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## Présentation de la fiche

Coteb022\_f0045

SourceBoite\_022-1-chem | Noces spirituelles [rayé : Chair (Antiquité) Virginité]

LangueFrançais

TypePhotocopie

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

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## CONCLUSIONS.

We shall now sum up the main results of this study, and first, those concerning the relation between marriage and death. Negatively, death is seen as the very cause of the existence of marriage: marriage is a direct consequence of death (this is already suggested in *Lk.* 20, 35, then firmly attested by Origen, and further developed in a protological setting by Basil of Ancyra, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa); at the same time it sustains the power of Death (EvEg, Gregory). Positively, marriage (as the begetting of posterity) is a consolation for man's mortality (Basil, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianze), and gives him some kind of immortality (Plato, Clement, Basil, Theodoretus), or (an image of) the resurrection (the Sadducees, at least in Hippolytus' account, Demas and Hermogenes, Sextus Julius, Chrysostom).

If marriage is a way of overcoming (physical) death, even more so virginity. It gives a kind of *ἀθανασία* (Basil), superior to the relative and provisory one given by marriage. Moreover, it bestows *ἀφθαρσία*, as a gift for both present and future (Methodius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa). The superiority of virginity over marriage is for a great deal based on the key-text *Lk.* 20, 34-36. From the Lord's saying that there will be no place for marriage in the world to come, 4th-century theologians concluded that marriage could not have been part of man's original, paradisiac life (—according to the wide-spread principle that the end will be like the beginning). An old tradition, connected with *Gen.* 4, 1, according to which Adam and Eve had no intercourse in Paradise, was another basic element of this theology.

Christian ascetism is eschatologically motivated. We can see this in *1 Cor.* 7 and in the frequent use made by ascetic (or encratite) writers of *Lk.* 20, 34-36. The flesh has to be kept unspoiled in view of the future resurrection (APTh, Methodius); the expectation of this resurrection makes all other sorts of resurrection appear as provisory images (Sextus Julius, Chrysostom). But the original pauline perspective was strangely distorted in the sense of radical eschatologism by the Egyptian Encratites: they claimed to have already received the resurrection and held that by general continence the power of Death as the last enemy could be broken. Now every kind of eschatological expectation implies a view of time. And as marriage (procreation) is part of the general process of begetting, which in its turn is coeval with the whole of time, the end of marriage is also the end of time, and the absolute rejection of marriage is, in fact, a rejection of time. Radicalized eschatology, as that advocated by the Egyptian Encratites, very often goes together with anarchy, i.e. the repudiation of the institutions on which this world is dependent for its existence, e.g. marriage. On the other hand, the acceptance of marriage as the institution on which the human race relies for its survival and the world for its fulfillment, implies a positive view of time and the realm of the Becoming (Plato, Clement, Gregory). The case of Gregory is particularly interesting: in *De Virg.* 14 he speaks the language of the Encratites, whereas in *Hom. Opif.* 22 he shows such a positive approach of marriage and time, that he cannot possibly have subscribed to the Encratites' radical eschatology and the corresponding rejection of marriage and time. Nevertheless, Gregory too insists that for those who practise virginity, the temporal distance (*διάστημα*) between themselves and the Parousia is taken away, which means that for the individual who gives up marriage, time is virtually non-existent. On this point he is joined by all those theologians who, starting from *Lk.* 20, 34-36, argue that the virgins *already* partake in the *ἀφθαρσία*: virginity is always realized eschatology; in virginity time, i.e. the process of *γένεσις καὶ φθορά*, seems to come to an end.



WARMOND

