The Early Christianization of Marriage: Sex, Procreation, and Ritual

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Abstract

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This dissertation tells the story of how the ritualization of Christian marriage antedated the appearance of episcopal blessings at Christian wedding ceremonies in the fourth century CE. Various forms of the Christianization of marriage date from the very earliest centuries of Christianity. Many of these efforts were centered on ritualizing the sexual procreative relationship of married Christian couples. Christians used what they viewed as the superior ritual efficacy of their marriages to valorize Christianized marriage as extraordinary action that benefitted both the couple and the children they bore. Christians considered this to set their marriage apart from the marriages of traditional polytheists and Jews.

Each chapter reveals a different way that Christians characterized Christian marriage in ritualized terms. Chapter one discusses the Christian position that desire should be controlled in both body and mind within marriage and reveals some of the ritualized means Christians touted for the control of desire, including acts of contemplation. This chapter also reveals that Christians

viewed the control of desire within marriage as more than a moral imperative; they also extolled Christian marriage itself as a type of apotropaic therapy that keeps both desire and demons away. The second chapter provides a different and more gendered story of desire. Despite the plentiful anti-desire rhetoric highlighted in chapter one, Christians did not view all desire as destructive. Like traditional polytheists and Jews, Christians embraced the belief that a woman's gaze shortly before or during coitus could impact the characteristics and abilities of the child that she conceives in that moment. The third chapter elucidates the Christian belief, often based on 1 Cor. 7:14, that Christianized marriage acts as a source of sanctification for both a married couple and any children they bear. This marital sanctification was rooted in, and at times even competed against, other forms of Christian ritual life, especially that of baptism. The fourth chapter highlights the belief among early Christians that their marriage possessed a theurgic efficacy due to humans' status as the image of God. And it demonstrates how they characterized this theurgic efficacy in ritualizing terms that cast Christians' image-producing procreation as efficaciously superior to the devotional image-making undertaken by traditional polytheists. The final chapter provides a more narrowed focus by exploring the heavily ritualized nuptial language of the *Gospel of Philip* from the fourth century CE Nag Hammadi collection. By situating the gospel's nuptial language in broader discourse on marriage in late antiquity, the chapter reveals the role of materiality in the gospel as it pertains to the Christianization of marriage within the text. In so doing so, this chapter not only affirms the importance of the *Gospel of Philip* in the study of early Christian marriage, but also contributes to Nag Hammadi studies by establishing how the study of the ritualization of Christian marriage at large casts important new light on the meaning and purpose of the *Gospel of Philip*'s nuptial imagery, including providing new insights on its use of the specialized Greek nuptial terms *numfôn*, *pastos*, and *koitôn*.

To Michael Williams, the best chair ever

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List of Abbreviations for Series

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
SC	Sources chrétiennes

Introduction

> If the marriage of defilement is a secret how much more is the undefiled marriage a true mystery. It is not fleshly. But it is pure. It does not belong to the desire, but to the will. – *Gospel of Philip* 82.4-8
>
> I think that the seed from the sanctified is even holy. – Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3.6.46(5)

Early Christians came to believe that daily married life can and should be Christianized, and that there were benefits for doing so. Many of Christians' efforts were centered around ritualizing procreative sex. As this study will demonstrate, Christians often discussed Christian marital sex in ritualized terms that characterized it as an other-than-ordinary act filled with efficacious power and potential, which was viewed as setting their marriages apart from those of non-Christians. And yet, despite the plentiful attestations, the ritualized aspect of Christian marriage has not been widely discussed in prior scholarship. This in turn has led to the erroneous assumption that the earliest Christians, except for perhaps those identified as "heretics," did not ritualize marriage and certainly not sex. I set out to correct this assumption by demonstrating the ritualization of marriage not only occurred, but Christians also characterized the ritual power of Christian marriage as one of the things that made their marriages "Christian," and which set them apart as extraordinary members of the late antique Mediterranean world.

Contribution to the Field

Analyzing pre-fourth-century Christian texts, I demonstrate that a collective picture emerges regarding the earliest ritualized practices of Christian marriage. By recovering this important discourse and related set of practices in earliest Christianity, I counteract the prevalent emphasis in the field on ascetic discourses and practices. The latter has been beneficial to

understanding why some Christians (who form the dominant voice in our sources) ranked ascetism, with its sexual celibacy, as soteriologically more efficient and of greater virtue than marriage.[1] A great deal of progress has been made in understanding the ritual efficacy, or what Martha Nussbaum would refer to as "therapy," of Christian ascetic practice, but the same progress has not been made in the study of Christian marriage.[2] In response to this stifled progress, in this dissertation I will not be studying Christian marriage alongside asceticism. Instead, my goal is to elucidate that Christian discourse on marriage often occurs along the lines of another hierarchy in which Christian marriage is placed at the top. Within this hierarchical framework, Christians valorize Christian marriage, along with its sexual intercourse and reproduction, as being more ritually efficacious than non-Christian marriage.

The study of Christian marriage has been stunted by a limited deployment of ritualization as a theoretical concept within the field. This has led to the erroneous assumption that Christians did not Christianize their marriages via ritualization for centuries. This conclusion arises out of the tendency to equate ritualization only with the development of sacred practices which can clearly be delineated from ordinary, profane life. This approach is reflected in the work of David Hunter (no relation), who has concluded, "The absence of explicit witnesses to Christian blessings or ceremonies before the fourth century suggests that the actual ritualizing of Christian marriages occurred very gradually and that marriage customs remained largely 'un-Christianized' for a long time."[3] In this evaluation of the question at hand, Hunter equates ritualization with the presence of

[1] Some Christians rejected marriage altogether. See Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions 13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Elaine Pagels, "Adam and Eve, Christ and the Church: A Survey of Second Century Controversies Concerning Marriage," in *The New Testament and Gnosis. Essays in Honour of Robert McLachlan Wilson* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited, 1983), 146–75.
[2] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. With a New Introduction by the Author* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).
[3] David G. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 33.

marriage ceremonies. This leads him in turn to date the earliest efforts to Christianize marriage to the fourth century, which is when we have the first explicit reference to a wedding blessing by a bishop, in the writings of Ambrosiaster.[4] Hunter's work on the development of episcopal involvement in weddings is invaluable, and I agree with him that Ambrosiaster is an important witness to this development. However, a lack of bishop involvement is an anachronistic place from which to begin an inquiry into the question of when and how the ritualization and Christianization of marriage occurred.[5] This is because ritualization is not the same as ceremonialization nor is ceremonialization the equivalent of the bishopizing of marriage. These processes are different from one another with their own unique histories of development. When we recognize this, it allows us to see that while Hunter's work has greatly contributed to our understanding about the historical developments that only slowly led to the Christianization of weddings, there is only limited research on how Christians ritualized and Christianized their marriages, including their sexual relationships, prior to episcopal involvement in weddings.[6]

Methodological Approach

The study of early Christian marriage can only be furthered if we distinguish between the ceremonialization of marriage via a wedding from the ritualization of marriage that occurs in non-ceremonialized daily life. To achieve this aim, throughout this study, I adapt a ritual studies

[4] David G. Hunter, "Echoes of the Early Roman Nuptial Blessing: Ambrosiaster, *De peccato Adae et Evae*," *Ecclesia Orans* 11, no. 2 (1994): 225–44.

[5] For other early witnesses of episcopal involvement in weddings and for the broader historical context of this development, see David G. Hunter, "Wedding Rituals and Episcopal Power," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*, ed. Risto Uro et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 626–43.

[6] For a refreshing study that looks at the Christianization of marriage through its representation on Christian funerary art, see Mark D. Ellison's dissertation, "Visualizing Christian Marriage in the Roman World" (Vanderbilt University, 2017). Although he does not approach the topic of early Christian marriage from the methodological framework of ritualization, Ellison's findings suggest that Christians in third- and fourth-century Rome viewed an eternal marital bond as one of the efficacious benefits of Christianized marriage (193-224).

approach, especially that of ritualization theory, to the study of early Christian marriage. Ritualization theory originated in ethology, the study of animals, as a theory that sought to explain why groups of animals develop different repertoires of behaviors and to understand the purpose behind these behaviors.[7] When anthropologists began to apply ritualization theory to human behavior, it became a way of situating and seeking to understand human behavior in the context of "ordinary" daily living and social life as opposed to relegating ritual only to the realm of the Sacred. Catherine Bell has observed that "ritualization involves the differentiation and privileging of particular activities."[8] David Frankfurter has highlighted the way in which the process of ritualization can recast even otherwise profane domestic acts like spinning wool into an act filled with efficacious power.[9] Throughout the upcoming chapters, I will demonstrate that Christians similarly ritualized their marriages. They did this not through Christianizing weddings as they would do centuries later, but by recasting Christian marriage, especially its marital sexual relationship, as other-than-ordinary ritual action that bestowed efficacious benefits upon the Christian couple, and even more so, upon the children they conceived.

This ritual studies approach to marriage sets my study apart from previous studies on early Christian marriage. Through this ritual-studies-driven approach I strive to expand our understanding of the Christianization of marriage by illustrating that this Christianization process went beyond a shift in ethical attitudes on how to "do" marriage, to include emerging ideas on what a Christianized marriage could efficaciously do for a Christian couple. I also highlight how

[7] For a brief introduction to ritual theory, including ritualization theory, I suggest Barry Stephenson, *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[8] Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 204.
[9] David Frankfurter, "'As I Twirl This Spindle, …': Ritualization and the Magical Efficacy of Household Tasks in Western Antiquity," *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 10, no. 1 (2021): 117–39.

a Christian could maximize that efficacy, especially as it concerned their reproductive sexual life and the children conceived therefrom.

The *Gospel of Philip* and the Ritualization of Christian Marriage

I afford the *Gospel of Philip* a special place within this study, even going so far as to devote an entire chapter (ch. 5) to the text. It was the ritualization of marriage in the *Gospel of Philip* that helped inspire the current project. As I sought to unravel whether the gospel's ritualized approach to Christian marriage was unique among Christians, I ran into the problem that there was no study on the ritualization of Christian marriage to which I could turn to answer that question. This lack of a study on the ritualization of Christian marriage, including marital sex, was frustrating on multiple fronts. One, it has contributed to the false assumption that Christians did not ritualize their marriages or sexual marital relations. Two, this in turn has led to the assumption that if it were discovered that a group of Christians did advocate for the ritualization of Christian marriage and sex, this would set the group's marital views apart as being "deviant" or "heretical" from other Christians. Three, as non-experts on early Christian marriage and in the absence of a study to suggest otherwise, the majority of Nag Hammadi scholars have concluded that if the *Gospel of Philip*'s clearly ritualized nuptial and sexualized language refers to actual marriage practices, this would indicate that the text embraces "deviant" sexual behavior. This assumption has likely contributed to scholars' conclusions that the *Gospel of Philip*'s nuptial and sexual language should be understood metaphorically as referring to something other than literal marriage and sex. Four, the situation has been exacerbated by the isolation of Nag Hammadi studies from the broader field of early Christian studies. The majority of scholarship on the *Gospel of Philip* has been undertaken under the auspices of Nag Hammadi studies by scholars whose expertise centers on the mostly

Coptic texts found within the collection. Thus, Nag Hammadi studies, for better or worse, has become the default gatekeeper to scholarly understanding of the *Gospel of Philip*. Since the majority of Nag Hammadi scholars have concluded that the *Gospel of Philip*'s nuptial imagery is metaphorical in nature (because after all, there has been no study on the ritualization of Christian marriage in early Christian studies to affirm otherwise), there has been little incentive for scholars of early Christianity to incorporate the text in studies on Christian marriage. Five, the exclusion of the *Gospel of Philip* with its clearly ritualized nuptial language from studies on "orthodox" Christian marriage has furthered the misconception that the ritualization of marriage and marital sex was not part of the process by which Christians came to Christianize marriage. My extensive use of the *Gospel of Philip* is an attempt to break through this circular impasse.

The findings of my study illustrate that the ritualization of Christian marriage cannot be understood without the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Gospel of Philip* cannot be understood without contextualizing its nuptial imagery within broader efforts by Christians to ritualize marriage. As a reflection of the circular nature of the problem, I at times use the *Gospel of Philip* as a "roadmap" to help identify and explicate the significance of nuptial references in other texts. But at the same time, I use the findings from other sources to provide the context through which to understand this fascinating gospel. And in my final chapter, I turn all my attention to the *Gospel of Philip* so as to reveal the unique peek this gospel allows us into a Christianized marital bedroom. Through this approach, my project contributes both to the study of early Christian marriage and to Nag Hammadi studies on the *Gospel of Philip* and demonstrates what we can gain in both fields when these two things are studied side-by-side.

An Overview of my Sources

In order to orient the reader, who may not be familiar with all the sources they will encounter within this project, I provide an overview below of some of the most prominent sources from which I draw in the upcoming pages. Unless indicated otherwise, the dates I provide for authors or texts are estimates and are derived from the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity.*[10] As readers encounter the examples that I provide from these sources on the ritualization of marriage, they should not treat them as an all-encompassing summary of a particular author's viewpoints, but rather as examples that illustrate the way these sources reflect a broader Christian discourse on the Christianization and ritualization of marriage, even if a specific author's contribution to that discourse does not remain consistent. I make no attempt to demonstrate a biographical account of a particular author's views on marriage, but instead demonstrate how that person's ideas on marriage (no matter how fleeting) reveals a broader Christian discourse on the ritualization of marriage that contributes to the construction of a social history of early Christian marriage.

The Letters of Paul

Paul is remembered as a Jewish convert to Christianity though scholarship terms him an apocalyptic Jew.[11] Although he never met Jesus in the flesh, it is reported that he converted after encountering a resurrected Jesus via a vision. Paul became an avid missionary to "Gentiles" or non-Jews across what is today Greece and Turkey. The letters he wrote to these communities in the 40s and 50s CE, along with the letter he wrote to a church in Rome that he did not found, were

[10] Everett Ferguson, Michael P. McHugh, and Frederick W. Norris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 1839 (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1999). This source also informs the brief biographical accounts of early Christian writers that I provide below.

[11] For traditional versus scholarly views of Paul, see John Goodrich Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21–76 and Paula Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

preserved by early Christians, and were already being treated as scripture by Christians in the late second century and early third century. It is this reception of Paul by later Christian writers that is of most interest to me in the current project. His 1 Corinthians 7 especially had a large influence on subsequent Christian writers as they began to articulate the benefits of a Christianized marriage, including an apotropaic control of desire (ch. 1) and procreative sanctification (ch. 3).

Ignatius of Antioch (beginning of second century CE)

Conventionally grouped as one of the so-called "apostolic fathers," Ignatius was a bishop of Antioch who is known by the seven letters that he wrote to various churches and to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, on his way to being martyred at Rome under the reign of Trajan (98 CE - 117 CE). He does not often address marriage, but he is unique in that he advocated that to avoid a marriage based on desire, Christians should seek the approval of the bishop before forming a marriage (ch. 1).

Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 115 CE – ca. 202 CE)

Likely born in Smyrna, Irenaeus studied in Rome before becoming the bishop of Lyons, and he is the most well-known of the heresiologists. Irenaeus' polemical writings against Christian groups that he deemed "heretical" serve as an important source for the diversity of Christian practices and beliefs in the second century. Irenaeus bears witness that some Christians rejected marriage and sex, and he accuses others of overindulging in the latter. While his polemical accusations should be taken with a grain of salt, his descriptions of Christian groups illustrate that opinions about marriage and sex were an important part of early Christian discourse. Moreover, it is not only his account of so-called "heretical" Christians that are of value for the topic of the

ritualization of Christian marriage. For example, despite his disdain for what he viewed as sexually deviant behavior by other Christians, Irenaeus saw no problem in associating a sanctifying power with Christian marital sex (ch. 3).

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160 CE – ca. 215 CE)

Clement is one of the earliest Christian writers from whom we have extensive surviving works. His multiple references to Greek philosophy in his treatises indicate that he was highly educated. It is even possible that he ran a Christian philosophical school in Alexandria. Although he was neither priest nor bishop, Clement's writing gives us a glimpse into early Christian lifestyles and controversies surrounding them. He wrote at a time in which marriage was coming under attack by certain Christians, such as the second-century figures Tatian and Marcion and their followers, who are said to have rejected marriage as defiled. This means that when Clement addresses marriage, he tends to do so defensively. But as we will see, he does not simply defend marriage by arguing that it is permissible. Instead, he enthusiastically affirms the superiority of Christianized marriage and sex by expounding upon the ritualized benefits that they give to the Christian couple and their children, including Christian marriage's ability to extinguish all desire and keep demons away (ch. 1), sanctify offspring (ch. 3), and theurgically manifest the image of God (ch. 4). He, furthermore, also gives witness to Christian attempts to reorient the gaze of the bedroom (ch. 2).

Tertullian (fl. 200 CE)

Writing from Carthage in northern Africa, Tertullian is another important witness to a contested early Christianity. It remains uncertain when he was born or died, but his *Apology* was

likely written around 197 CE. Like Clement, Tertullian oftentimes writes defensively on marriage, but he also provides a personal glimpse into marriage in a treatise that he addresses to his wife. Tertullian advocates for the superior efficacy of Christian marriage over the marriages of non-Christians. He embraces, for example, the procreative sanctifying efficacy of Christian marriage but limits its power by arguing that it does not work if a Christian, after their conversion, marries a non-Christian (ch. 3). He also embraces Christian marriage's ability to overcome desire and characterizes the gaze and mind as the realm in which it originates (ch. 1) and embraces the theurgic efficacy of Christian marital procreation (ch. 4).

Origen (ca. 185 CE – ca. 251 CE)

Origen was born in Alexandria to Christian parents. He was highly educated in Platonic philosophy, and he was likely given the responsibility at a young age for the catechetical instruction of converts. He was a prolific writer and commentator on Christian scripture, reportedly producing as many as 2,000 works. Due to his attempt to intellectualize Christianity in accordance with philosophical standards, Origen was a controversial figure both during his life and after his death. Nonetheless, his scriptural commentaries were so unrivaled, that even many of his opponents could not resist copying and incorporating Origen's work, without attribution of course, into their own. Origen himself was unmarried and professed to live a celibate life, but throughout his various works, he comments upon the ritualized efficacy of Christian marriage, including its apotropaic power (ch. 1) and spousal sanctification (ch. 3).

Methodius of Olympus (d. ca. 311 CE)

Methodius the bishop of Olympus is best known for championing virginity. Nonetheless, he still serves as an important witness to Christian ideas about marriage. He sometimes argues against the prevailing ideas of his day. For example, he rejects the idea that children born to married Christian parents are more sanctified than those born in adultery (ch. 3). And yet, he is an enthusiastic supporter of the theurgic efficacy of Christian marriage (ch. 4).

Gospel of Philip (contested date of origin)

Due to its preservation in one of the Nag Hammadi codices, the *Gospel of Philip* has most often been studied under the larger umbrella of Gnosticism, which also by extension marks the text as "heretical." Influenced by the work of Michael Williams and Karen King, in this study I do not interpret the *Gospel of Philip* through the problematic framework of Gnosticism. Williams argues that the texts which have often been labeled as "gnostic" are far too diverse to be understood as a single religious tradition and categorizing them under Gnosticism associates the texts with certain erroneous cliches.[12] Likewise, King contends that the term Gnosticism is limited since it has roots in an inaccurate historical narrative in which Christianity's roots are traced to a pure "orthodox" Christianity that was then degraded by Christian "heresy." King's observation still holds true today that early Christian polemical discourse on heresy and orthodoxy has become intertwined with modern scholarship on Gnosticism. This intertwined relationship has "distorted

[12] Williams challenges the often-evoked characterization of definitional Gnosticism and Gnostics as possessing an antisocial and anticosmic attitude (Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). He instead argues that many of these groups were instead moving toward "more social involvement and accommodation, and less tension with their social environment" (97). He also pushes back against the cliché that "Gnostics" shared a hatred of the body and highlights among other things, that multiple so-called Gnostic texts such as the *Apocryphon of John*, *On the Origin of the World*, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, and a *Valentinian Exposition* all depict the archons as fashioning the human material body after the "divine Human likeness and partly after their own image" (127-28). I would also add the *Gospel of Philip* to this list (see my ch. 4).

our analysis of the ancient texts," including subsuming the position of the heresiologists that heretics are sexually deviant in matters of sex and marriage by either expressing extreme ascetic ideology or libertine sexual ethics.[13] This problematic intertwining leads King to declare, "What I am calling for is a shift in historical-critical and literary methods away from the search for origins to the analysis of practice."[14] In answer to this call, I approach the *Gospel of Philip* not as a "Gnostic" or "heretical" source that has "deviated" from a supposed orthodox center, but as a valuable Christian source that can inform our understanding of the marital practices of early Christians.

The *Gospel of Philip* is best understood as a type of florilegium (i.e., largely a collection of extracts from earlier sources). It, thus, likely reflects beliefs and practices of Christians from more than one community and over a period of time prior to this eventual anthology.[15] The only surviving copy of the *Gospel of Philip* is found in Codex II in the collection of manuscripts known collectively as the Nag Hammadi codices, which were reportedly found buried in the desert outside of the town of Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945.[16] Although our only surviving text of the *Gospel of Philip* is preserved in Coptic, the majority of scholars have proposed that it was written

[13]Karen L. King, *What Is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 19.

[14] King, 228.

[15] For the perspective that the *Gospel of Philip* is not a coherent text, but some type of collection, see R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip: Translated from the Coptic Text, with an Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 9; Hans-Martin Schenke, "Das Evangelium nach Philippus: Ein Evangelium der Valentinianer aus dem Funde von Nag-Hamadi," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 84, no. 1 (1959): 1. Martha Turner's work demonstrates that even as a florilegium, the text has an organizational logic to it (*The Gospel According to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 38 [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], 15–59). To be sure, a collector could have revised or augmented extracts here and there. However, the disparate character of the extracts, as scholars such as those cited here have recognized, is most easily explained by diversity in the underlying provenance of a collector's sources. For an argument that the *Gospel of Philip* is not a florilegium, but a text composed and organized according to a coherent theology, see Louis Painchaud, "La composition de l'Évangile selon Philippe (NH II,3): Une analyse rhétorique," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 132, no. 35 (1996): 35–66.

[16] For an account of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices and a history of their publication, see James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Story*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

originally in Greek in Syria, due to certain passages in the gospel that provide an etymological explanation of Syriac words or supposedly mirror certain Syrian theology or ritual practices.[17] However, a Syrian attribution remains contested, and no definitive conclusions can be determined about the text's provenance; it remains possible that it was originally written in Coptic in Egypt.[18] As an anthology, we also cannot rule out that different passages may have different regional origins. Likewise, there is no agreement on when the original version of the gospel was written. Most scholars date the original composition of the *Gospel of Philip* to the late second or early third century CE,[19] but some have proposed a date as early as the latter half of the first century CE.[20] Viewing certainty on this as an impossible task, Hugo Lundhaug proposes we refrain from attempts to date the original composition of the *Gospel of Philip*, and instead argues that the best we can do is date the Coptic revision of the text, which he places in the late fourth or early fifth century CE.[21] In this study, I infer that content in the *Gospel of Philip* provides perspectives on the ritualization of Christian marriage mirroring ideas that circulated among more than one Christian circle from the early to mid-third century CE.

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[17]Scholarship that argues for a Syrian provenance for the *Gospel of Philip* is plentiful. See Eric Segelberg, "The Antiochene Background of the Gospel of Philip," *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie Copte* 18 (1966): 205–23; Jacques E. Ménard, "Beziehungen des Philippus- und des Thomas-Evangeliums zur Syrischen Welt." In *Altes Testament – Frühjudentum – Gnosis: Neue Studien zu "Gnosis und Bibel,"* ed. Karl-Wolfgang Tröger (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980), 347–48; Hans-Martin Schenke, ed., *Das Philippus-Evangelium: Nag-Hammadi-Codex II,3*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, Bd. 143 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 5; Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the "Valentinians,"* Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 350.

[18] Hugo Lundhaug falls short of concluding that the *Gospel of Philip* was originally written in Coptic in Egypt, but he concludes that this possibility cannot be excluded. Regardless of its original language, Lundhaug argues that at least some sections of the text were significantly revised during "its Coptic phase(s) of transmission" (*Images of Rebirth: Cognitive Poetics and Transformational Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 73 [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 367).

[19] E.g., Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip,* 3–5; Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 12; Herbert Schmid, *Die Eucharistie ist Jesus: Anfänge einer Theorie des Sakraments im koptischen Philippusevangelium (NHC II 3)*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 13–14.

[20] Barbara Thiering, "The Date and Unity of the Gospel of Philip," *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 2, no. 1 (1995): 102–11.

[21] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 373–74.

The *Gospel of Philip* is rich with nuptial and sexual imagery, including multiple references to the "bridal chamber." Most scholars have identified the *Gospel of Philip* as "Valentinian" in origin – that is, stemming from circles inspired by the second-century Christian poet and thinker Valentinus. These researchers have in turn asserted that its multiple references to the "bridal chamber" should be interpreted through a Valentinian theological framework. However, this identification of the text as Valentinian is both problematic and unnecessary. Like Lundhaug, I do not assume that when the text speaks of "Christians," it is code for Valentinians. Instead, I agree with his assessment, "that the term 'Christian' as it is used in *Gos. Phil.* could simply refer to 'Christian' in the same way as in standard early Christian usage."[22] In the same vein, I also argue that it is not necessary to impose a Valentinian theological framework to understand the text's references to "bridal chamber." Due to the eclectic nature of the gospel, I leave open the possibility that certain passages may retain a Valentinian notion of a heavenly bridal chamber, but in other passages, it is clear that the bridal chamber characterizes ritualized action that Christians undertake on earth. Others have recognized both the earthly and ritualized nature of the bridal chamber. But as Lundhaug has aptly observed "Most scholars, however, have held the 'bridal chamber' to be a metaphorical reference to some kind of ritual that probably did not involve any kind of ritualised sexual intercourse or actual human marriage."[23] I push against this position held by the majority

[22] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 334.

[23] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 333. Among these scholars, however, there is no consensus regarding what kind of ritual the "bridal chamber" metaphorically references. For example, Hans-Georg Gaffron proposes that it refers to some kind of death ritual. See Hans-Georg Gaffron, "Studien zum koptischen Philippusevangelium unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Sakramente" (Bonn, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University, 1969), 222-25. Herbert Schmid argues that the bridal chamber is a reference to a series of rituals which collectively served as an initiation rite into a Valentinian community (*Die Eucharistie ist Jesus*, 225). Einar Thomassen likewise associates the bridal chamber with an initiation ritual that includes baptism, the eucharist and chrism (*The Spiritual Seed*, 100). And Michael Peppard associates the *Gospel of Philip*'s bridal chamber with baptism. See Michael Peppard, *The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria*, Synkrisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 131-38.

of scholars and instead utilize the *Gospel of Philip* as a source that attests to Christian attempts to ritualize their marriages including sexual relationships.[24]

Other Second- and Third-Century Sources

While I use them more sparingly, Justin Martyr a teacher from Palestine (d. 165), Athenagoras a Christian philosopher from Athens (latter half of second century CE), Lactantius a Latin apologist from North Africa (ca. 250 CE – ca. 325 CE), and Novatian a bishop of Rome (mid-third century CE) all serve as other prominent Christian writers that bear witness to the ritualization of Christian marriage. I also draw from Christian texts whose actual authors are unknown, including the *Epistle of Barna*bas (debated, 70 CE – 135 CE), *Epistle of the Apostles* (ca. 150 CE), *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (redacted by late second century CE), and *Odes of Solomon* (debated, late first to early third century CE).

Fourth-Century and Fifth-Century CE Sources

Although the focus of this project is on the Christianization of marriage in the first three centuries of Christianity, I oftentimes turn to the writings of fourth- or fifth-century Christian authors to demonstrate either a continuity or discontinuity with earlier times. John Chrysostom (ca. 347 CE – 407 CE), who was a popular preacher prior to becoming the bishop of Constantinople in 398 CE, and writings attributed to Amphilochius (ca. 340 CE – after 394 CE) contribute to our understanding of Christian marriage in Asia Minor. The *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, most

[24] I am not the first to argue the bridal chamber plays a role in marriage and procreation. See Jorunn Buckley, "A Cult Mystery in *The Gospel of Philip*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 4 (December 1980): 569–81. April DeConick, "The Great Mystery of Marriage. Sex and Conception in Ancient Valentinian Traditions," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57, No. 3 (August 2003): 307–42, and Karen L. King, "The Place of the Gospel of Philip in the Context of Early Christian Claims about Jesus' Marital Status," *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 4 (October 2013): 565–87. However, usually (King is an exception) this has been in service of arguments about a special "bridal chamber" ritual practiced by a particular sect (i.e., Valentinians). That is not my agenda here.

likely written in fourth-century CE Syria or Palestine, is an important witness of the survival of a more Jewish form of Christianity, including ideas about the ritualization of Christian marriage. Augustine (354 CE – 430 CE) the influential bishop of Hippo, the writer known as Ambrosiaster (late fourth century CE), and Hilary (ca. 315 CE – ca. 367 CE) a bishop of Poitiers, are some of the important witnesses in the Latin speaking west.

Non-Christian Sources

Christians did not live in a cultural or religious vacuum. The Christianization and ritualization of marriage was inevitably shaped by the practices and ideals of the broader societies in which they lived. I use the works of both traditional polytheists and Jewish writers to illuminate the ways in which Christians drew from wider cultural concepts of marriage in order to conceptualize and promote what they saw as the unique ritual efficacy of Christianized marriage.[25]

Traditional Polytheistic Texts

In chapter two, I draw from traditional polytheistic texts to illustrate that the Christian belief in the procreative efficacy of the gaze was commonplace in antiquity. I demonstrate that this belief was operative among traditional polytheists as early as the philosophical writings of Empedocles (ca. 492 BCE – ca. 432 BCE) and Aristotle (384 BCE – 322 BCE), and it continued to survive well into the Roman period as attested in the *Natural History* by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder (ca. 23/24 CE – ca. 79 CE), the medical treatises of Soranus (fl. second century CE) and

[25] I use "traditional polytheists" to replace the problematic term "pagans." In so doing so, I follow in the footsteps of Heidi Marx-Wolf and Ross Kraemer: Heidi Marx-Wolf, *Spiritual Taxonomies and Ritual Authority: Platonists, Priests, and Gnostics in the Third Century C.E*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 134–5n10; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity: What Christianity Cost the Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 6–7n18.

Galen (ca. 129 CE – ca. 216 CE, the poetry attributed to Oppian (fl. mid-second century CE) and the *Life of Apollonius* by the philosopher Philostratus (fl. early third century CE).[26] In chapter four, I draw from the writings of the neo-Platonic philosopher Iamblichus (ca. 245 CE – ca. 325 CE), who defended the use of theurgic ritual to manifest the presence of the gods, to help contextualize Christian discourse which characterizes Christian procreation as a type of superior theurgic action. In the first section of chapter five, I again draw from Iamblichus to culturally contextualize the *Gospel of Philip*'s ritualized evocation of light and its defense of a mirror as a ritual tool. In the latter half of chapter five, I turn to funerary inscriptions from a range of dates, as well the writings of the lexicographers Apollonius Sophista (ca. early second century CE) and Pollux (fl. second century CE), to problematize the traditional translation of the Greek term *pastos* as a "bridal chamber" in the *Gospel of Philip* in my effort to deepen our understanding of the *pastos*' role in the ritualization of marriage within the gospel.

Rabbinic Sources (debated, first – sixth century CE)

With few exceptions, the majority of Jewish evidence from which I draw falls into the category of Talmudic literature. The Talmudic literature was written by Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis, who saw themselves as the authoritative religious leaders of the Jewish community. Although it is questionable to what degree the average Jew in antiquity turned to the rabbis for religious guidance, the rabbis' commentary on sex and marriage still serves as an important witness to ideas and practices about marriage that were circulating in late antiquity within a Jewish

[26] Unless otherwise noted, the approximate dates I provide for traditional polytheist writers derive from Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

context.[27] The earliest layer of Talmudic literature is attributed to rabbis living in Palestine prior to 200 CE, but this Palestinian material was preserved by and in many cases, heavily redacted by, Babylonian rabbis until at least 550 CE. Nonetheless, even in redacted form, the Talmudic literature provides glimpses into earlier time periods, and it is an invaluable source in contextualizing the ritualization of marriage within a broader cultural and religious milieu including the efficacy of the procreative gaze (ch. 2), the role of marriage in the sanctification of children (ch. 3), the theurgic function of procreation (ch. 4), and the use of a nuptial canopy during weddings (ch. 5).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one, "The Destructive Force of Desire: Keeping Sexual Desire and Demons Away," is divided into two sections. The first section discusses how Christians viewed the control of desire as a moral imperative. Since Christians viewed sexual impropriety as originating first in the mind (Matt. 5:28), they emphasized the need for Christians to extinguish desirous thoughts. And they proposed various ritualized methods, including contemplative practices, by which married Christians could achieve this mental control over desire. In the second section, I demonstrate how Christians not only advocated for the control of desire within Christian marriage, but also characterized the control of desire as a therapeutic result of a Christianized marriage, which was manifested both in mind and body. Christians also linked the therapeutic power of Christian marriage to overcome desire to the apotropaic ability of Christian marriage to keep demons away. Some Christians even assigned an apotropaic efficacy to sexual intercourse itself.

[27] For a study that questions the extent to which the rabbis exerted religious authority over the Jewish community, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Judaism to the Mishnah: 135-220 CE," in *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History*, ed. Hershel Shanks, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2011), 211–38.

If a Christian deprived his wife or her husband of a sexual relation without the consent of the spouse, Christians – often drawing upon statements from the apostle Paul – believed that this unilateral action exposed the couple to the harms of adulterous desire and demonic harassment. It was not only too little sex, however, that could endanger the couple, but also unbridled, passion-filled sex undertaken not for procreative purposes, but for the pure fulfillment of pleasure. Even within a marital context, this kind of wild, desire-motivated sex could both originate from or invite the meddling of demons. An overabundance of desire or demons during a sexual act that resulted in conception could in turn have a negative impact on the conceived child. We find examples of Christian authors who both implored married Christians to have restrained sex, while they also reassured Christians that if they Christianized their marriages, they could achieve this therapeutic result.

Chapter two, "The Positive Creative Force of Desire: The Female Gaze and Procreation," foregrounds a Mediterranean and West Asian belief in the impact of what a woman sees on the children she bears. Despite the anti-desire rhetoric discussed in chapter one, most Christians likely embraced the wider cultural belief that female desire was not necessarily destructive if it was properly channeled. According to this belief, if a woman desired an object, via the sight of her eyes and/or imagination during sexual intercourse or pregnancy, it would have either a negative or a positive impact on the child depending on the nature of the object she desired. Sometimes, for good or for bad, this desire-filled seeing occurred by accident. But this chapter also highlights the accounts that survive in both Greek and Jewish literature of women manipulating this imprinting power of desire by gazing at an object appropriate for conceiving a child with superior physical or moral characteristics. As I will show, this belief in the procreative power of the female gaze may have contributed to understandings attested in certain Christian sources of the virginal conception

of a human Jesus, such as the treatment of the Annunciation scene found in the *Epistle of the Apostles*. Due to their interpretation of the gaze's role in the story of Jacob's rods in Genesis, other Christian authors also accepted that a woman's gaze affected the development of a conceived child. This suggests that there were Christians who had reason to advocate for the ritualizing of the female gaze during marital procreative sex. And in fact, in the *Gospel of Philip,* we find an explicit example of instructions regarding the person to whom a woman should direct her imaginative gaze during sex.

Chapter three, "The Sanctifying Power of Christian Marriage and the Conception of Holy Children," illustrates the widespread Christian belief that Christians' marriages acted as a source of sanctification for the married couple, empowered by baptism or other Christian sacraments. During sexual intercourse, this sanctification therapeutically enabled the Christian couple to conceive holy children, who in the words of Paul, otherwise "would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14).[28] This belief that Christian marriage produced holy children can be found in pre-fourth-century texts and contributed to the belief among Christians that the baptism of their children could either be delayed or possibly forgone altogether. This belief in the all-encompassing sanctifying efficacy of Christian marriage is attested at least as late as the fifth century. At that time, Augustine in his treatise *Answer to the Pelagians* actively worked to undermine this belief to support his doctrine that all humans, even those born to married baptized Christians, are born with Original Sin, and thus are not as holy as his opponents argued on the basis of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 7:14.

Chapter four, "Living Images of God: Procreation as a Theurgic Act," discusses the belief among early Christians that marriage could function theurgically by manifesting the image of God

[28] Unless otherwise stated, translations of biblical passages are from the NRSV.

through the procreative act. I begin the chapter by aligning my use of "theurgy," with how the term is used within Jewish Studies. I then build upon the work of Yair Lorberbaum, who has demonstrated the theurgic efficacy of procreation within rabbinic literature, to establish that early Christian sources reflect a similar belief in the theurgic function of procreation. Christians evoked humans' status as the image of God and the function of marriage to reproduce that image, to defend their position that Christians could engage in marriage and procreation. They also characterized the theurgic efficacy of Christian marriage in ritualizing terms that cast Christians' divine image-producing procreation as efficaciously superior to the devotional image-making undertaken by traditional polytheists.

Chapter five, "Bridal Chambers, Nuptial Canopies, and Bedrooms," demonstrates the way in which the *Gospel of Philip*'s ritualized nuptial and procreative imagery allows us a unique glimpse into the role of materiality in the gospel's understanding of a ritualized Christian marriage. In this chapter, I use the material language of the text to, so to speak, follow its Christians into their bedrooms. In the first section of the chapter, I use its references to a mirror, light, and angels to suggest that the *Gospel of Philip* may advocate for the ritual use of a mirror during sex, possibly for the purpose of instilling light-like or angelic qualities upon a conceived child. In the second section, I provide an important corrective within Nag Hammadi studies by demonstrating that the text's Greek terms for nuptial space (*numphôn*, *pastos*, and *koitôn*) are not synonyms that all mean "bridal chamber." To accomplish this, I draw from the work of Eugene Lane, who has already proven the problematic nature of dictionary entries that provide "bridal chamber" as a definition for *pastos*. After summarizing Lane's findings, I analyze how the *pastos*' status as a nuptial canopy contributes to an understanding of the ritualization of marriage within the passages in which this term occurs in the *Gospel of Philip*. I also highlight how the *pastos*' ritualized role differs from

that of the *koitôn*, or bedchamber, within the gospel. Whereas a *pastos* is associated with the ritualized origin of a marriage at a wedding, the *koitôn* is associated with Christian everyday married life, which although it may no longer be ceremonialized, is still characterized as possessing efficacious ritual power.

Chapter One

The Destructive Force of Desire: Keeping Sexual Desire and Demons Away

> Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. – 1 Corinthians 7:5

Oftentimes drawing from 1 Corinthians 7:5, Christians characterized marriage as a therapy to keep both desire and demons away. Most authors of the surviving pre-fourth-century Christian literature identify sexual desire as problematic and a passion to be extinguished or controlled by Christians *in* their marriages as a moral imperative of community, mind, and body and *through* their marriages as a therapeutic, efficacious benefit of a Christianized marriage. The moral imperative of Christians to control desire, which I discuss in its marital context in the first part of this chapter, is widely recognized in scholarship as being at the heart of Christian sexual ethics for both sexually-active married Christians and celibate Christian ascetics. In studies on Christian asceticism, it is furthermore recognized that while the control of desire is a moral imperative that drives asceticism, the control of desire is also a therapeutic benefit of ascetic practice.[1] In the latter half of this chapter, I demonstrate that desire similarly operates in this dual moral-therapeutic function within Christian marriage. This dual-function of marriage is readily recognizable in the ritual-focused Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Philip*, which I use as a type of roadmap throughout this chapter.[2] As will become apparent, however, this gospel is not the only Christian text, nor is it even the first, to characterize the control of desire as a ritualized tool by which marriage can be

[1] Scholarship that discusses the control of desire as a benefit of ascetism is plentiful. See, for example, Peter Brown, *The Body and Society;* Teresa M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

[2] For one major critical edition of the *Gospel of Philip* with English translation and introduction, see Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,2-7*, vol. 1, Nag Hammadi Studies 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 131–57.

Christianized. Nor is it alone in its understanding of Christianized marriage as superior to non-Christian marriage, precisely because Christianized marriage is more therapeutically efficacious in (1) controlling desire and (2) keeping the demons away that stir up desire. This in turn serves to demarcate Christian marriage as more than simply permissible; it establishes Christian marriage as therapeutically superior to the marriages of non-Christians.

The Control of Desire as Moral Imperative

Gospel of Philip as a Roadmap

Some scholars have understood the *Gospel of Philip*'s rejection of "the marriage of the world" (ⲡⲅⲁⲙⲟⲥ ⲙ̄-ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ) and "the marriage of defilement" (ⲡⲅⲁⲙⲟⲥ ⲙ̄-ⲡϫⲱϩⲙ), along with its criticism of a love for the flesh, to be an indicator that the gospel rejects sexually-active marriage.[3] Yet, as we will see, its language to neither love nor fear the flesh and its distinction between a defiled, desire-driven marriage and an undefiled will-driven marriage is not unusual within pro-marriage Christian rhetoric. Despite the gospel's consistent praise of the bridal chamber, it does not hold the same opinion of non-Christianized marriage. The gospel says of worldly union that "Its image exists in a defiled state."[4] We are drawing conclusions too quickly if we assume that the difference between the marriage of defilement and the marriage of the bridal chamber is the absence of sex in the bridal chamber.[5] Rather, the *Gospel of Philip* advocates for

[3] For a summary of the scholarly debate regarding the meaning and purpose of the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*, see Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth,* 331–35. See also my discussion of the *Gospel of Philip*'s nuptial imagery in chapter five.

[4] *Gos. Phil*. 64.36-65.1. The text is lacunose here, but "its image" appears to refer to the image or negative counterpart of undefiled intercourse (κοινονία). Unless where indicated, translations of ancient texts are my own. The citations from the *Gospel of Philip* indicate the page and line number(s) in Codex II of the Nag Hammadi library, the only surviving manuscript of this text. See Bentley Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7*.

[5] Michael Williams has embraced the position that the bridal chamber refers to marriage, but he has argued that it was not a fleshly marriage, but a "spiritual marriage" in which the married couple refrained from sexual intercourse. See Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism,"* 148-9 and Michael A. Williams, "Uses of Gender Imagery in Ancient Gnostic Texts," in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell,

the position: "Do not fear the flesh. Nor love it. If you fear it, it will be master over you. If you love it, it will swallow you and strangle you."[6] The readers of the *Gospel of Philip* are not to fear their bodies, but nor are they to overly love or indulge the flesh of their bodies as they participate in the undefiled marriage of the bridal chamber. This "middle position" as expressed in the *Gospel of Philip* is also reflected in the larger corpus of pro-marriage Christian literature.

