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practise continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife, whom he ought to love [*agapan*], and that he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will," for the Christian ideal is "not to experience desire at all."⁹⁸ Origen's ascetic viewpoint is very clear. "God has allowed us to marry wives, because not everybody is capable of the superior condition which is to be absolutely pure."⁹⁹

It is conceivable that Christian influence is reflected in some imperial rescripts of the third century. For instance, Alexander Severus maintained the tax on prostitutes, criticized by both Justin and Tertullian, but diverted it from the *sacrum aerarium* to the support of public spectacles.¹⁰⁰ The emperor Philip, whether a Christian or not, forbade male prostitution, also condemned by Christian writers.¹⁰¹

What had come to be the common Christian emphasis on virginity was also expressed in the *Symposium* of a certain Methodius, perhaps a bishop, who produced many treatises in the last third of the third century. The *Symposium* consists of eleven discourses, mostly in praise of virginity (marriage and procreation are permissible but inferior), and ends with a marriage hymn addressed to the bridegroom Christ. The title suggests that Methodius is imitating the *Symposium* of Plato, and Platonic echoes occur throughout. There are numerous digressions indicating the author's need to come to terms with the culture in which he lives; these are on such matters as astrology, numerology, the symbolism of trees, and physiological matters. Methodius occasionally mentions martyrdom, but the struggle for virginity seems to have replaced it. The earlier eschatological expectations are mentioned, but the end will not come until the seventh millennium.

It is probably significant that just as in the case of the hermit Antonius, Eusebius of Caesarea says nothing about Methodius. He actually quotes an extract from one of his books but ascribes it to an otherwise unknown Maximus.¹⁰² Presumably the grounds for this silence were theological. Methodius had attacked Origen, one of Eusebius' heroes, and therefore deserved being ignored.¹⁰³ In addition, his ideas seemed to have little to offer in the new age of church life now dawning under Constantine's rule.

⁹⁸ Athenagoras, *Leg.* 32-34; Clement, *Str.* 3, 57-58. See also *Sexti Sententiae* 231-32; Soranus, *Gynaec.* 1, 30-32 (pp. 20-22 Ilberg).

⁹⁹ Origen, *C. Cels.* 8, 55.

¹⁰⁰ *SHA Severus Alexander* 24, 3-4; cf. Justin, *Apol.* 1, 27, 2; Tertullian, *De fuga* 13, 3.

¹⁰¹ *SHA Severus Alexander* 24, 4; Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 28, 6; cf. Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 4, 2, 69.

¹⁰² *P. E.* 7, 22.

¹⁰³ J. Sirinelli, *Les vues historiques d'Eusèbe de Césarée* (Dakar, 1961), 457.



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