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Apparently Methodius is not so radical as to consider the procreation of children (and the kind of immortality it implies) as the diabolic counterfeit of the ἀγγελία-παρθενία and the incorruptibility to which they lead³⁷. On the contrary, the procreation must go on, even after the Coming of Christ. We may be surprised to find in this 'treatise' which deals mainly with chastity and virginity, an apology of marriage and procreation (Logos 2)³⁸; there is a continuous creation, the Creator is still fashioning men, and man must cooperate in the production of God's image, until the predetermined number of men is completed (2, 1; cf. 9, 1), i.e. until the beginning of the seventh millenary when the Creator ceases to work. We will not find, in the Symp., the view that the end of marriage means at the same time the end of the reign of death, and the Encratites' conclusion, that therefore marriage has to be stopped.

Methodius also rejects the radical thesis that only virgins have part in the promises (7, 3); on the other hand, it seems as if only those who practise continence (ἀγγελία), either as virgins or in marriage, will attain the promised rewards, i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles, the first resurrection (9, 4). There is a close relation between chastity (and virginity in particular) and resurrection of the flesh ("the tabernacle" in Methodius' terminology) so that the latter remains reserved to those who keep the flesh unspoiled (cf. 1, 5). Here Methodius follows the encratic tradition of APTh (and also of 2Clem.). But the resurrection (and the Millennium) is only the first stage; it is followed by the transformation of the human body from corruption to angelic grandeur and beauty (9, 4). Elsewhere Methodius speaks of the angelic transformation of our bodies (2, 7); this seems to be an allusion to Lk. 20, 36 par. Throughout the Dialogue the link between chastity (virginity) and incorruptibility is obvious (1, 1; 2, 4; 6, 4; 8, 1-4; 10, 6). Incorruptibility represents the realm of the divine; in order to become like to God man has to banish corruptibility (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ φθορᾶς ἀποφυγή 1, 5), and it is by aspiring to the virginity of Christ that we come to the likeness of God (ib.). In Log. 8, 1, where Methodius, in a curious piece of etymological exegesis links παρθενία with παρθεῖα ("affinity with the divine")³⁹, we find a similar relation between virginity, divinity and incorruptibility. Virginity divinizes and, therefore, immortalizes.

The foregoing shows that incorruptibility is not just an extrinsecal reward bestowed upon those who have preserved their flesh free from corruption, without any inner relation with chastity itself. For the same reason this incorruptibility is not merely future. So Methodius speaks at one place (6, 5) of "the mystical rites of initiation into virginity"; the context, however⁴⁰, suggests that this initiation takes place at the Parousia and the resurrection of the body. But the idea of an actual partaking in incorruptibility seems to be implied by those texts in which there is question of the mystical ascent of the (virgin's) soul to the realm of incorruptibility. This is the case in 1, 1 and 8, 1-4; it is interesting to see that in these passages Methodius exploits for his purpose an idea that was unfolded in Socrates' discourse on the ecstasy of the soul by Eros (Phaedr. 244-257B). In 252B he quotes two Homeric verses which say that winged Eros is called Pteros by the gods because of his giving wings to the soul. By means of these wings the soul is able to ascend to the supercelestial area, to the realm of the pure essences, the Ideas, of Being, where it beholds Justice itself, Prudence and Truth (247CD). In Methodius' Symposium it is

37. Methodius uses alternately ἀγγελία and παρθενία; the former has a broader, more general sense: "continence"; it does not always mean sexual continence, as is clear from 6, 3. σωφροσύνη seems to be an equivalent of ἀγγελία.

38. H. MUSURILLO, *The Symposium. A treatise on Chastity*. ACW 27, Westminster (Maryl.) — London, 1958, p. 193, n. 2 thinks it very likely that the first speaker in

the Symp. used stronger language in praise of virginity, but that this was deleted by a later corrector.

39. παρθεῖα to an other manuscript (P.). See MUSURILLO's note, o.c. p. 219, n. 3: "in either case there is a reference to the divinizing effect of chastity".

40. The parable of the Ten Virgins combined with a rather curious exegesis of 1 Thess. 4, 15ff.

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