Self-Control and Desire in Christianized Marriage

The identification of desire as problematic predates the *Gospel of Philip*. It goes back to the beginning of Christianity as seen in the letters of Paul, who expresses in his well-known "concession" in chapter seven in First Corinthians that he wishes that everyone could remain unmarried, as he was at that time, in view of the imminent reign of God. But he concedes, in order to protect against sexual immorality, that it is not a sin for men and women to marry (1 Cor. 7:2-4). A husband and wife should not deprive each other except by agreement and for only a limited amount of time. They should then come together again sexually in order that Satan might not tempt them because of their lack of self-control (1 Cor. 7:5). To the unmarried and widows, he personally thinks it is better for them to remain unmarried, "But if they are not practicing self-control [ἐγκρατεύονται], they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn (i.e., to be aflame with passion)" (1 Cor. 7:9). In this solution, Paul conveys that select Christians can control desire even within a celibate life. But he notably does not exhort those among the Corinthian Christian community who lack self-control to "try harder" to obtain it through methods such as a restrictive

and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 196–227. While there is historical evidence that some early Christians practiced sexually continent marriage, throughout this dissertation I argue that the *Gospel of Philip's* criticism of the flesh and desire does not equate to a rejection of marital sexual intercourse, but rather is in accordance with the writings of other pro-marriage Christian authors who advocated for the control of desire and sexual restraint within the marriage bond.

[6] *Gos. Phil.* 66.4-7.

diet, which was widely embraced in philosophical schools as an effective tool to weaken sexual desire.[7] Instead, he presents indulgence in marital sex as a tool to control desire and prevent immoral sexual actions outside of the bonds of marriage. Paul's sentiment that it is better to indulge in marital sexual intercourse than burn accords with the widespread notion in antiquity that uncontrolled sexual desire is like an unmitigated and dangerous raging fire which can be contained through intentional and moderated sexual intercourse.[8] For Paul, this must occur within the marital bond. He may express a similar position regarding marriage as a solution to sexual impropriety in his instructions to the Thessalonians on how to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. He advocates that for the sake of their sanctification, the Thessalonians should abstain from sexual immorality and "keep one's own vessel (σκεῦος)" in purity and honor instead of lustful passion (πάθει ἐπιθυμίας).[9] It is possible that Paul uses the term *skeuos* to refer to one's own body, but if he uses the term similarly to the author of 1 Peter,[10] this Pauline passage may instead mean that each Thessalonian should "take a wife for himself" not in lustful passion, but in purity and honor.[11] Drawing from this interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:4 and Paul's prescription of marital sex to manage desire in 1 Corinthians 7:9, Dale Martin has proposed that Paul's ultimate aim is not the

[7] Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity*, The Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature 40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On the use of fasting to control desire in early Christianity, see Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh*.

[8] On the mitigating role of marriage on desire, see J. Edward Ellis, "1 Corinthians 7 in Light of the Greek Romantic Novels," in *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire: Paul's Sexual Ethics in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1*, Library of New Testament Studies 354 (London: T & T Clark, 2007). One of the most poignant examples he provides occurs in *An Ethiopian Story* in which Kalasiris advises the newly love-stricken Charikleia, "You must consider how to make the best of your situation: never to have felt love's (ἔρως) touch is a blessing, but once caught it is wisest to keep one's thoughts on paths of self-control (πρὸς τὸ σῶφρον). If you are willing to believe this, you may rid yourself of this slur of carnal desire [τὸ μὲν ἐπιθυμίας αἰσχρὸν ὄνομα] and make your objective the lawful contract of wedlock, so transforming your malady into marriage" (4.10.6; tr. Ellis, 156).

[9] 1 Thess. 4:3-5.

[10] 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman – though the weaker vessel (ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει), they are joint heirs of the gracious gift of life – so that nothing may hinder your prayers" (NRSVUE).

[11] For a summary of the debate as to the meaning of *skeuos* in 1 Thess. 4:4, see Todd D. Still, "Interpretive Ambiguities and Scholarly Proclivities in Pauline Studies: A Treatment of Three Texts from 1 Thessalonians 4 as a Test Case," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5, no. 2 (February 2007): 207–9.

indulgence of desire within sex, nor even the control of desire, but Christian marital sex as a tool for the complete extinguishment of desire. Accordingly, he interprets 1 Thessalonians 4:4 to mean that "The way to avoid the pollution is for men to possess and control their 'vessels' (their wives) as safe receptacles for their sexual overflow. But the idea that passion could be a part of that process is not entertained; in fact, it is excluded."[12] Despite this argument by Martin, it is not clear what Paul thinks of the role of desire within Christians' marital sexual relations. When we situate Paul's comment that it is better to marry than to burn within the larger discourse on marriage and sex within Greco-Roman society, his comment could simply be advocating for marriage as a means to control or rein in excessive desire. Furthermore, even if we understand *skeuos* in 1 Thessalonians to refer to a wife, I argue that Paul's command to not take possession of a vessel (wife) in lustful passion is more readily understood in the context of the betrothment stage of marriage, when a man first "takes" a wife, rather than the sexual marital relationship that follows. In this context, Paul could be understood to be saying that a Christian man should not find or marry a wife with motivations of lust but with honor and purity. Despite later Christian interpreters' use of Paul to advocate for the control or extinguishment of desire *within* marriage, he himself never clarifies – whether in 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, or elsewhere – what role he thinks desire (*epithumia*) should play *within* marriage itself, except that he does not envision excessive burning desire to be operative within Christians' marriages. He further admonishes married Christians to control desire by engaging in marital sex and warns that depriving an unwilling husband or wife of sex, invites demonic attack ("lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control," 1 Cor. 7:5), which in turn puts a Christian at risk of engaging in desire-motivated, immoral sexual behavior. For Paul,

[12] Dale B. Martin, "Paul Without Passion: On Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 203.

Christians' marital sex serves the apotropaic function of keeping both excessive desire and demons away.

As early as the second century, Christian authors use Paul to categorize uncontrolled sexual desire as destructive. Despite the ambiguity of Paul's own position, they also employ Paul in their advocacy for a diminished role of desire *within* marriage itself. These authors then go one step further by mapping the control of desire not only onto the actions of the material body, but onto the mental realm by arguing that true sexual purity can only be achieved through the control and extinguishment of desire-filled thoughts that are fueled by the vision of the eyes.[13] In building up this moral argumentation, Christian authors draw from the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus emphasizes that adultery does not begin with a sexual act but with a lustful look at a woman (5:27-28). In his commentary on this verse, the early second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165) exhorts his readers, that "not only the one who does commit adultery is repudiated by him [i.e., God], but also the one who wishes to commit adultery, as not only deeds, but desires as well, are known to God."[14] In a similar vein, the second-century bishop Theophilus of Antioch declares, "Concerning dignity (σεμνότητος) the holy Word teaches us not to sin either in deed or even in thought, not to imagine any evil in our heart or to covet another person's wife when we see her with our eyes."[15]

What counted as adulterous thought was, however, debated among Christians. In his *Stromata*, the second-century theologian Clement of Alexandria gives witness to a disagreement

[13] See also chapter 2 on the role of vision and desire during sexual reproduction.
[14] *First Apology* 15.5; tr. Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, eds., *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[15] *To Autolycus* 3.13; tr. Robert M. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum,* Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). Grant translates σεμνότητος as chastity, but σεμνότης has a broader meaning of dignity or solemnity. With his word choice of σεμνότης, Theophilus is not specifically emphasizing Christians' chastity, but rather is saying that their sexually chaste behavior is an expression of their dignity of character. Christian men conduct themselves with such dignity or solemnity, that when it comes to women, they are not even allowed to imagine engaging in immoral sexual behavior with them, let alone engage in such acts.

as to what Jesus meant in the Gospel of Matthew when he stated that the man who looks at a woman lustfully (ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτὴν), commits adultery (5:28). Clement recollects the position of a man who called himself a gnostic or "knower," who argued that it was not desire (ἐπιθυμία) alone that Jesus condemned, but only if at the sight of the woman, the man's desire leads him to imagine having intercourse with her.[16] Clement rejects this position, and instead insists that "to look with lust" means to look carnally by judging her flesh, rather than her spirit, which resembles God, to be beautiful.[17] In his *Exhortation to the Greeks*, Clement criticizes those who gaze at what he deems licentious paintings or statues of Greek deities, in public or in their homes, and he refers to eyes that fornicate and looks that commit adultery.[18] And elsewhere, in the *Stromata*, he quotes favorably an inscription at the entrance to a temple in Epidaurus that characterizes purity as the thinking of holy thoughts (ἁγνείη δ' ἐστὶ φρονεῖν ὅσια).[19] Similar to Clement, the second-century theologian Tertullian of Carthage, understands Jesus' exhortation in

[16] *Stromata* 4.18.114(2); for critical edition: Otto Stählin, ed., *Clemens Alexandrinus, Zweiter Band: Stromata Buch I - VI*, rev. L. Früchtel, GCS 52 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960).

[17] *Stromata* 4.18.116(1-2). In his condemnation of a man's admiration of a woman's beauty and his characterization of the beauty of the spirit as a superior form of beauty that directs one to the divine origin of that spirit, Clement is clearly influenced by Plato's philosophy of Beauty. Plato assigned a utilitarian purpose to a love of physical beauty but not to the act of sexual intercourse itself, because if one admires the beauty of another's body, it can then lead to a desire for the superior beauty of the soul. This in turn directs one's longing toward the divine (*Phaedrus* 243e9-257b6 and 254a2– 7, b5– c3; *Symposium* 201d1– 212a7). Although Clement makes it clear here and elsewhere that Christians should not have a sexual lust for the bodies of others, in his attempt to provide a solution that is compatible with Platonic philosophy, he does not fully reject a utilitarian role for an admiration of the body's beauty, as long as it directs one's attention to God as the creator of that beauty. Unlike a man who looks at a woman's flesh with desire, a Christian should look chastely at bodies. Clement expounds in *Stromata* 4.18.116(2), "For, on the other hand, he who in chaste love looks on beauty, thinks not that the flesh is beautiful, but the spirit, admiring, as I judge, the body as an image, by whose beauty he transports himself to the Artist, and to the true beauty" (tr. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *ANF* 2.430). On the roles of desire and beauty in Plato, including differences across his writings, see Gabriel R. Lear, "Plato on Why Human Beauty Is Good for the Soul," in Victor Caston, ed., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 57 (January 2020): 25–64.

[18] *Exhortation to the Greeks* 4.61.3; see G. W. Butterworth, trans., *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks, the Rich Man's Salvation, and the Fragment of an Address Entitled to the Newly Baptized*, Loeb Classical Library 92 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1919), 138-39.

[19] *Stromata* 5.1.13(3).

Matthew to mean that adultery can exist in concupiscence alone, which he describes as a man looking at a woman while he unchastely stirs his soul (*animam commouerit impudice*).[20]

In their assessment of Jesus' words, Clement and Tertullian read them through a Hellenized understanding of desire as a destructive passion rooted in the mind. As Kathy Gaca has noted, Clement views sexual desire as so dangerous that indulging in it, even within the marital union, can lead to immorality. He advocates, therefore, for marital sex to be reserved only for procreative purposes. Other early Christian authors, although they express varying degrees of procreational ethics, similarly mark the control of desire, beginning in one's thoughts, as a moral imperative within Christian marriage. Under this framing, the Christianization of marriage involves reritualizing desire in the marital bond.

Due to the influence of Jesus' words on both adultery and murder in Matthew 5:27-30, Christians thought of desire and sexual immorality as originating in the emotions and thoughts of the mind. As the origin of desire, the mind becomes the battleground upon which the control of desire takes place through ritualized contemplative practices. While it may be tempting to reject such contemplative practice as a part of a ritualization of Christian marriage, the insight of Richard Payne on Zen Buddhism serves as a caution against such an assumption. He calls the distinction between ritual and meditation "conventional" and convincingly argues that "there is no way in which the two can be clearly delineated from one another."[21] He writes, "Any attempt to do so is simply a stipulative definition, that is, one that is purely conventional, and potentially idiosyncratic. Rather, what one finds within Buddhism is that meditation is ritualized, and ritual

[20] *On Idolatry* 2.3; for critical edition: A. Reifferscheid, G. Wissowa, ed., *Opera, pars I: De spectaculis, De idololatria, Ad nationes, De testimonio animae, Scorpiace, De oratione, De baptismo, De pudicitia, De ieiunio adversus psychicos, De anima*. CSEL 20 (Vindobanae: F. Tempsky, 1890).
[21] Richard Payne, "Intertwined Sources of Buddhist Modernist Opposition to Ritual: History, Philosophy, Culture," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (November 17, 2018): 17.

has a meditative function."[22] He further points out that this convention does not derive from any articulated distinction in scholarly analysis between meditation and ritual as "two separate, natural kinds," but rather the distinction derives from what aspect of the practice any given scholar is focusing on.[23] If the object of study is a mental aspect, then the conventional practice is to characterize it as meditation, whereas if the object of analysis is a physical or material aspect, then the tendency is to characterize the practice as ritual. Payne further notes that another basis for this conventional, but idiosyncratic, distinction is the identified purpose of the practice: "If it is described in terms of a mental practice intended for individual psycho-spiritual development, then it will be considered a meditation. If, however, the intent of the practice is described in terms of expressions of devotion, as oriented toward a deity, or as a group activity, then it will tend to be considered a ritual."[24] Payne grounds his evaluation in Catherine Bell's model of ritualization, in which ritualization is recognized as occurring under various degrees of formalization or regularity.[25] While early Christian contemplative practices to control desire may not be as highly formalized as is the case in Buddhism, I adapt Payne's analytical framing in that I argue that the contemplative efforts of early Christians to control or extinguish desire-filled thoughts can be regarded as ritualized practices, which married Christians could incorporate into their efforts to Christianize their marriages.

What might a contemplative ritual to control desire have looked like for married, non-ascetic Christians? There is no singular answer to this question, nor is there a comprehensive "how-to" description of such a ritual. There are, however, glimpses into such contemplative practices,

[22] Payne, "Intertwined Sources," 17.
[23] Payne, "Intertwined Sources," 17.
[24] Payne, "Intertwined Sources," 17. Elsewhere, he refers to Buddhist meditative practice as a "ritualized visualization." See Richard K. Payne, "The Five Contemplative Gates of Vasubandhu's Rebirth Treatise as a Ritualized Visualization Practice." *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3rd, no. 17 (2015): 43–67.
[25] Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*.

which may never have been formalized, but nonetheless, served a ritualized function. For example, after expounding the precepts of chastity, Novatian, a third-century bishop of Rome, in his treatise *In Praise of Purity*, provides his readers two scriptural examples of these precepts in action: the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife for men and the story of Susanna for women.[26] Although Joseph's and Susanna's stories are survival stories of powerless victims escaping attempted sexual assault, Novatian idealizes Joseph and Susanna as victors over desire, who despite their youthful beauty and passion-stirring youth do not give into the temptation of sexual pleasure. [27] At the end of telling their stories, Novatian reveals a greater purpose for their stories beyond his rhetorical use of them as examples of purity. He argues that Joseph and Susanna, as victors over desire, should be the objects of ritualized contemplation: "We should keep these and similar examples before our eyes and meditate on them day and night."[28]

In the early fourth-century Pseudo-Clementine literature, likely written in Syria or Palestine, the author of the *Recognitions* ritualizes fear by presenting the mental cultivation of fear as an instrument to control desire. In book nine, the author compares the efficacy of the cultivation of fear to that of other ritualized practices of ritual washing and the invocation of the holy name to cleanse one of sin. A Christian can control lusts and drive off hostile powers by cultivating a fear of God's judgment.[29] In response to his position on the usefulness of fear, Pseudo-Clement anticipates that his opponents will say such a thing is impossible in the face of falling in love even

[26] *In Praise of Purity* 8-9. For the attribution of this treatise to Novatian, see James L. Papandrea, "De bono pudicitiae," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online*, ed. David G. Hunter, Paul J.J. van Geest, Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (Brill, 2018): http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00000854.
[27] *In Praise of Purity* 10; for critical edition: Gerardus Frederik Diercks, ed., *Novatiani opera quae supersunt, nunc primum in unum collecta ad fidem codicum qui adhuc extant necnon adhibitis editionibus veteribus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972).
[28] *In Praise of Purity* 10; tr. Russell J. DeSimone, *The Trinity; The Spectacle; Jewish Foods; In Praise of Purity; Letters* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010).
[29] *Recognitions* 9.11; for critical edition: Bernhard Rehm, ed., *Die Pseudoklementinen I: Homilien*. Revised by Georg Strecker. 3rd ed., rev. GCS 42 (Berlin: Akademie, 1992).

if one were to "see before his eyes" (i.e., imagine) Pyriphlegethon, a fiery river in the underworld. Pseudo-Clement rejects this anticipated argument by pointing out to his opponents that if a man were to see before his eyes a human punishment for "the crime of love," such as being burned at the stake, that man would no longer desire the woman. Nor would he even be able to conjure his love's "image before his eyes."[30] Three short chapters later in a discussion about past sinful generations, Pseudo-Clement concludes that they sinned because they had not placed God's punishment "before their eyes."[31] In the context of the previous chapter's discussion of frightening mental images of punishment "before one's eyes," it is clear that what Pseudo-Clement is referring to in this passage is a ritualized cultivation of God's punishment within the mind's imagination: a practice undertaken by the righteous, but not by the wicked. The knowledge of God's punishment and the cultivation of a mental image of this punishment in the mind drives out desire: "For as the sun obscures and conceals all the stars by the brightness of his shining, so also the mind, by the light of knowledge, renders all the lusts of the soul ineffective and inactive, sending out upon them the thought of the judgment to come as its rays, so that they can no longer appear in the soul."[32] In these passages, Pseudo-Clement does not characterize the fear of God as a mere emotion, but as a mental image of God's punishment, which Christians can cultivate through contemplative practice, and which like baptism, possesses ritual efficacy; these fearful mental images of God's punishment drive away unrighteous desire.[33]

[30] *Recognitions* 9.11.
[31] *Recognitions* 9.14.
[32] *Recognitions* 9.14; tr. Thomas Smith, *ANF* 8.186.
[33] Other Christians also discuss the relation between fear and desire, but they address a different kind of fear: a fear of desire itself. Novatian argues that since fear originates in excessive desire, persons who rid themselves of excessive desire also rid themselves of fear (*In Praise of Purity* 11). The *Gospel of Philip* exhorts its readers to neither love nor fear the flesh, since to fear the flesh is to become its slave (66.4-7). In his treatise *On the Trinity*, Augustine discusses fear's uncanny ability to create a mental image of the very person one was trying to avoid imagining out of fear of desiring the person (11.4). Novatian, the author of the *Gospel of Phili*p, and Augustine in these instances all reject the fear of desire as a tool for controlling desire. However, Pseudo-Clement in his endorsement of the ritual efficacy of fear is not talking about cultivating a fear of desire, but a fear of God's judgement and punishment that results from

In the late third or early fourth century, the Latin apologist Lactantius from North Africa also roots lust in the mind and assigns contemplation a role in containing desire within the marriage bond. This controlling of desire is particularly urgent for Lactantius, because he warns that, unlike the body which can be washed, a mind defiled by the actions of a body cannot be so easily purified. He argues that this purification of a defiled mind can only take place "by the application of good works over a long period of time."[34] In order to avoid this defilement, a married Christian couple should have sex only with each other and use their desire for one another only for the purpose of procreation. Christians who indulge in unrighteous desire make the soul subject to the body and in turn condemn the soul to death. To avoid this outcome, a married Christian, according to Lactantius, "should train himself in modesty, cultivate chastity, and guard purity with conscience and mind."[35] Since adultery occurs in "the very thought of it," he emphasizes to his married readers that it is not enough to avoid the act of adultery; one must not even mentally desire another man's wife. He warns, "The mind becomes adulterous if it even conjures up an image of that pleasure. Indeed, it is the mind that sins when it embraces in thought the fruit of immoderate desire."[36] Lactantius urges both spouses to "bear the yoke" in maintaining a sexual relation only with one another. To help train themselves in this chastity, he suggests a contemplative exercise in which spouses imagine each other in the other's place, so that they realize the injustice of afflicting their spouse with adulterous behavior when they themselves do not wish to be afflicted with pain caused by their spouse's adulterous actions.[37]

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giving into that desire; it is fear that results from a mental image of God's wrath, according to Pseudo-Clement, which causes images of desire to flee the mind.

[34] *Divine Institutes* 6; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 104. For critical edition: Eberhard Heck and Antonie Wlosok, eds., *Lactantius, Lucius Caelius Firmianus: Divinarum institutionum libri septem*. 4 vols. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Latin Edition (Monaco e Lipsia: K. G. Saur, 2005-2011).

[35] *Divine Institutes* 6; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality, 104.*

[36] *Divine Institutes* 6; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality, 104.*

[37] *Divine Institutes* 6.

Novatian, Pseudo-Clement, and Lactantius all present contemplation, whether on exemplars of chastity or images of divine punishment, as a ritualized practice to combat desire. They furthermore envision this practice as being undertaken by members of the church, most of whom would have likely been married. These married Christians could have used such contemplative practices to control desire, or practices like them, to Christianize their marriages. My argument here is not that these contemplative practices to control desire as proposed by Novatian, Pseudo-Clement, and Lactantius were more broadly accepted in the early Christian community. Rather, my purpose is to demonstrate that at least some Christians, like these three authors, envisioned married Christians as having access to ritualized practices of contemplation as tools to control desire. In this context, contemplative rituals to control desire can be recognized as part of the efforts by some Christians to reritualize and Christianize marriage by freeing it from unrighteous desire. As we will see in chapter two, the cultivation of images in the mind also has reproductive implications for the quality of the resulting progeny.

Tertullian and Clement take this emphasis on thought and mind in married Christian life even further by classifying marriage (in the case of Tertullian) or uterine conception (in the case of Clement) as states that originate in the mind. Tertullian expounds upon the gaze and mind as the original and continual realm in which marriage takes place. In *Veiling of Virgins*, Tertullian applauds Rebekkah for having veiled as soon as she *saw* Isaac, whom she was to wed. Tertullian marks this moment of Rebekkah's veiling as the beginning of her marriage to Isaac. Tertullian argues that through this act, Rebekkah "showed that marriage likewise, as fornication is, is transacted by gaze and mind."[38] Tertullian expresses a similar sentiment that marriage is a matter

[38] *On the Veiling of Virgins* 11; tr. S. Thelwall, *ANF* 4.34. For critical edition: J. W. Ph. Borleffs, ed., *Ad martyras, Ad Scapulam, De fuga in persecutione, De monogamia, De virginibus velandis, De pallio*. CSEL 76 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1957).

of the mind in his treatise *On Monogamy* in which he argues against the remarriages of widows. Since the heart or mind is the place of both concupiscence and "matrimony by volition (*matrimonium ex voluntate*)" he further reasons that a Christian woman should not remarry.[39] For even in death, "He [i.e., her husband] possesses the very part of her wherein he first became her husband, that is to say, her mind *(animum).*"[40] Here again, Tertullian maps out the mind as the origin and realm of marriage, so much so that even after a spouse's death, he views the marriage as continuing in the mind. For Tertullian, remarriage is forbidden since the wife, although she may be widowed in the material world, is not widowed in the mental realm. Her mind nuptially still belongs to her deceased husband.

While Tertullian assigns matrimony to the mind, Clement asserts that the mind can even be the originating point for conception prior to sexual intercourse. Clement exclaims, "But to those who live sinlessly and gnostically, He [God] gives [conception], when they have but merely entertained the thought. For example, to Anna, on her merely conceiving the thought, conception was vouchsafed of the child Samuel. 'Ask,' says the Scripture, 'and I will do. Think, and I will give.'"[41] Clement gives no indication that he is arguing for a virginal, sexless conception of Samuel, but he does seem to take the position that conception can first be granted by God in the realm of a mother's mind. This is similar to early Christian understanding of adultery taking place in the mind, or according to Tertullian, marriage taking place there. That marriage and conception could be viewed as transpiring in the mind means that contemplative practices for the control of desire should likely be understood as only one type of contemplative practice at the disposal of

[39] *On Monogamy* 10.
[40] *On Monogamy* 10; tr. William P. Le Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage; To His Wife; An Exhortation to Chastity; Monogamy*, Ancient Christian Writers 13 (Westminster: Newman Press, 1951), (slightly modified). For critical edition: Borleffs, CSEL 76.
[41] *Stromata* 6.12.101.4; tr. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF* 2.503.

Christians who desired to Christianize their marriages through a reorientation of their thoughts and mental images. This reorientation of thoughts via contemplation should not be viewed as a disembodied mental exercise. Since the bodily senses served as a conduit between the mind (and the soul) and the material body, control over desire including mitigation of its negative impacts on conceived offspring, could be further achieved through the manipulation and censoring of one's bodily movements and sensations. This is especially true of sight, which was widely recognized throughout the ancient world as a vehicle for desire.[42]

Furthermore, contemplative practices were not the only means of trying to restrict desire in Christians' marriages. Some Christians also advocated for communal (as in non-familial) involvement at the betrothal stage in order to ensure or police that Christian marriages were not formed out of desire-driven motives. Support for intervening in Christian marriage at the betrothal stage is found in both the middle and short recensions of Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to Polycarp*.[43] In the letter that he wrote on his way to be martyred in Rome in c. 110 CE, Ignatius as the bishop of Antioch in Syria exhorts Christians to seek the bishop's approval for their marriages, so that the bishop can confirm that their marriages are being formed "in the Lord and not according to desire (ἐπιθυμίαν)."[44] Ignatius' exhortation for Christians to marry in the Lord invokes Paul's teaching in his first letter to the Corinthians (7:39), where Paul urged widowed women who wish to remarry to do so only "in the Lord." As discussed by Shaye Cohen, modern interpretations of this scripture

[42] I discuss the impact of sight and desire on reproduction at length in chapter two.

[43] There is continued scholarly debate about the authenticity of some of Ignatius' letters. Except in the form of its later longer recension, which has clear fourth-century theological influence, most scholars consider Ignatius' *Letter to Polycarp* to be one of his original letters. The passage in question is found in both the Greek middle recension and the shorter Syriac recension, and thus is likely part of Ignatius original letter. For a recent summary of the debate over the authorship of Ignatius' letters and the related debate regarding when Ignatius lived, see Jonathon Lookadoo, "The Date and Authenticity of the Ignatian Letters: An Outline of Recent Discussions," *Currents in Biblical Research* 19.1 (October 2020): 88–114.

[44] *Letter to Polycarp* 5; tr. Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 24 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

have tended to absorb the opinion of patristic writers like Tertullian and Jerome who interpret "in the Lord" to mean that Christians should only marry a fellow Christian.[45] Cohen notes that Ignatius, however, presents a different understanding of what it means to marry in the Lord. For Ignatius, to marry in the Lord means to not let desire motivate one's decision in choosing a spouse. To ensure that this happens, Ignatius urges Christians to reritualize their habits through the incorporation of a consultation with the bishop at the betrothal stage. He then advocates that the bishop should serve as the ultimate arbitrator of whether a Christian couple is or is not motivated by desire in forming a marriage.[46] Even if Ignatius' efforts to install bishops as desire police and arbitrators of Christian matchmaking had limited effect, it is still notable that the first known attempt by a bishop to urge episcopal involvement in marriages pertains to the betrothal stage (as opposed to the wedding).[47] Furthermore, the purpose of the bishop's involvement is to mitigate the presence of desire within Christian marriage. Ignatius does not mention a ritual blessing by the bishop, but his attempt to routinize the bishop's arbitrator role in betrothals is nevertheless one kind of effort to Christianize the marriage process. This provides further witness that the mitigation of desire was at the heart of the earliest attempts to Christianize marriage. It is unfortunate that Ignatius does not provide any guideline as to precisely how a bishop should determine whether

[45] Tertullian, *To His Wife 2.2.4* and *De Corona* 13.4-5; Jerome, *Against Jovinian* 1.10.

[46] Paul's meaning in his use of marriage "in the Lord" is not clear. As Shaye Cohen has discussed, Augustine already recognized this Pauline ambiguity in his discussion of the phrase in *On Adulterous Marriages*, where he hypothesizes that "in the Lord" could mean either to marry a fellow Christian or to marry in a righteous and chaste manner (1.25.31). Cohen further points out that Theodoret of Cyrrhus, John Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, and Epiphanius all express a similar interpretation of "in the Lord" to mean (either possibly or exclusively) to marry in a chaste manner. Cohen uses this passage to hypothesize that Ignatius expresses a similar understanding of what it means to marry "in the Lord." Thus, Ignatius' comment about avoiding a union motivated "according to desire" is not a separate command from that to marry in the Lord but is Ignatius' clarification of what it means to marry "in the Lord" in the first place. See Shaye J.D. Cohen, "From Permission to Prohibition: Paul and the Early Church on Mixed Marriage," in *Paul's Jewish Matrix*, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press), 259–91.

[47] Within the surviving corpus, the next hint of episcopal involvement in Christians' marriages occurs more than two centuries later in the works of Ambrosiaster, who makes no mention of a bishop's involvement at the betrothal stage but does bear witness to a Christian liturgical wedding blessing, presumably given by a bishop or priest. See Ambrosiaster's commentaries on 1 Corinthians 7:40 and 1 Timothy 3:12. For the development of episcopal wedding blessings, see Hunter, "Wedding Rituals and Episcopal Power," 626–43.

desire is or is not the motivating factor in a betrothal, but several decades later, Tertullian provides a glimpse into the possibilities.

Writing from Carthage more than a century after Ignatius, Tertullian too is concerned with mitigating the role of desire in the formation of Christian marriages. It remains unknown how representative Ignatius' exhortation for bishop involvement in the approval of Christian marriage was in the Greek East. However, it is apparent from Tertullian's treatise *On Modesty* that at least some Christians in Carthage announced their betrothals "in the presence of the church" in order to avoid any suspicion or charges that the marriages were being improperly formed on the basis of desire or as a result of pre-marital sexual indulgence:

> So, too, whoever enjoys any other than nuptial intercourse, in whatever place, and in the person of whatever woman, makes himself guilty of adultery and fornication.[48] Accordingly, among us, secret connections (*occultae coniunctiones*) as well – connections, that is, not first professed in the Church (*ecclesiam*) – run risk of being judged akin to adultery and fornication; nor must we let them, if thereafter woven together by the concealment of marriage, elude the charge.[49]

Tertullian speaks about these betrothal announcements as an established practice in the Carthage church, which some Christians are not practicing to his standard since they are announcing their marriages after the fact instead of at the betrothal stage. In Tertullian's opinion, this leaves open the possibility that their marriages are being used to cover their pre-marital sexual impiety. Regarding these betrothal/marriage announcements, Tertullian does not mention whether a bishop

[48] Tertullian argues that adultery (*adulterium*) and fornication (*stuprum*) are synonymous with one another as they both involve a contamination of the flesh.
[49] *On Modesty* 4; tr. Thelwall, *ANF* 4.77 (slightly modified). For critical edition: Charles Munier, ed., *La Pudicité,* vol. 1, *SC 394* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1993).

was present for them, but since they occur in the communal presence of the church (*ecclesiam*), the attendance of a bishop remains a likelihood. Yet, Tertullian mentions no special role for the bishop or church leaders during these announcements. Nor does he explicitly speak of any need for a Christian couple to have their marriages approved by the bishop or by the community at large. This leaves open the possibility that these professions are simply a "people's announcement" of betrothal during a church gathering. Even if this is the case, Tertullian assigns these people's announcements – if done at the betrothal stage – a ritualized value within the community as they serve to mark a couple's future marriage as Christian (i.e., untainted by any previous sexual pleasures with one another). Perhaps Ignatius, several decades earlier, had a similar concern regarding a couple's pre-marital sexual contact when he advocated that bishops, in adherence to the moral imperative to mitigate desire, should scrutinize a nuptial match for the presence of desire before giving their episcopal approval that the betrothal was being undertaken "in the Lord." Ignatius does not explain in his letter to Polycarp what might indicate that a marriage is being improperly formed, but it remains possible that he envisions the bishop interrogating the couple about the presence or lack of sexual desire for the other, regardless of whether they did or not have pre-nuptial sexual contact. At the minimum, it is safe to assume that if a Christian couple had engaged in pre-nuptial sexual intercourse, Ignatius, like Tertullian, would treat this as evidence that the satisfaction of sexual desire was a motivator in the formation of the marriage, and thus it is not taking place in the Lord.

Christian Marriage as Therapy of Desire

Martha Nussbaum in *The Therapy of Desire* refers to the "therapeutic agenda" and "therapeutic arguments" of Hellenistic-Roman philosophers.[50] In her use of "therapeutic," Nussbaum means to stress that philosophers understood philosophic life as not simply bound by certain characteristics such as calmness and the control of desire, but as the therapeutic means by which to achieve such characteristics.[51] Nussbaum contends that above all, Hellenistic philosophy was "therapy concerned with desire and emotion."[52] As therapy, Hellenistic philosophers did not only provide ethical arguments in support of controlling desire, they envisioned philosophy as a means to achieve that control.

Early Christian authors imagine a similar function for Christianized marriage as a therapy of desire. As we have seen in the first half of this chapter, some Christian authors advocate for the ethical or moral control of desire even within the bounds of marriage. But they also present Christianized marriage as the only or superior form of *married life* capable of therapeutically controlling desire. Notice the emphasis on married life. I am not arguing that Christian authors viewed Christianized marriage as the most effective way for Christians to control desire, as that status is usually reserved for sexual renunciation. I am, however, making the case that early Christian authors viewed Christianized marriage as the most efficacious therapy for the desire of *married* individuals. And since Christians believed that demons were oftentimes responsible for the stirring of desire, they also marketed Christian marriage as an effective means of warding off demons that arouse that desire.

[50] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. With a New Introduction by the Author* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), xi and 13-47.
[51] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, xi.
[52] Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*, 16.

Gospel of Philip as Roadmap

A strong example of this desire- and demon-expunging efficacy of Christian marriage can be found in the *Gospel of Philip*.[53] The gospel exhorts Christians to neither love nor fear the flesh.[54] The text characterizes the marriage of the world as "a mystery," but "undefiled marriage" as the true mystery, because "It is not fleshly, but it is pure. It does not belong to the desire (ἐπιθυμία) but to the will. It does not belong to the darkness or the night, but it belongs to the day and the light."[55] In addition to desire, undefiled marriage also expels evils spirits. The author of the *Gospel of Philip* draws upon the multivalent meaning of the Greek term *mystêrion* to characterize the marriage of the Christianized bridal chamber as a greater *mystêrion* than the defiled marriage of the world. *Mystêrion* can refer to either a mundane secret or to a divine mystery. In this vein, the author concedes that the marriage of the world is a *mystêrion*, because it takes place in a secretive (ϩнп) manner. The author then draws upon the second meaning of *mystêrion* as a divine mystery to praise the "undefiled marriage" of the bridal chamber as the true *mystêrion*, because unlike worldly marriage, the Christianized marriage of the bridal chamber overcomes fleshly desire:

> No one is able to know the day when the husband and the wife have intercourse with each other except they alone. For the marriage of the world, for those who have married a wife, is a mystery (μυστήριον). If the marriage of defilement is a secret (ϩнп), how much more

[53] In line with April DeConick, Karen King, and Jorunn Buckley, I understand the "bridal chamber" and "undefiled marriage" in the *Gospel of Philip* to involve physical, sexually-active marriage, as opposed to spiritual, sexless marriage or as a metaphorical use (Buckley, "A Cult Mystery,'" DeConick, "The Great Mystery of Marriage," King, "The Place of the Gospel of Philip."). As mentioned earlier, I believe that in *Gos. Phil*. bridal chamber also effectively means *Christian* marriage, as opposed to the "defiled" marriage practiced by those who do not enjoy the benefit of the particular Christianized ritual advocated in *Gos. Phil*.
[54] *Gos. Phil*. 66.4-7.
[55] *Gos. Phil.* 82.2-11.

> is the undefiled marriage a true mystery (ⲟⲩⲙⲩⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲛ̅ⲁⲗⲏⲑⲉⲓⲛⲟⲛ). It is not fleshly. But it is pure. It does not belong to the desire (ἐπιθυμία), but to the will.[56]

Those who overcome desire in and through the marriage of the bridal chamber are also afforded protection against evil spirits. In a fragmentary passage, the *Gospel of Philip* declares that the person who is no longer of the world, and who has overcome desire, can no longer be detained by malevolent spirits: "The one who comes out of the world, and so it is not possible for him to be detained on the basis that he used to be in the world, it is apparent that he is beyond desire [….] and the fear."[57]

The *Gospel of Philip* again expounds on this two-folded apotropaic ability of Christian marriage to keep both demons and sexual temptation away in its description of the protection that a couple receives as participants in the image-producing (*eikonikos*) bridal chamber:[58]

> The forms of the unpurified spirits contain among them males and females. While it is the males who join with the souls which conduct themselves in a female form, the females are those which are mixed with those male forms as a result of a separation (from their female). And no one will be able to escape these as they seize one if one does not receive a male or female power, i.e., the bridegroom or the bride. And one receives (these) by means of the image-producing (*eikonikos*) bridal chamber. Whenever the ignorant females see a male sitting alone, they leap upon him and mock him and defile him. Thus, also, unlearned males, if they see a woman sitting alone who is beautiful, they persuade her and they act forcefully against her, desiring to defile her. But if they see the man with his wife as they sit next to each other, the females are not able to enter into the males. Neither are the males

[56] *Gos. Phil.* 81.34-82.7.
[57] *Gos. Phil.* 65.27-30.
[58] For an explanation as to why I translate *eikonikos* as "image-producing" within the context of the *Gospel of Philip*, see my discussion in chapter four.

> able to enter into the woman. Thus, if the image and the angel join to each other, nor will any be able to dare to go into the man or woman.[59]

In the *eikonikos* bridal chamber, the wife and husband receive a male or female power, which in turn protects them from gendered evil spirits that would otherwise unite with their souls. Within this passage of the *eikonikos* bridal chamber, the author blurs the line between these spirits and the harmful, unwelcome desires that humans may direct toward a married couple. To be protected against evil spirits is to also be protected against those humans in whom those spirits inhabit. The text further grounds the apotropaic nature of the husband's and wife's union by emphasizing that the females and males cannot approach the couple "if they see the man with his wife as they sit next to each other."[60] I suggest that the passage's author intentionally does not clearly delineate between the intrusions of the gendered spirits and the unwelcome sexual advances of gendered human "Others." As in other early Christian texts, the *Gospel of Philip* associates the presence of disruptive desire with demonic influence. And as we will see, the author of the *Gospel of Philip* is not alone in suggesting that Christianized marriage provides protection from both desire and demons to those who participate in it. The gospel also declares that those who procreate through the marriage of the bridal chamber produce children that do not resemble the sinful world, but instead resemble the Lord (78.20-24).

The *Gospel of Philip*'s assertion that marital sexual intercourse can take place for reasons outside of desire is such an important theme within the text that it even permeates its Christology. The gospel mocks Christians who believe that Mary was impregnated by the "female" Holy Spirit, declaring of these Christians: "Some said, 'Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit.' They are in error.

[59] *Gos. Phil.* 65.1-26.
[60] *Gos. Phil.* 65.19-20.

They do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever conceive by a woman?"[61] Instead, the gospel expresses that Jesus' conception can be attributed to a human father: "And the Lord would not have said, 'My [father who is in heaven]' unless he had another father. But he [would] have simply said, '[My father].'"[62] The assigning of Christ's origin to two fathers is consistent with the *Gospel of Philip*'s hierarchical outlook on sex that divides sexual intercourse, along with its corresponding detriments versus therapeutic benefits, into two categories: desire-driven or will-driven. Its author is also not alone among Christians in the belief that Jesus' conception occurred through the sexual union of his parents. Irenaeus, a second-century heresiologist and bishop of Lyons, reports that followers of Cerinthus, Carpocrates, and those Jewish Christians he refers to as Ebionites, all believe that Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary, and that he was conceived by their marital sexual union.[63] Like the *Gospel of Philip*, the Ebionites reject that Jesus' conception took place via the Holy Spirit or by the overshadowing of the power of God. Irenaeus writes, "Vain also are the Ebionites, who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but who remain in the old leaven of [the natural] birth, and who do not choose to understand that the Holy Ghost came upon Mary, and the power of the Most High did overshadow her (Luke 1:35)."[64] In a similar vein with this reported "Ebionite" sentiment, the *Gospel of Philip* refers to Mary as a "virgin whom no power (δύναμις) defiled."[65]

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[61] *Gos. Phil.* 55.23-26.
[62] *Gos. Phil.* 55.33-36.
[63] *Against the Heresies* 1.25 and 1.26; for critical edition: Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, eds., *Contre les hérésies Livre I.* SC 264 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1979).
[64] *Against the Heresies* 5.1.3, tr. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, *ANF*, 1.527.
[65] *Gos. Phil.* 55.31. This phrase also occurs in the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, where it is used to refer to Norea as the virgin who escaped being raped (i.e., defiled) by evil archons/powers (92.1-3). Remarkably, the *Gospel of Philip* uses the same phrase, but wields it polemically to reject the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus. As Paul Foster has observed, "It also needs to be noted that this interpretation seems to be a direct attempt to refute the comment spoken to Mary in Luke's gospel, 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Luke 1:35)" (Paul Foster, "The Gospel of Philip," The Expository Times 118, no. 9 [June 2007]: 423). Thomassen also recognizes that *Gos. Phil.* is clearly being influenced by Luke 1:35 in its use of the phrase, but in an attempt to reconcile this *Gos Phil.* passage with Valentinian theology, he interprets the *dunamis* in *Gos. Phil.* 55.31 to refer to the Demiurge, who Thomassen views as the father of Jesus' material body. He writes, "…we are led

The Ritualized Efficacy of Christian Marriage: The Control of Desire

Clement of Alexandria, drawing from Paul, recognizes an affinity between Christian marital sexual practice and that of the non-Christian Greeks.[66] Despite recognizing this affinity between the two sexual ethical systems, Clement differentiates them by asserting that when it comes to desire, Christian marital sexual practice is therapeutically superior in that it produces a more efficacious outcome in regard to desire:

> Human self-control (I am referring to the views of the Greek philosophers) professes to counter desire (*epithumia)* rather than minister to it, with a view to praxis. Our idea of self-control (*enkrateia)* is freedom from desire. It is not a matter of having desires and holding out against them, but actually of mastering desire by self-control. It is not possible to acquire this form of self-control except by the grace of God.[67]

Clement makes the case that Christian marriage, despite any parallels it may have with Greek philosophical tradition, is set apart as unique both in its sexual ethics and in its efficacy of sexual practice.[68] Through the power of God's grace present during Christians' marital, procreative sexual

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to conclude that what that text [*Gos. Phil*.] claims is not that Mary was not made pregnant by the Demiurge, but that *in spite of* that she was not defiled" (Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 93). I find Thomassen's interpretation of the *Gospel of Philip*'s usage of the phrase to be unpersuasive, because it relies on reading things into the gospel that are not found in the text itself. For example, nowhere does *Gos. Phil.* say that the Demiurge is the father of Jesus' material body. I find the simplest answer to be the most likely; the *Gospel of Philip* uses the phrase to reject the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus as it does elsewhere (55.23-26). See also my discussion on the problematic nature of strictly interpreting the *Gospel of Philip* through a Valentinian lens.

[66] For the alleged influence of Stoic sexual ethics on Paul, see Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 104-20. In contrast to Ellis and others, Kathy Gaca has rejected the notion that Paul was influenced by Greek philosophy in the formation of his sexual ethic, arguing instead that Paul's position is firmly grounded in Jewish notions of uncontrolled bodily impulses and sexual piety, but that later patristic writers like Clement read Paul's engagement on desire through a Greek philosophical lens. See Gaca, *Making of Fornication,* 160-89. For my own purpose, whether Paul drew from Greek philosophy or Jewish tradition, there is no doubt that Clement interprets Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7 through the lens of Greek philosophical teaching that taught uncontrolled desire was dangerous, and thus should be controlled.

[67] *Stromata* 3.7.57(1-2); tr. John Ferguson, *Stromateis: Books One to Three*, vol. 85, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991).

[68] This process of syncretism between Greek philosophic and Christian ideas of desire should be understood as a process of Christianization. As David Frankfurter has convincedly argued, syncretism is not merely a survival of the 'old' into an otherwise fictional 'pure' Christianity but refers to the process by which Christians Christianized their world through negotiation. In this way, syncretism serves as the very vehicle by which Christianization occurs as it

intercourse, Christians alone, according to Clement, are capable of "turning off desire," allowing them to engage in sex not for pleasure, but only for the conceiving of children. Kathy Gaca refers to Clement's application of grace during the sexual encounter as "prophylactic grace."[69] This God-given prophylactic grace is what makes desire-free sexual reproduction possible for Christians. Since this grace is a gift of God reserved only for the followers of Christ, it is only through Christianized marriage that a married couple has access to this therapy of desire. In the words of Gaca, the married Christian recipients of God's gift of grace, "neither want nor feel sexual pleasure when they have genital contact with procreationist resolve."[70] As discussed above, while there is no explicit evidence that Paul himself viewed Christian marriage as capable of extinguishing desire rather than merely controlling it, it is clear that Clement takes the position that Christian marriage does indeed possess the unique therapeutic ability to extinguish desire.[71] Clement characterizes Christian marriage as achieving this through a reritualizing of sexual practice for procreative purposes only and due to the presence of God's grace during the sexual encounter. Similar to the *Gospel of Philip*'s proclamation that the marriage of the bridal chamber does not belong to desire and darkness but to the will and light, Clement declares:

> We are children of will, not of desire (*epithumia*). If a man marries in order to have children he ought to practice self-control. He ought not to have a sexual desire even for his wife, to whom he has a duty to show Christian love. He ought to produce children by a reverent,

serves as a culture's way of "interpreting and assimilating new religious discourse" (*Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018)], 6).

[69] Gaca, *Making of Fornication*, 264.

[70] Gaca, *Making of Fornication*, 248.

[71] See my discussion above on Dale Martin's argument that Paul's concession in 1 Corinthians 7 does not give the Corinthians permission to control sexual desire through a limited indulgence in sexual desire, but rather Paul is preaching that married Christians should have passionless sex. Greek philosophical and medical traditions sometimes prescribe moderate and infrequent sex as a tool to control desire (e.g., Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant [Oxford: Blackwell, 1988]). However, I do not find Martin's argument persuasive, although Martin's interpretation of Paul is similar to the position of Clement of Alexandria.

> disciplined act of will. We have learned not "to pay attention to physical desires," "walking decorously as in the light of day" – that is, in Christ and the shining conduct of the Lord's way – "not in drunken carousing, sexual promiscuity, or jealous quarreling."[72]

This therapeutic capability to overcome desire in one's marital sexual relations is one of the characteristics that marks a marriage as Christianized, setting it apart from less therapeutically endowed non-Christian marriage.

Novatian also speaks of Christian marriage's therapeutic ability to overcome desire, which he roots in married Christians' adherence to chastity. Novatian establishes a three-pathed hierarchy for the practice of chastity: Virginity (i.e., no sexual experience) is the highest form of chastity, followed by continence (i.e., refraining from sex after having experienced it, whether in marriage or widowhood), and then Christianized marriage (i.e., limiting sex to the marital relationship, and then, not for the sake of pleasure).[73] In line with domestic and marital imagery, Novatian expresses that chastity instills peace and concord in Christians' homes, unites them to Christ, and "expunges from our members all unlawful fomentations of desire, and brings peace to our bodies"[74] He later refers to the peace that is given to Christians who overcome desire through chastity as a type of "perpetual peace."[75] The image of chastity as peace contrasts with the understanding of uncontrolled desire as a disruptive, peaceless bodily force. In this vein, it is common in erotic magical texts for the spell to cast sleepless nights and restlessness upon the person for whom the spell seeks to stir desire.[76] In contrast to restless desire-filled bodies, Novatian characterizes the

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[72] *Stromata* 3.7.58.(1-2); tr. Ferguson, *Stromateis*.
[73] *In Praise of Purity* 4.
[74] *In Praise of Purity* 3; tr. DeSimone, *The Trinity; etc*.
[75] *In Praise of Purity* 11.
[76] In this vein, a binding love spell from the *Greek Magical Papyri* declares, "Let her…not be strong, not have peace of mind, that she, NN, not find sleep without me" (*PGM* IV. 350-55). Other examples include, *PGM* IV. 1425-30, 1510-20, 2910-15, 2943-66; *PDM* xiv. 665-60; *PGM* XXXVI. 145-155; *PGM* XXXVI. 305-10 (Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, vol. 1 [Chicago: University of Chicago

bodies of chaste married Christians as perpetually peaceful, undisturbed by desire. In contrast to non-Christians, married Christians have special access to this desire-expunging chastity due to the liberating power of baptism, which Novatian describes as freeing Christians from the dominance of the flesh: "You no longer are debtors to the flesh because you have been reborn of water."[77]

Tertullian integrates therapeutic arguments into his explanation as to why Christians should only marry Christians. He also speaks of Christian marriage as sealed by God and the benediction. In his letter *To His Wife*, Tertullian provides a list of practical reasons as to why a Christian should marry only another Christian, such as not needing to hide the sign of the cross or say the blessing in silence and also having open freedom to meet with other Christians.[78] He also implies that only marriage between two Christians can truly be Christianized, because only marriage between two Christians can be free from ungodly sexual desire. For if a woman marries a non-Christian man, "Even the private acts of marriage will be tainted."[79] If she, however, marries a fellow Christian, they will be able to engage in sexual intercourse modestly and moderately, "as if under the eyes of God" (*tamquam sub oculis Dei*).[80] Although Tertullian takes a more practical approach to the desire-limiting benefit of Christian marriage by emphasizing the assumed impossibility of having non-desire-driven sex with a non-Christian spouse, he nonetheless envisions the control of desire as a therapeutic benefit to Christianized marriage. Tertullian further marks a marriage as Christian by assigning it a special ritualized status in the eyes of God: "What words can describe the happiness of that marriage that the church unites (*conciliat*), the offering (*oblatio*) strengthens, the

Press, 1996)]); see also spells 73, 77, and 84 in Marvin W. Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).
[77] *In Praise of Purity* 2, tr. DeSimone, *The Trinity; etc*.
[78] *To His Wife* 2.8; for critical edition: Charles Munier, ed. and trans., *A son épouse.* SC 273 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980).
[79] *To His Wife* 2.3.
[80] *To His Wife* 2.3; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 49.

blessing seals (*obsignat benedictio*), the angels proclaim, and the Father declares valid?"[81] In his treatise *On Monogamy,* Tertullian again speaks of the marriage which God has sealed (*signavit*).[82] These Tertullian passages are important as potential early witnesses to the ceremonialization of marriage, with his reference to a *benedictio* that "seals"—possibly a blessing pronounced by some officiant. But in the context of Christian marriage as therapeutic, this rooting of Christian marriage in Christian ritual life also establishes these passages from Tertullian as sources that attest to the ritual power and therapeutic efficacy of Christianized marriage.[83]

In his *Plea for the Christians*, the Christian philosopher Athenagoras of Athens defends Christians in the latter half of the second century against accusations of promiscuous intercourse (ἀδιαφόρως μίγνυσθαι). Citing the gospel of Matthew (5:28), he composes a therapeutic argument that Christians' practice of equating lustful looks and thoughts with adultery means Christians are so far removed from promiscuity, that they are not even allowed to look at a woman with desire (ἐπιθυμίαν).[84] Athenagoras sees the extraction of desire from thoughts to be so essential to the Christian ethos that later in the same chapter, he further attributes to Christians an otherwise unattested church teaching that Christians should rid themselves of pleasure-stirring thoughts before the exchange of the ritual kiss, so as to not contaminate it. Otherwise, Athenagoras warns, "it places us outside eternal life if our thoughts are the least bit stirred by it."[85] While other scholars

[81] *To His Wife* 2.8; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 50.
[82] *On Monogamy* 9.
[83] David Hunter has argued that Tertullian is not referring to any kind of formal church ritual in this passage. Since Tertullian elsewhere reports that Christians engaged in the same ceremonies of betrothal, nuptials (*nuptialia*), and namegiving as traditional polytheists (*On Idolatry* 16.3), Hunter concludes that "it remains unlikely that anything like a formal Christian ritual of marriage existed" (Hunter, "Wedding Rituals and Episcopal Power," 632-33). I, however, think it is possible that Tertullian is aware of some kind of church ceremony, but does not understand it as replacing public wedding celebrations (*nuptialia*). At the minimum, Tertullian characterizes Christian marriage in ritualizing terms that connect it to church ritual life.
[84] *A Plea for the Christians* 32.2; for critical edition: Bernard Pouderon, ed. and trans., *Supplique au sujet des chrétiens et sur la Résurrection.* SC 379 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992).
[85] *A Plea for the Christians* 32.5; tr. William R. Schoedel, *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione*, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

have argued that the main concern of Athenagoras' discussion of the holy kiss is to protect the kiss from rumors against licentious use,[86] Michael Penn has rejected this understanding of Athenagoras' purpose. He instead has argued that Athenagoras writes about the kiss in order to construct it as a ritualized "performance of Christian self-control:"[87]

> Just as a wandering eye commits adultery, when Christians kiss each other, a wandering mind can lead to damnation. According to Athenagoras, because the stakes are so high, whenever they kiss, Christians regulate both their outward behavior and their inward thought. By his very emphasis of the kiss's inherent danger, Athenagoras constructs the chaste exchange of a ritual kiss as a dramatic performance of how faithful Christians keep their sexual desires under control even in the most tempting of circumstances.[88]

If Penn is correct, Athenagoras sees the restraint of sexual desire during the holy kiss as an instance of Christians being far removed from sexual promiscuity; Christians not only keep their bodies pure, but they keep their thoughts free from desire even during the tempting exchange of a kiss. Penn's thesis is further supported, as he himself notes, by the observation that Athenagoras follows this passage about the desire-free holy kiss in chapter 32 with a discussion of Christian chaste marriage in chapter 33,[89] which has the therapeutic benefit that it does not take place for the purpose of pleasure, but "with a view to nothing more than procreation."[90] A Christian husband is like a farmer who does not needlessly throw seed after seed upon the ground, but sows a measured amount of seed and waits to harvest it. In this manner, the number of children (whether none in

[86] See for example, William Klassen, "The Sacred Kiss in the New Testament: An Example of Social Boundary Lines," *New Testament Studies* 39, no. 1 (1993): 122–35.
[87] Michael Philip Penn, *Kissing Christians: Ritual and Community in the Late Ancient Church* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 107.
[88] Penn, *Kissing Christians*, 108.
[89] Not only does Athenagoras' discussion of chaste marriage (ch. 33) directly follow his discussion of the desire-free holy kiss (ch. 33), he also emphasizes a continuing thematic link between the two topics through the reiteration of "eternal life" (αἰωνίου ζωῆς) in the last sentence of chapter 32 and αἰωνίου [ζωῆς] at the beginning of chapter 33.
[90] *A Plea for the Christians* 33.1; tr. Schoedel, *Athenagoras*.

the case of virgins or more in the case of married couples) becomes the measure of Christians' indulgence in appetite.[91] Much like philosophic life for Greek philosophers, Athenagoras characterizes the holy kiss as a therapeutic cultivation of control over desire. Athenagoras then connects the therapeutic kiss, by extending the control it cultivates, to the nuptial bedroom and the sexual practices of married Christians. And in so doing so, he assigns a type of ritual power to the holy kiss in Christians' efforts to control desire.

The Ritualized Efficacy of Christian Marriage: Keeping Demons Away

Since Christians come to associate desire with demonic presence, to protect oneself from desire also by extension means to protect one's marital relationship and spousal bodies from demonic influence. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul situates this two-folded marital apotropaism within the sexual union itself. If the married couple sexually deprives each other without agreement and for an undetermined amount of time, they make themselves vulnerable to attack by Satan and to a destructive burning of desire (1 Cor. 7:4-5). Paul does not specify whether sexual intercourse functions apotropaically in all marriages or just the marriages of Christians, but regardless of his thinking on that matter, he instructs the members of the Corinthian church to come together sexually, except for agreed upon periods of temporary celibacy for the sake of prayer, to protect themselves from Satan and desire.

Clement, citing 1 Corinthians 7, firmly grounds the apotropaic function of Christian marriage in the sexual union itself, stating that a couple, as Paul taught, should not sexually deprive each other except for a short period for the sake of prayer, lest Satan "create a hurricane so that the

[91] Athenagoras also condemns remarriage even after the death of a spouse in 33.4-5. As other Christian writers, he condemns remarriage as adultery, but since he frames his condemnation of remarriage in his broader repudiation of sexual intercourse motivated by pleasure, it seems likely that Athenagoras views sexual desire as the motivator for remarriage.

waves drive their yearnings to alien pleasure."[92] Christians, more than others, are in need of this protection, because "It may be that Satan is jealous of those whose lives are morally upright, opposes them, and wants to master them."[93] From Clement's perspective, when Christians practice Christianized marriage through a reritualization of their sexual behavior, which includes periods of celibacy for prayer, it makes them both vulnerable to Satanic attack while also protecting them from those attacks through non-desire-driven sexual intercourse. Clement determines that a Christian couple needs the apotropaic protection of the marital sexual union to keep Satan from tempting them to stray outside the bonds of marriage:

> The Apostle's added reference to their "coming together again because of Satan" is designed to anticipate and cut at the roots of any possibility of turning aside to other love affairs. The temporary agreement serves to negate natural desires but does not cut them out root and branch. These are why he reintroduces the marriage bond, not for uncontrolled behavior or sexual immorality or the operations of the devil, but to prevent him from falling under their sway.[94]

Clement writes the above passage as a response to Tatian, whom Clement understands to have equated all sexual intercourse, even marital intercourse among Christians, as the devil's work. Clement uses Paul to argue that in fact, the very opposite is true; marital intercourse cannot be from Satan, because Paul says it protects Christians *from* Satan and the immoral actions Satan incites.

[92] *Stromata* 3.15.96(2); tr. Ferguson, *Stromateis*.
[93] *Stromata* 3.15.96(3); tr. Ferguson, *Stromateis*.
[94] *Stromata* 3.12.82(1); tr. Ferguson, *Stromateis*.

Clement is also familiar with the apotropaic argumentation of "Paul" in 1 Timothy, which he again uses, alongside the books of Isaiah and Baruch, to argue against Tatian's assertion that marital sexual intercourse, like all sexual intercourse, is from the devil:

> "It was through your own sins that you were sold" (Isaiah 50:1 LXX), and again, "You experienced defilement in an alien land" (Baruch 3:10). He is applying the idea of defilement to a partnership involving an alien body rather than the body given away in marriage for the purpose of producing children. This is why the Apostle says, "So it is my wish that younger women should marry, have children, and be mistresses of their homes, without giving any opponent an opportunity to criticize. There are some already who have taken the wrong course and followed Satan" (1 Timothy 5:14-15).[95]

In this passage, Clement associates the apotropaic efficacy of marriage in repelling Satan to the procreative sexual intercourse between a Christian husband and wife.

The early third-century theologian Origen from Alexandria also ties the apotropaic therapeutic benefit of Christian marriage to the marital sexual act itself. In his *Commentary on Romans*, he writes regarding Paul's prohibition against non-consensual continence:

> The reason he [Paul] says this is because among married persons the freedom of continence of one partner can endanger the chastity of the other. For they are not obligated except by mutual consent for a time in order to be free for prayer. Then they ought to return again to the same lest Satan tempt them owing to their lack of self control. Therefore he who has been called a slave on account of the marriage bond is the Lord's freedman.[96]

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[95] *Stromata* 3.12.89(2-3); tr. Ferguson, *Stromateis*.

[96] *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 1.12-13; tr. Thomas P. Scheck, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Books 1-5*, The Fathers of the Church 103 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 61. For critical edition: Luc Brésard and Michel Fédou. *Commentaire sur l'Épître aux Romains*, vol. 1, SC 532 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2009).

Drawing from Paul, Origen declares that marital sexual relations help guard against Satan. He makes a similar declaration in his treatise *On Prayer*. There he comments on wording in Romans 8:26, where Paul says that the believer does not know how to pray "as is necessary" (καθὸ δεῖ), so the Spirit supplies unutterable groans. Origen interestingly applies the issue to Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:5 that couples should not withhold sex from one another except for a season of prayer. And he remarks that the problem of what "is necessary" to utter in those prayers might be an impediment, unless the performance of the esteemed mysteries of marriage is duly solemn, measured and without passion, while what here (i.e., in 1 Cor 7:5) is called "agreement" (συμφωνίας; i.e., between the spouses to be temporarily continent for prayer) removes the disharmony accompanying passion (τὸ ἀσύμφῶνον τοῦ πάθους), removes "incontinency" (τὴν ἀκρασίαν), and prevents Satan's rejoicing over another's misfortune."[97] In this role, marital sexual intercourse is more than a procreative act; it plays a ritualized role in protecting the couple from Satan and his desire-driven temptations.

Tertullian is also aware of Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 7 that Christians should not deprive each other sexually except by agreement for a period of time for the sake of prayer. Despite this awareness, however, he does not reference Paul's words that the couple should come together again sexually to keep Satan away.[98] Despite this exclusion by Tertullian, like Clement and Origen, he still associates an apotropaic power with the marriage of Christians. Instead of specifically assigning this apotropaic power to the sexual act between married Christians, Tertullian more vaguely attributes apotropaic power to Christian-to-Christian marriage. In his letter *To His Wife*,

[97] *On Prayer* 2.2: διὰ τούτων γὰρ ἐμποδίζεται τὸ "καθὸ δεῖ," ἐὰν μὴ καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν γάμον σιωπᾶσθαι ἀξίων μυστηρίων τὸ ἔργον σεμνότερον καὶ βραδύτερον καὶ ἀπαθέστερον γίνηται, τῆς λεγομένης ἐνταυθοῖ ˝συμφωνίας" τὸ ἀσύμφῶνον τοῦ πάθους ἀφανιζούσης καὶ "τὴν ἀκρασίαν" ἀναλισχούσης τοῦ τε Σατανᾶ τὸ ἐπιχαιρησίκαχον κωλυούσης. For critical edition: Paul Koetschau, ed., *Origenes Werke*, vol. 2, GCS 3 (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1899).
[98] *Exhortation to Chastity* 10. For critical edition: Claudio Moreschini and Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Exhortation à la chasteté*. SC 319 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985).

Tertullian touts this Christian-to-Christian marital apotropaism as one of the many reasons that Christians should only marry a fellow Christian. In establishing this apotropaic efficacy of Christian-to-Christian marriage, Tertullian turns not to Paul, but to the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew,[99] in which Jesus declares that wherever two or more are gathered in the name of the Father, he too is present: "They sing psalms and hymns to one another, and strive to outdo each other in chanting to their Lord. Seeing and hearing this, Christ rejoices. He gives them his peace. Where there are two, he is also present; and where he is there is no evil."[100] Tertullian is describing to his wife those activities and characteristics that are made possible only when a Christian marries a fellow Christian as opposed to a non-believing spouse. As two believers, a Christian couple can praise God together, and because Christ is present where two or more Christians gather, Christ is present with the couple. Tertullian then tacks on an additional phrase ("where he is there is no evil") not found in Matthew, which ascribes an apotropaic benefit of the presence of God that keeps evil away when two Christians gather. Tertullian argues that this apotropaism is present within a marriage only when a Christian marries a fellow Christian. How might we make sense of Tertullian's inclusion of an apotropaic benefit to Christ's presence that Jesus himself does not mention in Matthew 18? A possible answer to this question is that Tertullian is reading Matthew 18:20 alongside the apotropaic benefit of marriage as described by Paul in 1 Corinthian 7:5, and in so doing so, engages in a "marital reading" of Matthew 18:20 which applies the benefit of God's presence in the gathering of two or more in the Lord's name to Christian-to-Christian marriage. While this understanding of Tertullian may be conjectural, by turning our attention again to Origen, we will see it is not farfetched, since Origen gives witness to other

[99] Matt. 18:20
[100] *To His Wife* 2.8; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 50.

Christians, who, with a variation in exegetical application, also co-apply 1 Corinthians 7:5 and Matthew 18:20 to the context of Christian marriage.

In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Origen states that one of his Christian predecessors, whose name he does not give, drew from Matthew 18:20 in an exhortation for married people to live in chastity and purity. Writing of this predecessor, Origen expounds:

> One must think, he said, that the two whom the Logos wishes to be in harmony on earth are husband and wife. By agreement, they mutually withdraw from bodily intercourse that they may have leisure "for prayer." When these pray "for anything," they will receive "whatever they ask." Their request coming from such great harmony, is granted them "by the Father" of Jesus Christ, "who is in heaven."[101]

In contrast to Tertullian, who I suggest was reading Matthew 18:20 alongside the latter apotropaic portion of 1 Corinthians 7:5, Origen's predecessor reads this Matthean verse alongside the beginning part of 1 Corinthians 7:5, which discusses a Christian couple's right upon mutual agreement to withdraw from sexual intercourse for the sake of prayer. Like Tertullian, however, Origen's predecessor also engages in a "marital reading" of Matthew 18:19-20, which equates the ritualized efficacy of two Christians gathered in agreement in prayer as one of the therapeutic benefits of Christian marriage. While Origen does not provide enough context to determine the intent of the original interpreter that he cites, Origen rejects that his predecessor's interpretation is by nature an anti-marriage stance and instead argues that it emphasizes the efficacy of prayer undertaken by a Christian couple, as two who pray in agreement to God, during an agreed upon period of continence.[102] Thus, similar to Tertullian, Origen views the ritualized efficacy of

[101] *Commentary on Matthew* 14:2; tr. Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentary of Origen on the Gospel of St Matthew*. Vol. 1, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 161. For critical edition: Robert Girod, ed. and trans., *Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon Matthieu*. SC 162 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970).
[102] *Commentary on Matthew* 14.2.

Matthew 18:20 as one of the unique benefits to Christian marriage, even if Tertullian applies that benefit more broadly to shared prayer within Christians marriages, and Origen limits the ritualized benefit to prayers that take place during agreed-upon periods of sexual continence in Christians' marriages. While these are the only two examples of which I am aware that apply a nuptial reading to Matthew 18:20, they raise the strong possibility that two married Christians themselves could have seen their marriages as affording them the therapeutic benefit of God's presence and answer to prayers. And as Tertullian suggests, Satan cannot be where God is.

Irenaeus also quotes the apotropaic portion of 1 Corinthians 7:5, but he is not interested in the passage to prove the apotropaic efficacy of Christian marriage. Instead, he simply cites Paul's words, "Lest Satan tempt you because of your incontinence," to prove his point that God allows certain behaviors only because of human frailty.[103] Thus, God allows Christians to marry only to protect those too weak to resist Satan. Cyprian and Methodius both use the apotropaic language of 7:5 in a similar manner to Irenaeus to emphasize that despite Paul's "concession" in 1 Cor. 7:6-7 that Christians can marry, not marrying is a superior choice.[104] However, as we have seen, their usage contrasts sharply with that of Origen or Clement, who both use 1 Cor. 7:5 not to validate the worthiness of virginity over marriage, but rather to emphasize the apotropaic efficacy of Christian marriage. In fact, Clement draws upon the apotropaic language of 1 Cor. 7:5 to argue *against* Tatian that all sex is demonic. Clement maintains that, *au contraire*, Paul's word demonstrates that Christian marital sex is anything but demonic; it fights off Satan and his demonic desire.

At least according to the perspective of some Christians, demonic presence was not just a danger that could lead to other-than-marital sex; demons could also instigate or even be invoked

[103] *Against the Heresies* 4.15.2; tr. Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1997), 113.
[104] Cyprian, *Treatise 12* (*Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews* 3, Testimonies 32 in *ANF* 2:167); Methodius, *Symposium* 3.11 and 3.12.

as a result of desire-driven, rather than procreation-driven, marital sexual intercourse. Already, prior to Christianity, as noted by Kathy Gaca, Pythagoreans were unique among the Greek philosophers in their argument that when sex takes place non-harmoniously due to the whims of desire rather than the procreative will of aspiring parents, it could lead to the conception of morally-flawed progeny.[105] In the Pythagorean worldview, unrestrained, desire-filled sex could not lead to the conception of well-behaved, well-formed children due to the damage that excessive sexual excitement causes the soul when it comes to be embodied at the moment of conception. The author of the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions*, likely influenced by contemporary Neopythagorean philosophy, similarly argues that excessive desire during conception harms the conceived children. Instead of placing the blame for this harm upon the agitation that excessive desire causes a soul at the moment of its embodiment (as touted by Pythagoreans), the author of the *Recognitions* places the blame on desire-loving demons, whom a child comes to resemble if they are present at the moment of that child's conception:

> From this, therefore, it sometimes happens, that if any persons have acted incontinently, and have been willing not so much to resist as to yield, and to give harbour to these demons in themselves, by their noxious breath an intemperate, ill-conditioned, and diseased progeny is begotten. For while lust is wholly gratified, and no care is taken in the copulation, undoubtedly a weak generation is affected with the defects and frailties of those demons by whose instigation these things are done. And therefore, parents are responsible for their children's defects of this sort, because they have not observed the law of intercourse. Though there are also more secret causes, by which souls are made subject to these evils, which it is not to our present purpose to state, yet it behoves every one to

[105] Gaca, "The Reproductive Technology of the Pythagoreans," in *Making of Fornication*, 94–116.

> acknowledge the law of God, that he may learn from it the observance of generation, and avoid causes of impurity, that that which is begotten may be pure. For it is not right, while in the planting of shrubs and the sowing of crops a suitable season is sought for, and the land is cleaned, and all things are suitably prepared, lest haply the seed which is sown be injured and perish, that in the case of man only, who is over all these things, there should be no attention or caution in sowing his seed.[106]

Interestingly, the author of the *Recognitions* situates this explanation that passion-filled and demonic-driven marital copulation negatively impacts conceived children as an explanation replacing the non-Christian theories of astrologers who explain the dispositions of children by the astrological timing of their conception and not by an assessment of their parent's motivations and actions during the moment of their conception: "Therefore the astrologers, being ignorant of such mysteries, think that these things happen by the courses of the heavenly bodies."[107] Although the author of the *Recognitions* himself does not directly state it, since from his perspective desire-driven sex is the opposite of proper moral behavior, it suggests that the author views Christians' marital sex as superior to non-Christians' and thus more therapeutically capable of producing morally superior children.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the Christian view that desire is a destructive force that must be minimized or extinguished within Christian marriage. In turn, Christians also tout Christian marriage as a type of therapy of desire which affords married Christians a superior ability to control desire and to keep demons away within their marriages in contrast to non-Christian

[106] *Recognitions* 9.9; tr. Thomas Smith, *ANF* 8.184-185.
[107] *Recognitions* 9.12; tr. Smith, *ANF* 8.185.

couples. Christians characterize these therapeutic benefits as giving married Christians both a moral and procreative advantage. In the next chapter, we will take a different and more gendered look at desire within Christian marriage and discover that despite all the anti-desire rhetoric found within the Christians sources, when we read deeply or against the grain, it becomes possible to recognize that many Christians, especially women, would have recognized a powerful procreative benefit to properly cultivated or channeled desire. This understanding that desire could serve a positive procreative purpose does not negate the anti-desire Christian rhetoric as discussed in this chapter, but rather existed alongside it – sometimes even within a single text like the *Gospel of Philip*.

Chapter Two

The Positive Creative Force of Desire: The Female Gaze and Procreation

> The babies are shaped by the imagination of the woman during conception. For often women fall in love with statues and images and they give birth to children who resemble these. – Empedocles, *The Principles of Nature* 5.12[1]

> But you who exist with the son of God, do not love the world. But love the Lord, so that the ones you will beget will not come into being resembling the world but will come into being resembling the Lord. – *Gospel of Philip* 78.20-24

From the time of Empedocles to the time of the *Gospel of Philip,* people in the ancient Mediterranean and West Asia embraced the belief that a woman's gaze could have a procreative impact. This means that despite the anti-desire Christian rhetoric discussed in the previous chapter, when we delve deeper into the sources, we can discover that many Christians, especially women, would likely have rejected the notion that all desire within Christian marriage was bad. Instead, due to ancient theories about vision, Christians would likely have embraced the idea that if a married woman properly channels her desire, via the means of a ritualized gaze, it could potentially have a positive procreative impact on the children she conceives. According to ancient theories of vision, the image that a person sees travels along the optic nerve and imprints itself upon a person's soul, where it generates mental images (*phantasia*). Due to this imprinting power of the gaze, along with the mental images and desire it arouses in the soul, the impact of vision takes on extra significance during sexual intercourse when an imprintable soul begins the process of being embodied in a mother's womb and during the months of gestation that follow. In order to

[1] Translated in Jaap Mansfeld and David T. Runia, *Aëtiana V: An Edition of the Reconstructed Text of the Placita with a Commentary and a Collection of Related Texts,* Part 4, Philosophia Antiqua, v. 153/4 (Leiden: Brill, 2020). See also part 3 for the Greek text of *Principles of Nature.*

understand how and what the mother's gaze – and in more rare instances, the father's gaze – imprints upon a fetus, I begin this chapter with a survey of the phenomenon as found in Greek, Roman, and Jewish sources before turning my attention toward its presence in Christian texts. I then illustrate how the procreative gaze is similarly operative in Annunciation stories that address Jesus' conception, Christian commentaries on the account of Jacob's rods in Genesis, and more rarely, instructions to married Christians about gazing (whether in actuality or mentally) that should or should not take place in the marital bedroom. These types of instructions can be found in the writings of Clement, John Chrysostom, and most notably, in the *Gospel of Philip*. It is within the latter that we find instructions about to whom a married woman should direct her imaginative gaze in the bedroom so as to conceive children that resemble the Lord. These plentiful attestations of the imprinting power of the gaze within Christian sources suggest that a ritualized gaze, especially that of the mother, during procreative marital sex would have been implicated in efforts to Christianize marriage and its sexual union.

A Roadmap to the Procreative Efficacy of the Gaze

The Procreative Efficacy of the Gaze in Greco-Roman Sources

Aristotle assigns a vital role to unfocused desire and mental images in his explanation as to why the offspring of humans are less likely to resemble their parents than is the case with the offspring of animals:

> Why in the other animals do the offspring resemble the natures (of their parents) more than in humans? Is it because the human, during intercourse, is capable of thinking of any number of things (ἢ ὅτι ὁ μὲν ἄνθρωπος πολλαχῶς διατίθεται τὴν ψυχὴν κατὰ τὴν

> ὁμιλίαν),[2] and however the father and the mother arranged (their souls), in that way the offspring are varied, but with the other animals most are focused on the act itself? And further, they do not become pregnant in most cases owing to this desire.[3]

According to Aristotle, the reason that human children do not always resemble their parents is due to the procreative impact of thoughts during sex, which he says tend to be more disordered among humans than animals. He lays out two factors that influence a human child's development and resemblance to a parent: the extent to which the parents focus their desire during sexual intercourse and the extent to which they keep their thoughts from wandering during the sexual procreative act. Since animals' desire and thoughts are less disordered during sex, their offspring show more resemblance to them than those of humans. Ohr Y. Margalit and Chariklia Tziraki-Segal have demonstrated that for Aristotle, both these processes, which they refer to as the "vision-soul loop" and the "appetite/passion-soul loop," involve and influence the soul (ψυχήν); processes made possible due to his understanding of the nature and impact of sight, which occurs via the conduit of air.[4] Air transmits the images of objects to the eye, which in turn imprints these images onto the inner faculty of *phantasia*, which Aristotle situates in the animal soul of humans. The mental images (generated by sight) within the *phantasia* of the mother during coitus or gestation also imprint themselves onto the fetus. This means that a child does not inherit a resemblance to their father through the conduit of the father's seed, but via the mental images – which may or may not be images of the father – in the mind of the mother at coitus or during gestation. Margalit and

[2] Robert Mayhew translates πολλαχῶς διατίθεται τὴν ψυχὴν literally as "arranges the soul in many ways" but notes in a footnote that "The phrase 'arranges the soul in many ways' is a literal translation, probably meaning something like 'is capable of thinking of any number of things' (during intercourse)" (Robert Mayhew, *Problems: Books 1-19*, Loeb Classical Library 316–17 [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011], 288).
[3] *Problems* X.10, 891b; tr. Mayhew, *Problems.*
[4] Ohr Y. Margalit and Chariklia Tziraki-Segal, "Ancient Desires to Shape Progeny: The Role of Vision and Soul in Greek and Jewish Sources of Late Antiquity," in *Medicine and Healing in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Demetrios Michaelides (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2014), 190-92.

Tziraki-Segal hypothesize that this "vision-soul feedback loop" may be behind Aristotle's account in *History of Animals* of superfetation of a woman who gives birth to twins in which one resembles the lover and the other resembles the father.[5] Since fatherly resemblance is not inherited by seed, the resemblance of each twin results from the mother's mental images. They further observe, "The assumption is that the woman at the time of conception of the first foetus was receiving 'presentations' looking at her lover, and shortly thereafter at her husband! Their respective likeness is 'imprinted' through the sense of vision on the inner faculty of *phantasia* and then through the same medium – air – becomes imprinted on the two foetuses."[6] Margalit and Tziraki-Segal argue that the reason that Aristotle ascribes this fetal imprinting power to women rather than men is because "there are gender related defects" in the vision-soul and appetite/passion-soul loops.[7] Since Aristotle viewed the female by nature as having a weaker appetite/passion soul loop, her rationality does not let her control her passions to the extent of the male. Margalit and Tziraki-Segal conclude, "Therefore, the female must be made to focus during coitus. It is her desires that must be channeled and controlled, in order to influence the foetus in a specific manner."[8] It is the desires of the woman, as opposed to the man, that hold the most potential to shape the characteristics of a child she conceives.

Aristotle was likely not the first to suggest a woman's mental images can affect the children she conceives. Instead, he uses his theory of sight to explain what others already knew: the things a woman sees impacts her developing fetus. The writings of the first century CE philosophical compiler Aëtius suggest that Empedocles, a Greek philosopher who wrote a century before

[5] *History of Animals* 7.585a; tr., D. M. Balme, ed., *History of Animals. Books VII-X*, Loeb Classical Library 439 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991.
[6] Margalit and Tziraki-Segal, "Ancient Desires to Shape Progeny," 192. Although it is an error that otherwise does not affect the quality of their analysis, Margalit and Tziraki-Segal erroneously ascribe this Aristotelian passage to *Generation of Animals* 1.585a, when it is in fact found in *History of Animals* 7.585a.
[7] Margalit and Tziraki-Segal, "Ancient Desires to Shape Progeny," 193.
[8] Margalit and Tziraki-Segal, "Ancient Desires to Shape Progeny," 193.

Aristotle, was the first to record the folk belief that even an image in the imagination of a woman, spurred by the earlier sight of an actual material object, could affect the formation of the fetus in her womb. This in turn could lead to unintended consequences. As proof of the imprinting power of mental images during conception, Empedocles recounts a folkloric story of women whose children resembled statues with whom they fell in love, and whose images were still in the minds of the women when they conceived children with their husbands. Empedocles uses this folktale account to teach that "The babies are shaped by the imagination (φαντασίᾳ) of the woman during conception. For often women fall in love with statues and images (εἰκόνων), and they give birth to children who resemble these."[9] Empedocles does not clarify the context in which the women gaze upon these statues with whom they have fallen in love. One option is that this might be an earlier attestation of a bedroom practice with which the later Soranus and Galen are both familiar in the first century CE of women staring at beautiful statues or images during coitus, which they "love," in order to conceive more beautiful children (see below). Another possibility is that the women's gazes are directed toward statuary in public places. If this is the case, Empedocles conveys a belief that the desired objects of the female gaze have a procreative impact that begins outside of the bedroom but also extends into it. Either way, unlike the later Greek and Jewish writers, Empedocles does not characterize the women's gazes upon the statues as being undertaken at the behest of a husband or some other man; the women's gazes are actions that originate with themselves.[10]

The belief that a woman's vision and desire impacts a developing fetus was still alive well into the Common Era. In his Latin treatise on *Natural History*, the first-century CE Roman author

[9] *The Principles of Nature* 5.12; tr. Mansfeld and Runia, *Aëtiana V*.

[10] For analysis on the role of men in manipulating the female gaze prior to or during coitus in Greco-Roman sources, see: Wendy Doniger and Gregory Spinner, "Female Imaginations and Male Fantasies in Parental Imprinting," *Daedalus*, Science in Culture, Vol. 127, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 97–129. For the phenomenon in Jewish sources, see: Rachel Raphael Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity*, Greek Culture in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 113–69.

and influential encyclopedist Pliny the Elder not only embraces the idea already attested in Aristotle that a woman's vision and mental images at the moment of conception impact the conceived child, but also embraces the possibility that what a man sees, feels or thinks during conception can also affect the child:

> Resemblances offer considerable food for thought. They are believed to be influenced by many chance occurrences, including sight, hearing, memory, and images absorbed at the very moment of conception. Even a chance thought which briefly crosses the mind of one or other parent may form or confuse the resemblance. This is the reason why there are more variations within the human race than there are among all the other animals: the swiftness of man's thoughts, his mental agility and the versatility of his intelligence produce a wide variety of features; whereas the minds of other creatures are sluggish and exhibit a uniformity in keeping with their particular species.[11]

The Aristotelian influence on Pliny is clear in this passage. Pliny adopts the idea that humans among all animals are less likely to resemble their parents as a result of humans' less-focused thoughts at the time of conception. This by extension also implies that if either or both parents concentrate their thoughts during sex, they can instill desired traits into their child. By applying a procreative impact to the father's disarrayed thoughts, in addition to the mother's, at the time of conception, Pliny as a Roman writer more closely resembles later Jewish writers rather than the Greek writers who precede or come after him.

Influenced by Aristotle's theory of sight, the second-century CE Greek physician Soranus also embraces folktales that confirm the female gaze's soulful impact on the resemblance of a child. According to Soranus, sometimes the female gaze's imprinting power leads to undesired

[11] *Natural History* 7.52; tr. Mary Beagon, *The Elder Pliny on the Human Animal: Natural History Book 7* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

results: “What is one to say concerning the fact that various states of the soul also produce certain changes in the mould of the fetus? For instance, some women seeing monkeys during intercourse, have borne children resembling monkeys.”[12] Soranus believes that these women have born children that resembled monkeys, because when they saw the monkeys during the act of conception, it created a mental image that imprinted itself on their souls and thus upon their children. In this instance, it was a sighted object like a monkey that led to the formation of a procreationally-impactful mental image. The maternal gaze also impacts the fetus formation in animals. Soranus says that horse breeders intentionally take advantage of the procreative effect of vision by placing “noble” male horses within sight of breeding mares.[13] Soranus, furthermore, not only identifies seen material objects as a potential risk, but also fantastical images a woman conjures in her mind. He determines, “Thus in order that the offspring may not be rendered misshapen, women must be sober during coitus because in drunkenness the soul becomes the victim of strange phantasies; this furthermore, because the offspring bears some resemblance to the mother as well, not only in body but in soul.”[14] By connecting the use of alcohol to the generation of unpredictable mental images, Soranus transforms a woman’s soul-stirring drunkenness into a danger to the child she conceives during the drunken state. Even though Soranus recognizes that the female gaze during sexual intercourse poses certain risks, he also indicates that this natural imprinting power of sight also means that the female gaze can be manipulated during sex (by a husband), as a ritualized source of formative procreative power to the benefit of the resulting children. This intentional ritualization of sight can be seen in a folk story recounted by Soranus in which “The tyrant of the Cyprians, who was misshapen, compelled

[12] *Gynecology* 1.10.39; tr. Owsei Temkin, *Soranus’ Gynecology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956).
[13] *Gynecology* 1.10.39.
[14] *Gynecology* 1.10.39. tr. Tempkin, *Soranus’ Gynecology*.

his wife to look at beautiful statues during intercourse and became the father of well-shaped children."[15]

Galen, a second-century CE Greek physician – whose career began in his hometown of Pergamum before making his way to Rome – is familiar with a similar tale of a "powerful, ugly man" who made his wife look at a painting of a beautiful baby during sex:

> And I have heard an old story that a powerful, ugly man wanted to breed a good looking child, and had a picture of an attractive baby drawn on a flat piece of wood, and told his wife, while he was making love to her, to keep looking at that image in the drawing. And she kept intently looking, and kept pretty much all her mind not on her husband but on the child in the drawing, and gave birth to a child like it; and in my opinion the impression of the likeness was transmitted by sight, in accordance with nature but not by means of any particles.[16]

This tactic of ritualizing the woman's gaze through intentionally directing her eyes' and mind's focus on an image during sex is deemed by Galen to be effective. The resulting child does not look like its 'ugly' father, but instead resembles the beautiful baby in the drawing.

The author of the second- or third-century CE Greek poem on hunting, *Cynegtica*, pseudonymously attributed to the Syrian poet Oppian, is, like Soranus, familiar with horse breeders manipulating a breeding mare's vision to produce a desired appearance in the conceived foals. In describing this process, Pseudo-Oppian uses marital language and the ritualized visual and material aesthetics of human weddings to describe the husbandry practice undertaken by the horse owners:

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[15] *Gynecology,* 1.10.39; tr. Tempkin, *Soranus' Gynecology*.
[16] *On Theriac to Piso* 11; tr. Robert Leigh, ed., *On Theriac to Piso, Attributed to Galen: A Critical Edition with Translation and Commentary,* Studies in Ancient Medicine 47 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

> What time the mating impulse seizes the mare and she abides the approach of the glorious high-spirited horse, then they cunningly adorn the beautiful sire. All about they inscribe all his body with spots of colour and to his bride they lead him, glorying in his beauty. Even as some youth, arrayed by the bridal women in white robes and purple flowers and breathing of the perfume of Palestine, steps into the bridal chamber singing the marriage song, so while the hasting horse neighs his bridal song, long time in front of his bride they stay her glorious spouse, foaming in his eagerness; and late and at last they let him go to satisfy his desire. And the mare conceives and bears a many-patterned foal, having received in her womb the fertile seed of her spouse, but in her eyes his many-coloured form.[17]

In this description, in addition to being painted, the horse is adorned as a groom that is then led to his awaiting bride. The comparison of the adorned horse to a human groom also implicitly invites the reader to see the same potential procreative impact of a human bride's sight of her groom as he enters the bridal chamber finely bedecked in white robes.[18] The delightful sight of the groom becomes an efficacious part of the aesthetics of the bridal chamber as ritualized space. For similar purposes, Pseudo-Oppian reports that the Laconians place paintings of beautiful figures near their wives when they are pregnant (γαστέρα κυμαίνουσι):

> Near them they put pictures of beautiful forms (γράψαντες πινάκεσσι πέλας θέσαν ἀγλαὰ κάλλη), even the youths that aforetime were resplendent among mortal men, Nireus and Narcissus and Hyacinthus of the goodly ashen spear, and Castor with his helmet, and Polydeuces that slew Amycus, and the youthful twain who are admired among the blessed

[17] *Cynegtica* 1; tr. A. W. Mair, *Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus*, Loeb Classical Library 219 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1928), 37.

[18] Pseudo-Oppian also reports similar sight-driven practices are used in the breeding process of birds such as doves and hen-birds. Like the horses, the descriptions of the latter are also anthropomorphized; they produce "sea-purple children" after they are gladdened in their hearts (θυμὸν ἰαινόμεναι) at the sight of their mates bedecked in purple cloths (*Cynegtica* 1).

> gods, laurel-crowned Phoebus and Dionysus of the ivy wreath. And the women rejoice to behold their lovely form and, fluttered by their beauty, bear beautiful sons.[19]

In these examples recounted by Pseudo-Oppian, it is the mother's heart or mind being pleasantly stirred by a sight that leads to this imprinting. In his discussion of the Laconians, Pseudo-Oppian envisions the imprinting efficacy of the soul-stirring images of divine heroes to be active not only at the moment of conception, but throughout a woman's pregnancy. Wendy Doniger and Gregory Spinner have rightly noted regarding Oppian's passage on the Laconians that it contains "the idea of the image of a celestial being imprinted on a human child."[20] Through a cross-comparative approach with Jewish sources on the procreative impact of sight, Margalit and Tziraki-Segal have further suggested that the Laconians' use of Greek heroes could have also been viewed by the Laconians as passing along some of the extraordinary abilities of these heroes [21]

We do not, however, have to turn to Jewish sources to find an example of abilities being imprinted upon a conceived fetus via their mother's gaze. Instead, we can turn to the *Life of Apollonius* by the third-century CE writer Philostratus. Within this biographical account, it is not via the sight of a mere statue of a deity, but an actual visit by the god Proteus to Apollonius' pregnant mother that imprints the fortune-telling talents of the god Proteus upon Apollonius in the womb:

> When his mother was still carrying him, she had a vision of an Egyptian divinity, Proteus who changes shape in Homer. She was not at all frightened, but asked him who her child would be. He replied: "Myself." … But the reader must bear Proteus in mind, especially when the course of my story shows that my hero (i.e., Apollonius) had the greater

[19] *Cynegtica* 1; tr. Mair, *Oppian, etc.*, 39.
[20] Doniger and Spinner, "Female Imaginations and Male Fantasies in Parental Imprinting," 102.
[21] Margalit and Tziraki-Segal, "Ancient Desires to Shape Progeny," 195.

prescience of the two, and rose above many difficult and baffling situations just when he was cornered.[22]

Like Proteus who appeared to his pregnant mother, Apollonius, too, can foretell the future, which serves to fulfill Proteus' words to Apollonius' mother at the sight of Proteus, that she would give birth to Proteus himself, not in actuality, but in resemblance.[23]

The Procreative Efficacy of the Gaze in Rabbinic Sources

The Greco-Roman sources contextualize rabbinic stories, which might otherwise be enigmatic. Conversely, rabbinic sources draw out how Greco-Roman attitudes played out in daily life in late antiquity. Within rabbinic literature, one of the most well-known conception stories on the procreative efficacy of the female gaze centers on the mid-third-century Palestinian Rabbi Yohanan, who is renowned in the Talmud for his exceptional beauty. His good looks serve as a backdrop to a story in *Bava Metsia* 84a that records that Rabbi Yohanan used to stand outside of the ritual bath (the *miqve*), where women immersed themselves after their monthly menses and thus were able to resume sexual intercourse again. In explaining why he does this, Rabbi Yohanan declares, "When the daughters of Israel ascend from ritual immersion, they will look (*mistakkelin*) at me, that they may bear sons as beautiful and learned in Torah as I am."[24] Although there is reason to be skeptical in this male-authored story as to whether Jewish women actually gazed at the handsome Rabbi Yohanan as they came out of their bath, what is clear in this Talmudic tale is that

[22] *Life of Apollonius* 1.4; tr. Christopher P. Jones, ed., *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana: Books I-IV*, Loeb Classical Library 414 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005).
[23] On the relation of Apollonius' miraculous conception to other similar accounts of conception that follow a divine vision, see Ra'anan Boustan, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 309–10. See also my discussion below on the role of vision in Christian accounts of the Annunciation.
[24] *Bava Metsia* 84a; tr. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 160.

at a minimum, the rabbis portray Rabbi Yohanan as having imagined himself as a type of iconic object, filled with ritual power, at which women were meant to gaze in order to help them produce handsome and pious children. The belief underlying this story is that upon seeing Rabbi Yohanan, a mental image of his beautiful form is imprinted upon the women's souls. With this image still present in their mind, they then return and have sex with their husbands. Similar to the conception story of Apollonius, in addition to his good looks, Rabbi Yohanan envisions that the image of himself imprinted in the minds of the women also causes their children to be endowed with his righteous talent for Torah study. And as in the Greek stories mentioned above of women staring at handsome statues of Greek heroes and gods, the rabbis cast Rabbi Yohanan as the superior image, capable of imprinting both beauty and piety, upon which Jewish women can gaze before engaging in sexual intercourse with their husbands. Elsewhere in Talmudic literature the image of Rabbi Yohanan is asserted to be superior to the plentiful statuary of Roman public spaces. An earlier passage from the Jerusalem Talmud declares, "When R. Yohanan died, the icons bent over; they said it was because there was no icon like him." [25] Both Rabbi Yohanan's beauty and his piety secure his place as a power-filled icon.

Other stories reveal the rabbis' anxiety about the lack of control they have over their wives' gazes in public spaces. The fourth-century Palestinian Rabbi Berechiah recounts the following story in *Genesis Rabbah:*

> "And afterwards, when the sons of God came to the daughters of men [and they bore them children]" (Genesis 6:4). R. Berekhyah said: "A woman would go into the marketplace, and she would see (*hayetah ro'ah*) a young man and lust after him (*umit'avvah lo*). She would go and have intercourse and bring forth a young man resembling him."[26]

[25] *y. 'Avodah Zarah* 3:1, 42C; tr. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 159.
[26] *Genesis Rabbah* 26:7; tr. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Cul*ture, 155.

There is a lot to unpack in this story. Although Rabbi Berechiah is critical of women's wandering, desire-filled gazes in the marketplace, he also characterizes them as agents of their own looking. This leaves open the question as to whether he views the resemblance of the women's children to the young men in the marketplace as an unintended consequence of the women's lustful gazes, or if Rabbi Berechiah envisions this result as motivating the women's glances. If the latter, in order to bear handsome children, the married women stare longingly not at statues of traditional Greco-Roman gods, or perhaps less-than-youthful husbands, but at the handsome young men of the marketplace.

It is also notable that Rabbi Berechiah recounts this story about the imprinting impact of women's wandering gazes in the marketplace as commentary on Genesis 6:4 on the children produced via the sexual possession of the daughters of men by the sons of God. While the connection between the biblical passage and Berechiah's commentary on it is not readily apparent within the Talmudic passage, a likely explanation as to why Berechiah sees his commentary as relevant to Genesis 6:4 can be found by comparing this rabbinic account to the version of the visit by the sons of God found in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, [27] which likely was composed by a Jewish author and redacted in its extant form with Christian interpolations by 200 CE:

> Flee, therefore, fornication, my children, and command your wives and your daughters, that they adorn not their heads and faces to deceive the mind: because every woman who useth these wiles hath been reserved for eternal punishment. For thus they allured the Watchers[28] who were before the flood; for as these [Watchers] continually beheld them [the

[27] Ra'anan Boustan has implicitly made this same suggestion. See Boustan, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception," 315–17.

[28] The term "Watcher(s)" is found in the Hebrew scriptures only in Daniel 4:13-23, for angels seen in a vision. But the Watchers in the above-quoted passage from *Testament of Reuben* are an allusion to the tradition found in the Second Temple Jewish source today commonly known as *1 Enoch* (chs. 6-36), in which Watchers is the term for angels sent to earth to protect humanity, but who turn wicked in their lust for human women – i.e., a far more elaborate version of the "sons of God" story in Genesis 6:1-4. But interestingly, *Test. Reuben* appears to reverse the blame,

> women], they lusted after them, and they [the Watchers] conceived the act in their mind; for they [the Watchers] changed themselves into the shape of men, and appeared to them [the women] when they were with their husbands. And the women lusting in their minds after their forms, gave birth to giants, for the Watchers appeared to them as reaching even unto heaven.[29]

In this interpretation of the visit by the sons of God to human women, the giant children the women bear are not the result of any sexual union between the sons of God and daughters of men. Instead, they are the result of the sons of God in human form appearing to the women during sex with their husbands. This causes the women's desire-filled gaze and accompanying mental images not to be focused on their husbands with whom they are engaging in sex but upon the beautiful and expansive forms of the sons of God. As a result, the women's children are imprinted with the giant stature of the heavenly Watchers, whose images filled their mothers' minds at the moment of their conception.[30] Since Rabbi Berechiah provides a story about the imprinting efficacy of the procreational female gaze as commentary to Genesis 6:4, it seems likely he is familiar with a version of the myth similar to the one found in the *Testament of Reuben*, which is likely why he sees the former as relevant for commentary on the latter.

Ra'anan Boustan has written about the role of the gaze in the conception story of Rabbi Ishmael in the early medieval (7th-10th centuries CE) text *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*. The children of Ishmael's mother, who is unnamed in the text, keep dying soon after being

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placing it upon women who lusted after the handsome figures of these angels, who for their part seem innocent bystanders!

[29] *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*Testament of Reuben* 5); tr. R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 2, Pseudepigrapha (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

[30] As evidenced by the numerous Christian interpolations that are interwoven throughout the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, this version of the sons of God with its emphasis on the procreative gaze was embraced within Christian circles by the third century CE. A similar motif of conceiving while gazing at a heavenly being can be found within Christian demiurgical creation accounts. See my discussion below on the Achamoth myth that Irenaeus attributes to Valentinian-Christians.

born. Distraught at this repeated outcome, she prays to God, who he answers her by instructing the angel Metatron to descend to earth to inform Ishmael's mother that she will become pregnant with the future Rabbi Ishmael that very night. Like in the story of Rabbi Yohanan, Metatron positions himself in front of the ritual baths, where Jewish women go to purify themselves before resuming sexual intercourse. The story relates regarding Ishmael's mother that "*She emerged [from the bath], saw him*, went home, and became pregnant that very night with Rabbi Ishmael. His form was beautiful like the form of Metatron."[31] Several recensions of the *Story of the Ten Martyrs* furthermore convey that Ishmael's angel-like ability to ascend to heaven is due to this angelic visit.[32] Thus, his mother's sight and mental image of Metatron imprinted both angelic features and angelic powers upon Ishmael. While this is a medieval text, as Boustan discusses, it has roots in the stories of angels in the Hebrew Bible, who announce the births of special children like Isaac and Samson, or John the Baptist and Jesus in the New Testament.[33]

Like Pliny the Elder, but unlike the Greek authors, the rabbis also believe that the sight and mental images of the father can impact the resulting child. This can be seen in the conception story of the children of Imma Shalom and her husband Rabbi Eliezer (a late first-, early second-century CE Palestinian rabbi) in the *Nedarim* tractate in the Babylonian Talmud. The rabbis approach Imma Shalom to ask her why her children possess such good looks, to which she replies:

> He 'converses' [Rashi: has intercourse] with me neither at the beginning nor at the end of the night, but at midnight; and when he 'converses,' he uncovers a handbreadth and covers a handbreadth, and he resembles one driven by a demon. And when I asked him why, he

[31] *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*; tr. Boustan, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception," 314.
[32] *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*; tr. Boustan, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception," 326.
[33] Boustan, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception," 309-10.

answered, "So that I may not set my eyes (*etten et enay*) on another woman and my children become like bastards."[34]

According to Imma Shalom's own words within this story, Rabbi Eliezer ritualizes his sight during sex with her by avoiding looking at her body and completing coitus quickly (as if driven by a demon). She reports to the rabbis that he says he does this in order to keep his imagination free of images of other women, which inadvertently would cause him to commit adultery even while engaged in sex with his own wife. The beauty of his children serves as material evidence of the purity of his mental images and serves as an exemplar of how others can also have beautiful children.

Note, however, that within this story, it was not readily apparent to Imma Shalom why her husband engages in sex in the manner that he does. She had to ask him the reason behind his behavior. The rabbis in turn then ask Imma Shalom for an explanation as to why her children are so beautiful. Why do they ask her instead of her husband Rabbi Eliezer? It seems likely that the answer to this question is that, as seen in the other rabbinic examples and throughout the Greek sources, it was widely held throughout the late antique world that it was the vision of the woman, and not the man, which affected the look of a child in the womb. In this context, we can view Imma Shalom's explanation that her children's good looks derive from Eliezer's gaze during sex, and not from her own gaze, as an unexpected answer; yet it is an explanation which the rabbis embrace. In this way, the rabbis advocate in this passage that *in addition to* the ritualization of the woman's gaze during sex, a man's gaze can also impact the quality of the resulting child.[35]

[34] *b. Nedarim 20a-b*; tr. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 131-32.

[35] The impact of the paternal gaze could also be negative. Eliezer's quick coitus with minimal nudity, along with the beautiful children that this produces, are juxtaposed in *b. Nedarim 20a-b* with men whose gazing at their wives' genitalia leads to disabled children. See the discussion in Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture,* 131-35.

The Procreative Efficacy of the Gaze in Christian Sources

The Gaze in Stories of the Annunciation

Within early Christian sources, it is evident that Christians, like traditional polytheists and Jews, believed that the conditions in which a child is conceived shape the nature of the child. Similar to the imprinting effects of visits by heavenly beings to mothers discussed above, some of the earliest evidence that Christians shared a belief in the imprinting powers of the female gaze can be found in retellings of the Annunciation story, in which Mary's sight of Gabriel plays a role in the formation of Jesus within her womb.

Jared Secord has argued that the creative power of female desire is operative in understandings of the virginal conception of a human Jesus among Christians who embraced the teaching of the second-century CE Theodotus of Byzantium.[36] He builds upon the work of Richard Walzer, who proposed that the "Theodotians" were familiar with Galen's treatises on logic.[37] Secord contends that there is also evidence that the Theodotians had an interest in Galen's works on medicine, and that they particularly drew upon Galen's embryological theory of the imprinting efficacy of the mother's gaze in the development of their Christology.[38] According to an early third-century CE work, the *Refutation of All Heresies* (sometimes, perhaps incorrectly, attributed to the Roman bishop Hippolytus), the Theodotians insisted that Jesus was born a "mere man"

[36] Jared Secord, "Galen and the Theodotians: Embryology and Adoptionism in the Christian Schools of Rome," *Studia Patristica* 81 (2017): 51–63.
[37] Richard Walzer, *Galen and Jews on Christians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949).
[38] Secord, "Galen and the Theodotians," 53–9. Eusebius reports that the Theodotians used the writings of Euclid, Aristotle and his successor Theophrastus, and Galen (*Eccl. Hist*. 5.28.14). Michael Williams has pointed out that the Theodotians' usage of these writings demonstrate that they possessed "a strong inclination in the direction of cultural accommodation" (Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism*," 112). Both Walzer and Secord accept Eusebius' account of the Theodotians' use of Galen as accurate, but they differ in what writings the Theodotians would have used of Galen. Secord is pushing against the assumption made my Walzer that the Theodotians would have been uninterested in Galen's works on medicine.

(ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον) but embraced his virgin birth by Mary.[39] The *Refutation* further reports that another group, who followed the teaching of a man (a banker) also named Theodotus, believed that Jesus was in the image (κατ' εἰκόνα) of the biblical priest-king Melchizedek (Genesis 14; Psalm 110:4).[40] This claim engages with Hebrews 7:15 in which it is stated that Jesus is a priest "according to the likeness of Melchizedek" (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ).[41] In Theodotus' allusion to this passage in Hebrews, he does not refer to Christ as a likeness (ὁμοιότης) of Melchizedek, but rather the image (εἰκών) of Melchizedek. As Secord has already argued, a likely reason for this change in terms is due to the relevancy of εἰκών in discussions about the role of a mother's sight in the formation and resemblance of a fetus.[42]

The Theodotians, however, were not alone in their knowledge and acceptance of embryological theories of sight. The second-century bishop Irenaeus of Lyons attempts to refute the validity of the Achamoth[43] myth by arguing that it defies visual eugenics.[44] Within this myth, as recounted by Irenaeus, Achamoth conceives as she gazes up at the higher heavens and is

[39] *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.35, 10.23; text and translation in M. David Litwa, *Refutation of All Heresies*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 40 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).
[40] *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.36 and 10.24.
[41] As already noted by Secord, "Galen and the Theodotians," 57.
[42] Secord, "Galen and the Theodotians," 57.
[43] The name Achamoth derives from the Hebrew חכמה *chokhmah*, "wisdom," and Irenaeus alleges that Valentinian myth taught that Achamoth was a lesser, more imperfect aspect of higher Wisdom (Greek: *Sophia*), because Achamoth was the reification of Sophia's impulsive, passion-motivated and impossible attempt to comprehend God or "the Father;" or mythically, an imperfect child of Sophia, a sort of "miscarriage" (ἔκτρωμα), since she had been begotten by Sophia's own thinking, without a male consort (Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* 1.4.1). In Irenaeus's account, Achamoth eventually fashions a Demiurge or artisan (from Plato's use of the term; e.g., *Timaeus* 28a-c), who then creates the material cosmos and material humans (*Against the Heresies* 1.5.1-6). The background for this Wisdom speculation is found in Jewish traditions that assigned a key role in the world's creation to God's "Wisdom" as a personified/mythic figure (e.g., Proverbs 8:22-31; Wisdom of Solomon 7:21-27). This was a mythopoeic way of saying that the creation manifests God's wisdom, although such portraits of Wisdom as a mythopoeic goddess in Jewish literature were sometimes also informed by other ancient Near Eastern female deities, such as the Egyptian figure Ma'at (connoting Truth, Order, Justice, etc.), Isis, and others. This Wisdom tradition had a decisive influence in shaping early Christian interpretations of Jesus, who could be understood as the incarnation of pre-existent Wisdom or Word/Logos. Demiurgical Christians like the theological heirs of the second-century CE teacher Valentinus obviously developed these Wisdom myths more elaborately. There were many versions of this Wisdom speculation in these demiurgical myths, but they share an interest in explaining how God's Wisdom could be behind the creation of the cosmos, while at the same time how human material existence could be flawed.
[44] "Visual eugenics" is a term that I borrow from the work of Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 131-37.

raptured by the sight of the angels that surround the Savior.[45] She then gives birth to beings that resemble the luminous angels upon whom she had gazed. Irenaeus polemicizes against the myth by questioning, "How was it, moreover, that on seeing the Angels with the Savior she conceived the form of these but not of Savior, who is more beautiful than they? Was it that he did not please her, and so she did not conceive according to him?"[46] Irenaeus seems to draw from his knowledge of the role that the appetite/passion-soul loop plays in imprinting a mother's soul and thus also her child's.[47] In this theory, it is not the act of seeing alone that imprints a mother's mental image upon her child. Rather, it is the presence and intensity of her desire which serves as a conduit for the imprinting process. Thus, Irenaeus questions, if Achamoth was staring at both the angels and the Savior, why did her children resemble the angels when her desire-fueled gaze would logically have been more intensely directed to the beauty of the Savior?[48]

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[45] *Against the Heresies* 1.4.5 and 2.19.5-6.

[46] *Against the Heresies* 2.19.5-6; tr. Dominic J. Unger, *St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies*: *Book 2*, rev. John J. Dillon, Ancient Christian Writers 65 (New York: Newman Press, 2012).

[47] Although he recognizes Irenaeus' use of embryological theory to undermine the Achamoth myth, Secord fails to note that the myth itself assumes an embryological role for the gaze, which is why Irenaeus can easily draw upon embryological theory to critique the myth. Drawing from some of the same Greek sources on the procreative gaze that I discuss above, April DeConick has recognized the role of embryological theory and gazing in the Achamoth myth ("The Great Mystery of Marriage," 326). In light of Tertullian's allegation that the pneumatics (i.e., the more divinely-seeded) among the Valentinians honored the celestial marriages in their own sexual unions (*Against the Valentinians* 30), DeConick has further hypothesized that the pneumatics imitated this contemplative form of gazing in their own procreative practices in order to help ensure their children would resemble God (334-35). DeConick points to *Gos. Phil.* 78.12-20 as evidence of this pneumatic Valentinian practice (335-36). While I agree that the *Gospel of Philip* embraces an efficacious role of the gaze in procreation (see my discussion below), I am not convinced by DeConick's interpretation of the *Gospel of Philip*'s distinction between "pure marriage" and "defiled marriage" as a distinction between the marriage of the pneumatics and the psychics as nowhere does the gospel use these distinctly Valentinian terms in defining its viewpoints of marriage. See ch. 3 for my discussion of the widely held belief among Christians that Christianized marriage is "pure" or "holy" in contrast to the "defiled" marriage of non-Christians. See the Introduction for my discussion on the traditional identification of the *Gospel of Philip* as Valentinian, and the limitations of such identification in understanding the nature of the gospel's ritualized bridal chamber. Nonetheless, I do affirm the importance of the question that DeConick raises as to what influence, if any, sexualized demiurgical accounts had upon the Christian groups who embraced these myths in their concepts of Christian marriage. This question, however, is beyond the scope of the current study.

[48] Creation via the "vision-soul loop" and the "appetite/passion-soul loop" is also found in other demiurgical Christian accounts of creation. The *Apocryphon of John*, which many scholars have labeled as a classic "Sethian text," appears to have been widely influential as evidenced by its survival in four manuscripts. In the two shorter MSS (BG and NHC III), Barbelo gazes at the light that surrounds the Father or Invisible Spirit and then begets the son Christ in the image of the Father (BG 29,14-30,8; in NHC III 9,8-19). Interestingly, in the longer recension in NHC II 6,8-18 and IV 9,8-23, it is the Father who looks at Barbelo, resulting in her conception of a Son with characteristics of the Father. For a

In light of Irenaeus' use of an "embryological challenge" to the Achamoth myth, Secord argues that embryology was "common currency among Christians of the late second century."[49] He concludes that in this environment, the Theodotians – who valued the writings of Galen according to heresiologists – would have felt compelled to defend their Christology not only with scripture, but embryological theory, which they applied to their version of the Annunciation:

> Theodotus the banker thus seems to have believed that Jesus was born as a mere man from a parthenogenetic conception, and that his mother saw in her mind an image of Melchizedek when she conceived. As was the case for other Christians of the second century, the Theodotians too made use of the contemporary thought concerning the important link between sight and conception, making their Christological investigations compatible with prevailing ideas about embryology.[50]

I think Secord is right that the Theodotians serve as an example of Christians who did not relegate the efficacy of the maternal gaze to accounts of creation. Instead they utilized the theory to create a Christological account of the birth and nature of Jesus within the earthly realm, a realm within which Christians also procreate and encounters with heavenly beings are not limited to Mary. In this context, although the Theodotians maintain Jesus' virgin birth, Mary's conception of Jesus in the image of a heavenly Melchizedek becomes part of a larger medical and folkloric discourse of

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synopsis of the four translations of the *Apocryphon of John*, see Michael Waldstein and Frederik Wisse, eds., *The Apocryphon of John: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1; III,1; and IV,1 with BG 8502,2*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 33 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995). Creation via an imprinting gaze is also found in Manichaean myth, such as in Mani's *Fundamental Epistle* as preserved by Augustine (*de natura boni* 46) and *Šābuhragān* 43. Although the accounts have slight variations, within both of them, the head of darkness Saklas and his consort gaze up at a being of light that momentarily appears in the heavens. Desiring to imitate what they saw, they then copulate with each other with the image of the being of light still in one or more of their minds, and thus produce humans in the image of the light upon whom they had gazed. On the relation of these Manichaean creation myths with Jewish demiurgical traditions, see Jason BeDuhn, "Gnostic Myth in Manichaeism?," *Gnosis: Journal of Gnostic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2020): 188–219.

[49] Secord, "Galen and the Theodotians," 58.

[50] Secord, 57.

mothers conceiving children according to the mental image seared in their minds via sight during or shortly preceding coitus. Instead of resulting from gazing at an image of a "false" god in stone, the conception of Jesus occurs via a theophanic sight of the divine, much like the tales of Apollonius and Ishmael discussed above.

The role of the maternal gaze in the Annunciation is also attested elsewhere in Christian literature of the second century, such as in the anonymous *Epistle of the Apostles*, which despite its name, resembles a gospel more than a letter. Written originally in Greek, the letter only survives in Coptic, Ethiopic, and Latin translations. Within the Coptic version of the *Epistle of the Apostles*, Jesus speaks to his disciples about his conception within Mary. In doing so, he assumes his disciples are familiar with Luke's version of the Annunciation, but then Jesus clarifies that there is more to the story than his disciples realize; it was really Christ himself who appeared to Mary in the angelic guise of Gabriel:

> "For you know that the angel Gabriel brought the good news to Mary?" We answered, "Yes, Lord." Then he answered and said to us, "Do you not remember that I told you a moment ago that I became an angel among angels and all in everything?" We said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he answered and said to us, "When I took the form (ⲧⲙⲟⲣⲫⲏ) of the angel Gabriel, I appeared to Mary and I spoke with her. Her mind (ⲡⲥϩⲛⲧ) received me,

she believed; sh[e mou]lded me (ⲁⲥⲣⲡ[ⲗ]ⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓ),[51] I entered into her, I became flesh.

For I became my own servant in the appearance of the likeness (ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲛⲉ) of an angel."[52]

To my knowledge, other scholars have not noticed the role that Mary's maternal imprinting gaze plays in the *Epistle of the Apostles'* version of the Annunciation. However, the role of Mary's sight seems apparent in the text. Jesus appears to Mary in angelic form. Mary then receives this angelic sight of Jesus into her mind (ⲥϩⲛⲧ), and from this, she molds the fleshly Jesus in her womb into the likeness of the angelic Jesus she saw. That the author of the *Epistle of the Apostles* reinterpreted Gabriel's visit to Mary through the lens of the imprinting efficacy of the female gaze upon a conceived child leaves open the question as to how many other Christians embraced a similar interpretation of the Annunciation in Luke.

These Annunciation stories remind us that due to the role of the gaze in embryology, a theophany is a gendered experience full of procreative potential and efficacy, especially when it occurs in the sight of a woman of procreative age. And although they do not explicitly elucidate the gazing practices of married Christians in the bedroom, these Annunciation stories do assume readers' awareness of such belief and capitalize upon it in order to convey the procreative import of Gabriel's appearance to Mary. And in the broader Greco-Roman cultural context, they also

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[51] In their critical edition, Carl Schmidt and Isaak Wajnberg suggest the reconstruction ⲁⲓⲣⲡ[ⲗ]ⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓ ("I formed myself") for this phrase, but they note in a footnote that the reconstruction ⲁⲥⲣⲡ[ⲗ]ⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓ ("She formed me") is also possible. See Carl Schmidt and Isaak Wajnberg, eds., *Gespräche Jesu mit seinen Jüngern nach der Auferstehung: Ein katholisch-apostolisches Sendschreiben des 2. Jahrhunderts.* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1919), 5*. Since the preceding passages speaks of Mary seeing Jesus and receiving him into her mind, this passage is best understood in the context of the imprinting power of Mary's procreative gaze. For this reason, I think it is more likely that the passage speaks of Mary forming Jesus (ⲁⲥⲣⲡ[ⲗ]ⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓ) and not him forming himself (ⲁⲓⲣⲡ[ⲗ]ⲁⲥⲥⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓ). However, even if the text does speak of Jesus forming himself, it does not negate the role of the procreative gaze in the text, since Jesus by appearing to Mary in the form of Gabriel in some sense "forms himself" since he actively manipulated his own fleshly form by appearing to his mother in angelic form shortly before she conceived his body. Thus, Jesus is the reason his own body is imprinted or formed with the likeness of Mary's pre-conception angelic visitor (ie., Jesus' angelic self).

[52] *Epistle of the Apostles* 14.1-7; tr. Francis Watson, *An Apostolic Gospel: The "Epistula Apostolorum" in Literary Context*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 179 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) (slightly modified).

affirm that for Christians, an angel, as an object of the female gaze, possesses a far greater procreative impact than gazing upon the so-called gods of the polytheists or mere material images.

The Role of the Gaze in Christian Commentary on the Biblical Account of Jacob's Rods

Christian reception of the embryological gaze was not limited to Annunciation stories. Nor was it limited to the earliest centuries of Christianity. Jerome and Augustine both draw upon vision theory to explain the efficacy in Genesis 30:37-39 of Jacob placing "speckled" branches into watering troughs to breed speckled sheep. Jerome and Augustine confirm that this tactic worked because when the ewes drank from the troughs, they saw the speckled branches in the water. The lambs then turned out speckled, because the rams mated with the ewes while the image from the sight of the speckled branches was still in the ewes' minds. Jerome then recounts a story that confirms his belief that the female gaze possesses the same imprinting efficacy in the context of human procreation:

> Now it is not astonishing that this is the nature of female creatures in the act of conception: the offspring they produce are of such a kind as the things they observe or perceive in their minds in the most intense heat of sexual pleasure. For this very thing is reported by the Spaniards to happen even among herds of horses; and Quintilian, in that lawsuit in which a married woman was accused of having given birth to an Ethiopian, brought as evidence in her defense that what we have been describing above is a natural process in the conception of offspring.[53]

[53] *On Genesis* 30:33; tr. Robert Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 67. For critical edition: J.-P. Migne, ed., *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri Liber Hebraicarum Quaestionum in Genesim.* PL 23 (Paris, 1845). Heliodorus, who lived in third- or fourth-century Syria, reports a similar phenomenon, except in his account, it is an Ethiopian princess who gives birth to a white child after staring at a picture of a white Andromeda while having sex with her husband (*Aethiopica* 4.8).

For Jerome, what a female, whether animal or human, sees at the time of conception leaves an impact on the offspring.

Augustine is particularly fond of the story of Jacob's rods and wields the role of vision in the story as an illustrative tool in his doctrines on Original Sin and on the body and the soul. Augustine interprets this story via the widespread understanding of the interrelationship between a mother's vision-soul loop and her appetite-passion-soul loop and the resulting imprinting impacts upon the child she conceives:

> Note how easily the little body of the chameleon turns very easily into the colors that it sees. In other animals, whose bodily bulk does not lend itself so easily to such changes, the fetus usually shows some traces of the passionate desires of their mothers, whatever it was that they gazed upon with great delight. For the more tender, and so to speak, the more formable the original seeds were, the more effectually and the more capably do they follow the inclination of their mothers' soul and the phantasy which arose in it through the body upon which it looked with passion. There are numerous examples of this which could be mentioned, but one from the most trustworthy books will suffice: in order that the sheep and the she-goats might give birth to speckled offspring, Jacob had rods of various colors placed before them in the watering-troughs, to look at as they drank, during that period when they had conceived.[54]

In the *City of God*, Augustine confirms that this phenomenon of the imprinting female gaze is not limited to animals: "And granted that the different states of a pregnant woman's soul (*anima*) can, as it were, endow her unborn child with certain qualities, just as Jacob with the variegated rods

[54] *On the Trinity* 11.2.5; tr. Stephen MacKenna, *The Trinity*, vol. 45, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 321–22. See also *On the Trinity* 3.8.15. For critical edition: W.J. Mountain and Fr. Glorie, eds., *De trinitate libri XV, (Libri I-XII)*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 50(Turnhout: Brepols, 1968).

caused flocks of varied colours to be born…"[55] And in his *Questions on Heptateuch*, Augustine recounts a story, which he attributes to Hippocrates, of a woman who was suspected of committing adultery after giving birth to a beautiful child whose beauty did not resemble either parent. At the suggestion of a physician, her bedroom was searched, and she was exonerated when an image of a beautiful being[56] is found in her bedroom that explained the child's beautiful form.[57] Since Augustine recounts this story in support of the role of the maternal gaze in the biblical account of Jacob's rods, this story serves as another example of Augustine's acceptance of the imprinting power of the maternal gaze in human conception.

Neither Jerome nor Augustine is interested in giving instructions to married Christians about what a wife should stare at in the bedroom so as to conceive children in a manner appropriate to Christianized marriage. However, by affirming that what a woman sees and desires imprints itself upon her children, their acceptance of such a belief allows us to conjecture that many married Christians would have shared a similar understanding about the procreative efficacy of the female gaze. The question then becomes, how would this belief have then impacted the gazing of Christian women in their bedrooms?

Christianizing the Gaze in the Bedroom: Some Possibilities from Clement and John Chrysostom

As we have seen in the examples from Jerome and Augustine, unlike the Jewish rabbis, most Christian authors seem more reticent to describe what exactly a married Christian woman

[55] *City of God* 12.26. For text and translation: Philip Levine, *The City of God Against the Pagans: Books XII - XV*, Loeb Classical Library 414 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966) (slightly modified).
[56] Augustine does not disclose the nature of the image, but since it results in a beautiful child, it is clear that it is an image of a being that is beautiful.
[57] *Questions on Heptateuch* 1.93 (on Genesis); tr. Joseph T. Lienhard, *Writings on the Old Testament*, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century 14 (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2016). For Latin text: Walter Groß, ed., *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum, Fragen zum Heptateuch*, Augustinus Opera - Werke 57 (Leiden: Brill | Schöningh, 2018).

should or even should not gaze at during sexual intercourse in order to instill a more desirable or God-approved resemblance in their children. There are, however, some possibilities. While neither author links the practices to procreation itself, the second-century Clement of Alexandria makes it clear what Christians should *not* look at in the bedroom. And John Chrysostom provides us one example of what some Christians in fifth-century Antioch were looking at in their bedrooms.[58]

In line with his belief that Christians should and can extinguish all desire,[59] Clement polemicizes against the sexually explicit stories and images of the Greek gods due to the desire and lewd behavior that he thinks these images arouse in humans. It is possible, however, that Clement also has the imprinting power of the female gaze in mind when he criticizes non-Christians for staring at images that depict the sexual embraces of the gods while having sexual intercourse, a practice in which Christians themselves should certainly not engage:

> Casting off shame and fear, they have their homes decorated with pictures representing the unnatural lust of the daemons. In the lewdness to which their thoughts are given, they adorn their chambers with painted tablets hung on high like votive offerings, regarding licentiousness as piety; and, when lying upon the bed, while still in the midst of their own embraces, they fix their gaze upon that naked Aphrodite, who lies bound in her adultery. Also, approving of the representation of effeminacy, they engrave in the hoops of their rings the amorous bird on rings hovering over Leda, using a seal which reflects the licentiousness of Zeus.[60]

Notice that it is within this polemic against the gazing at images during sex that Clement also rails against the sexualized and polytheistic images that adorn rings. Did he envision that traditional

[58] For a more explicit example, see my discussion of the *Gospel of Philip* below.
[59] I discuss Clement's views on desire, including his belief that married Christians can have sex without desire, in ch. 1.
[60] *Exhortation to the Greeks* 4; for text and translation Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria*, 137 (slightly modified).

polytheists also stared at these images on the rings in the midst of their sexual embraces? Interestingly, a rabbinic source from the sixth century CE suggests that Romans used their wedding rings in such a manner as part of their attempt to manipulate and maximize the imprinting efficacy of the procreative gaze:

> [It is written]: "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold" (Lamentations 4:2). What is meant by "comparable to fine gold"? ... It means that they put fine gold to shame with their beauty. Previously, the Roman nobility used to attach the seal of a ring in front of them and have intercourse in their bed. From now onwards they brought the sons of Israel, tied them to the foot of their beds and had intercourse.[61]

Neis has argued that the rabbis depict the Roman nobility using their wedding rings as objects of their gazes, along with the substitution of those rings with presumably handsomer male Jewish slaves, precisely because of the imprinting power of the gaze upon a conceived child.[62] This Babylonian rabbinic account of the Romans' use of rings as objects of the gaze during sex is far removed in time and space from Clement's own account of rings and cannot be understood as a historical account of Roman practice.[63] Nonetheless, it invites us to reflect upon Clement's own linking of iconic rings to his broader polemic against the gazing at images in the bedroom during sexual intercourse. And it raises the possibility that like the later rabbis, he envisions the images

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[61] *b. Gittin* 58a; tr. Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 154.
[62] Neis, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*, 153–56.
[63] As evidenced by the archaeological evidence, Christianized marriage rings were not in use until the early Byzantine period. Through the study of rings' imagery, scholars have tended to see these marriage rings as more than symbolic objects and assigned them various ritual power from fecundity to harmony within the marriage. To my knowledge, no scholar has explored the rings as potential objects of a Christianized marital gaze, and such an investigation is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, in light of the belief in the imprinting power of the gaze on a developing fetus, and the assumed presence of marriage rings in the bedroom, this type of investigation may prove fruitful. On Byzantine marriage rings, see Gary Vikan, "Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium," in *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*, Rev. ed, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Washington, D.C.: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 145–63; Alicia Walker, "Myth and Magic in Early Byzantine Marriage Ritual Jewelry: The Persistence of Pre-Christian Traditions," in *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59-78.

of the rings as objects of the sexualized gaze. Either way, through his polemic against the practice, Clement conveys that gazing at sexualized polytheistic images of the gods should not be part of married Christians' sexual (and thus procreative) practices. In effect, he advocates for a Christianization of the marital sexual gaze by conveying what Christians should *not* look at during sex, which for Clement, should only be undertaken for procreative purposes. He does not, however, relay what images, if any, should replace these depictions of the gods in Christians' bedrooms. Did he envision Christians instead looking at more "Christian-like" objects in the bedroom, or did he envision Christians having sex like Imma Shalom's husband (i.e., with minimal looking)?

Whereas our knowledge of the materiality of Christians' bedrooms is obscured in the writings of Clement, two hundred years later, John Chrysostom *does* give us a glimpse into the image-adorned bedrooms of Christians in Antioch. In the year 386 CE, John Chrysostom composed a homily on the well-loved Antiochian bishop Meletius, who Chrysostom reports had died five years earlier. In this homily, delivered in Antioch, Chrysostom expounds upon all the ways in which congregants show their love for Meletius. Chrysostom speaks of their participation in an annual festival to commemorate Meletius and their practice of naming their children after him. In addition, he praises them for the images that they display of the blessed Meletius upon their bodies and homes:

> At least, what you did with names, this you practiced, too, in the case of that man's image. For truly, many carved that holy image on finger rings and on seals and on cups and on bedroom walls (ἐν θαλάμων τοίχοις) and all over the place so that one didn't just hear that

holy name, but also saw the depictions of his body all over the place and had a double consolation for his loss.[64]

In this description of Christians' ritualized use of Meletius' image, Chrysostom uses the Greek term *thalamos* to refer to the room in which Christians are painting or placing images of Meletius upon the walls. A *thalamos* is an inner bedroom associated with women and the marital sexual act, and as such, is also frequently translated as "bridal chamber."[65] In these Christians' sexualized marital bedrooms, their walls are not bedecked with depictions of the gods, but images of the saintly Meletius. Chrysostom does not provide an explanation as to why Christians particularly choose the *thalamos* of their homes, rather than a more public room, for images of Meletius. But due to what we know was the widespread belief that the images a woman sees during coitus can imprint physical and moral characteristics, and even abilities, upon her child, it is plausible that these Antiochian Christians chose the *thalamos* precisely out of a hope that Meletius' image by the marital bed would reap procreative benefits, much like R. Yohanan, producing beautifully pious children.[66]

Christianizing the Mental Gaze in the Bedroom: The Image of the Lord in the Gospel of Philip

The *Gospel of Philip* serves as the most explicit witness that at least some Christians sought to Christianize the female gaze by redirecting it to a more appropriate Christian object:

The one whom the woman loves, those whom she will bear resemble him. If it is her husband, they resemble her husband. If it is an adulterer, they resemble the adulterer. Often

[64] *On Meletius*; tr. Wendy Mayer, *The Cult of the Saints: Selected Homilies and Letters*, Popular Patristic Series 31 (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 43. For critical edition: J.-P. Migne, ed., *S. Joannes Chrysostomus*. PG 50 (Paris, 1862).
[65] See also my discussion of *thalamos* as a "bridal chamber" in chapter five.
[66] Blake Leyerle has written on the "female gaze" in the works of John Chrysostom, but her interest is focused on the eroticized and transgressive nature of women's gazes and the perceived harm those gazes have upon men. See Blake Leyerle, "John Chrysostom on the Gaze," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993): 159–74.

> if a woman sleeps with her husband according to a necessity, yet her mind is on the adulterer while she has sex with him [i.e., her husband], the one she will beget resembles the adulterer. But you (pl.), who exist with the son of God, do not love the world. But love the Lord, so that the ones you (pl.) will beget will not come into being resembling the world but will come into being resembling the Lord.[67]

April DeConick has pointed out that this passage of the *Gospel of Philip* is situated within and fueled by the widespread belief in the imprinting power of the female gaze via the mental images it inscribes onto the mother's soul.[68] Although there is no mention of a material object within the *Gospel of Philip* which addresses toward what a woman can direct her gaze to ensure her children resemble the Lord, as discussed above, the underpinning theory as to why a mother's gaze has an imprinting impact upon a conceived child is because sight, fueled by desire, imprints an image into the mother's mind. It is then this mental image that imprints its resemblance upon the mother's child. Mental contemplation of images was often touted by Christians as a means to control inappropriate desire (see ch. 1), but this passage takes the power of mental images one step further by assigning an active and positive role to a pregnant woman's mind-fueled desire and imagination in the procreative process. By drawing upon the imprinting efficacy of a mother's gaze, the *Gospel of Philip* embraces mental contemplation as a sexualized and procreative ritualized practice within Christian marriage. A woman's use of this mental contemplation helps ensure that the children a woman conceives resemble the mental image of the Lord that their mother had in her mind and desired at the time of their conception. As we have seen in previous examples, a mother's mental image is not only capable of imprinting a physical resemblance upon a child, but a resemblance of moral characteristics or divine abilities as well. Furthermore, although the *Gospel of Philip* does

[67] *Gos. Phil.* 78.12-20.
[68] DeConick, "The Great Mystery of Marriage," 335–36. See also note 47 in this chapter.

not explicitly mention a material object upon which a woman can stare in order to generate a mental image of the Lord, by recognizing the imprinting power of mental images, it clearly embraces the theory of sight upon which such belief is based.

Conclusion

The examples discussed above suggest that many Christians would have embraced the belief that what a Christian, especially a Christian woman, gazed upon in the bedroom had an impact upon the formation of the child. As we have seen, this belief is most evident in the *Gospel of Philip*, which remains the only Christian text that provides explicit guidance as to what should fill a married woman's mind during sexual intercourse. The role of the gaze in the *Gospel of Philip* further raises questions about the role of materiality and visual aesthetics within the gospel's ritualized bridal chamber in achieving its goal of Christianizing marriage and procreation. It is to this topic that I turn my attention in chapter five.

Chapter Three

The Sanctifying Power of Christian Marriage and the Conception of Holy Children

> For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the brother. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. – 1 Corinthians 7:14
>
> In much the same way, Cleanthes believed that just as there are bodily resemblances between parents and their children, so also qualities of soul are directly transmitted from the souls of the parents. – Tertullian, *On the Soul* 5.4[1]

In addition to helping control or manipulate desire, many early Christians held the belief that Christians' marriages acted as a source of sanctification for the married couple and their children. Christians oftentimes understood this marital sanctification to be empowered by baptism, as already noted by scholars of early Christian baptism, but at other times they situated its efficacy in other Christian rituals or left its origin unexplained. Regardless of what lay behind its efficacy, during sexual intercourse this sanctification therapeutically enabled the Christian couple to conceive holy children, who in the words of Paul, "otherwise would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). In Paul's view, this sanctification was in effect even if only one of the spouses was a believer. This belief that Christian marriage produces holy children can be found in pre-fifth-century CE texts such as the *Gospel of Philip*, as well as in the writings of authors like Clement, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Hilary of Poitiers, and Ambrosiaster. It was also embraced into at least the fifth century CE, at which time Augustine the influential bishop of Hippo actively worked to undermine the potency of this belief among Christians of his time in order to support his doctrine

[1] *On the Soul* 5.4; tr. Rudolphus Arbesmann, Sister Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain, *Tertullian, Apologetical Works; Marcus Minucius Felix, Octavius*, The Fathers of the Church 10 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

that all humans, even those born to married baptized Christians, are born with Original Sin, and thus are not as holy as his opponents would imply through their interpretation of Paul's words in 1 Cor. 7:14.

Producing Holy Children: The Sanctifying Efficacy of Christian Marriage

The Lasting Influence of 1 Corinthians 7:14

Paul establishes the sanctifying therapeutic efficacy of Christian marriage in his response to the Corinthians on what a member of the community should do if he or she is married to an unbeliever. Paul exhorts the Corinthians that if the unbelieving spouse is willing to remain married to the Christian spouse, the Christian spouse should not divorce the unbelieving husband or wife. He then provides a rationale for his position as to why divorce should be avoided when possible: "For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the brother. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). Since Paul does not elaborate the process by which the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse occurs, both ancient and modern readers of this verse have proposed various interpretations of how Paul envisioned this sanctification taking place. Some scholars have interpreted the origin of this sanctification in a manner that distances it from sexual intercourse.[2] I find these interpretations unpersuasive, because it seems clear to me that Paul's primary concern with

[2] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor for example interprets Paul's comment to be referring to the sanctifying power of a proper upbringing by Christian parents ("Works Without Faith in 1 Cor., VII, 14," *Revue Biblique* 84 [1977]: 349–61). Some scholars decenter the role of the parents even more by assigning the sanctifying power as actually lying outside of the parents. In these interpretations, the parental role in sanctification is described as a process of facilitation in which the sanctified parents are not themselves the origin of the child's sanctification, but rather facilitate access (whether in the present or in the future) to a sanctification that originates outside of the parents themselves, such as in infant baptism (J.C. O'Neil, "1 Corinthians 7,14 and Infant Baptism," in *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, style, et conception du ministère*, ed. A. Vanhoye [Leuven: Leuven University Press / Peeters, 1986], 357–61) or membership into a holy Christian community (Margaret Y. MacDonald and Leif E. Vaage, "Unclean but Holy Children: Paul's Everyday Quandary in 1 Corinthians 7:14c," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 [July 2011]: 526–46).

uncleanness and sanctification in this passage is in response to procreative angst amongst the Corinthians. He soothes their concerns by explaining why it takes only one Christian within a marriage to experience sanctification during the sexual act and thus produce holy children. By interpreting 1 Corinthians 7:14 through a halakic lens in which he argues that Paul is applying and reforming Jewish legal notions about the legal status of children from mixed marriage, so as to give the legal and communal status of "holy" to children regardless of whether it is their mother or father who is the believer, Yonder Moyhnihan Gillihan similarly characterizes Paul's primary concern to be about the procreative ramifications of a Christian being married to a non-Christian.[3] Gillihan does not situate the origin of the holiness of the children in the procreative sexual act itself, but rather emphasizes the children's state of "holy" as an expression of their communal status after their conception, birth, and acceptance into the community. Other scholars, however, have argued that Paul *did* see a direct relationship between the couple's sexual union and the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse. William Davies and Albert Schweitzer both interpreted the spousal sanctification in 1 Corinthians 7:14 as occurring through the physical union of the husband and wife, in the same way that the believer is sanctified by his or her union with Christ.[4] Regardless of whether Paul viewed this sanctification as occurring via the sexual union of the couple or was present prior to and thus during their sexual union, it is apparent that the reason why members of the Corinthian church would have questioned Paul about divorcing an unbelieving spouse was due to an underlying worry about the effects of procreating with such a spouse. This

[3] Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, "Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121, no. 4 (2002): 711–44.

[4] William David Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 56; see also note 3 on this same page. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), 127. Peter Tomson similarly argues that 1 Cor. 7:14 means that union with a Christian "constituted de facto union with the body of Christ" (Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* [Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1990], 119).

would have been a concern that members of the church who were married to a fellow Christian would not have shared, because they would not have possessed any angst that Christian-to-Christian marriage would produce anything other than holy children. It is reasonable to infer that there was no doubt among the Corinthians that sanctification was present in Christian-to-Christian marriage, but they were concerned Christian-to-unbeliever marriage would not possess the same sanctifying and procreative efficacy during sexual reproduction. Paul reassures the Corinthians that there is no reason to worry. A Christian married to a non-Christian need not (and should not) divorce their unbelieving spouse, because even the participation of only one Christian in the marriage is enough to guarantee that the couple's sexual intercourse will possess a sanctifying procreative efficacy that guarantees their children's status as holy.[5]

Joachim Jeremias also implicates the sanctifying power of Christian marriage in 1 Cor. 7:14 in his influential work on infant baptism. Jeremias argues that prior to the second century, Christians baptized the infants and children of converts, but due to the sanctifying efficacy of marriage established by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:14, they did not baptize the children of Christians. Jeremias concludes that since Paul's analogy (i.e., the sanctification of the children is like the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse) only makes sense if the children had themselves not been sanctified via baptism, the sanctification of Christians' children did not derive from baptism, but from being conceived by at least one Christian parent.[6] Jeremias observes, "One believing member sanctifies the whole household; that is one of the most tremendous things that the New Testament says about marriage."[7] Jeremias contends that this early Christian practice of distinguishing

[5] Although the exact meaning of the passage has been much debated, Paul may have also presented marriage as a means to sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 as a defense against desire. See my discussion in chapter 1.
[6] Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. David Cairns, The Library of History and Doctrine (Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1962), 45. Everett Ferguson rejects that Paul of 1 Cor. 7:14. Everett Ferguson expresses a similar view.
[7] Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, 44–45.

between the children of converts and the children of baptized members of the Christian community was steeped in baptism's status as a conversion ritual and mirrored the role of conversion baptism in Jewish communities as attested by rabbinic sources. An opinion dated by the Talmudic rabbis to the Tannaitic period (pre-200 CE) declares that if a male child was born to an enslaved Gentile woman after her baptism, the child is to be treated as Jewish and circumcised on the eighth day. If, however, the male child was born to the enslaved Gentile mother before her baptism, the child was to be treated as a proselyte and circumcised on the first day of his birth.[8] Similarly for a female child, Jeremias points to the statement by the early fourth-century CE rabbi Rava that "If a non-Israelite during her pregnancy becomes a proselyte, then her child does not need the baptismal bath."[9] Jeremias concludes that the Christian practice of distinguishing between the infants of converts and those of Christians, which was motivated by 1 Cor. 7:14, quickly started to fade, and by the second century, a uniform practice of baptizing Christian infants developed.[10]

As Walter Schmithals has demonstrated, however, the evidence indicates that the practice of infant baptism was far from uniform in the second century and beyond.[11] In addition to arguing that Jeremias has misinterpreted some of the second-century evidence, Schmithals also points to Jeremias' own recognition that we know of Christians born after 329 CE into Christian families, but who themselves were not baptized as small children, such as "Basil the Great, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, Rufinus, Paul of Nola, and Gregory of Nazianzus".[12] Whereas Jeremias sees the above list to be an example of a fourth-century crisis that led to the "postponement" of baptism for Christians' children in the fourth century, Schmithals argues that it may in fact demonstrate

[8] *b. Shabbat* 135b.
[9] *b. Yevamot* 78a; tr. Jeremias, *Infant* Baptism, 39.
[10] Jeremias, *Infant Baptism*, 57-58.
[11] Walter Schmithals, "On the Problem of Baptizing Children in Early Christianity," in *The Theology of the First Christians*, trans. O.C. Dean, Jr., 1st ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).
[12] Schmithals, "On the Problem of Baptizing Children," 236.

that Christians did not see any need to baptize children born into Christian families even as they entered adulthood, due to what he sees as baptism's limited status as a communal, household ritual of conversion and due to the sanctifying power of marriage established by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:14:

> Actually, we may have come upon the last remnants of the early church practice of not baptizing the children of Christians at all. Then the wrongly named "postponement of baptism" of the fourth century shows that even Christians who had not previously known the baptism of their children went over to baptizing, or having themselves baptized – and at an age at which they, like pagan converts, could attend catechism instruction for adults. Only toward the end of the fourth century, after this transition period, was there a general trend toward baptizing Christian children and soon also infants.[13]

Schmithals concludes that prior to this time, Christians saw no need to baptize people born to baptized parents, because the latter were part of the community via their birth and not via baptism.[14]

I do not seek to resolve the debate regarding the origin of infant baptism, but rather I point to Jeremias' and Schmithals' work to indicate the way in which the sanctification of children via

[13] Schmithals, "On the Problem of Baptizing Children," 237.

[14] For more recent support of Schmithals' claims that draws further comparison with Jewish conversion baptism, see Daniel H. Weiss, "Born into Covenantal Salvation? Baptism and Birth in Early Christianity and Classical Rabbinic Judaism," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2017): 318–38. Everett Ferguson has also noted that there is no evidence that infants were baptized prior to the fourth century CE (or perhaps even later) except in emergency situations in which the infant might die. He rejects, however, that in undertaking these emergency baptisms, Christians distinguished between the children of believers and non-believers. In support of this position, he points to funerary inscriptions from the late second century or early third century CE which indicate that infants or small children of Christian parents were baptized before death. However, as Ferguson himself notes, these inscriptions do not say when the parents converted. Thus, I argue it is still possible that only a child who was conceived before their parents' baptism was baptized at death's door. See Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 372-77. Likely due to his rejection that Christians did not distinguish between the children conceived by baptized believers and the children conceived by non-believers, Ferugson does not discuss any potential role that 1 Cor. 7:14 may have played in Christians' decisions to not baptize infants prior to the fourth century. He instead sees the main reason why Christians delayed baptism of their children was due to a fear that the child might sin after being baptized (p. 627-33). However, as I discuss below, there is plentiful evidence that Christians embraced the sanctifying power of Christian marriage for their children. For this reason, I still find Jeremias' and Schmithals' positions more persuasive than that of Ferguson.

Christianized marriage is implicated in larger debates about Christian ritual. If this is the case, as we will see, the opposite can also be said: Christian ritual life, including baptism, is implicated in the study of the sanctifying power of Christianized marriage.

Gospel of Philip as a Roadmap: Sanctified versus Defiled Marriage

The opening words of the *Gospel of Philip* announce that a child born to a person who has already converted is not themselves a convert, but already a member of the community:[15] "A Hebrew person creates Hebrews. And one of this manner is called a proselyte. But a proselyte does not create proselytes."[16] Since the communal status of one's parent determines the communal status of a child, perhaps it is no surprise that the *Gospel of Philip* makes a distinction between the marriage of the world that is defiled and the superior form of Christianized marriage undertaken in the bridal chamber which it describes as pure or sanctified: "If the marriage of defilement (ⲡⲅⲁⲙⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡϫⲱϩⲙ) is hidden, how much more is the undefiled marriage a true mystery. It is not fleshly. But it is pure/sanctified (ⲉⲩⲧⲃ̄ϩⲩ)."[17] The *Gospel of Philip* also declares a holy person has the ability to sanctify or make other things holy, including even one's own body: "The holy man is completely holy (ⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ), even his body. For if he takes the bread, he makes it holy (ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ). Or the cup or all the other remaining things which he takes, he purifies (ⲉⲩⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟ) them.

[15] Hans-Martin Schenke has interpreted this passage through a different lens that distances it from actual begetting of children. He argues that the passage is best understood through a missionizing context in which a proselyte's inability to create a Hebrew is a reference to a convert's inability to persuade others to also convert. Thus, according to Schenke, the convert to Judaism is "missionarily barren" (missionarisch unfruchtbar). In this state then, the proselyte is "a Hebrew *in statu nascendi*," who since they are still undergoing birth themselves, is unable to "create" other converts (Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 140). R. McL. Wilson argues that while it is possible to interpret the passage through a missionizing lens, it is more likely that the passage refers to a distinction between being Jewish by conversion versus natural birth (R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip*, 63–64.

[16] *Gos. Phil.* 51.29-32.

[17] *Gos. Phil.* 82.4-7.

And how will he not purify (ϥ-ⲛⲁ-ⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟ) also the body?"[18] In addition to purifying the body, sanctified or "pure" (ⲧⲃ̄ⲃⲏⲩ) marriage involves cleansing the mind of all negative forms of desire by directing the thoughts toward the Lord.[19] As we saw in chapter two, when this sanctifying of mind is effectively undertaken (especially by the woman), it bestows a therapeutic procreative benefit upon the couple which allows them to conceive righteous children that resemble the Lord and not the defiled world.[20] Those who practice the Christianized marriage of the bridal chamber are also said to conceive while giving a kiss of grace: "For the perfect ones through a kiss, conceive and beget! Therefore, we too kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which is in each other."[21]

The Sanctifying Power of Marriage in Patristic Sources

Similar to the *Gospel of Philip*, Clement draws from a variety of scriptural sources, including Paul's letters, to distinguish between pure and defiled marriage. As already well documented by Kathy Gaca, Clement is an advocate for the "holy" or "pure" (ἅγιος) marriages of rightly-guided Christians, who engage in sexual intercourse only for the sake of procreation.[22] He condemns, however, the "defiled" (μιαρός), desire-driven sexual practices of misguided married Christians or non-Christians, who do not limit sexual intercourse for procreative purposes but instead use it as a source of pleasure. In his arguments against Christians who reject marriage as fornication, Clement expresses that God affirms marriage in his Law for the sake of procreation.[23]

[18] *Gos. Phil.* 77.2-7.
[19] See chapter one for further examples of contemplative exercises promoted by Christian authors as a means to combat desire.
[20] *Gos. Phil.* 78.12-25.
[21] *Gos. Phil.* 59.2-7.
[22] Kathy L. Gaca, "Prophylactic Grace in Clement's Emergent Church Sexual Ethic," in *The Making of Fornication,* 253.
[23] *Stromata* 3.12.82(3).

Therefore, "If the Law is holy, marriage is holy (ἅγιος)."[24] And the resulting children are sanctified not only via birth, but through education, "Just as 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit' (John 3:6), not just in the process of birth but in its education (κατὰ τὴν μάθησιν). So 'the children are holy' (1 Cor. 7:14), objects of delight, when the Lord's words have brought the soul to God as a bride."[25] In this passage, Clement pinpoints the beginning of a child's sanctification to be his or her birth, but also characterizes it as an ongoing process that is enabled by proper Christian education. To be born of non-Christian parents is to be born flesh from flesh, but to be begotten by Christian parents and to undergo a Christian education means a child is spirit begotten from spirit.

When a marriage's sexual relation takes place for the sake of procreation according to God's law, Clement sets it apart from fornication at a distance "as great as separates the devil from God."[26] Whereas fornication wields sex for the sake of pleasure, Clement argues that Christian marriage restricts sexual intercourse to the marital bond and stays focused on the real purpose of God-given monogamous marriage: the conception of children.[27] Along this same vein, he interprets the declaration in Baruch 3:10-11 that "You were defiled in an alien land" as a condemnation of non-monogamous sexual intercourse, which he contrasts with the procreative sexual practices of rightly-guided Christians:

> It is in relation to these matters that the prophet says, "It was through your own sins that you were sold," and again, "You experienced defilement in an alien land." He is applying

[24] *Stromata* 3.12.84(2). The translations here and below from books 1-3 of the *Stromata* are from Ferguson, *Stromateis*.
[25] *Stromata* 3.12.84(3).
[26] *Stromata* 3.12.84(4).
[27] *Stromata* 3.12.82(1-3).

the idea of defilement to a partnership involving an alien body rather than the body given away in marriage for the purpose of producing children.[28]

Clement advocates that Christians should Christianize their marriages by engaging in sexual practices only for the sake of procreation, which is in itself a logos-fueled therapeutic benefit of Christian marriage, "For the rest of humankind, marriage finds concord in the experience of pleasure, but the marriage of true lovers of wisdom leads to a concord derived from the logos."[29] Like farmers who plant wheat and barley at the right moment, Christians should carefully sow their seeds, "So marriage should be sanctified of every foul and defiled practice."[30]

While at times Clement speaks of the sanctification of marriage as a moral imperative, at other times, he speaks of the sanctification of marriage as a therapeutic benefit of Christianized marriage. Clement establishes that Christian marriage, when undertaken with thankfulness (εὐχάριστος) toward God,[31] is uniquely capable of achieving undefiled sexual practice, precisely because "It is sanctified (ἁγιάζεται) by God's Word and by prayer,"[32] while non-Christian marriage is not. Clement applies the words ascribed to Paul in Titus 1:15 that "To the pure (τοῖς καθαροῖς) all things are pure (καθαρὰ)" to the marriages of both bishops and Christians more broadly.[33] A true Christianized marriage is purified of sexual immorality due to the purifying waters of baptism, which Clement argues some Christians have misunderstood as meaning that even immoral behavior (for which he provides an exhaustive list that includes forms of sexual licentiousness) is pure for baptized Christians: "We used to be such (they say), but 'have passed through the purifying waters.' But they purify themselves for this licentiousness. Their baptism is

[28] *Stromata* 3.12.89(2).
[29] *Stromata* 2.23.143(1).
[30] *Stromata* 2.23.143(3): πᾶν οὖν εἴ τι ῥυπαρόν καὶ μεμολυσμένον ἐπιτήδευμα ἀφαγνιστέον τοῦ γάμου
[31] *Stromata* 2.23.145(1) and 3.12.85(1), 86(1), and 88(2).
[32] *Stromata* 3.12.85(1).
[33] *Stromata* 3.18.109(1).

out of responsible self-control into sexual immorality (εἰς πορνείαν)."[34] Yet, despite Clement's wariness of the misuse of baptism's sanctification for *porneia,*[35] and much like the author of the *Gospel of Philip,*[36] Clement describes the sexual bodies of Christians as holy.[37] He further assigns a benefit of sanctification to Christians' marital sexual unions by tying Paul's words regarding mutual spousal sanctification in 1 Corinthians 7:14 to Jesus' declaration in Matthew 19:5-6 that the "two shall become one single flesh."[38]

As part of his polemic against Christians who say that all marriage is defiled (μιαράν), Clement argues that these Christians themselves must be defiled, since they owe their existence to sexual intercourse. For Clement, to call all marriage defiled is to erase the benefit to Christians' progeny, who are sexually conceived via the sanctified bodies of their parents. He declares, "I think that the seed from the sanctified is even holy."[39] Again in response to anti-marriage Christians, Clement quotes a passage from Isaiah to affirm that the seed of the elect (ἐκλεκτοί) is not cursed, but rather blessed by God.[40] He reserves this divine blessing as a therapeutic marital benefit reserved only for rightly-guided Christians: "The Lord's true elect do not dogmatize or produce children to be under a curse; they leave that to the heretical sects."[41] In line with this blessing from God, he states that those Christians who raise their children in obedience to reason

[34] *Stromata* 3.18.109(2).
[35] Since Clement viewed marital sexual pleasure as a form of adultery and adultery as a form of *porneia,* it seems probable that Clement would lump baptized, married Christians who engage in spousal sex for pleasure into the larger category of Christians whom he accuses of misusing the sanctification of baptism to cover a multitude of sins. For a broader discussion of early Christian views on *porneia* within the marriage bond, see David Wheeler-Reed, Jennifer W. Knust, and Dale B. Martin, "Can a Man Commit Πορνεία with His Wife?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 2 (2018): 383–98. The authors' discussion of Clement can be found on p. 396-98.
[36] *Gos. Phil.* 77.2-7.
[37] *Stromata* 3.6.47(2); 3.8.62(3); 3.11.77(3); 3.12.88(3); 3.12.89(2); 3.17.104(4).
[38] *Stromata* 3.6.47(1-2).
[39] *Stromata* 3.6.46(5). τῶν ἁγιασθέντων ἅγιον οἶμαι καί τὸ σπέρμα.
[40] *Stromata*. 3.15.98(3). Quoting LXX Isaiah 65:23.
[41] *Stromata* 3.15.98(5).

(*logos*) and instruct them in the way of the Lord, will receive a reward (μισθός) from God both for themselves and for their elect seed (ἐκλεκτῷ σπέρματι).[42]

Tertullian, writing from late second-century Carthage, suggests that some Christians were using Paul's passage on the sanctifying efficacy of marriage to justify marrying non-Christians out of a belief that Paul taught such marriages were allowed since the Christian spouse could sanctify the unbelieving spouse. At least this is the justification that Tertullian imagines these Christian are using when they contract marriage with an unbeliever. He surmises, "Can it be, I ask, that such

[42] *Stromata* 3.15.98(4). Scholars have also attributed to Clement a belief in a soteriological benefit to reproduction in his application of 1 Timothy 2:15 to married bishops. But I believe this is an error that arises out of a misunderstanding, and thus mistranslation, of Clement's usage in *Strom*. 3.12.90(1) of the notoriously debated phrase, σωθήσεται διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, as found in 1 Timothy 2:15. Ferguson's translation of this passage in Clement is representative of the current scholarly understanding, and reads as follows, "In fact, he [Paul] expresses approval of the man who is husband of a single wife, whether elder, deacon, or layman, if he gives no ground for criticism in his conduct of his marriage. He 'will find salvation in bringing children into the world'" (*Stromata* 3.12.90(1)). However, it is clear from the surrounding context that Clement uses this phrase in one of two ways (or perhaps intentionally evokes both meanings), neither of which implies that Clement sees a soteriological instrumentality to bearing children. (1) When read in the context of the preceding sentences that lead up to his usage of 1 Timothy 2:15, it apparent that what Clement thinks a married bishop is being kept safe from (σωθήσεται) are damaging rumors of impropriety and the influence of Satan; the same perils that unmarried, younger women face in 3.12.89(3). The bishop faces those same perils unless he gives no grounds for criticism by marrying and having children. Thus, "he will be protected [from rumors and Satan] by bringing children into the world." (2) When read within the context of the passages that follow his usage of 1 Tim. 2:15, it becomes possible to read a soteriological meaning of σωθήσεται into Clement's usage of the passage, but even in this interpretative scenario, it is clear that Clement does not render an instrumental meaning of "by/via" for the preposition διὰ in the prepositional phrase διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, but a temporal meaning of "throughout/during." When διὰ is rendered into English with a temporal sense, "[the married bishop] will be saved throughout childbearing," it sets up the foundation upon which Clement continues to build in the following passages in which he emphasizes that he thinks it is ridiculous that some Christians think married Christians will not be saved. He states, "For on this argument neither those who were righteous before the coming of Christ nor those who have married after his coming will be saved, even if they are apostles" (*Strom*. 3.12.90(4)). Thus, just like married apostles (who clearly would only marry for procreative purposes according to Clement's nuptial theology), a married bishop "will be saved throughout childbearing." To suggest otherwise, as Clement makes clear, is to suggest that the married apostles themselves could not have been saved during their marital procreative years. (3) Since Clement wields 1 Timothy 2:15 as part of his transition between his discussion of marriage's protection for young women and his assertion that married apostles, and thus all Christians, are saved during married life, it is possible that Clement intentionally evokes both interpretational possibilities in his assertion that a married bishop "σωθήσεται διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας." None of the broader context that frames Clement's usage of 1 Tim. 2:15 suggests that he understands a soteriological instrumentality in a bishop's procreative act. Origen is the only other pre-fourth-century author who makes use of 1 Tim. 2:15, but he never applies the verse to actual women and childbirth. He instead wields 1 Tim. 2:15 allegorically as a verse that speaks of the childbearing of the soul (*Homily on Joshua* 22.3, *Commentary on Matthew* 17.31) or the Church (*Homily on Genesis* 6.3, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 2.3). For further analysis of early Christian authors' usage of 1 Timothy 2:15, including that of Clement's mentioned above, see the forthcoming publication, Jason BeDuhn and Jennifer Hunter, "'Saved through childbearing?' The Enigma of 1 Tim 2:15 and its Interpretation in Early Christianity."

persons justify themselves by an appeal to that chapter in First Corinthians where it is written…"[43] He then quotes the entirety of 1 Cor. 7:12-14, and again surmises, "This directive, which is meant for those of the faith who are actually married to pagans, they understand, possibly, in an unrestricted sense, as also conveying permission to contract marriage with pagans."[44] Even while Tertullian himself rejects the practice of using 1 Cor. 7:12-14 to justify a Christian's marriage to an unbeliever, his condemnation of the practice suggests that Christians in Carthage, drawing from 1 Co. 7:12-14, envisioned the sanctifying therapeutic power of Christian marriage to extend to all Christians' marriages, regardless to whom the Christian was married (a fellow believer or to a non-believer). While recognizing that the unbeliever may be sanctified through marriage with a believer, Tertullian works to limit this sanctifying power of Christian-to-unbeliever marriage to only those mismatched marriages which were contracted prior to the Christian spouse's conversion. He does this by arguing that 1 Cor. 7:12-14 should be understood in light of Paul's exhortation to widows in verse 39 that they are allowed to remarry, but "only in the Lord." Tertullian interprets Paul's usage of "in the Lord" to mean that Christian widows are only allowed to remarry if they marry another Christian, a requirement which Tertullian by extension applies not only to the remarriages of widows, but to all Christians' marriages, whether they be first marriages or remarriages.[45] For Tertullian, this means that the sanctifying therapeutic benefit of Christian marriage for unbelieving spouses is only effective in those marriages that predate a Christian spouse's conversion:

[43] *To His Wife* 2.2; tr. Le Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage, etc.*
[44] *To His Wife* 2.2; tr. Le Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage, etc.*
[45] The meaning of Paul's exhortation to marry "only in the Lord" is unclear. While most patristic writers interpret this phrase to mean that Christians should only marry fellow Christians, other writers interpret the phrase as prohibiting marrying for the sake of desire. For this understanding of "in the Lord," see my discussion in chapter one.

> Secondly, Scripture states that those who are converted while living in marriage with a pagan are not defiled, because their partners are sanctified along with them. If this is true, then doubtless those who become Christians before their marriage and later on take a pagan wife, are unable to sanctify her flesh *(carni*) since they were not married at the time of their conversion. The grace of God sanctifies things as it finds them. Therefore, whatever could not be sanctified remains unclean; and whatever is unclean has no part in what is holy.[46]

Tertullian speaks of the sanctifying power of baptism on the fleshly body in his treatise *On Baptism*.[47] The sanctification that a Christian undergoes at conversion is that of baptism. When a married person converts to Christianity and is sanctified through baptism, the flesh of their unbelieving and unparticipating spouse is sanctified along with the believing spouse's own flesh, because they have already become one flesh via marital sexual union (Gen. 2:24) prior to the believing spouse's baptism. For Tertullian, Christians cannot sanctify an unbelieving spouse to whom they are not married at the time of their baptism, because baptismal sanctification cannot sanctify the flesh of a spouse with whom the Christian is not already fleshly joined (ie., become one flesh with) at the moment the Christian's flesh is sanctified via baptism. God's grace sanctifies flesh though baptism only as it finds that flesh at the baptismal moment.

Tertullian, furthermore, envisions this sanctification of the flesh as having an efficacious benefit during sexual intercourse and for the children produced thereof. This position aligns with Tertullian's teaching that the soul is corporeal. In his effort to emphasize this corporeal nature of the soul in his treatise *On the Soul*, he cites a passage from the fourth- to third-century BCE Stoic

[46] *To His Wife* 2.2; tr. Le Saint, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage, etc.*
[47] *On Baptism* 4, 8 and 20. For Latin text and translation: Ernest Evans, ed. and trans., *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964). See also my discussion in chapter one on Tertullian situating the efficacy of Christian marriage within Church rituals such as baptism.

philosopher Cleanthes that affirms that not only do bodily traits pass from parent to child, but so also does soulful character:

> In much the same way, Cleanthes believed that just as there are bodily resemblences [sic] between parents and their children, so also qualities of soul are directly transmitted from the souls of the parents. Thus, he holds that both soul and body of the child would be the reflection of the individual manners, characteristics, and qualities of the bodies and souls of each of the parents.[48]

For Tertullian, the quality of a parent's sanctified body and soul therapeutically contributes to the quality of the child that they produce. He also surmises that the rituals to which the child is exposed at birth also affect the quality of the corporeal soul, which Tertullian offers as another reason that children born to traditional polytheistic parents are not sanctified. Instead, these children are tainted by "demonic" childbirth rituals to the Greco-Roman gods:

> For, the Devil lies in wait to trap every human soul from the moment of its birth, to which he is invited to assist by all the superstitious practices which surround childbirth. All men are born surrounded by the idolatry of the midwife: the wombs from which they are born are still wrapped in the ribbons which were hung on the idols, and thus the child is consecrated to the demons; in labor, they chant prayers to Lucina and Diana; for a whole week a table is set in honor of Juno; on the final day, the "Writing Fates" are invoked; and the child's first step is sacred to Statina.[49]

These polytheistic rituals of childbirth and early childhood mean that the children of non-Christian parents are exposed to demonic forces from which children of Christian parents are protected by

[48] *On the Soul* 5.4; tr. Rudolphus Arbesmann, et al., *Tertullian, Apologetical Works*.
[49] *On the Soul* 39.1-2; tr. Arbesmann et al., *Tertullian, Apologetical Works, etc*.

their parents' presumed rejection of such rituals.[50] Since Christians, according to Tertullian, do not practice these idolatrous birth rituals, and they also possess sanctified seed, Christians' marriages produce superior, sanctified children.

It is in this context of idolatrous childbirth and early childhood polytheistic rituals that Paul, according to Tertullian, stated that children conceived in wedlock by at least one Christian parent are sanctified:

> As a result, there is hardly a birth that is free from impurity, at least among the pagans. This is the reason why the Apostle said that, when either parent was sanctified (*sanctificato*) the children were holy (*sanctos*), as much from the privilege of Christian seed (*seminis*) as much as the discipline of the custom/institution (*ex institutioni disciplina*). For, he says: "Otherwise they would have been born unclean," as if the children of believers were in some sense designated for holiness and salvation, and in the pledge of this hope he supported those marriages which he wishes to continue. In general (*alioquin*), of course, he was mindful of the words of Christ: "Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit, he will not enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5); in other words, he cannot be holy.[51]

Thus, for Tertullian, because most people of his time are the children of heathen parents, almost everyone is tainted from the moment of their birth. For this reason, "in general" – with the one exception of children born to Christian parents as established in 1 Cor. 7:14 – people must be born of water and spirit to enter the kingdom of God. The salvation of children born to a Christian parent

[50] Tertullian does not address the gendered nature of the childbirth rituals. Since childbirth was the affair of women, a Christian man who married a non-Christian woman, would not have had any control over what took place during the birth of his child, whereas a Christian woman married to a polytheist could have refused participation in such rituals, although even then, her agency would have been limited if she was unable to control the actions of others, especially those of the midwife.

[51] *On the Soul* 39.4.; tr. Arbesmann et al., *Tertullian, Apologetical Works, etc*. (slightly modified).

is not guaranteed, but from the moment of their birth, they maintain a distinct advantage over non-Christian children since their neonatal holiness has "designated" them for salvation.[52]

Other early Christian authors struggled to identify the source of the marital sanctification that Paul preaches. Elizabeth Clark has noted that in his interpretation of Paul, Ambrose in the fourth century rejected that this marital sanctification originates from the sexual act itself, but Origen leaves room for this possibility. Clark writes, "Unlike Ambrose, Origen more daringly compares the 'mixing' of the faith of the believing with the unbelieving partner to the sexual 'mixing' of the man and woman."[53] Origen connects this sanctification to the marital sexual union, which, like the mixing of water and wine, render the couple into one flesh:

> The non-believing husband is sanctified in the wife, and the non-believing wife is sanctified in the husband (1 Cor. 7:14). Like a mixture of wine and water, the two, husband and wife, become one flesh (Matthew 19:5 and 1 Cor 6:16, citing Genesis 2:24).[54]

Although Origen connects this sanctification to the sexual union, it is not clear exactly what role he envisions sexual intercourse (i.e., becoming one flesh) playing in this sanctification process since he goes on to say, drawing from 1 Corinthians 7:16, that the hope is that the believing spouse can win over the unbelieving spouse over time. Since this contains a risk of failure, Origen like Tertullian encourages Christians to marry "in the Lord," which he understands as an exhortation

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[52] Jeremias argues that Tertullian in this passage teaches a concept of Original Sin, but I agree with Kurt Aland that "The last sentence of 39.3, with which Jeremias begins, *adeo nulla ferme nativitas munda est, utique ethnicorum*, in my view is falsely rendered when we translate it as he does: 'Therefore (since in every man by nature or because of pagan practices at birth there is a 'demonic spirit') practically no birth is pure, especially in the case of pagans'; rather it should be rendered as Waszink does in his commentary: 'Practically, nobody is completely pure at birth, i.e. among pagans. What Tertullian says here relates to the heathen…" (Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, trans. George R. Beasley-Murray, The Library of History and Doctrine [Philadelphia: The Westminister Press, 1963], 65).

[53] Elizabeth A. Clark, "1 Corinthians 7 in Early Christian Exegesis," in *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, Core Textbook (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 298.

[54] Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 7:14 (sec. 36); tr. Shaye J.D. Cohen, "From Permission to Prohibition," 289. Cohen's translation is based on the Greek text published in Claude Jenkins, "Origen on 1 Corinthians III," *Journal of Theological Studies* 9, no. 36 (July 1908): 500–514.

to marry only other Christians.[55] Unlike Tertullian, however, Origen does not discourage post-conversion mixed marriage by arguing that a non-believing spouse in such a marriage is not sanctified. On the contrary, in an apparent nod to its presence, Origen urges that *despite this marital sanctification*, a Christian should still not marry a non-Christian since any attempt to win an unbelieving spouse to salvation may ultimately fail.

The influence of 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 was far reaching. Even Irenaeus, despite all his polemical rantings against other Christians for incorporating marriage and/or sex into concepts of salvation, does not entirely shed the notion that marital sex possesses a sanctifying efficacy. This is evident in Irenaeus' biblical interpretation of the prophet Hosea's marriage to the promiscuous Gomer, as well as in his interpretation of Moses' marriage to a non-Jewish, Ethiopian bride. According to Irenaeus, God commanded Hosea to marry Gomer as a type of prophetic foreshadowing of Christ's future sanctifying marriage to the Church:

> For this reason did Hosea the prophet take "a wife of whoredoms," prophesying by means of the action, "that in committing fornication the earth should fornicate from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2), that is, the men who are upon the earth; and from men of this stamp it will be God's good pleasure to take out a Church which shall be sanctified by communion with His Son (*sanctificandam communicatione Filii ejus*), just as that woman was sanctified by communion with the prophet (*sicut et illa sanctificata est communicatione*[56] *prophetae*). And for this reason, Paul declares that the "unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband."[57]

[55] Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 7:14 (sec. 36).
[56] Some manuscripts have *communione* instead of *communicatione*. See note 58 below in this chapter.
[57] *Against the Heresies* 4.20.12; tr. Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1.492. For critical edition: Adelin Rousseau, et al., eds. and trans., *Contre les hérésies Livre IV*. SC 100. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1965.

In this interpretation, Irenaeus draws upon Paul to equate Gomer to a non-Christian wife and Hosea to a Christian husband. Irenaeus draws from 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 to make sense of Hosea's marriage to a promiscuous woman. Irenaeus sees the sanctifying power of marriage as discussed by Paul as operating in the marital communion (*communicatio)* between Hosea and Gomer. Through their *communicatio*, Hosea, as the righteous, believing spouse, was able to sanctify his sinful wife. The original Greek of this passage is lost, but as Rousseau indicates in his hypothetical reconstruction of the Greek, *communicatio* is likely a translation of the Greek term κοινωνία.[58] In a marriage context, *koinônia* can carry a double meaning. Stoics used *koinônia* to refer to the marriage bond, including the friendship between husband and wife.[59] In line with this meaning, *koinônia* is found in adjectival form in marriage contracts. A marriage contract from Alexandria (1st century BCE-1st century CE) speaks of the couple being joined to each other in "communion of life" (πρὸς βίου κοινωνίαν)[60] and a marriage contract from Oxyrhynchus dated from 201 CE speaks of the couple being joined together in "a communion of marriage" (πρὸς γάμου κοινωνία[ν]).[61] In addition, *koinônia* can also refer to sexual intercourse. In the context of marriage then, *koinônia* oftentimes can take on a double meaning, simultaneously referring to the marital bond and to the sexual union within it. For example, in Euripides' play the *Bacchae*, when Agave

[58] As indicated by Rousseau, two manuscripts use *communione* instead of *communicatione* to refer to Hosea and Gomer's union (*Contre les hérésies Livre IV*, 670). If this does not derive from a scribal error, in support of Rosseau's reconstruction, this variant is best explained by the fact that these two Latin words are close synonyms. Both are used to translate the Greek term *κοινωνία* in the Vulgate (*communicatio*: Acts 2:42, Rom. 15:26, 1 Cor. 10:16, 2 Cor. 8:4 & 13:13; *communio*: 1 Cor. 1:9, 2 Cor. 9:13, Gal. 2:9, Phil. 1:5, 2:1, & 3:10). Karl Shuve also assumes κοινωνία is the original Greek word behind the Latin translation. See Karl Shuve, "Irenaeus's Contribution to Early Christian Interpretation of the Song of Songs," in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 86.

[59] Aristotle also used *koinônia* to refer to the marriage bond. For a helpful overview of the varied meaning of *koinônia*, see Ilaria L. E. Ramelli et al., "Koinonia," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception Online*, ed. Christine Helmer, et al. (De Gruyter 2017): https://doi.org/10.1515/ebr.koinonia and J. Y. Campbell, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ and Its Cognates in the New Testament." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 4 (December 1932): 352–80

[60] BGU IV. 1051.9.

[61] P Oxy XII. 1473.33. Third Maccabees uses *koinônia* in a very similar fashion: πρός βίον κοινωνίαν γαμικόν (3 Macc. 3:4).

is asked what child she bore for her husband in the house, she replies, "Pentheus, from my union (κοινωνία) with his father."[62] In this context, Pentheus can be understood as a child produced from both the socially-recognized marital bond (*koinônia*) and sexual intercourse (*koinônia*) of his parents. Since *koinônia* is likely the original Greek term behind the Latin *communicatio* in Irenaeus' interpretation of Hosea, I suggest a similar double meaning can be read into Irenaeus' understanding that Hosea sanctified his wife through his *koinônia* with her.[63] This double meaning is reinforced by Irenaeus' observation that despite (*adhuc etiam*) this sanctification of Hosea's wife, Hosea did not give his children (who were produced from this *koinônia*) names that were in accordance with this sanctification since he named them "Not having Obtained Mercy" and "Not a People."[64] In his observation of Hosea's less-than-upright children, Irenaeus continues his interpretation of Hosea's marriage through the lens of 1 Corinthians 7:12-14, which includes Paul's statement that children produced by a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever are to be "holy." Hosea's children, however, fell short of this result, which Irenaeus sees as laying down the prophetic foundation for what would be Christ's future success. Where Hosea failed, Christ has now succeeded by producing "children of the living God" through his union with the Church, which has been "sanctified by union (*communicatione*) with his Son."[65] This image of Church as bride reflects the words of "Paul" in Ephesians, in which he metaphorically refers to the Church as a cleansed spotless bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-27). Irenaeus grounds the metaphorical

[62] Lines 1273-1276; for Greek text: David Kovacs, ed. and trans., *Bacchae: Iphigenia at Aulis; Rhesus*, Loeb Classical Library 495 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[63]Karl Shuve also sees a "clever play of words" in Irenaeus' use of *koinônia* in which he notes that the term can mean a type of fellowship or association with someone, but also refer to marriage with someone. In the latter context, he points out that the New Testament authors use the term *koinônia* to refer to the "believer's participation with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:9)" ("Irenaeus's Contribution," 86). My argument here should not be read as an argument against Shuve, but rather serves to supplement his list of the multivalent meanings of *koinônia* from which Irenaeus draws by pointing out that it can also mean sexual intercourse (whether in or outside of marriage); this is a meaning that I argue Irenaeus intentionally evokes in his discussion of the *koinônia* of Hosea and his sexually promiscuous wife.
[64] *Against the Heresies* 4.20.12.
[65] *Against the Heresies* 4.20.12.

sanctification of the Church as bride in the actual physical marriage and sexual intercourse of Hosea and Gomer in which Hosea sanctified his unrighteous wife through his *koinônia* with her. In a similar fashion that also foreshadowed the marriage and union between Christ and the Church, Irenaeus establishes that Moses also sanctified his Ethiopian (i.e., unbelieving) bride.[66] While it may be tempting to reduce Irenaeus' arguments regarding the sanctification of marriage to his deployment of the metaphor of Christ and the Church, to do so would be to ignore the way in which Irenaeus grounds this metaphor in an assumption that even from the time of the prophets, actual human *koinônia* (marriage/sex) is an efficacious way for believers to sanctify an unbelieving spouse.

In the later third or early fourth century CE, Methodius, the bishop of Olympus, takes the opposite position from Clement, Tertullian, Origen, and the *Gospel of Philip* in that he rejects that children born of Christians are specially sanctified or that children born to sinners, such as those born to adultery, are somehow less holy. While his position may become that of the majority of Christians in the future, Methodius must defend his position against Christians of his time who, using scripture, claim otherwise:

> And you must not try to take refuge, as it were, behind a wall by quoting as your proof the text, *The children of adulterers shall not come to perfection* (Wisd. 3:16); you will be politely refuted and told that often we do see offspring who have thus been conceived in unlawful unions, appearing fully developed after normal childbirth. And if you would quibble further and say: But look, by 'not coming to perfection' I mean not being perfected according to the righteousness taught by Christ, the reply will be made: Well, my dear, very many men who have been born out of wedlock are, notwithstanding, not only thought

[66] *Against the Heresies* 4.20.12.

> worthy of being counted among the flock of our brethren; they often are even chosen for positions of authority over them…we must not imagine that the teaching of the Holy Spirit had anything to do with conception and birth; rather, He probably had in mind those who adulterate the truth, who corrupt the Scripture…"[67]

In this passage, Methodius gives witness to Christians who used the declaration in Wisdom 3:16 that "The children of adulterers shall not come to perfection" to mean that either (1) children born to adulterers would fall short of physical "perfection" by being born with birth defects or (2) children born to adulterers would be unable to obtain perfection in righteousness.[68] Both of these interpretations rely on the belief that the moral character of the parents affects the character of the children they conceive. Methodius rejects these interpretations by pointing to experiential evidence that indicates that children born to adulterers are not only frequently born healthy, they also can achieve such a high level of righteousness that some have even been appointed as church leaders. As we have seen, the idea that a parent's moral character affects their children is not only expressed by Methodius' presumably Christian opponents but is also expressed in the writings of Clement, Tertullian, Origen, and the *Gospel of Philip*, all of which advocate that children born of Christians have a superior moral advantage over those born to non-Christians. However, since Methodius never engages with 1 Cor. 7:14, we are left in the dark as to how he would have made sense of the sanctification of Christian marriage in relation to the holy children Paul said it produces. We only

[67] *Symposium* 2.3; tr. Herbert Musurillo, *The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity*, Ancient Christian Writers 27 (New York: Newman Press, 1958). For critical edition: G. Nathanael Bonwetsch, ed., *Methodius*. GCS 27 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1917).

[68] See for example Origen's explanation as to why, despite the accusation by Celsus, Mary could not have conceived Jesus from an adulterous relationship: "Why, from such unhallowed intercourse, there must rather have been brought forth some fool to do injury to mankind, – a teacher of licentiousness and wickedness, and other evils; and not of temperance, and righteousness, and the other virtues!" (*Against Celsus* 1.33; tr. Frederick Crombie, *ANF*, 1.433). By arguing for an offspring dissimilar to its parents, Methodius is perhaps closer to the later Augustine, although it is notable that Methodius emphasizes that non-Christian parents can conceive children destined for righteousness while Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin emphasizes that even the children of Christians are born into an impure state.

know that he rejects the idea that children are tainted by the seed of an adulterous parent. To drive home this point, Methodius creates a visualization of God as a type of potter and procreative seed as a type of clay. He invites his reader to imagine that God the potter is sitting inside a room in which he receives clay (i.e., human seed) from different people through separate windows. No man is allowed to deposit clay/seed into any window (i.e., wife) that does not belong to him, but despite threat of punishment for doing so, some men still deposit seed into a window that does not belong to them. As the potter, it is not God's job to reject the clay/seed which has been wrongly deposited, but to mold it without prejudice into a statue (fetus):

> And his [the artisan's] assignment is constantly the same, namely that he work indifferently on all clay that is capable of being moulded, even if someone should maliciously put some through another's window. The clay obviously has done no wrong, and being blameless it must be moulded and fashioned... The clay is not to be blamed, but only the one who acted thus against the law."[69]

Since all children are born without blame, Methodius says that this also accounts for the teaching from scriptures that all babies, even those conceived from unlawful unions, are assigned a guardian angel at their birth.[70]

Hilary of Poitiers writing in the mid-fourth century affirms the sanctifying efficacy of a Christian's marriage for an unbelieving spouse. But by reading 1 Cor. 7:14 alongside 1 Tim. 2:15b ("provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty"), he reverses the direction of procreative sanctification so that is it not the children whom he describes as sanctified by the parent(s), but rather the unbelieving spouse who is sanctified by the procreation of children, as long as the children are believers:

[69] Symposium 2.4; tr. Musurillo, *The Symposium*.
[70] Methodius, *Symposium* 2.4. It is possible that the scripture that Methodius has in mind is Matthew 18:10.

> For when in 1 Corinthians he was preaching God's multiple forms of mercy among the non-faithful who were to be sanctified through their marriage (*in sanctificandis per coniugia*) to one of the faithful, he also taught that a sanctification of this kind would be bestowed through the procreation (*procreationem*) of children, *as long as the children were believers*, so that just as a non-faithful one is profited by associating through marriage with a faithful one, so also procreation of faithful children will be a remedy for the non-faithful [parents].[71]

In 1 Cor. 7:14, Paul espouses the Christian's ability to sanctify an unbelieving spouse to address the community's angst regarding the consequences of procreating with an unbelieving spouse. He uses the sanctification of an unbelieving spouse to reassure the Corinthians that the children they conceive with that unbelieving spouse will also be sanctified. Paul thought the sanctification of the unbelieving parent is to the benefit of the child; if the unbelieving spouse was unsanctified, the child would be unclean instead of holy. However, through an inventive hermeneutical approach to 1 Cor. 7:14 in which he reads it together with 1 Tim. 2:15, Hilary keeps intact the Christian's ability to sanctify an unbelieving spouse but reverses the direction of this procreative sanctification, so that it flows not from parent to child, but child to parent. Hilary downplays any salvational implications of 1 Tim. 2:15a by equating its salvation with the sanctification of 1 Cor. 7:14 and by expanding this sanctification as a benefit not just for women (1 Tim. 2:15a), but for unbelieving spouses of either gender (1 Cor. 7:14a) who are sanctified (1 Cor. 7:14b) by

[71] Hilary of Poitiers, *Treatise on the Mysteries* 1.4; for critical edition: Alfred Leonard Feder, ed., *Tractatus mysteriorum. Collectanea antiariana parisina (fragmenta historica) CVM appendice (Liber I ad Constantium). Liber ad Constantium imperatorem (Liber II ad Constantium). Hymni. Fragment minora. Spuria*. CSEL 65 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1916). The provided translation is that of Ross M. Twele, a PhD. candidate at The Catholic University of America's School of Theology and Religious Studies. His dissertation is on Hilary of Poitiers, and he has generously shared his translation of this treatise on his blog: "Hilary, Treatise on the Mysteries 02: Eve's Body and the Church as Body," *Sketches of Christ* (blog), August 10, 2021, https://sketchesofchrist.wordpress.com/2021/08/10/hilary-mysteries-02/.

procreating (1 Tim. 2:15a) with a Christian spouse as long as the children they co-produce with that Christian spouse become members of the faithful (1 Tim. 2:15b). Hilary's hermeneutical gymnastics allow him to uniquely assert that it is not only marriage to a Christian that sanctifies an unbelieving spouse, but the act of procreation as long as it leads to raising a Christian child. He says nothing, though, about any sanctifying benefits for the Christian parent who also helped conceive the child.

Perhaps in an attempt to distance the sanctifying power of marriage from sexual intercourse, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians the fourth-century author known as Ambrosiaster shifts the sanctifying therapeutic power of Christian marriage for both the unbelieving spouse and the couple's children away from the marital union to the ritual of the signing of the cross. He visualizes the latter to be a domestic ritual that protects the physical space of the home:

> Paul says that these unbelievers have the benefit of good will, because they do not detest the name of Christ. The fact that the sign of the cross, by which death was conquered, is made [in their household] serves to protect it, for this is their sanctification. Their children would be unclean if they were to send them [i.e., unbelieving spouses] away against their will, and also if they were to cohabit with others. In that case, they would be adulterers and their children would be illegitimate, and therefore unclean.[72]

In this commentary on 1 Cor. 7:14, Ambrosiaster must deal with the sanctification that Paul says passes from a believing spouse to an unbelieving spouse. Ambrosiaster works to preserve this sanctification as a therapeutic benefit of Christian marriage that can benefit even an unbelieving spouse and the interfaith couple's children. But unlike earlier authors (except for Methodius) who had no problem with a direct spouse-to-spouse transmission of this sanctification through the

[72]*Commentary on 1 Corinthians* (7:14); tr. Gerald L. Bray, ed., *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

marital bond (and perhaps even sex itself!), Ambrosiaster sees the real origin of the sanctifying power as not lying with the believing spouse but with the signing of the cross. In this interpretive move, the believing spouse does not individually or specifically transmit sanctification (i.e., directly to a spouse or to a child), but rather sanctifies the entire home through the signing of the cross. Thus, Ambrosiaster envisions the therapeutic sanctification of Christian marriage as both situational and spatial. As long as an unbelieving spouse and children remain in the matrimonial home that has been sanctified by the believing spouse/parent through the sign of the cross, they too remain sanctified.[73] Ambrosiaster ritualizes Paul's marital sanctification by grounding its origin in the Christianized domestic rituals of the material home.

Unlike Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom shows no discomfort with teaching that one of the therapeutic benefits of Christianized marriage is sanctification of sexualized and procreative bodies, which are empowered with the ability, regardless of the participation of a non-Christian spouse, to produce a holy child. In fact, for Chrysostom, the whole reason that Paul wrote 1 Cor. 7:14 was to address the sexual angst of Christians within mixed marriages:

> Then lest the woman might fear, as though she became unclean because of intercourse with her husband, he says, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the husband." And yet, if "he that is joined to an harlot is one body" (1 Cor. 6:16), it is quite clear that the woman also who is joined to an idolater is one body. Well: it is one body; nevertheless she becomes not unclean, but the cleanness

[73] Ambrosiaster seems to assume that the children of interfaith marriages are not baptized (i.e., individually sanctified) since he characterizes these children as possessing no mobile form of sanctification outside of the communal space of the home.

> of the wife overcomes the uncleanness of the husband; and again, the cleanness of the believing husband overcomes the uncleanness of the unbelieving wife.[74]

In Chrysostom's commentary, the sanctifying efficacy of Christian marriage is operative in and through sexual intercourse. The Christian woman fears being contaminated during sex by an unbelieving spouse, but she has nothing to worry about, because during sex the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the Christian spouse. Chrysostom realizes that his audience might recognize a contradiction in his teaching, because after all, the church has preached that a Christian man should not have sex with a harlot because they become one body. In that instance, however, the Christian man does *not* sanctify the harlot in the sexual act, and in fact he himself becomes unclean. In response to this anticipated line of argumentation, Chrysostom distinguishes between a harlot and an idolater-husband. He agrees that like the man who has sex with a harlot, a Christian woman who has sex with an idolater-husband becomes one body with him. But due to the sanctifying power of marriage established by Paul, she does not become unclean in this joining of the bodies in the way that "all the purity flits away" from the man who becomes one flesh with a harlot.[75] Chrysostom explains that the woman is not made unclean by her husband, because uncleanness in a sexual act with a spouse does not originate from the bodily joining with an unclean body, but from unclean thoughts that motivate the sexual act:

> For the uncleanness is not in the bodies wherein there is communion, but in the mind and the thoughts. And here follows the proof; namely, that if you continuing unclean have offspring, the child, not being of you alone, is of course unclean or half clean. But now it

[74] *Homily 19 on First Corinthians* (7:12-14); tr. Talbot W. Chambers, *NPNF*, 12.107; for critical edition: J.-P. Migne, ed., *S. Joannes Chrysostomus.* PG 51 (Paris, 1862).
[75] *Homily 19 on First Corinthians* (7:12-14); tr. Chambers, *NPNF*, 12.107.

> is not unclean. To which effect he adds, "else were your children unclean; but now are they holy;" that is, not unclean.[76]

Thus, if one's thoughts are pure, then even when engaging in sex and procreating with the unclean body of a non-Christian spouse, one's children are holy. Otherwise, unclean thoughts lead to unclean children.[77]

The belief that Christianized marriage possesses a sanctifying power, which particularly benefits the resulting progeny, was still present into the fifth century CE. Augustine has to address this belief among Christians in his effort, against the Pelagian Julian of Eclanum, to assert that even infants born to two baptized Christian parents are tainted with sin and in need of baptism for salvation. Many scholars such as David Hunter, Elizabeth Clark, Peter Brown, and Robert Markus have already written on the place of marriage and sex within the debate between Julian and Augustine regarding Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin. I agree with Hunter that "After the condemnation of Pelagius for heresy in 418, Julian attacked Augustine's theology of Original Sin precisely because of its Manichaean depreciation of marriage."[78] Clark has written on how Julian, after lobbing more general accusations of Manichaeism on Augustine, moves "to pinpoint the source of Augustine's error: his view of 'vitiated seed.'"[79] Brown and Markus have both separately addressed Julian's attempt to rehabilitate the sexual urge as it comes under attack by Augustine in his attempt to explain the origin of Original Sin even in children born to Christians.[80] In building

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[76] *Homily 19 on First Corinthians* (7:12-14); tr. Chambers, *NPNF*, 12.107.
[77] See chapter one for my discussion on the role of contemplative rituals among Christians to combat improper sexual desire. See chapter two on the positive role of righteous desire and mental images during a woman's pregnancy on the resulting children.
[78] David G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 267.
[79] Elizabeth A. Clark, "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichaean Past," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen L. King, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 368.
[80] Peter Brown, "Sexuality and Society in the Fifth Century A.D.: Augustine and Julian of Eclanum," in *Tria Corda: Scritti in Onore Di Arnaldo Momigliano*, ed. Emilio Gabba (Como: New Press, 1983), 49–70; Robert A. Markus,

upon the work of these scholars, what I wish to stress here is the manner in which Julian's defense of marriage, according to Augustine, relies heavily upon 1 Cor. 7:14, which as we have seen, many Christians had already embraced as scriptural evidence that Christian marriage is superior to non-Christian marriage due to Christianized marriage's sanctifying power:

> "The apostle says, *Your children would be unclean, but now they are holy* (1 Cor. 7:14). And so," they claim, "the children of believers do not now need to be baptized." I am surprised that those people say this who deny that sin is derived from our origin from Adam. After all, if they interpret this statement of the apostle so that they suppose that the children of believers are born in a state of holiness, why are they convinced that they must be baptized? Why do they moreover, refuse to admit that some sin is derived from our origin from a sinful parent, if some holiness is derived from a holy parent?[81]

As evidenced in Augustine's response to him, Julian is not only concerned that Augustine debases marriage in such a way that non-marriage (i.e., virginity) becomes the only option. He also seems to accuse Augustine that by diminishing the sanctifying power of Christian marriage for procreation by saying all are born in a sinful state, he is also undermining the hierarchy of marriage in which Christianized marriage is supposed to have superior therapeutic benefits that set it apart from non-Christian marriage. In his opposition to Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin, the sanctification of marriage, alongside its benefits for Christians' offspring, is at stake for Julian. Julian feels that Augustine's assertation that all people were born sinful, regardless of whether they were conceived by Christian parents or non-Christian parents, erases the sanctifying benefit of

"Augustine's 'Confessions' and the Controversy with Julian Eclanum: Manichaeism Revisted," *Augustiana* 41, no. 1 (1991): 913–25.

[81] *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* 2.41; tr. Roland John Teske, *Answer to the Pelagians I*, ed. John E. Rotelle, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century 23 (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1997), 107.

Christianized marriage in the procreative act. Elsewhere, Augustine repeatedly rails against his opponents in opposition to their position that a child conceived by two baptized parents possesses a sanctifying therapeutic benefit for the child that would otherwise not be present if the child was conceived by unbelieving, unbaptized parents:

> But the question is how the captivity of the child can be inherited even from parents who have been redeemed. Because it is not easy to investigate it by reason or to explain it in words, those without faith refuse to believe in it.[82]

> The Christian faith which the new heretics have begun to attack has no doubt that those who are washed by the bath of rebirth are redeemed from the power of the devil and that those who have not yet been redeemed by such a rebirth – even the little children of redeemed parents – are still captives under the power of the same devil, unless they are themselves redeemed by the same grace of Christ.[83]

> One might ask: How does this concupiscence of the flesh remain in one who has been reborn and who has received the forgiveness of all sins, since, even from baptized parents a carnal child is conceived through it and born with it?[84]

Augustine must repeatedly work to justify his doctrine of Original Sin against this opposing Christian belief that one of the therapeutic benefits of Christianized marriage is its ritualized

[82] *Marriage and Desire* 1.(19)21; tr. Teske, *Answer to the Pelagians, II*, 42.
[83] *Marriage and Desire* 1.(20)22; tr. Teske, *Answer to the Pelagians, II*, 42-43.
[84] *Marriage and Desire* 1.(25)28; tr. Teske, *Answer to the Pelagians, II*, 46.

power, rooted in the baptism of the Christian parents, to sanctify the children produced by the couple's sexual union.[85]

While Augustine's doctrine of Original Sin (at least in the Latin West) may over time have eroded the belief that Christian reproductive sex possesses a sanctifying efficacy that is not present in non-Christian marriage, his polemical arguments give witness to the fact that this belief survived from the time of Clement into the fifth century. Other opinions also circulated, such as we saw in the earlier writings of Methodius. It seems likely, however, from the intensity of the debate that many married Christians would have been exposed to the rhetoric that Christianized marriage was a source of sanctification and used that knowledge to shape their marital relationships and familial ritual lives.

Conclusion

Throughout the earliest years of Christianity, we have seen that Christians embraced Christianized marriage as a therapeutic source of sanctification that negated the impurity that children would otherwise possess if not born to at least one Christian parent. Christians were not unified in their views as to the moment or means of this marital sanctification, but we have seen that oftentimes its procreative efficacy was associated with the baptism of a child's parent(s). So much so that by the time Augustine arrives on the scene, he recognizes that his opponents' belief in the sanctifying power of Christianized marriage is in direct theological competition with his doctrine of Original Sin and in direct ritual competition with what he views as the necessity of infant baptism. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the ways in which early Christians

[85] See my discussion in chapter one for the way in which Tertullian similarly roots the therapeutic power of Christian marriage to control desire in the couple's participation in baptism and the eucharist.

placed their marriages in competition with a different type of ritualized action: the crafting of divine images.

Chapter Four

Living Images of God: Procreation as a Theurgic Act

> Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness." – Genesis 1:26a
>
> But now it is necessary that human beings cooperate in producing the image of God, since the universe continues to exist and to be created. *Increase and multiply*, Scripture says. – Methodius, *Symposium* 2.1[1]

Both early rabbis and Christian authors assign a theurgic efficacy to procreation which serves as "divine action" to manifest the presence of God's image on earth. They derive this iconic[2] ritual power of procreation from Genesis 1:26a in which God declares, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness." In verse 27, God then follows through with his declaration by creating humans in his image. And in verse 28, he blesses these new iconic humans and commands them to "Be fruitful and multiply." For many early Jewish and Christian interpreters of Genesis, God's command for humans to procreate is directly related to their status as his image on earth. This interpretation embraces the iconic efficacy of procreation as a theurgic act that not only benefits humans, but also God himself.

As a methodological approach in this chapter, I build upon the work of Yair Lorberbaum, who discusses the theurgic function of procreation in Judaism. Lorberbaum's insights on how procreation functions theurgically in rabbinic sources allows me to demonstrate that early Christian sources also embrace the theurgic efficacy of procreation. A possible allusion to the iconic function of procreation can be found as early as the *Epistle of Barnabas*. Other examples

[1] *Symposium* 2.1; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 93 (slightly modified).
[2] Iconic derives from the Greek word "*eikon*" (εικών), which means an image or imitative copy of something else. Traditional polytheists used the term *eikôn* (or eidôlon, εἴδωλον) to refer to the paintings and statues they created of the gods, which were thought to manifest the presence of the gods they depicted. For Jews and Christians, it is humans themselves who are the image of God.

extend all the way into the fifth century and beyond. As in other chapters, the *Gospel of Philip* also serves as an important witness in this chapter's treatment of the iconic efficacy of Christian marriage. Since the *Gospel of Philip*'s contribution to this topic can only be understood by contextualizing its usage of "*eikonikos* bridal chamber" (65.12) and "*eikonikos* person" within the larger cultural-religious discourse on the iconic efficacy of procreation, I treat the *Gospel of Philip* at length at the end of this chapter, as yet one more example of an early Christian text that embraces marriage and procreation by evoking its role in manifesting God's image.

Early Rabbinic Sources: A Roadmap to Theurgic Procreation

Yair Lorberbaum provides insight into the theurgic role of procreation in manifesting the image of God within rabbinic sources. In adapting the term theurgy within a Jewish context, Lorberbaum follows in the footsteps of other scholars of Judaism, who have wielded the category of "theurgy" as a phenomenological research tool, while claiming no historical connection between traditional polytheistic and Christian theurgical practices and the theurgy found in rabbinic literature.[3] In this usage, scholars of Judaism have drawn upon the etymological roots of the word theurgy (θεουργία), which combines the word for God (θεός) with the term for work or action (ἔργον). In her introduction to her translation of the *Chaldean Oracles,* Ruth Majercik stresses the double meaning of theurgy as divine action: "Theurgy, then, can best be characterized as 'divine action,' since theurgy properly involves not only 'divine actions' on the part of men, but the 'action of the Divine' on behalf of men."[4] In other words, theurgy is both action that humans undertake

[3] Yair Lorberbaum, *In God's Image: Myth, Theology, and Law in Classical Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 96n30. The first scholar of Judaism who adapted theurgy as a phenomenological tool was Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1941), 56–57, 77–78.
[4] Ruth Dorothy Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 22.

for the purpose or benefit of the divine, as well as action that the Divine takes on the behalf of humans.

Unlike the goal of theurgy in Neoplatonic or other Greco-Roman sources, the purpose of theurgic acts in rabbinic literature is not the purification of the soul and mystical union with the divine. Instead, Lorberbaum writes that within rabbinic literature,

> [t]he theurgic act, generally consisting of the performance of (some of) the commandments, is seen as an act performed on God, for the sake of God Himself. It is occasionally (albeit rarely) accompanied by an act of mystical elevation; its primary goal is to act upon God in order to "augment Him," to "empower" Him, or to prevent His diminishment, depletion or weakening.[5]

Lorberbaum divides these acts into two theurgic categories: preventative theurgy and proactive theurgy. He characterizes preventative theurgy as those acts meant to prevent the diminishing or weakening of God, while proactive theurgy are those acts meant to augment or restore God's power.[6] As an act that manifests the image of God, he places procreation into the latter category of proactive theurgy.

Procreation can be seen as proactive theurgy due to the theomorphic nature of humans established in Genesis 1:26, and because images of the divine were widely understood in antiquity as being more than passive symbols of the gods; images of the divine extend the presence of the divine to earth by participation in the prototype. Thus, images of the divine were plentiful throughout the world of antiquity, filling temples and houses precisely because the images of the gods invited the presence of the gods.[7] Lorberbaum argues that it is this combination of the

[5] Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*, 96.
[6] Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*, 96.
[7] Christians adapted a similar theory of iconic presence through their use of the images of the saints.

scriptural description of humans as theomorphic and the widely accepted belief that divine images manifest the presence of the gods that allows the tannaim to characterize "human procreation as theurgic, intended to augment God by increasing his images in the mundane realm."[8]

This theurgic function of procreation is expounded in discussion found in the *Tosefta Yebamot* and attributed to Eleazar ben Azariah (first century CE) and Ben Azzai (early second century CE).[9] Both Eleazar and Ben Azzai credit procreation with a theurgic role:

> R. Akiva says: One who sheds blood, he annuls the Image [*demut*], as it says "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed [for in the image of God did He make man]." (Gen. 9:6)
>
> R. Eleazar b. Azariah says: One who does not engage in procreation annuls the image, as it says, "For in the image of God did He make man" and as it is written, "And you, be fruitful and multiply" …
>
> Ben Azzai says: One who does not engage in procreation, he sheds blood *and* annuls the Image, as it says, "For in the image of God did he make man" and it is written "And you be fruitful and multiply"…[10]

[8] Yair Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*, 226.

[9] The dating of the Tosefta is highly debated and no singular date can be assigned to it with any level of certainty except to say that it existed largely in its current form prior to the sixth century as the authors of the Talmud quote from it (Paul Mandel, "The Tosefta," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz, 1st ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 316–20). As will become clear later in this chapter, the idea that procreation serves a theurgic function may have also circulated among Christians by the late 1st or early 2nd century CE as evidenced by a possible allusion to it in the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

[10] *t. Yebamot* 8:7; tr. Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*, 225. This is only one example. For more, see Lorberbaum's chapter titled "Procreation: An Eternal Building." Lorberbaum makes the interesting argument that this theurgic aspect of procreation in rabbinic Judaism developed in response to the destruction of the temple as the residence of God. He concludes, "It would then be natural for the *zelem* ["image"] conception and the notion of image as presence to provide a solution to the problem (or difficulty) of the place of Divinity and that of the epicenter of holiness" (272).

Eleazar and Ben Azzai build upon the logic of Akiva to allude to the theurgic function of procreation. Akiva equates the killing of a person with the annulment of God's image. Murder is an act not only against one's fellow human, but against God's iconic presence on earth. Avoiding bloodshed then becomes what Lorberbaum refers to as preventative theurgy, because it prevents the diminishing of God's image. In extension of this same logic, procreation becomes the opposite of murder according to Eleazar and Ben Azzai; it produces the image of God on earth and serves as the reason why God commanded humans to be fruitful and multiply. Thus, procreation becomes a proactive theurgy that increases iconic presence on earth. Procreation becomes an action by humans for the benefit of God, while also being a divine action in which God's iconic presence is found and which therapeutically benefits humans over animals. This iconic function of procreation means that the God who prohibits using images to worship him, is also the same God who has created humans in His image and given them the command to multiply. Lorberbaum speculates that "The prohibition on worshipping God by means of stone and wooden images may derive from the fact that man himself is an image of God."[11] Lorberbaum must speculate here, because while this intention may be implicit in the biblical and rabbinic sources, neither source explicitly establishes iconic procreation as God's alternative to the creation and worship of idols. However, what remains implicit in the Jewish sources is more openly discussed in early Christian writings.

Iconic Procreation as Theurgy in Early Christian Sources

While scholars of early Christianity have often noted a link between procreation and the image of God in certain textual passages, I am aware of no systematic study of the theurgic function

[11] Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*, 279.

of procreation in early Christian literature. This absence may give the erroneous impression that Christians, who so often exalted virginity over marriage, were more reticent than their Jewish neighbors in evoking the theurgic function of procreation in marriage, but this is not the case. Beginning as early as the *Epistle of Barnabas* (late first or early second century CE),[12] numerous examples can be found throughout the Christian sources that allude to or directly promote procreation for theurgic reasons. In delving into the topic of the image of God and procreation in early Christianity, I adapt Lorberbaum's definition and usage of "theurgy" as a helpful phenomenological tool that can serve to situate this inquiry into early Christian sources alongside the Jewish examples discussed by Lorberbaum. This allows me to draw out the way in which these Christian authors likewise envision procreation as an iconic action taken by humans for the benefit of God and from which humans also benefit. In taking this comparative approach, my purpose is not to establish a chronological lineage of the belief in theurgic procreation. Instead, my goal is to establish that a belief in the theurgic function of procreation existed among both Christians and Jews until at least the sixth century CE. Instead of trying to separate out the origin of this belief as "Jewish" or "Christian," I suggest that it is best approached through what Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed call "approaching Judaism and Christianity as 'Ways that Never Parted,'" in order to emphasize that this is just one more example of the many ways that these traditions continued to be intertwined and reflect one another throughout late antiquity.[13]

The *Epistle of Barnabas*' commentary on Genesis 1:26, for example, mirrors its treatment in the rabbinic passages discussed above. Comparable to the passages attributed to R. Eleazar ben

[12] For a brief discussion regarding the dating of the *Epistle of Barnaba*s and for its text and translation, see Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol 2, Loeb Classical Library 25 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[13] Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 3.

Azariah and R. Ben Azzai in the *Tosefta Yebamot*, the *Epistle of Barnabas* links God's creation of humans in His own image in Gen. 1:26 to God's commandment to "Be fruitful and multiply" in Gen. 1:28:

> For the Scripture speaks about us when he says to his Son, "Let us make humans according to our image and likeness, and let them rule over the wild beasts of the land and the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea." Once the Lord saw our beautiful form, he said "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." He said these things to the Son.[14]

The main purpose of *Barnabas*' exegesis of Gen. 1:26, 28 is to emphasize that God's image includes that of the Son. Upon closer reading, however, it is possible to recognize that its exegesis may also derive from or reflect an interpretive tradition that assigned a theurgic function to procreation. This perhaps explains why *Barnabas* ascribes a visual reaction to God – a reaction not found in Genesis – to his image that he has given humans. God is so pleased with the theomorphic beauty of humans, he commands them to multiply this image by procreating and filling the earth. This link between a non-canonical visual reaction by God to his image in humans (Gen. 1:26) and his command to "Multiply" (Gen. 1:28) seems superfluous to *Barnabas*' larger theological point that the image in Gen. 1:26 includes that of the Son. Its presence, however, makes sense if *Barnabas* is reflecting an understanding of procreation in theurgic terms as an act that augments God and is done on behalf of God to multiply his image on earth. If this is the case, such a theurgic interpretation might have originated with the *Epistle of Barnabas*, although it seems more likely that the author was already drawing from an established interpretive tradition, which,

[14] *Epistle of Barnaba*s 6:12; tr. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*. The notion that the plural in Genesis 1:26 ("Let us") indicated God speaking to his Son is found commonly among early Christian authors (e.g., Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 62.2-3, 129.2; Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2.18).

according to the Tosefta, was also known by Jewish rabbis by the early second century (although without the role of God's gaze).

Clement of Alexandria, a second-century CE theologian, similarly ascribes a theurgic function to procreation. Since Clement knew the *Epistle of Barnabas*, it is possible that this was where he found the idea that procreation functions theurgically. Yet, other than a loose continuation of the procreative theurgic theme in *Epist. Barn.* 6:12, Clement does not quote or paraphrase the verse.[15] Instead, in *The Instructor*, Clement incorporates procreative theurgy into a broader agricultural metaphor in which he equates sexual intercourse to the sowing of seed.[16] As he consistently expounds elsewhere, Clement emphasizes that marital sex should only be for the purpose of procreation. Married Christians should be like a wise farmer, who only sows seed for the purpose of producing fruit. Clement likens procreative sex to sowing seeds in living soil, which in turn produces superior fruit. Someone who has sex for pleasure is a like a farmer who sows only for temporary sustenance, but one who has sex in order to procreate contributes to the continued existence of the universe. He further distinguishes these modes of sexual behavior by characterizing procreative sex as taking place for God by assisting God in his creation: "The one plants solely for himself; the other does so for God, since God himself said, *Multiply*, and we must obey. In this way the human being becomes the image of God, by assisting (συνεργεῖ) in the creation of another human being."[17] Although he himself does not deploy the term "theurgic," Michel Foucault notes the way in which procreation in this passage of Clement is undertaken as action not for oneself but for God, and also enacts humans' creative capacity as the image of God:

[15] On Clement's use of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, see Jonathon Lookadoo, *The Epistle of Barnabas: A Commentary* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022), 11-13. Lookadoo concludes that Clement makes more use of the *Epistle of Barnabas* than any other Christian author does in their extant writings (11).
[16] *The Instructor* 2.10.83(1); for critical edition: Otto Stählin and Ursula Treu, eds., *Clemens Alexanadrinus: Erster Band: Protrepticus und Paedagogus*. 3rd ed. GCS 12 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972).
[17] *The Instructor* 2.10.83(2); tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 61 (slightly modified).

"The act of [pro]creation must be performed 'because of' God in the sense that, first of all, it is God who prescribes it by saying 'Increase and Multiply,' but also because by procreating, man is the 'image of God,' and he 'collaborates,' for his part, 'in the birth of man.'"[18] I would add to Foucault's comments that in this passage Clement is not characterizing all procreation as an act that fashions the image of God, but it is married Christians who are having sex with the intention of procreation (rather than procreation that results from desire-driven sex, which produces inferior fruit) that propels a human into the status of God's image. Due to humans' status as the image of God, intentional procreation becomes divine action (theurgy) done *for* God as an assistive means of multiplying his iconic presence and divine action (theurgy) *by* God as the master creator who bestows his image upon humans.

In other passages in *The Instructor*, Clement situates the procreation of Christians within a ritualized context by using the language of craftsmanship to describe procreation's iconic efficacy.[19] This craftmanship language serves to ritually place procreation, along with its co-creation of a theomorphic human, in direct competition with the cultic crafting and worship of the inferior images of false gods. Thus, Christians are called to share God's action of divine craftsmanship by not scattering seed indiscriminately or for purposes other than procreation: "We who have a share in the divine craftsmanship (δημιουργικῆς), must not scatter seed randomly, nor should we act disrespectfully or sow unproductive seed."[20] Again, Clement equates Christians who engage in proper sexual behavior only for the sake of procreation with respectful participants and sharers of God's iconic divine craftsmanship. By the same logic, women who nurture a child in

[18] Michel Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 4, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 2021), 16.
[19] The Greek term δημιουγός (demiurge) was used by Plato in dialogues such as the *Timaeus* (e.g., 28c) to designate the fashioner of the cosmos. The term simply means "craftsman, artisan." This language was taken over by many early Christian authors to designate God as the "creator/craftsman/maker" (e.g., Theophilus, *To Autolycus* 1.4). The wording mentioned above from Clement and that below from Methodius are other examples.
[20] *The Instructor* 2.10.91(2); tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 62 (slightly modified).

their womb participate in theurgy (divine action) since in this capacity they "cooperate with the Craftsman (συνεργοῦσι τῷ δημιουργῷ)."[21]

In the *Exhortation to the Greeks,* Clement bestows a further ritualized status upon theomorphic humans by positioning them as the true images of God that displace the false, handcrafted images of the gods in Greek cultic practice:

> Go forth in the way, ye craftsmen all…stupid craftsmen (δημιουργοί) and worshippers of stones! Let your Pheidias and Polycleitus come hither, Praxiteles too, and Apelles, and all the others who pursue the mechanical arts, mere earthly workers in earth (γήινοι γῆς ὄντες ἐργάται) …Let them come then, I say again, – for I will not cease to call, – trivial artists (μικροτέχναι) that they are. Not one of them has ever crafted a breathing image (οὐδείς που τούτων ἔμπνουν εἰκόνα δεδημιούργηκεν) or made tender flesh out of earth… Who breathed life (ψυχήν) into man?... None but the Craftsman of the Universe (ὁ τῶν ὅλων δημιουργός), the "Father, the superior artist (ὁ "ἀριστοτέχνας πατήρ)," formed such a living statue (ἄγαλμα ἔμψυχον) as man, but your Olympian Zeus, an image of an image (εἰκόνος εἰκών), far removed from the truth (ἀληθείας), is a dumb lifeless work (ἔργον) of Attic hands.[22]

There is no need for the lifeless, handmade images of the Greeks, because the true divine image can be found in humans as the theomorphic work of the Divine Craftsman. When this passage from Clement's *Exhortation to the Greeks* is read alongside his teaching in *The Instructor* that procreation assists God in his creation, what emerges is a Clement who calls upon Christians to recognize the ritualized efficacy of their marital procreation as a theurgic activity that competes

[21] *The Instructor* 2.10.93(1).
[22] *Exhortation to the Greeks* 10.98(1-3); tr. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria*, 212–15 (slightly modified).

with and supersedes the cultic reproduction of false images.[23] As Foucault has already warned, this does not mean that the iconic children that Christians bear immediately possess a perfect likeness of God, which occurs only through a righteous life, but the iconic procreative act begins the "progression toward resemblance" and fills it with synergetic possibility. He observes, "Man procreates, along with God, human beings who are worthy of being loved with a love whose manifestation was the 'cause' of the Creation, and later the Incarnation."[24]

Although he only mentions it in passing, Tertullian, a second-century CE theologian from Carthage, also embraces procreation as a manifestation of God's image in his treatise *On the Soul*. It occurs in a passage in which he is contemplating why it is that some fetuses survive despite being born prematurely in the seventh month of pregnancy. He conjectures that the reason might be due to seven's association with the sabbath day of rest: "Thus, the image of God in a child [i.e., the child's birth] would sometimes coincide with the number of the day on which God's creation was completed."[25] Tertullian does not develop the theme further, so although he recognizes the iconic efficacy of procreation, he does not do so in the kind of stark theurgic context as does Clement.

The bishop of Olympus Methodius (late third or early fourth century), however, whose writings on marriage and chastity were influenced by Clement,[26] also emphasizes procreation as a theurgic action that benefits both humans and God. Clement's influence on Methodius can be seen in his use of Clement's term "*synergia*" to characterize the cooperative role of God and humans in

[23] Using a similar logic, Clement in *The Instructor* also forbids Christians as the living images of God to crown their head in the manner that people crown dead idols (*Instructor* 2.8.73(2). And he accuses women who stare admirably at their reflection in the mirror of gazing upon a graven image of God (*Instructor* 3.2.11(2)-12(1)).
[24] Foucault, *Confessions of the Flesh*, 17.
[25] Tertullian, *On the Soul* 37.4; tr. Arbesmann, et al., *Tertullian: Apologetical Works, etc.*
[26] On the influence of both Clement and Origen on Methodius, see Loyd. G. Patterson, "Symposium: Chastity and the Plan of Salvation," in *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 64-122.

the sexual procreative act that creates the image of God. Although there may be a time in which the earth becomes so full that procreation is no longer necessitated, Methodius asserts that this moment has not arrived since all can see that God the Painter (ζωγραφῶν ὁ θεός) is still creating human beings and is thus still at work in the universe.[27] In describing God as a ζωγραφῶν, Methodius uses a term for an artist that characterizes God as a "Painter of Life." He then expands:

> But now it is necessary that human beings cooperate (συνεργεῖν) in producing the image of God, since the universe continues to exist and to be created. *Increase and multiply*, Scripture says. We must not recoil from the commandment of the Craftsman (Δημιουργοῦ), from whom we too have received our existence. Human reproduction begins with the sowing of seed into the furrows of the womb, in such a way that *bone from bone and flesh from flesh* is taken by an invisible power and fashioned by the Craftsman (Δημιουργηθῶσι) himself into another human being."[28]

He concludes by declaring that if God fashions humans without shame, then human beings, as co-participants in this activity, should also not be ashamed.[29] Christians should feel no shame in participating in sexual reproduction precisely because of its theurgic nature; it augments both humans and God as a divine act of (co-)creation that manifests God's iconic presence on earth in humans. As I discussed in chapter three, Methodius rejects the popular assertion by other Christians that the righteous have an ability to engender children (i.e., images) of a higher moral quality than the children of sinners. It would appear that since God the Craftsman fashions children out of the seeds of their parents in a non-punitive manner, for Methodius, even adulterers serve as co-creators of God's image.[30] Nonetheless, Methodius still galvanizes the theurgic efficacy of

[27] *Symposium* 2.1.
[28] *Symposium* 2.1; tr. Hunter, *Marriage and Sexuality*, 93 (slightly modified).
[29] *Symposium* 2.2.
[30] *Symposium* 2.4.

procreation as one of the reasons why Christians should not hesitate to marry and have children. To procreate as a Christian means to procreate with the knowledge that one's marital sexual union possesses theurgic potential.

An oration attributed, perhaps falsely, to the late fourth-century bishop CE, Amphilochius of Iconium is another important witness that suggests that some Christians were still embracing the theurgic function of procreation into the fourth century.[31] In this oration, Amphilochius makes an interesting shift in comparison with what we have seen with Clement and Methodius. Whereas Clement and Methodius referred to God himself as the craftsman and/or artist of the procreative Image of God, and humans as God's assistants in this process through their role in the procreative act, Amphilochius uses the terms craftsman and artist to describe marriage itself. He does this in a passage in which he first extols the benefits of virginity, but then moves on to also embrace marriage as equally worthy of Christians. Since it is only through marriage that virgins are born, Christians should not see marriage and virginity as being in conflict (μάχην) with each other, but as indebted to one another (ἀλληλόχρεα).[32] In a longer list of the benefits unique to marriage, Amphilochius situates marriage in the Greco-Roman context of ritualized image-making by declaring that marriage is "like a craftsman of humanity, like a painter of the divine image (ὡς δημιουργὸς τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, ὡς τῆς θεϊκῆς εἰκόνος ζωγράφος)."[33] Although the virtues of virginity are many, it is marriage that Christians are to admire as a craftsman and painter of the

[31] I am speaking specifically about Amphilochius' *Oration Two*. In his introduction to the critical edition of Amphilochius' works in the *Corpus Christianorum* series, Cornelis Datema has argued for the authenticity of *Oration Two*. He sees no compelling reason in the manuscript tradition or in the content or language of the oration to doubt its attribution to Amphilochius; Cornelis Datema, ed., *Amphilochii Iconiensis: Opera*, Corpus Christianorum Graeca 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978). For my purposes, whether *Oration Two* was authored by Amphilochius or by a later pseudonymous author, it serves as a witness that at least some Christians continued to expound on the iconic efficacy of marriage into the late fourth century or beyond. See also the example from John Chrysostom below.

[32] *Oration Two* 1.27-31. A similar sentiment is expressed by the fourth-century CE Christian writer Jerome, in a famous passage in his *Letter* 22.20 (to Eustochium), where he says that he praises marriage, because marriages "give me virgins!"

[33] *Oration Two* 1.22-23.

divine image. And lest his readers think he is extolling all marriage as virtuous, Amphilochius makes it clear that his praises are directed toward "the true and honorable marriage (ὁ ἀληθὴς γάμος καὶ τίμιος)."[34] In this sermon, Amphilochius is not interested in theologically parsing whether all marriage produces the image of God or only "the true and honorable marriage" of Christians, but he does want his congregants to walk away with the understanding that the production of God's image is one of the benefits of their marriages as Christians. This iconic efficacy is one of the reasons why he states that Christians marvel at (θαυμάζομεν) marriage as equally as they marvel at virginity; both of which are informed by a fear of God (θεοφοβίας).[35]

The fourth-century CE bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, also ascribes a ritualized theurgic and iconic efficacy to procreation. He characterizes the image-producing that takes place through married Christians' procreative sexual acts as rivaling and exceeding the idolatrous image-making of non-Christians. In his twelfth homily on the (pseudo-)Pauline letter to the Colossians, Chrysostom calls marriage a reflective "type (τύπος) of the church and of Christ" and a mystery that rivals the "Hellenic mysteries (τοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων μυστηρίοις)."[36] In this same competitive vein, he contrasts his idealized version of Christians' weddings with the idolatrous wedding festivals of non-Christians. Due to the theurgic nature of procreation that produces the image of God, he urges Christians to purge their weddings of the cacophonous activities, like dancing, that he thinks are more appropriate for idolatrous festivals than the image-producing sexual activities of a Christian couple at their wedding. He urges his congregants to see and act in

[34] *Oration Two* 3.84.
[35] *Oration Two* 1.31-34.
[36] *Homily 12*; tr. Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians* (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2021), 278–79. Allen translates the Greek text in Frederick Field, ed., *Ioannis Chrysostomi interpretatio omnium epistularum Paulinarum*, vol. 5 (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1855), 1-171.

solemn accordance with what a Christian's wedding really is: a great mystery that produces not a lifeless image, such as one finds at the festivals, but the making of the very image of God:

> How is it a mystery? They come together, and the two make (ποιοῦσιν) one.[37] Why is it, when at the entrance there is no dancing, no cymbals, but great silence, great stillness? But when they come together, making (ποιοῦντες) not a lifeless image (εἰκόνα ἄψυχον), nor yet an image of anything on earth, but of God himself, and in his likeness, you introduce such a great uproar, and disturb those present, and shame the soul, and cause uproar? They come, about to be made one body. Look again at a mystery of love! If the two don't become one, they won't accomplish many (οὐκ ἐργάζονται πολλούς),[38] as long as they remain two, but when they enter into oneness, then they accomplish (ἐργάζονται) many.[39]

Chrysostom feels no need to explain to his congregants how a married couple is engaged with "making" an image of God on their wedding night. As we have seen in the writings of previous authors, it is for good reason that Chrysostom can assume that his congregants are aware of the iconic efficacy of procreation in creating a life-filled image of God.[40] He is not introducing a new

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[37] An allusion to Gen. 2:24 ("the two become one flesh"). But here, the "two make one" by producing a child through their sexual union. Chrysostom also emphasizes this elsewhere in the same homily. "This is anyway why God said accurately not 'they will be one flesh,' but 'into one flesh,' namely, that of the child by whom they are connected" (tr. Allen, *Homilies on Colossians*, 281).

[38] The "many" refers to children. If the couple does not become one through sexual union, they cannot "accomplish" or "produce through labor" (ἐργάζονται) many children. Chrysostom's use of a form of ἐργάζομαι in this context characterizes the bearing of children as a type of creative labor, which further reinforces procreation's status as a superior image-producing craft within the homily.

[39] Chrysostom, *Homily 12*; tr. Allen, *Homilies on Colossians*, 279.

[40] Scholars have missed the theurgic procreative context in this passage of Chrysostom. Since Chrysostom earlier in *Homily 12* refers to marriage as a relational "*tupos*" (form, type, model, image) that reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church, the tendency by scholars has been to interpret John Chrysostom in this later passage of *Homily 12* to be saying that the marriage itself (made up of husband and wife) is an "*eikon*" of God. This interpretation equates Chrysostom's earlier usage of *tupos* with his usage of *eikôn* in the passage discussed here. This erroneous interpretation has likely been fueled by Catherine Roth's and David Anderson's influential 1986 translation of *Homily 12* in which they ignore Chrysostom's use of a participle of the active verb ποιέω (to make) in this image of God passage by translating ποιοῦντες with a verb of being: "They have not become the image of anything on earth" (Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson, *John Chrysostom, On Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 75). Roth's and Anderson's translation is misleading because through his choice of ποιοῦντες, Chrysostom is not stating that when the couple joins in sexual union that they "become" the image of God, but that they "make" or "create" the image of God. Chrysostom's emphasis that this image is not lifeless is also

idea in describing procreation in iconic terms or in placing it in rivalry with the lifeless image-making activities of idolators. He assumes that his congregants are aware of this fact and urges them to act according to this knowledge during their weddings. As early as Clement, Christians were already contrasting the lifeless, earthbound images created by idolaters with the life-filled, truly divine images produced through procreation. John Chrysostom's innovation is that he uses this common knowledge of the iconic efficacy of procreation to argue that because Christians know that their procreative sex manifests a living image of God, they should ritualize that sexual moment, and the celebrations that surround it, not in a manner appropriate to lifeless images, but in a solemn, silent manner that is in accordance with the iconic presence of God. Chrysostom uses this as the reason why Christians should re-ritualize their sexualized weddings; they should do this not by de-sexualizing them, but by treating the sexual moment as the image-producing, theurgic mystery that Christians know it to be.

This belief in the theurgic efficacy of procreation also extended beyond the treatises and homilies of elite church leaders, as evidenced by a Christian magical spell for pregnancy.[41] The spell ends with evoking Jesus' suffering on the cross, which serves to identify the user of the spell as Christian. In order to establish the ritual efficacy of the spell, it begins by evoking humans' status as the image of God and connecting it to God's interest in human procreation:

> Almighty master, lord, O god, since from the beginning you have created humankind in your likeness and in your image, you have also honored my striving for childbirth. You said to our mother Sarah, "At this time in a year a son will be born to you" (Gen. 17:21).

best contextualized in the long-established tradition of emphasizing that Christians create true, life-filled images of God through their procreation in contrast to the lifeless, falsely-divine images created by non-Christians in line with their polytheistic worship of the Greco-Roman gods. Pauline Allen's translation above ("*making* not a lifeless image . . .") provides a more accurate rendering of this "image of God" passage in *Homily 12*.

[41] Spell 83, "Spell to make a woman become pregnant" in Marvin Meyer, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 176. Meyer dates this text tentatively to the seventh century CE, which shows the longevity of Christian belief in the theurgic and iconic efficacy of Christian procreative practices.

> Thus also, look, I invoke you, who is seated upon the cherubim, that you listen to my request today – me, N. son of N. – over the chalice of wine that is my hand, so that when I […] it to N. daughter of N., you may favor her with a human seed.[42]

The spell's evocation of humans' status as the image of God serves as a ritually efficacious reminder to God that he has a personal, theurgic stake in a successful outcome of a couple's pregnancy. It is because of their iconic status as his image that God honors human longing for children including gifting the barren Sarah a son. The spell makes it clear that if God grants the request for a successful pregnancy, he helps himself by increasing his own iconic presence on earth.

The Image-Producing Bridal Chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*

The iconic procreative role of the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip* has not been discussed by other scholars, but it can be brought into focus by delving into the gospel's use of the term *eikonikos* and contextualizing that usage in the larger marital and procreative concerns of the gospel and by situating it alongside the Christian and Jewish texts discussed above that similarly characterize procreation in theurgic terms. The Greek word *eikonikos* occurs twice in the Coptic text of the *Gospel of Philip*. It is first used by the author in 65.12 to refer to the *eikonikos bridal chamber*. The author then uses the same Greek term in 72.14 to refer to the *eikonikos person*. In English, German, and French translations of the *Gospel of Philip*, *eikonikos* has been translated in a variety of ways (see Appendix 1), but while the exact wordage may differ, all the current translations reflect the most common meaning of the word as imaged or according to an image. However, previous scholars and modern translators have only developed a partial understanding

[42] Spell 83; tr. Meyer, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 176.

of the meaning of *eikonikos* in the *Gospel of Philip*, because they have failed to recognize that the gospel draws from the double meaning of the term: one passive (imaged) and one active (image-producing). I adapt the approach of feminist philology to draw out this double meaning.

Feminist philology was first introduced as a methodological approach by Mieke Bal in her 1987 article, "Virginity: Toward a Feminist Philology," which was republished with some expanded content in 1989 under the title, "Between Altar and Wandering Rock: Toward a Feminist Philology" as part of an anthology on *Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible*.[43] Bal conceptualizes feminist philology as an approach that draws upon fields such as narratology, anthropology, and psychology in order to go beyond "the sheer linguistic-historical" when translating and interpreting terms to draw out gender-related meaning.[44]

In their 2018 co-authored article, "'The Daughters of Israel': An Analysis of the Term in Late Ancient Jewish Sources," Mika Ahuvia and Sarit Kattan Gribetz set out to revive and further develop feminist philology as proposed by Mieke Bal by adapting a feminist philological approach in their analysis and reinterpretation of the meaning of the Hebrew term *benot yisra'el*, "daughters of Israel," in biblical passages, Second Temple texts, and particularly in late Jewish texts including rabbinic literature and incantation bowls.[45] With feminist philology in hand, Ahuvia and Gribetz demonstrate that the term Daughters of Israel (*benot yisra'el*) has been misunderstood by scholars of Judaism, most of whom are male, because these scholars have missed the term's latent meaning that connects it to female ritual language. Specifically, by contrasting the usage of *benot yisra'el* with *nashim* (women) in rabbinic literature, Ahuvia and Gribetz argue that the term *benot yisra'el*

[43] Mieke Bal, "Virginity: Toward a Feminist Philology," *Dispositio* 12, no. 30/32 (1987): 65-82. Mieke Bal, "Between Altar and Wandering Rock: Toward a Feminist Philology," in *Anti-covenant: Counter Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible,* ed. Mieke Bal (Sheffield: Almond Press/Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 211-32.
[44] Bal, "Virginity: Toward a Feminist Philology," 65-66.
[45] Mika Ahuvia and Sarit Kattan Gribetz, "'The Daughters of Israel': An Analysis of the Term in Late Ancient Jewish Sources," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108, no. 1 (2018): 1–27.

most frequently appears to refer to Jewish women as "ritual innovators or when their customs become law."[46] In other words, the term refers not to Jewish women more generally as objects of the rabbis' discourse, but rather is used by the rabbis to refer to Jewish women as *active subjects* within Jewish traditions.

I adopt the methodological approach of feminist philology to emphasize the theurgic and procreative function of the "*eikonikos* person" and "*eikonikos* bridal chamber" in manifesting the image of God within the *Gospel of Philip.* Since humans' ability to create the image of God via sex and procreation is a process which necessitates the involvement of women, the gospel's use of "*eikonikos*" has gendered ritual implications to which virtually no attention has been paid. Within the Christian procreative context that it occurs, *eikonikos* in the *Gospel of Philip* carries both the passive meaning of "imaged," as well as the active meaning of "image-producing." Humans' status as the image of the divine affords Christians the ability to produce more images of God by procreating more humans in his image. This active meaning of *eikonikos* as "image-producing" connects the image-producing aspect of the "*eikonikos* bridal chamber (ⲛⲩⲙⲫⲱⲛ)" in 65.12 and the "*eikonikos* person (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ)" in 72.14 with the human act of reproduction.[47]

Although both men and women participate in the theurgic act of conception, women arguably serve the larger role as bearers of the image of God through pregnancy and birth. This *active* theurgic act of image-producing through reproduction is made possible precisely because humans (both men *and* women) possess a *passiv*e status as "imaged" in that they were created in the likeness of God's own image. It is the passive status of humans as images of God that gives

[46] Ahuvia and Gribetz, "Daughters of Israel," 11.

[47] The Coptic word ⲣⲱⲙⲉ can carry the meaning of "man" or simply "person." Either way, the noun is grammatically male, which can obscure the fact that in the context of a story, a woman can be a ⲣⲱⲙⲉ. Previous translators have tended to translate ⲣⲱⲙⲉ as "man" in this passage of the *Gospel of Philip*. In line with a feminist philological approach, I translate the term as "person" when context allows in order to emphasize the inclusion of women within the term.

humans the active capacity, unlike animals, to produce the image of God through procreation.[48] This meaning of *eikonikos* as image-producing is also evident in non-procreative contexts such as in the writings by the third-century CE philosopher Plotinus and the later sixth-century CE Christian theologian John Philoponus.[49] In book three of the *Enneads*, Plotinus uses the term *eikonikos* to refer to the "image-producing imagination" (φαντασίᾳ εἰκονικῇ).[50] In his commentary on Aristotle's "On the Soul," Philoponus uses the term to refer to the soul's ability to know and produce images of the consonant numbers.[51] The author of the *Gospel of Philip* draws upon this active meaning of *eikonikos* to refer to the *eikonikos* person's ability to procreate and thus produce images of God.

The *Gospel of Philip* contrasts the inferior, human-crafted images of gods (such as paintings or statues) with the God-given iconic status of a human (*rôme*) – for whom I use the gender-neutral pronoun "they" below:[52]

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[48] In Genesis, God only makes humans in God's own image, which leads to the belief among Jews and Christians that humans were set apart from animals in that the former possess the image of God, but the latter do not.

[49] This sixth-century example from Philoponus demonstrates that the meaning of *eikonikos* as "image producing" was still in use three centuries after Plotinus evoked this meaning in his *Enneads*. This further helps demonstrate the need for in-depth research as to what other authors might have employed this active meaning of *eikonikos* in the three centuries that spanned Plotinus and Philoponus, so as to deepen our understanding of how this term is used in the *Gospel of Philip*.

[50] *Ennead* 3.6.18,32: "[T]hat which proceeds from the rational principle in the higher world has already a trace of what is going to come into being, for when the rational principle is moved in a sort of image-making imagination, either the movement which comes from it is a division, or, if it did remain one and the same, it would not be moved, but stay as it was" (slightly modified) (For text and translation: A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus III: Enneads III.1-9*, Loeb Classical Library 442 [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1980], 283).

[51] *On Aristotle On the Soul* 1.3.120,12: "How, then, will this apply to our soul? Evidently, according to the account we have also given for the consonant numbers. For the soul of the universe has powers that can produce these and that are exemplary, whereas our soul has powers that can know them and produce images of them (ἡ δ' ἡμετερα γνωστικάς τε καὶ εἰκονικάς);" tr. Philip J. van der Eijk, *John Philoponus, On Aristotle's "On the Soul 1.3-5,"* Ancient Commentators on Aristotle (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006). For critical edition: Michael Hayduck, ed., *Commentary on the Soul*. CAG 15. (Berlin: 1897).

[52] The Coptic word ⲣⲱⲙⲉ can mean a man or more broadly human. As is the tendency also in English, the pronoun for ⲣⲱⲙⲉ defaults to the masculine in Coptic even though the passage can be understood as referring to a human of either gender. In order to emphasize the gender-inclusive nature of ⲣⲱⲙⲉ as "human," I have chosen to adapt "their" as a gender neutral pronoun in my translation of this passage to emphasize that despite the commonly encountered use of the masculine pronoun for ⲣⲱⲙⲉ, a human can be of any gender.

> God creates humans […] humans create God. Thus, in the world, humans create gods, and they worship their creations. It would be fitting that the gods worship humans. This is true of the works (ⲛ̄ϩⲃⲏⲩⲉ) of a human,[53] which come into being through their (sg.) power (ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ).[54] Because of this, they are called "powers" (ⲛ̄ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ). Their (sg.) works (ⲛ̄ϩⲃⲏⲩⲉ) are their (sg.) children, who come into existence by means of a rest.[55] Because of this, their (sg.) power (ⲇⲩⲛⲁⲙⲓⲥ) lives in their (sg.) works (ⲛ̄ϩⲃⲏⲩⲉ), and it is in their (sg.) children that the rest is visible. And you will find that this extends to the image. This is the image-producing human (ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲓⲕⲟⲛⲓⲕⲟⲥ), who makes their (sg.) works through their (sg.) power (ⲥⲟⲙ)[56] and through rest begets their (sg.) children.[57]

Instead of humans worshipping the images of the gods, the gods should worship humans as the makers of the gods' own inferior idols. Due to their status as an image of the divine, humans can also produce a superior form of image through the act of procreation.

In order to draw out this comparison of the lifeless images of the gods to the living divine images of humans, we can situate this *Gospel of Philip* passage in larger debates about the role of images in manifesting the presence of the divine in the third century. The writings of the third-

[53] On the difficulties in the syntax in this Coptic clause, see Hans-Martin Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium,* 426-7.

[54] The term δύναμις can also be translated as "ability."

[55] "Rest" (ἀνάπαυσις) here has sometimes been understood in the technical sense of an ultimate state of bliss, which it can have in some Nag Hammadi writings (see Jan Helderman, *Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung des valentinianisch-gnostischen Heilsgutes der Ruhe im Evangelium Veritatis und in anderen Schriften der Nag-Hammadi Bibliothek*, Nag Hammadi Studies, 18 [Leiden: Brill, 1984]). However, I take the meaning of this sentence to be that children are obvious evidence of procreative activity, just as (in the following sentences) the work of divine image-producing humans can be seen in children who bear the image of God as products of the power and "rest" (procreation) of their parents.

[56] The term ⲥⲟⲙ is oftentimes treated by Coptic translators as a synonym for the Greek term δύναμις, "power," but it also can carry the meaning of "might" or "strength." It is not readily apparent why at this point, the text shifts to ⲥⲟⲙ from its previous use of δύναμις in the preceding sentences.

[57] *Gos. Phil.* 71.35-72.16.

century Neoplatonist and theurgist Iamblichus offer a pertinent example.[58] In *On the Mysteries*, Iamblichus is critical of those people who use "magical" as opposed to "theurgic" methods to evoke the presence of the gods. Throughout his treatise, Iamblichus states that these diviners of magic, as pseudo-theurgists, evoke images (εἴδωλα) of the gods, but they fail to realize that that which they have evoked is not really a god, because the true form of the gods is pure light and not the inferior images evoked by a pseudo-theurgist through such means as a mirror, water, symbols, etc. Iamblichus calls the pseudo-theurgist who conjures inferior, untrue images of the gods an εἰδωλοποιός, which means a maker or producer of images.[59] Elsewhere, he refers to the εἰδωλοποιὸς ἀνήρ (the image-producing man):

> Why, then does the image-making man [εἰδωλοποιὸς ἀνήρ], who does these things, so undervalue himself, although superior and begotten from superior beings, as to appear to trust in lifeless images, infused only by an outward appearance of life… Does anything genuine or true exist in them? No, indeed, nothing of the things shaped by human skill [τέχνη] are simple and pure… But is no pure and perfect power [δύναμις] manifest in them? Not at all![60]

In the above passage, Iamblichus critically questions why the image-maker, who is begotten from superior beings, would place his trust in his own lifeless images, since nothing made by humans contains a perfect and pure power.

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[58] Among relevant studies, see the work of Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Gregory Shaw, "After Aporia: Theurgy in Later Platonism" in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*, ed. John D. Turner and Ruth Majercik, SBL Symposium Series, 12 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 57-82.

[59] For Iamblichus' usage of εἰδωλοποιός, see *On the Mysteries* III.28.170.5; III.29.171.4 and X.2.287.2. Plato also uses the term in *Sophist* 239d to refer to a maker of images.

[60] *On the Mysteries* III.29.171.5-14. For text and translation: Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell, *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) (slightly modified).

Iamblichus' devaluing of divine images produced by the *eidôlopoios* ("image-making") *man* can be contrasted with the *Gospel of Philip*'s positive valuation of the images created by the *eikonikos* human. *Philip* draws from Jewish and then Christian tradition that the human is created after the image of God, and thus when the *eikonikos* human procreates, they produce or manifest that image in their children. Yet, the Greek term *eidôlon* acquired a pejorative connotation in both Christian and Jewish circles since *eidôlon* was the term used by these groups to refer to an idol or idolatrous image.[61] Christians and Jews preferred to use the term *eikôn* to refer to an image in a positive sense, whether in reference to the image of God, Christ, or the saints. Thus, in contrast to Iamblichus' use of *eidôlopoios* man to refer (negatively) to a producer of images, the *Gospel of Philip* use the term *eikonikos* person to refer (positively) to the humans, both men and women, who reproduce the divine image in their children. And whereas Iamblichus asks why the image-making man would trust in lifeless images that only have an outward appearance of life, the *Gospel of Philip* casts humans as the living image of God by situating their origin in the story of God's creation of Adam in paradise, in which God created him in his own image and then rested afterwards.[62] For the *Gospel of Philip*, the human image is not a "lifeless" idol as was Iamblichus' charge against Greco-Roman idols, because it is the living image of God. From the *Gospel of Philip*'s perspective, an author like Iamblichus has confused the nature of the true divine image and where it resides. Procreation as image-producing by the *eikonikos* person ties into the larger pro-procreation, pro-marriage stance in the *Gospel of Philip*, and this stance can also be seen in the *eikonikos* bridal chamber passage in 65.1-26. If the eikonikos person is the human who

[61] For a discussion on the meaning of the term *eidôlon* in Greco-Roman society and the unique ways in which Christians used the term in comparison to the broader culture, see Terry Griffith, "The Meaning and Background of the Term Eidolon," in *Keep Yourselves from Idols: A New Look at 1 John*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 233 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 28–57.

[62] Similarly, Valentinian Christian tradition is reported to have held that the human was created "after the image of the power above" (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.18.1).

produces the image in children, then the *eikonikos* bridal chamber is the place in which those iconic children are produced and come to resemble the Lord; it is literally the image-producing bridal chamber.

Conclusion

Jewish and Christian authors discussed in this chapter embrace the theurgic, iconic efficacy of marriage. Clement, Methodius, Amphilochius, John Chrysostom, and the *Gospel of Philip* all adopt ritualized imagery and language of artisanship and "image-making" as they emphasize the iconic ritual power of procreation. And they do not accept that there is ritual power in the false, so-called "divine" images produced by "idol-makers." The iconic divine presence that people mistakenly ascribe to false idols can actually be found only in the "true" divine images produced by Christians through their marriages.[63] In this context, Christian marital procreative sex is ritualized as an image-making art that competes with and is superior to the image-making art of polytheistic non-Christians.

[63] And Jews, as Lorberbaum points out from rabbinic sources (see above). But my focus in this study is examining the contribution of such themes to the Christianizing of marriage.

Chapter Five

Bridal Chambers, Nuptial Canopies, and Bedrooms

> And the woman unites to her husband in the bridal canopy. And those who have united in the bridal canopy will no longer be separated.
> – *Gospel of Philip* 70.17-20

Marriage occurs in and through materiality. In weighing whether the *Gospel of Philip*'s ritualized nuptial and procreative imagery, including its references to the bridal chamber, is best understood as metaphorical in nature or as a literal reference to actual sexualized marriage, this answer cannot be ascertained without analyzing the text's nuptial and procreative references within the broader cultural context of the ritualization of "literal" marriage in early Christianity. However, Nag Hammadi scholars have not analyzed the bridal chamber in this kind of comparative study, which is perhaps why so many have rejected a literal understanding of the bridal chamber as an extreme position that would mark the sexual practices that the *Gospel of Philip* embraces as "deviant" within a broader Christian context. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the *Gospel of Philip*'s marital viewpoints do not seem so deviant when compared to other early Christian texts which similarly advocate that daily married life can and should be Christianized. As in the *Gospel of Philip*, across these sources much of this Christianizing effort centers around the procreative sexual relationship, which Christians often discussed in ritualized terms that valorize Christians' marital sexual practices as other-than-ordinary acts filled with efficacious power and potential. In this comparative context, it becomes apparent that while it has often been relegated to Nag Hammadi studies, the *Gospel of Philip* with its ritualized marital imagery is an important source that can and should contribute to our understanding of the Christianization of marriage in the earliest centuries of Christianity. This is what I have sought to demonstrate in the

preceding chapters. However, the reverse can also be said. An understanding of the role that ritualization of marriage and sex played in the earliest centuries of Christianity can and should contribute to our understanding in Nag Hammadi studies of the ritualized marital and sexual imagery of the *Gospel of Philip,* including recognizing the historical tenability of the proposition that this gospel valorizes Christians' marriages and sex as acts filled with efficacious ritual power. And if the *Gospel of Philip* does cast marital sexual relations as something other than ordinary, I suggest that we can use this gospel, with all of its diverse references to domestic marital spaces, to, so to speak, follow its Christians into the bedroom. After all, if a community practices Christianized marriage and sex, these are not disembodied ideologies, but practices that both arise out of and shape the materiality of the Christian bedroom. And what might that materiality be?

Materiality – such as objects, bodies, and space – helps to create or intensify ritual power in line with the ideological aims of a group. The Marxist French philosopher Louis Althusser conceptualized the theoretical term "material-ideological apparatus" as a means of asserting the mutual and interactive relation between ideology and materiality, rather than a hierarchal or temporal relation that privileges ideology over materiality:

> ...the existence of the ideas of his [a given individual's] belief is material in that his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.[1]

[1] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 169. Althusser developed the concept of the material-ideological apparatus as a means of describing the relation between ideology and materiality in the realm of politics and power. Nonetheless, I also find it to be a relevant concept in the study of ritual.

This mutual theoretical relation between ideology and materiality is emphasized within ritual studies in the field of anthropology, but it is underutilized as a theoretical tool in text-centric, historical religious studies. Even in the work of April DeConick, Karen King, and Jorunn Buckley (scholars who have embraced a marital role for the bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*),[2] there has been no sustained discussion regarding the *material nature or physicality* of the gospel's bridal chamber. In other words, there has been a great deal of discussion regarding what the bridal chamber metaphorically represents and what it ritually aims to achieve, but not any debate on *with what* it does these things. And yet, no ritual is divorced from materiality, and that materiality informs our understanding of the ritual's purpose and the efficacy of its ritual power. And what might we encounter as we follow the Christians of the *Gospel of Philip* into the bedroom? Unfortunately, we have no material remains that can answer this question definitively, but when textual references to certain objects are analyzed through the lens of the gospel's ritualized marital goals, certain possibilities about the materiality of the gospel's Christianized bedroom emerge. While some of these material marital practices may have been unique to the *Gospel of Philip*, such as a possible use of a mirror as a ritual tool, others like its reference to a bridal canopy, link the *Gospel of Philip* to broader regional nuptial customs.

While the *Gospel of Philip* itself does not explicitly declare how a mirror might help achieve its ritualized goals, we can draw upon the material-ideological nature of mirrors in antiquity to explore the possibility that the gospel views reflection as a means to evoke light and angels. Mirrors are unique in that even in the most mundane of circumstances, they are not passive material objects, but objects which *act* on the world with reflection. Mirrors act unless they are hindered by darkness, material covers, or neglect by humans. This active nature of mirrors, tied

[2] Buckley, "A Cult Mystery," DeConick, "The Great Mystery of Marriage," King, "The Place of the Gospel of Philip." See also my discussion of the *Gospel of Philip*'s bridal chamber in the Introduction.

with the unique nature of reflection, is what made them particularly potent ritual tools in antiquity. For although the mirror is itself a material object, reflection is a type of immateriality. Yet, a visible projection of a flipped image of a person or a thing, enabled only by light, defies a simple categorization of real or "imaginary." As Sabine Melchior-Bonnet eloquently expresses in her book on the history of mirrors, "The fiction of the mirror refuses the rigid distinction between real and imaginary and allows a more subtle dialectic of the subject."[3] It is this liminal state of reflection betwixt real and imaginary that lent the mirror status as a gateway to the world of the gods.

Spells of vessel divination which evoke the presence of angels and light upon water or oil are plentiful in Greek and Demotic magical papyri. These spells most commonly utilize a young boy whom the ritual expert instructs to stare at a lamp or a vessel filled with reflective water or oil. The ritual expert then calls upon the god or angels to descend in the form of light upon the surface of the filled vessel or into the light of the lamp. Oftentimes, a spell provides a formulaic response for the boy which he is to recite when he sees the light. For example, a Demotic vessel divination spell instructs the ritual expert, "You should say to the boy, 'Open your eyes!' If he opens his eyes and sees the light, you should make him cry out, / saying 'Be great, be great O light! Come forth, come forth, O light!...'"[4] In a Greek lamp divination spell, which also uses a young boy as a medium, the ritual expert is to evoke light, the vehicle of divine presence, by crying out, "Hither to me, O lord, riding upon immaculate light without deceit and without anger; appear to me and to your medium the body."[5] Upon seeing the god in the light of the lamp, the boy is to call out "I see your lord in the light." Similar spells from the sixth and seventh centuries CE also occur in a more Christian context. For example, the spell ACM 57 calls the angel Gabriel down onto

[3] Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. by Katharine H. Jewett (New York: Routledge, 2001), 182.
[4] PDM xiv.1-92; tr. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 197.
[5] PGM VII. 540-78; tr. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, 134.

water and oil. ACM 122 calls down Harmozel upon a filled chalice, and ACM 127 calls for light to descend upon a water-filled chalice.[6]

In *On the Mysteries,* Iamblichus is critical of people who use "magical" rituals (like the ones discussed above) as opposed to "theurgic" methods to evoke divine presence. Throughout his treatise, Iamblichus states that these diviners of magic, as pseudo-theurgists, evoke images (εἴδωλα) of the gods, but they fail to realize that that which they have evoked is not really a god, because the true form of the gods is pure light and not the inferior images evoked by a pseudo-theurgist through inappropriate ritual tools. Iamblichus writes, "The gods, however, and those following the gods, reveal the true images of themselves, and do not in any way offer apparitions of themselves such as those contrived in water or mirrors."[7] Although he rejects others' use of mirrors, Iamblichus still embraces the use of ritual to evoke the gods via light:

> Concerning another kind of divination you say the following, "others who retain consciousness in other respects, are inspired according to their imagination… Some have visions by means of water, others on a wall or in the open air, others in the sun or some other celestial body." All this kind of divination you mention, being of many forms, is encompassed by one power which someone might call "evoking the light." This somehow illuminates the aether-like and luminous vehicle surrounding the soul with divine light, from which vehicle the divine appearances, set in motion by the gods' will, take possession of the imaginative power in us… And this happens in one of two ways: either from the presence of the gods in the soul, or from their shining on it some advanced light… Sometimes they also use conditions of certain objects that are akin to the gods who are

[6] Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 266.
[7] *On the Mysteries* 2.10; tr. Emma C. Clarke, et al., *On the Mysteries*.

about to intervene, or alternatively incantations or communications, which are also akin to and prepared for the gods' reception, their presence and manifestation.[8]

Iamblichus reports that the light could be evoked via different methods such as causing light to shine on a specific place on the wall on which sacred inscriptions with magical symbols had been written or by conducting light through water. However, Iamblichus also observes, "There might be many other ways for conducting the light, but all are reduced to one, i.e., the shining of the bright light in whatever way and through whatever instruments it may shine forth."[9] What is clear in Iamblichus' treatise is that he associates the evocation of actual light in a ritual setting with the illumination of the soul with divine light.

In contrast to Iamblichus, the *Gospel of Philip* defends the use of mirrors as a ritual tool to evoke light: "No one will be able to see himself either in water or mirror without light. Nor again will you able to see light without water (or) mirror."[10] Whereas Iamblichus rejects that the light-filled gods can be evoked via the reflective images of a mirror, the *Gospel of Philip* defends the use of a mirror or water by arguing that reflections upon their surface occur only with the aid of light and that vice versa, light relies on the medium of water or a mirror to be made visible. In other words, reflected images (*eikones*) and light are inseparable; the presence of the one necessitates the presence of the other. Thus, if indeed present, the mirror could have served as an efficacious ritual tool in the image-producing (*eikonikos*) bridal chamber[11] to evoke the light that serves as a vehicle for angels and the male and female powers.[12] Light only exists for the viewer when seen, and the gospel affirms that you become what you see.[13] It is in the bridal chamber that

[8] *On the Mysteries* 3.14; tr. Clarke, et al., *On the Mysteries.*
[9] *On the Mysteries* 3.14; tr. Clarke, et al., *On the Mysteries.*
[10] *Gos. Phil.* 69.8-11.
[11] For *eikonikos* as "image-producing," see ch. 4.
[12] *Gos. Phil.* 65.7-11, 23-24.
[13] *Gos. Phil.* 61.27-35. The gospel is not consistent on this point, however, as elsewhere it says that Christ made his disciples great, so that they might see him in his greatness (58.8-10).

the Christian couple receives light and unites with angels.[14] In this context, a mirror or the reflective surface of water could have been used to help achieve the goals of the bridal chamber.

As discussed in chapter two, since the *Gospel of Philip* recognizes the power of the maternal gaze upon conceived children, it is more likely than not that if the divine light is indeed seen, the author would have embraced this sight of angelic light as possessing a procreative benefit. Within broader cultural practices, even the light of day was sometimes cast as being procreatively impactful. The Babylonian Talmud provides a lengthy commentary on the subject of whether Jews should have sex in the light or dark:

> Rav Ḥisda said: A man is forbidden to have sexual intercourse in the daytime, for it is said, "Love your fellow as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). But what is the meaning of this scriptural proof? – Abaye said: "Lest he observes something repulsive about her and she would become loathsome to him." Rav Huna said, "Israel are holy and do not have sex in the daytime." Rava said: "If it was [performed in] a dark house – it is permissible." And Rava [further] said, or perhaps it was Rav Papa: "A scholar may wrap himself with his cloak and perform sexual intercourse."[15]

In the above passage, Rava takes a more lenient position than the rest of the rabbis by giving options in which sex can be engaged during the day. It is also Rava who speaks favorably of the custom of the people of Meḥoza, his hometown, for having sexual intercourse during the daylight hours. He praises them thus: "the reason they [the people of Meḥoza] are beautiful is that they have sex in the daytime."[16] Yaakov Elman was the first to assert that Rava's opinion reflects accultured practices in Meḥoza, and he suggested that a similar custom of daytime sex can be seen

[14] *Gos. Phil.* 65.19-23; 86.4-5.
[15] *b. Niddah* 17a; tr. Yishai Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud: Christian and Sasanian Contexts in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 108.
[16] *b. Berakot* 59b; tr. Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud*, 108.

in the instructions given to Zoroastrian priests in the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*.[17] The relevant passage reads: "This is also manifest in the Avesta that a man should approach his wife in the light of the sun or a [domestic] fire, for if he does so, the demons can do less damage to him. The child who is born [of such a union] will be, as a righteous person, more righteous and more victorious."[18] Yishael Kiel concludes that it is not clear from Rava's comments whether he approves of, rejects, or tolerates the Meḥozan or Zoroastrian custom, but what is evident is that he makes a "eugenic assertation (sex in the light = beautiful children)."[19] Why would light have created beautiful children (according to Rava) or righteous children (according to the *Pahlavi Rivāyat*)? In the context of the widespread belief in the imprinting power of the procreative gaze (ch. 2), it seems likely that seeing light (whether that of daytime or a fire) during coitus was thought at least by some in antiquity to have procreative benefits. It is also interesting that in the Zoroastrian context, light during coitus keeps demons away, which is an apotropaic benefit also associated with the light-giving bridal chamber in the *Gospel of Philip*.[20] There is no reason to infer any direct connection between the *Gospel of Philip* and the Talmudic and Pahlavi sources in question, but I highlight these passages in order to demonstrate the interpretive possibilities and establish that it is not necessary through metaphorization to strip the bridal chamber of a literal marital function in order to make sense of its evocation of light.

The materiality of marriage can also help us make sense of the *Gospel of Philip*'s usage of spatial nuptial terminology. The gospel deploys three different terms, all borrowed from Greek, to refer to domestic marital spaces: νυμφών, παστός, and κοιτών. As already noted by Hugo

[17] Yaakov Elman, "'He in His Cloak and She in Her Cloak:' Conflicting Images of Sexuality in Sasanian Mesopotamia," in *Discussing Cultural Influences: Text, Context, and Non-Text in Rabbinic Judaism*, ed. Rivka Ulmer (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2007), 141–44.
[18] *Pahlavi Rivāyat* 34e1; tr. Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud*, 108.
[19] Kiel, *Sexuality in the Babylonian Talmud*, 109.
[20] *Gos. Phil.* 65.1-26. See also my discussion of the apotropaic efficacy of Christian marriage in ch. 1.

Lundhaug, scholars have most frequently treated these terms as synonyms, so much so that translators, more times than not, have chosen the English term "bridal chamber" to translate all three terms.[21] This tendency toward a single-term approach can be found in the influential translation by Wesley Isenberg,[22] and more recently in the translation by Geoffrey Smith.[23] Lundhaug recognizes that this single-term approach is problematic but only provides a partial solution. He translates *koitôn* as "bedroom," but then drawing from dictionary definitions, he translates *pastos* and *numphôn* both as "bridal chamber." Nonetheless, despite this choice, Lundhaug warns that although he translates *pastos* and *numphôn* identically, scholars should keep in mind which term is being used at all times. He notes, "For although the semantic fields of these terms overlap to a significant degree, they also have some different additional connotations and different allusive potential."[24] Building on Lundhaug's comments, it is helpful to note that *pastos* and *numphôn* are not as similar in meaning as the dictionary entries for *pastos* suggest. *Numphôn* certainly does carry the meaning of "bridal chamber," but if we turn to the neglected work of Eugene Lane on the term *pastos*, we can recognize that the denotation of "bridal chamber" in dictionary entries for *pastos* is problematic.

Lane acknowledges that similar to other dictionaries, Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon*,[25] provides five possible meanings for *pastos*: (1) woman's chamber, bridal chamber, (2) bridal bed, (3) embroidered bed-curtain, (4) bridal hymn, (5) perhaps, shrine. By surveying *pastos* as found in both literature and inscriptions, Lane demonstrates that:

[21] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 331n653.
[22] Wesley W. Isenberg, trans., "Gospel of Philip," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M Robinson, Revised (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 139–60.
[23] Geoffrey S. Smith, ed. and trans., *Valentinian Christianity: Texts and Translations* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019).
[24] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 331n653.
[25] Henry George Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Revised (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

> ...the distinctions between the meanings of the word in the various passages are factitious. Rather, wherever the context is clear enough, παστός always appears as a woven fabric of some sort. It is also customarily connected with marriage, both for males and for females. At most, παστός can be taken as a sort of bridal canopy. But it can never be shown to refer to a chamber, shrine, or other permanent, non-textile structure.[26]

Writing in 1988, Lane notes that he is not the first one to come to this conclusion. Felix Solmsen made a similar observation in 1912 as did Claude Vatin in 1977.[27] Lane bemoans, "But neither of these works has passed into the mainstream of scholarship."[28] Unfortunately, Lane's work has shared a similar fate as that of Solmsen and Vatin. To my knowledge, Nag Hammadi scholars, writing on the *Gospel of Philip*, have never engaged Solmsen's, Vatin's or Lane's work on *pastos* despite the term occurring eight times within the gospel.[29] Instead, although understandable, scholars have relied upon dictionary entries for *pastos*, which in turn has stunted analysis of the gospel's nuptial imagery by obscuring the meaning of *pastos* as an impermanent curtained canopy, instead rendering it as a synonym for *numphôn* and translating both of the terms as "bridal chamber."[30] This difference is important, because as we will see, "a setting up" and presence of a

[26] Eugene N. Lane, "Παστός," *Glotta* 66, no. 1/2 (1988): 100. This is the first of two articles that Lane wrote on the term παστός. See also his article "On the Use of the Word Παστός in Patristic Greek," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Donald Arthur Carson, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 113 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 140–55.

[27] Felix Solmsen, "Zur Griechischen Wortforschung," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 31, no. 1 (1913): 485–87; Claude Vatin, *Recherches sur le mariage et la condition de la femme mariée à l'époque hellénistique* (Paris: E. de Bocard, 1970).

[28] Lane, Παστός, 100.

[29] *Gos. Phil.* 69.1, 69.37, 70.18, 70.19, 70.22, 70.33, 71.7, and 71.9.

[30] Silke Petersen provides the most comprehensive analysis of the terms *numphôn*, *pastos*, and *koitôn*, but her work like that of others' before her is limited in scope since she does not recognize the problematic nature of the dictionary entry for *pastos* and thus mistakenly also understands it to be a "bridal chamber." See Silke Petersen, "Marriages, Unions, and Bridal Chambers in the Gospel of Philip," in *Re-Making the World: Christianity and Categories: Essays in Honor of Karen L. King*, ed. Taylor G. Petrey, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 434 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 225–32.

pastos has ceremonial significance as it is particularly associated with weddings and procreation and the earliest phases of a marriage.

While *thalamos* (θάλαμος), a term for "bridal chamber," is not found in the *Gospel of Philip*, it occurs with great frequency in the sources that Lane surveys. In these surveyed sources, *numphôn* is found only in its adjectival form (*numfidios*), "bridal." What is pertinent for our purposes is that *pastos* occurs with great frequency alongside *thalamos*, but it is treated as something distinct from a *thalamos*. This serves to establish the meaning of *pastos* as something other than "bridal chamber."[31] Lane provides numerous examples that highlight this phenomenon of *pastos* and *thalamos* being used beside one another in a distinguishing fashion. In one of the most provocative examples from a second- or third-century CE grave poem from Karanis in Egypt, a young man who died too early at the age of twenty declares:

> Οὐδ' ἐτέλεσσα
>
> νυμφιδίων θαλαμων εἰς ὑμέναια λέχη,
>
> Οὐδ' ὑπὸ παστὸν ἐμον δεμας ἤλυθεν.
>
> Nor did I arrive at the marriage beds of the bridal chambers, nor did my body pass under the *pastos*.[32]

In light of scholarly misunderstanding of the meaning of *pastos*, what is so notable about this inscription is that (1) *pastos* is distinguished in meaning from "bridal chambers" (νυμφιδίων θαλαμων) and beds (λέχη), and (2) a *pastos* is something that one enters by going under (ὑπό) it.

[31] The examples surveyed by Lane also distinguish *pastos* from a wedding hymn, which again indicates the problematic nature of dictionary entries for the term.

[32] Inscription no. 1680 in Werner Peek, ed., *Greek Verse Inscriptions: Epigrams on Funerary Stelae and Monuments = Grab-Epigramme*, Exact repr. of the ed. Berlin 1955 (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1988); tr. Lane, Παστός, 104.

In a similar fashion, women are described as having entered under (ὑπεληλυθυῖαι) the wedding/marriage (γαμικόν) *pastos* in 3 Maccabees 4:6. And although he makes no reference to its usage in weddings, Clement characterizes a ritual in the mysteries in which the initiate goes under a *pastos (*ὑπὸ τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν).[33] If a *pastos* were a bridal chamber, entering it by going under it would not make sense. However, this issue disappears when we turn to other passages that point to the nature of the materiality of a *pastos* as a curtain. For example, Lane finds four inscriptions which indicate a *pastos* can be dyed.[34] In the below example, from a grave epigram for a girl who died young before marriage, in addition to being dyed, a *pastos* is described as something that can be "spread out" *inside* a bridal chamber:

> ἤδη μὲν κροκόεις πιτανίδι πίτνατο νυμφᾳ
> Κλειναρετᾳ χρυσέων παστός ἔσω θαλάμων,
>
> already the saffron-dyed *pastos* was spread for Kleinareta, the bride of Pitana, inside her golden chambers, when death snatched her away.[35]

A *pastos* is also something that can be unfastened or unrolled at an art show[36] or washed alongside a bride's headdress.[37] The fact that one can go under it, spread it, unfasten or unroll it, and wash it alongside other cloth items, all points to a *pastos* being made out of cloth and it not being a walled chamber of a house. This is further confirmed by ancient lexicographers who provide a definition of the term *pastos*. Apollonius Sophista, probably writing in the beginning of the second century CE, associates *pastos* with the verb πάσσω (to embroider), and declares that this is:

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[33] *Exhortation to the Greeks* 2.
[34] Three are described as dyed saffron yellow while one is dyed purple (Lane, Παστός, 118).
[35] *Anthologia Graeca* 3, 711 (Antipater) (= Peek, no. 1797). Text and translation from Lane, Παστός, 112.
[36] Herodas' *Mimiamboi* 4.56. See also analysis of this passage by Lane, Παστός, 114-5.
[37] Peek, no. 2046. See Lane, Παστός, 113.

ἀφ’ οὗ καὶ παστὸν λέγομεν γαμικὸν ποικίλον ὕφασμα κυρίως,

whence we also call mostly a colorful wedding fabric a *pastos*[38]

Pollux, writing in second-century CE Egypt, provides the following entries for *thalamos* and *pastos*:

Τὸ δὲ παραπέτασμα παρὰ τῇ εὐνῇ παστός.

The curtain next to the bed is called a *pastos*.

ὁ μὲν τόπος τοῦ γάμου θάλαμος.

The place of marriage is called the *thalamos*.[39]

I agree with Lane that these entries by Pollux again confirm that a *pastos* is not a bed nor a bridal chamber, but rather refers to the curtain(s) that surrounds the bed, which is itself inside the bridal chamber. The meaning of *pastos* as curtain is also the meaning that the translators of the Septuagint know as reflected in their choice of *pastos* to translate the Hebrew word *huppah* (canopy) in Psalm 19:5 and Joel 2:16, which are both scriptural passages rife with nuptial imagery. *Huppah* is also the term that the rabbis use to refer to the cloth wedding canopies that Jews of their time period used.[40] There is also some indication that a *pastos* served a cultic function in some temples, but here again, it seems to be a cloth and not a chamber. An inscription from Smyrna lists “a temple-

[38] Text and translation from Lane, Παστός, 111.
[39] Text and translation from Lane, Παστός, 111.
[40] On the *huppah* in rabbinic literature, see Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 55-56, 73, 128, 164, 167, 172, and 235.

shaped *pastos*-holder and a linen *pastos*" (παστῆον ξύλινον ναοειδὲς καὶ παστὸν λινοῦν) in a list of cultic objects for Apollo Kisalauddenos.[41]

While it seems that *pastos* could sometimes be used to refer to a curtain outside of a nuptial context in the inscriptional and literary passages surveyed by Lane, in the context of marriage the setting up of a *pastos* anticipates or is part of wedding festivities. Grave epigrams frequently bemoan that instead of being ritually led to the *pastos* (as one would expect during a wedding procession), a young woman or man is instead processed to the grave. In a grave epigram for a woman who died on the night of her wedding, the torches of the wedding procession[42] are replaced with the torches of her funeral: "The same pine branches which shed torchlight by the παστός also lit her way below when she died."[43] A grave inscription from Thrace for a young man of twenty mourns that due to his early death, "He did not at all see the desirable παστός the companion of a bridal marriage (νυμφικῶν γάμον)."[44] In another grave inscription for a man of twenty, the epigram bemoans that instead of the bridal chamber, he instead finds himself in the tomb:

> Βαιόν σοι τὸ μεταξὺ βίου θανάτοιό τ' εθηκε
> Καὶ τύμβου, καπίτων, καὶ θαλάμοιο τύχη,
> Νύκτα μίαν ψεῦστιν καὶ ἀνηλέα, τὴν ἄνις αὐλῶν,
> τὴν δίχα σοι παστῶν, τὴν ἄτερ εἰλαπίνης

[41] Inscription no. 753 in Georg Petzl, ed., *Die Inschriften von Smyrna*, Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien, Bd. 23 (Bonn: Habelt, 1982); See also Lane, "Παστός," 111.
[42] On the ubiquity of wedding processions, including the use of torches during them, see John Howard Oakley and Rebecca H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, Wisconsin Studies in Classics (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 11–37; Karen K. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 135–75.
[43] Peek, no. 1825; tr. Lane, "Παστός, 102."
[44] *IG* XII, 8, 441, lines and 13-14. Text and translation from Lane, 102.

> Fortune left you a small space between life and death, Capito, between tomb and marriage chamber, one night deceitful and pitiless, without flutes, without *pastoi*, without a banquet.[45]

In the above inscription, *pastoi* are listed as part of the wedding festivities, alongside flutes and a banquet, that the young man will never experience. And in another inscription, which ties *pastos* to procreation, the parents of the girl who died at fourteen, mourn:

> ἆ μοῖραι, τί τοσοῦτον ἀπηνέες, οὐδ' ἐπὶ παστοὺς
> ἠγάγετ' οὐδ' ἐρατῆς ἔργα τεκνοσπορίης;
>
> Ah Fates, why so hard, did you not lead her to the *pastoi*
> or the works of lovely procreation?[46]

We see yet again in this inscription that the *pastos* is characterized as a ritualized place to which one was led during a wedding procession.

In fact, in none of the pre-Christian examples does *pastos* mean a bridal chamber, so how did "bridal chamber" come to be associated as one of the definitions of *pastos* in modern dictionaries? I am convinced by Lane's argument that the answer to this question seems to be two-fold. The first arises from the influence of the Latin Vulgate, whose translator in light of not knowing what a *pastos* was and despite them likely having different etymological roots, seems to have mistaken "*pastos*" as an alternative spelling for the word "*pastas*" (a woman's chamber). Thus, within the Latin Vulgate the term is rendered as *thalamus*, asserting a translation of θαλάμος that is not actually found in the Greek. The second reason is that by the fifth century, some Greek

[45] *CIG* 5172. Text and translation from Lane, "Παστός," 104.
[46] *Anthologia Graeca* 7. Text and translation from Lane, "Παστός," 102.

writers themselves, most notably John Chrysostom and Hesychius, equate *pastos* with a *pastas*.[47] However, this confusion of *pastos-pastas* is not found prior to the fifth century CE, and even then, it is not universal as others like Amphilochius and (Pseudo-)Basil both recognize that a *pastos* is something that is "spread out."[48] It is the "spread out" nature of a *pasto*s which is "set up" around the procreative marriage bed that allows Amphilochius to allegorically equate Christ's death on the cross as a type of redemptive *pastos* that gave birth to God's people:

> A cross was set up (ἔστη) and Christ was spread out (ἐφηπώφη) on it and unjust death was the appearance and a holy bride chamber (θάλαμος) was the happening; a cross was the appearance and a παστός was the event. Yesterday a nuptial canopy (παστός) was set up (ἀνέστη) and today a people was born."[49]

A treatise dubiously attributed to John Chrysostom also equates the setting up of the cross to the setting up of a *pastos*: "He does not know that the cross which he is going to set up is a παστός for me, but a cross for him; it is a [bridal] chamber (θάλαμος) for me, but death for him."[50] These instances further affirm the status of a *pastos* as a type of curtained canopy that is set up for the wedding. A nuptial canopy that is "spread out" is also found in Ode 42 of the Syriac *Odes of Solomon*, which declares, "And like the bridal tent (*gnūnā)* spread out (*mṯaḥ*) in the house of the bridal pair, so my love is over those who believe in me."[51] And similar to Amphilochius, it seems likely that the *Odes of Solomon* draws an intentional parallel between the spread-out bridal canopy and Christ's spread-out hands on the cross that is mentioned at the beginning of the same ode

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[47] John Chrysostom, *On Virginity* 30.26; Hesychius of Jerusalem, *In Sanctum Lazarum* 11.8.9; 10.10.
[48] Amphilochius, *De recens Baptizatis* 90; (Pseudo-)Basil, *Homilia de Virginitate* 78.79.5.
[49] *De recens Baptizatis* 90; text and translation from Lane, "Παστός in Patristic Greek," 151.
[50] *In Illud, Pater Si Possible Est*; text and translation from Lane, "Παστός in Patristic Greek," 147. This is a good example of *pastos* and *thalamus* being used in parallel to convey a common point (the redemptive effect of Christ's crucifixion), but not as linguistic synonyms. This is, in effect, the way *pastos, numfôn* and *koitôn* function in the *Gospel of Philip*.
[51] *Odes of Solomon* 42.9a-b; tr. Michael Lattke, *Odes of Solomon: A Commentary*, trans. Marianne Ehrhardt, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

(42.1b). Michael Lattke takes note of this parallel and remarks, "It is probably fortuitous that the stretching of the bridal tent (9a) and the 'spreading out' of the hands (1b) employ words from the same Syriac root."[52]

While it is possible that the *Gospel of Philip* – like the Latin Vulgate translator, John Chrysostom and Hesychius – equates *pastos* with *pastas*, there is plentiful evidence that this should not be adapted as the default assumption in analyzing the text. In fact, the opposite should be assumed unless a strong case can be made that the compiler of the *Gospel of Philip*, or the authors of the compiler's sources, were unaware of what a *pastos* is. There is reason to believe, however, that this is not the case and compiler and sources both were aware that a *pastos* is something distinct from a bridal chamber (*numphôn*).

The *Gospel of Philip* allegorically casts the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple as a bridal chamber (*numphôn*).[53] This same passage, although in a lacunose portion, contains a reference to a *pastos*. As we have seen in the passages above, *pastos* frequently occurs alongside, but is differentiated from, *thalamos*. Might the appearance of both terms in this one short passage suggest that the gospel sees *pastos* as something distinct from a *numphôn*? That seems more likely than the assumption that the use of the two terms in the same passage means that they are simply being equated. Unfortunately, the passage is fragmentary at the exact moment we might gain a more explicit clarity regarding the relationship between *numphôn* and *pastos*. However, given the evidence cited above in which a *pastos* is a curtain that can be found in a bridal chamber (*numphôn*), it is tantalizing that the *pastos* is introduced directly after and before two references to the torn "curtain" (καταπέτασμα) of the temple revealing the holy of holies (an allegorical

[52] Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 591n127.
[53] *Gos. Phil.* 69.14-74.

numphôn).[54] This suggests that the allegory draws upon the readers' knowledge of nuptial domestic space in order to convey the holy of holies as the *numphôn* and the *pastos* as its curtain or as the bridal canopy set up within.

So why does the materiality of *pastos* as a nuptial canopy rather than a walled chamber matter in an analysis of the *Gospel of Philip's* nuptial imagery? I believe the answer to that question lies in recognizing the ritualized role a *pastos* would have played in the ceremonial legitimization of a marriage. As we have seen, the *pastos* is frequently identified as the processional destination of a bride or groom. Greek, Latin, and Jewish sources all testify that a wedding procession to the groom's home was part of marriage celebrations. Tertullian characterizes the procession of a veiled bride to her husband as so ubiquitous that even the "heathen" (*ethnici*) do it.[55] Arnobius refers to nuptial rites as something that distinguishes the unions of humans from that of animals.[56]

Karen Hersch has argued that in the Roman world, even more so than marriage contracts, wedding processions served to communally mark a couple's union as a legitimate marriage:

> Whatever individual Romans may have thoughts of the weddings they attended, the majority of all types of written evidence focuses on the procession of a bride before the eyes of her community. Contracts recording marriages or dowries may have been the norm only for the wealthy, and so it seems that *consensus* (or *affectio maritalis*) had to be expressed in a way that a whole community could easily observe. The bride's procession to her new husband's house was the public declaration of this consensus. The highlighting of the procession is crucial, for this parade was the most public aspect of the wedding –

[54] In a Christian text like the *Gospel of Philip*, this is an obvious reference to the scene in Mark 15:38 (= Matthew 27:51; Luke 23:45) where the καταπέτασμα in the Temple is torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus' death.
[55] *On the Veiling of Virgins* 11.9.
[56] *Against the Heathen* 1.2.

> anyone could attend – while events in the bride's or groom's house may have been restricted to a smaller number of invited guests.[57]

The important role of public wedding rites in legitimizing a marriage continued well into the mid-fifth century CE as reflected in a letter to Rusticus the Bishop of Gallia Narbonensis (in southern France) from Leo the Great, a bishop of Rome. The letter addresses the issue of whether it is permissible for a clergyman to give his daughter in a marriage to a man who has lived with, and even has had children with, another woman. In his answer, Leo says a father is allowed to arrange a marriage with such a man as long as the intended groom was not married to the woman with whom he cohabited and with whom he had children:

> Not every woman that is joined to a man is his wife, even as every son is not his father's heir. But the marriage bond is legitimate between the freeborn and between equals: this was laid down by the Lord long before the Roman law had its beginning. And so a wife is different from a concubine, even as a bondwoman from a freewoman. For which reason also the Apostle in order to show the difference of these persons quotes from Genesis (21:10), where it is said to Abraham, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And hence, since the marriage tie was from the beginning so constituted as apart from the joining of the sexes to symbolize the mystic union of Christ and His Church, it is undoubted that that woman has no part in matrimony, in whose case it is shown that the mystery of marriage has not taken place. Accordingly a clergyman of any rank who has given his daughter in marriage to a man that has a concubine, must not be considered to have given her to a married man, unless

[57] Hersch, *The Roman Wedding*, 58.

> perchance the other woman should appear to have become free, to have been legitimately dowered and to have been honoured by public nuptials.[58]

The distinction between different types of unions and the role of ritual in establishing that distinction is perhaps what the *Gospel of Philip* has in mind when it declares that a *pastos* is not for everyone: "A nuptial canopy (*pastos*) does not exist for animals nor does it exist for slaves nor for women who are unclean, but it exists for free men and for virgins."[59] As part of public nuptial rites, the setting up and presence of a wedding canopy would have marked a union as one of marriage. Michael Satlow observes that a procession to a nuptial canopy (*huppah*) played a similar role among Jews: "The mishnah assumes that a woman who had never been married would be led from her home with celebration, and that the public procession itself would testify to the legitimacy and status of that marriage."[60] In a betrothal blessing, the *huppah* is made Jewish by praising it as the means by which God established marriage and sanctifies Israel:

> What does one bless [for] the "betrothal blessing"?
>
> Rabin bar Ada, both [sic] in the name of Rav, said "Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us through His commandments and has commanded us concerning the forbidden relationships, and has permitted to us the married women by means of a *ḥuppah* and betrothal (qiddušin)."
>
> Rav Aḥa son of Rabba would conclude [the blessing] in the name of Rav Yehudah: "Praised are You, Lord our God, Who sanctifies His people Israel by means of *ḥuppah* and betrothal (qiddušin)."[61]

[58] *Letter 167.3*, question 4; tr. Charles Lett Feltoe, *NPNF* 2.110.
[59] *Gos. Phil.* 69.1-4.
[60] Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity*, 171.
[61] *b. Ketubbot* 7b; tr. Satlow, 164.

The *Syro-Roman Lawbook* presumes that a nuptial canopy would have been set up at the betrothal stage and uses its presence or lack thereof as a legal measure to determine what happens to the earnest a groom's family paid a bride in the event that the groom dies before the marriage takes place:

> If the girl had a nuptial canopy (*gnūnā*, ܓܢܘܢܐ),[62] and the man to whom she is betrothed saw her and kissed her,[63] half of what she received, the earnest or goods from the man to whom she is betrothed or from his family, she should return to the family of her dead betrothed, and if he has no family, to his relatives, those close to him by clan ties.
>
> If a man betrothed the girl only through his family or through others, but the girl did not have a bridal chamber, and her betrothed did not see whom he has betrothed, and did not kiss her, everything he or his family has given her, if she dies, he takes back from her family, except food and drink.[64]

The *Syro-Roman Lawbook* assumes different stages of betrothal. The first stage is merely an agreement of betrothal. The second stage involves the meeting of bride or groom and a setting up a nuptial canopy, which the text associates with the meeting of the betrothed. The presence of a bridal canopy indicates that a wedding was closer at hand, and thus in the event of the groom's death, the bride is entitled to a larger portion of the earnest money that the groom's family paid her. In rabbinic literature, while they frown upon the practice, the rabbis are familiar with the

[62] Although *gnūnā* can also mean a bridal chamber, the lawbook uses the presence of a *gnūnā* as an indication that a marriage was closer to taking place. As such, I think it is more likely that as in the *Odes of Solomon*, *gnūnā* here refers to a bridal curtain or canopy that was set up in preparation for public nuptials.

[63] It is not clear where the nuptial canopy is set up. One would expect it to be at the groom's house, to which the bride would have been processed, but the lawbook describes it as something that the bride possesses. On the other hand, perhaps the phrase "if the girl had a nuptial canopy" is just an idiomatic expression that simply means that the girl has already experienced the ritualized *pastos*.

[64] *Syro-Roman Lawbook* 84-85; tr. Yifat Monnickendam, "The Kiss and the Earnest," *Le Muséon* 125, no. 3 (2012): 307–34.

practice alluded to in the *Syro-Roman Lawbook* of the bride and groom meeting in the bridal canopy prior to their marriage. The Tosefta associates this practice with Judeans, but characterizes it as being shunned by the more chaste Galilean Jews:

> R. Yehuda said: At first in Judaea, they would examine the *ḥuppah*, and the groom, and the bride, three days before the *ḥuppah.* But in the Galilee they did not do so.
>
> At first in Judaea, they would leave the bride and the groom alone for one hour before the *ḥuppah*, so that his heart may become crude with her. But in the Galilee they did not do so.
>
> At first in Judaea, they would appoint two *shushbinin* [attendants], one from the groom's family, and the other from the bride's family, but despite this, they would only testify concerning the marriage. But in the Galilee they did not do so.[65]

Regardless of whether it was set up during the meeting of the bride and groom during betrothal or afterwards in preparation for the wedding procession, a nuptial canopy (*pastos*, *gnūnā*, *ḥuppah*) throughout the Ancient Mediterranean and West Asia had a ritualized connotation that associated it with the act of "becoming married" and with the curtained space around the marriage bed, where the sexual consummation of the newly formed marriage took place.

These observations should then also inform our understanding of the two other passages in the *Gospel of Philip* where *pastos* occurs. The first passage characterizes Christ's arrival on earth as occurring in order to rectify the separation of the sexes that occurred in the beginning:

> If the woman had not separated from the man, she would not have died with the man. His separation became the beginning of death. Therefore, Christ came so that the separation, which occurred at the beginning, would be repaired. And he will again unite them together. And to those who died because of the separation, he will give them life and unite them.

[65] *t. Ketubbot* 1.4; tr. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity*, 167.

> And the woman unites to her husband in the bridal canopy (*pastos*). And those who have united in the bridal canopy (*pastos*) will no longer be separated. Therefore, Eve separated from Adam because it was not in the bridal canopy (*pastos*) that she united with him.[66]

In an earlier passage, the *Gospel of Philip* declares, "When Eve was in Adam, death did not exist. When she separated from him, death came into existence."[67] What is the separation the *Gospel of Philip* envisions having occurred between Adam and Eve? Ismo Dunderberg views the "separation" in both 68.22-24 and 70.9-22 to be references to Eve's primeval separation from Adam in the beginning of creation (Gen. 2:21-23) in line with the gospel's understanding of salvation as a "returning to one's original androgynous state."[68] While Dunderberg's interpretation may work for the separation of Adam and Eve in 68.22-24, it falls short as an explanation of the separation of them in 70.9-22, because it is not clear what it would mean that an androgynous Adam's female and male aspects were only separated because they had not been properly united in a *pastos* beforehand. One solution to this problem is to interpret Adam, Eve, and their gendered separation metaphorically. Elaine Pagels, like Dunderberg, views both passages as referring to Adam and Eve's primordial separation, but in line with her understanding that the *Gospel of Philip* is a Valentinian text, she interprets this as a metaphorical reference to the separation of *pneuma* (Adam) and *psyche* (Eve).[69] However, this is a metaphorical equation that the text itself does not directly offer, and the *Gospel of Philip*'s status as a Valentinian text remains uncertain.[70] Furthermore, Pagels, like Dunderberg, does not address how her interpretation of Adam as spirit

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[66] *Gos. Phil.* 70.9-22.
[67] *Gos. Phil.* 68.22-24.
[68] Ismo Dunderberg, *Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 57.
[69] Elaine Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and the *Gospel of Philip*," in King, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, 187–206.
[70] See my discussion in the Introduction.

and Eve as soul fits into the text's assertion that Adam and Eve were only separated because they had not united in a *pastos*.

Robert Grant offers a more tenable solution. Instead of 68.22-24 and 70.9-22 referring to a singular separation, he suggests that they refer to two different types of separation that Adam and Eve experienced. The first separation (68.22-24), says Grant, refers to the androgynous unity of Adam, which is humans' "destiny to recover."[71] The second separation relates to the "indissolubility of marriage" and refers to the separation of Adam and Eve that occurred due to their lack of a union in the *pastos*, which Grant translates as "bride-chamber."[72] This leads him to conclude, "In other words, an ontological separation was succeeded by an existential one."[73] In this vein, Christ came to repair both separations. Although he too misidentifies the *pastos* as a "bridal chamber," Lundhaug not only recognizes the role of marriage in the reunification of Adam and Eve in 70.9-22, but even identifies its ceremonial context. "In a basic sense," he observes, "this means that they were not properly married, which again may imply that their joining lacked the proper ceremony and/or that it was not performed in the proper place."[74] The passage's ceremonial aspect is further intensified when we recognize that a *pastos* is an impermanent cloth canopy set up in preparation for the wedding and consummation of the marriage. Despite Lundhaug's recognition of the ceremonial nature of this passage, however, he still sees this ceremonial reference to the *pastos* as serving a metaphorical purpose that distances it from any actual marital practices of Christians.[75] But is this really the case? Or is it possible that the author uses this passage to affirm the necessity of a *pastos* in establishing a Christian marriage?

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[71] Robert M. Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage in the Gospel of Philip," *Vigiliae Christianae* 15, no. 3 (September 1961): 134.
[72] Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage," 134.
[73] Grant, "The Mystery of Marriage," 135.
[74] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 272–73.
[75] Lundhaug, *Images of Rebirth*, 273–74.

I agree with Grant and Lundhaug that the separation of Adam and Eve in 70.9-22 does not refer to the division of the sexes after Eve is split from an originally androgynous Adam. Instead, it seems more likely to be a reference to the separation of Eve from Adam that occurred after the completion of Eve's creation.[76] In the book of Genesis, it appears that Eve is alone, that is, separated from Adam, when the serpent tempts her (Gen. 3:1-6). The aloneness of Eve in this moment contributed to the belief among some Jews and Christians that Cain was not a product of the sexual union of Adam and Eve but was conceived via a union between the serpent and Eve.[77] This is a belief that the *Gospel of Philip* embraces: "And he was begotten from adultery. He was the son of the serpent. Therefore, he also became a murderous man in the manner of his father. And he killed his brother."[78] It is this serpent-driven, adultery-motivated separation of man and woman that Christ has come to repair, and it is this reparation of sexes a couple can experience via the union in the *pastos*. Afterall, as I discussed in chapter one, the *Gospel of Philip* assigns an apotropaic efficacy to the marriage of the bridal chamber. As long as the gendered evil spirits and sexually deviant humans see the couple together, they remain protected from their advances.[79] And by characterizing this unification of the sexes as taking place in the *pastos*, the *Gospel of Philip* uses a spatial term that intensifies the ceremonialized aspect of this marital moment.

[76] Schenke, *Das Philippus-Evangelium*, 411, similarly rejected a reference here to the creation of Eve from Adam, arguing instead that the separation of Eve from Adam involves an interpretation of her fall into sin: Eve had already initiated her mistake before the reunification with Adam in marriage could take place. She and Adam had eaten of the tree of knowledge before they could partake of the tree of life, which Schenke felt must have been identified implicitly with the bridal chamber (*Brautgemach*; p. 413). Although Schenke recognized that the comment in *Gos. Phil.* 70.17-18 about the woman being united with her husband in the *pastos* refers to "actual, earthly weddings" (*wirklichen, irdischen Hochzeiten*), he made nothing more of that fact and focused entirely on the metaphorical use of these themes. He apparently was unaware of Eugene Lane's studies on *pastos* and treats the term as synonymous with *numphôn*.
[77] For an overview of these stories, see John Byron, "Like Father, Like Son," in *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry*, Themes in Biblical Narrative Jewish and Christian Traditions 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 11–38.
[78] *Gos. Phil.* 61.6-10.
[79] *Gos. Phil.* 65.1-26.

If this is indeed the separation of Adam and Eve that the *Gospel of Philip* alludes to, this would further suggest that it sees the use of a *pastos* as a necessary ceremonial object during a wedding that marks the couple's union as one of marriage with all of its apotropaic benefits. This possibility is also interesting in the light of Lane's discovery of the confusion over *pastos* in some of the later Christian material. Whereas Clement writing in second-century Alexandria knows that a *pastos* is a curtain, two hundred years later Hesychius, also writing from Alexandria, is unfamiliar with the term and confuses it with *pastas*. As discussed above, some Christian writers make a similar mistake as Hesychius, whereas others, such as Amphilochius, maintain familiarity with what a *pastos* is and its use during weddings. How should we understand this unfamiliarity of *pastos* by many Christian writers? Does it indicate that the *Gospel of Philip* is written during a time in which the use of a *pastos* during the wedding festivities – which mark a union as a legitimate marriage – is falling out favor or is simply unknown in some Christian circles? Further research on Christian usage of *pastos* is needed to answer this question, but it does raise the possibility, however tentative, that it is precisely in this context of its diminishing use that the *Gospel of Philip* casts a *pastos* as a necessary ceremonial object of the Christianized bedroom that supports Christ's purpose of creating an apotropaic lasting union between man and woman.

This Christianized use of a *pastos* is further intensified in the *Gospel of Philip* by the gospel's explanation that the body of Jesus himself came to exist in the *pastos* of his parents:

> Indeed, it is fitting to speak of a mystery. The father of all united with the virgin who came down. And a fire illuminated it (the mystery). On that day he uncovered the great nuptial canopy (*pastos*). Because of this, his body came into existence. On that day he came out

> from the nuptial canopy (*pastos*) in the same manner as that which came into being from the bridegroom and the bride.[80]

As part of a text that affirms elsewhere that Jesus is the son and seed of Joseph,[81] I find little reason to read this passage metaphorically. Furthermore, the usage of *pastos* in the passage intensifies both the ceremonialized and sexualized nature of the passage by characterizing the Father's descent as an entering into the curtained nuptial space set up in anticipation of a wedding procession and as a ceremonial cover for the bride and groom's sexual union. I agree with the interpretation of Karen King that the passage can be understood as presenting two unions: that of the heavenly father and virgin and that of the earthly bridegroom (Joseph) and bride (Mary), and that it links the union of the heavenly father and virgin with the begetting of Jesus' earthly body.[82] And this whole process of Jesus' conception is understood to be "a mystery." Interestingly, in a homily on the Annunciation dubiously attributed to Gregory Thaumaturgus (an early third-century CE bishop of Neocaesarea), the begetting of Jesus' body is also described as a "mystery:"

> The incorporeal servant [i.e., Gabriel] was sent to the virgin undefiled. One free from sin was sent to one that admitted no corruption. The light was sent that should announce the Sun of righteousness. The dawn was sent that should precede the light of the day…
>
> And for what purpose was she espoused? In order that the spoiler might not learn the mystery prematurely. For that the King was to come by a virgin, was a fact known to the wicked one…

[80] *Gos. Phil.* 71.3-11.
[81] *Gos. Phil.* 55.34-36, 73.8-14.
[82] Karen L. King, "The Place of the Gospel of Philip in the Context of Early Christian Claims about Jesus' Marital Status," *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 4 (October 2013): 576.

> In the sixth month Gabriel was sent to a virgin – he who received, indeed, such injunctions as these: "Come hither now, archangel, and become the minister of a dread mystery which has been kept hid, and be thou the agent in the miracle. I am moved by my compassions to descend to earth in order to recover the lost Adam. Sin hath made him decay who was made in my image, and hath corrupted the work of my hands, and hath obscured the beauty which I formed… Yet I wish to keep this mystery, which I confide to thee alone, still hid from all the powers of heaven. Go thou, therefore, to the Virgin Mary…"[83]

According to pseudo-Gregory Thaumaturgus it was in order to hide the mystery of his descent that Jesus was born to a married woman. Since the evil powers knew Christ would be born of a virgin, they were looking for the sign of his earthy descent among unmarried women. Mary's co-status as an undefiled virgin and yet a wife served to deceive the powers and kept both her and the mystery of Christ's descent hidden from them. The *Gospel of Philip* also utilizes the language of "mystery" to characterize the heavenly descent that led to the conception of Jesus' body, but instead of emphasizing a virginal conception, the *Gospel of Philip* emphasizes Jesus' body as a product of his parents' union under the nuptial canopy, a union which mirrors the union of the Father and heavenly virgin. This imagery of Christ's own conception taking place under a *pastos* again serves to Christianize the ceremonial use of a nuptial canopy.

While it remains unclear how many Greek-speaking Christians were incorporating a nuptial canopy into their weddings, we know with more certainty that it never fell out of favor among Syriac-speaking Christians. Blessings for putting up and taking down a nuptial canopy are found in Syriac marriage liturgical texts. Gabriel Radle reports that these blessings are absent from early Byzantine marriage liturgical texts with the notable exception of *Sinai Gr. 957,* a ninth-

[83] *Third Homily: On the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary*; tr. S.D.F. Salmond, *ANF* 6.65-66.

century CE Byzantine manuscript from Palestine. Mirroring that of the Syriac liturgies, the marriage liturgy in *Sinai Gr. 957* contains a blessing for setting up the *pastos* and for dismantling it.[84] And among Jews, the rabbis affirmed the necessity of one. And apparently, so does the *Gospel of Philip*. With this in mind, could it be possible that the *Gospel of Philip*'s affirmation of the ceremonial usage of a *pastos* might help contribute to questions regarding the gospel's provenance? While this question remains tangential to my current project, and it only can be answered by further building on the work that was first started by Eugene Lane, it demonstrates how questions regarding the materiality of Christianized marriage, which first begins with a wedding, can and should contribute to our understanding of ritualization of marriage in the *Gospel of Philip*.

And yet, the ritualization, and thus the materiality of marriage, extend far beyond the time-bounded wedding. We can also speak of the ritually empowered materiality of everyday married life. As the *Gospel of Philip*'s usage of *pastos* is a nod toward the ceremonial beginning of a marriage, then its usage of *koitôn,* "bed chamber," in the end of the gospel is a nod toward the continued nature of that marriage into the un-ceremonialized, but as we have seen in chapters 1-4, still deeply ritualized, everyday life of a Christian couple.

Koitôn occurs four times toward the end of the *Gospel of Philip*.[85] It first appears in a passage that contrasts "the marriage of defilement," which is motivated by desire, with the "undefiled marriage" which is controlled by the will. Within an undefiled marriage, the *koitôn* is cast as a domestic space in which a wife confines herself when houseguests are present. In the

[84] Gabriel Radle, "The Development of Byzantine Marriage Rites as Evidenced by Sinai Gr. 957," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 78, no. 1 (2012): 133–48.
[85] *Gos. Phil*. 82.13, 84.22, 85.21, and 85.33,

same manner that entrance into a bridal chamber (*numphôn*) is controlled, so also should entrance into the marital bedchamber (*koitôn*) be regulated, as a type of perpetual *numphôn*:

> If a marriage becomes naked (i.e., uncovered), it has become *porneia*, and not only if the bride receives the seed of another man, but even if she leaves her bed-chamber (*koitôn*) and is seen, she commits *porneia*. Let her appear only before her father and her mother and the friend of the bridegroom, and the children of the bridegroom. It is appropriate for these ones to enter the bridal chamber *(numphôn)* daily.[86]

I think it would be a mistake to characterize the *Gospel of Philip*'s use of *koitôn* and *numphôn* within the above passage as synonyms. Rather, the text seems to be advocating that a wife's everyday bed chamber (*koitôn*) should be treated as if it is still her bridal chamber (*numphôn*), and thus entrance to it should be regulated.[87] Elsewhere, the (*koitôn*) also appears to be equated to the holy of holies (85.21).

The last occurrence of *koitôn* is found in the closing passage of the *Gospel of Philip*, which begins with a creative interpretation of Matthew 15:13 that connects this scripture to the marital bed chamber:

> [Every] plant (ⲧⲱⲱϭⲉ), which the father in heaven [has not] planted, [will be] plucked out (ⲡⲱⲣϰ). The separated ones (ⲡⲱⲣϫ) will be united […] will be fulfilled. Everyone who will [enter] into the bed chamber (ϰⲟⲓⲧⲱⲛ) will kindle the [light]. For [it] is like the marriages which […] happen at night. The fire […] at night it ceases. The mysteries of this

[86] *Gos. Phil.* 82.11-18.
[87] The fact that the *Gos. Phil.* characterizes the wife as committing *porneia* simply by being seen aligns with its emphasis elsewhere on the significance of sight in Christian marriage and procreation (see ch. 2).

> marriage, by contrast, are fulfilled in the day and light. That day and the light do not set. If one becomes a child of the bridal chamber (ⲛⲩⲙⲫⲱⲛ), he will receive the light.[88]

It seems significant in this passage that the Coptic term for plant (ⲧⲱⲱⲥⲉ) can also mean a joining or a union. Thus, every plant (union), which God has not planted, will be plucked out. But those who are separated (i.e., man and woman), will be united. This union takes place in the everyday marital bed chamber (*koitôn*), where the mysteries of the marriage are fulfilled during the day and the light. As discussed above, there is no reason to assume that a light-filled *koitôn* is simply a metaphor; it could refer to an actual ritualized marital practice of evoking light (with the use of a ritual tool like a mirror) or even having sex during the daylight.

While it can be difficult to "see" materiality in our textual sources, the materiality of Christian marriage matters in unpacking what it means to "Christianize marriage." The *Gospel of Philip* with its rich nuptial imagery provides us a unique opportunity to peek into the bedroom of a small group of Christians,[89] where we might find objects ranging from a nuptial canopy for a newly married couple to a mirror sitting in the corner of their bed chamber years later.

[88] *Gos. Phil.* 85.29-86.5

[89] And given *Philip*'s probable nature as in large part a *florilegium,* or compilation of excerpts from various previous sources, it likely provides peeks into the bedrooms of multiple Christian groups, from over an extended period. See also my discussion in the Introduction.

Conclusion

My research has demonstrated that already in the early generations, Christians ritualized marriage, and that much of their efforts in this process were centered on Christians' marital sexual relationships. I did this by revealing the ways Christians conceptualized Christian marital sex in ritualized terms that cast Christian marriage as possessing a more efficacious power than non-Christian marriage, especially in regards to procreative outcomes. And I revealed how this in turn helped establish Christian marriage as extraordinary, and thus set apart from the marriages of non-Christians. By revealing that it was common for Christians to ritualize their marital sexual relationships, my research has also undermined previous assumptions in early Christian studies that only so-called "heretical" Christians would have engaged in the ritualization of marriage and sex. Instead, I establish that Christians frequently touted superior ritual power as one of the benefits of Christianizing one's marriage.

Prior to my own study, a ritual studies approach has not been widely adapted in studies on early Christian marriage. By adapting a ritual studies approach, I have been able to demonstrate why it is necessary to distinguish the ritualization of Christian marriage from the Christianization of weddings. Early Christians situated the ritualized power of Christian marriage not in the ceremonial happenings of a wedding, but in practices of everyday married life. This served to transform Christian married life along with its sexual relationship into extraordinary ritually-potent action, which was viewed by Christians as benefiting both the couple and their children. Through this ritual studies approach, my research adds to our understanding of the Christianization of marriage, by illustrating that Christians did not only think about how "Christians should do Christian marriage," they also embraced the idea that "Christian marriage efficaciously does things for Christians," especially in the realm of procreative sex and the offspring it produces.

In order to illustrate that the ritualization of marriage occurred early in the history of Christianity, I focused my attention on pre-fourth-century Christian sources. From these I was able to extrapolate shared threads of discourse that help illuminate some of the common ritualized benefits that Christians touted as deriving from Christianized marriage.

One of those benefits, the apotropaism against desire and demons, goes back to as early as the apostle Paul. The anti-desire stance of Christians has been well-documented in early Christian studies. My research affirms that Christians viewed the control of desire, including within marriage, as a moral imperative that begins with controlling desire-fueled thoughts. And I illustrate how Christians' ritualized life, including acts of contemplation, were touted by Christians as assisting them in their efforts to overcome desire. My research then ventured into new territory in the study of early Christianity by demonstrating that Christians not only advocated for the control of desire with marriage, they also touted the control of desire and the repelling of desire-causing demons as therapeutic benefits that spouses could expect in their Christianized marriages. And keeping both desire and demons away meant Christians could produce more exceptional children. While my aim has been to deepen our understanding of Christian marriage, my findings also broaden our understanding of Christians' conceptions of desire and the ritualized methods they used to control it by demonstrating that Christians conceptualized marriage –and not just celibacy – as one of the methods by which a Christian could achieve a greater control of desire in contrast to a non-Christian.

My findings reveal that Christians, however, likely did not understand marital sexual desire in entirely negative terms. It was a commonly held belief throughout the late antique world that a woman's desire-fueled gaze during or shortly before coitus, influenced the characteristics of the child conceived in that moment. I demonstrated the presence of this belief in both traditional

polytheistic and Jewish sources, and I highlighted accounts of married women's procreative gazes being manipulated, by themselves or someone else, in order to ensure the child would be imprinted with superior physical looks, moral characteristics, or even abilities. Through the use of various examples, I established Christians also embraced this belief in the procreative potential of the female gaze. I then used these findings to suggest that this would have motivated at least some Christians to embrace the need for ritualizing the procreative gaze of married women as part of the Christian quest to produce superior children via Christian marriage. And I affirmed that the *Gospel of Philip* does this very thing by providing instructions as to where a woman should direct her internal gaze in order to produce children that resemble the Lord. Whereas previous studies have collected the traditional polytheistic and Jewish accounts that attest to the imprinting efficacy of the procreative gaze, my study is the first one, to my knowledge, to draw the Christian accounts relevant to this notion into a singular study. It is my hope that the accounts gathered here will also serve as an important resource to any scholar who is studying the procreative gaze, whether within Christian studies, or more broadly.

In 1 Cor. 7:14, Paul established sanctification of a spouse and the sanctification of children as one of the therapeutic benefits of Christian marriage. This early attestation in Paul contributed to the widespread belief among Christians that Christianized marriage sanctified those who participated in it. And I revealed that although Paul himself did not pinpoint the origin of the sanctification that is operative in Christian marriage, early Christians tended to trace its origin to Christian sacraments, especially that of baptism. Christians embraced the belief that this sanctification was then operative in Christians' marital sexual encounters, which they viewed as giving them the unique ability to conceive "holy" children. My findings are also relevant to studies of pre-fifth-century CE baptismal practices, because they confirm that the Christian belief in the

sanctifying power of Christian marriage was so strong that it likely contributed to Christians prior to the fifth century delaying or forgoing the baptism of their children.

My research also establishes that Christians embraced the theurgic efficacy of procreation as one of the ritualized benefits of Christians' marriage. Christians situated this theurgic function of marital procreation in the status of humans as the image of God. This iconic status benefits humans, but Christians also characterize their iconic statue as benefiting God by manifesting his image through the act of procreation. To procreate as a Christian was to procreate with the knowledge of the theurgic role that it played in manifesting God's image on earth. And I revealed that when Christians discussed this theurgic benefit of Christian marriage, they did so in ritualizing terms in which the iconic action of Christians' marital procreation was characterized as trumping the efficacy of the image-making actions of idol makers. Thus, my study may also be of interest to scholars who study the way in which Christians sought to compete on the market of ritual efficacy with traditional polytheists.

By affording the *Gospel of Philip* a privileged place in my study, my research has served as a bridge between the socio-historical study of early Christian marriage and analysis of the *Gospel of Philip* in Nag Hammadi studies. In this manner, my research serves as a valuable intervention. My findings push against the current trend in Nag Hammadi studies to treat the *Gospel of Philip*'s bridal chamber as a ritualized metaphor rather than a reference to literal marriage. Instead, by contextualizing its nuptial language within broader pre-fourth-century CE Christian discourse, I have shown that its ritualized nuptial language can be understood as referring to actual marriage. This comparative approach further allowed me to illustrate that the *Gospel of Philip*'s views on the ritualization of Christian marriage were not "heretical" in the sense of being narrowly sectarian or "deviant" from more widely attested ideas and practices, but rather they

reflect ideas about the ritualization of marriage that we also see in other Christian sources conventionally treated as "orthodox." Through this comparative approach, I was also able to illuminate the contribution that the *Gospel of Philip* can and should make to socio-historical research on the ritualization of Christian marriage and the role that ritualization played in making marriage "Christian." Lastly, my study has demonstrated the way in which knowledge of the ritualization of Christian marriage can contribute to unpacking the meaning and purpose of the *Gospel of Philip*'s complex nuptial imagery. To illustrate this point, in my final chapter, I offer a valuable correction within Nag Hammadi studies by demonstrating why it is erroneous to assume that the meaning of "bridal chamber" lies behind all three Greek terms that the gospel uses for nuptial space (*numphôn, pastos,* and *koitôn*). In order to do this, I shined a light on the neglected work of Eugene Lane, who illustrated that *pastos* means a "bridal canopy" and not a bridal chamber. Until the arrival of my own study, Lane's work seems to have been virtually unknown in previous scholarly treatment of the *Gospel of Philip,* but I show why it is imperative to recognize the *pastos*' material status as a bridal canopy in order to differentiate its ritualized role within the text from that of the *koitôn,* or bedchamber.

As in all studies, my research has had certain limitations. I chose to undertake a comparative socio-historical study of Christian marriage in which I studied it across time and regions. This approach helped me identify the longevity and shared nature of much of the Christian discourse on the ritualization of marriage, but one of the downsides to such an approach is that at times it may mask important regional or chronological differences. It is my hope that future studies will illuminate these.

One of the principal things that I wish my reader to take away from my study is the value in adapting a ritual studies approach to the study of early Christian marriage. It is this approach

that allowed me to reveal that Christians did not situate the ritualized power of Christian marriage in weddings, but in the everyday actions of married life. This recognition can also help in the study of the Christianization of weddings as well. But it allows us to ask different kinds of questions moving forward about how, when, to what extent, and why Christians felt a need to Christianize weddings in the first place. Was this shift simply about the Church inserting its authority into weddings, or did it result from changing Christian attitudes about the nature and origin of the ritualized power of Christian marriage?[1] Regardless of the answer to these questions, it is my hope that my study has shown why it is so imperative to treat the historical development of the Christianization of marriage *rituals* and the Christianization of wedding *ceremonies* as two distinct phenomena with their own timelines of historical development. From the earliest centuries of Christianity, marital ritual practice, ongoing after any initial marriage ceremony (and in fact employed long before even the development of specifically Christian wedding ceremonies), served an important role in the Christianization of marriage.

[1] For the role of episcopal power in the Christianization of weddings, see Hunter, "Wedding Rituals and Episcopal Power."

Appendix 1: Tables 1-4

History of the Translation of *eikonikos* in Full Translations of the *Gospel of Philip*

Table 1: Scholars that assign the general meaning of "duplicate" to *eikonikos* in both 65.12 and 72.14

Scholar (date of publication)	Translation of 65.12	Translation of 72.14
Schenke (1959)	aus dem abbildhaften Brautgemach	der ebenbildliche Mensch
Till (1963)	aus dem abbildlichen Brautgemach	der abbildliche Mensch
Bo Frid (1966)	genom bild-brudgemaket	bild-manniskan
Menard (1967)	de la chambre nuptiale en image	l'homme d'aprés l'image
Krause (1971)	aus dem abbildlichen Brautgemach	der abbildliche Mensch
Cartlidge (1974)	from the imaged bride chamber	the image-man
Layton (1987)	from the imaged bridal chamber	the imaged person
Painchaud (2007)	dans une image de la chambre nuptiale	l'homme selon l'image
Smith (2020)	within the imaged bridal chambers	the imaged man

Table 2: Scholars that assign the meaning of "figurative" or "symbolical" to *eikonikos* in both 65.12 and 72.14

Scholar (date of publication)	Translation of 65.12	Translation of 72.14
de Catanzaro (1962)	from the figurative bride-chamber	the figurative man
Isenberg (1968)	from the figurative bridal chamber	the figurative man
Kasser (1970)	de la chambre (nuptiale) symbolique	l'homme symbolique

Table 3: Scholars that assign the meaning of "mirrored" to *eikonikos* in 65.12, but the general meaning of "duplicate" in 72.14

Scholar (date of publication)	Translation of 65.12	Translation of 72.14
Wilson (1962)	from the mirrored bridal chamber	the man after the image
Isenberg (1977)	from the mirrored bridal chamber	the man made after the image

Table 4: Scholars that assign the meaning of "symbolical" to *eikonikos* in 65.12. but the general meaning of "duplicate" in 72.14

Scholar (date of publication)	Translation of 65.12	Translation of 72.14
Lundhaug (2010)	from the symbolical bridal chamber	the man pertaining to the image

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