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Présentation de la fiche

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towards the platonic-aristotelian view of γένεσις and marriage, we can say that his Symposium gives no direct reply to Plato's definition of Eros in his Dialogue of the same name and his idea of immortality by begetting; he neither rejected it (for he is convinced that the procreation goes on until the seventh millenary, when God ceases to fashion man), nor positively accepted it, as did some of the laudatores virginitatis after him. On the other hand, in those passages of which the language is inspired by Plato's Phaedrus, we see that virginity (or σωφροσύνη = Prudence or Continence) has taken Eros'place as the wings by means of which the soul ascends into the realm of incorruptibility.

3. *Basil of Ancyra.*

Fourth century theology yealds a rich harvest of treatises on virginity [45]. One of these, handed down under the spurious name of Basil of Cesarea, we seem entitled, after the investigations of F. Cavallera [46], to attribute to his namesake, the bishop of Ancyra. His treatise offers some new elements in comparison with what we have seen sofar, concerning both the relation between marriage and death, and that between virginity and immortality. We shall first deal with the former.

In ch. 54 Basil applies the classical typology Adam-Christ on the antithesis between marriage and virginity: as Adam was the seed of the present life by the pleasure of marriage, so Christ has become the seed of the future world by the incorruptibility that is inherent to virginity. He then goes on:

> But if you look at Adam and his life in Paradise not just superficially, you would find that in Paradise he had no need to know his wife, but that he knew her only after the transgression, and (the entrance of) death, and the expulsion from Paradise in order to comfort his nature which was henceforth mortal, by the succession of children (τῇ διαδοχῇ τῶν παίδων) (*PG* 30,777C).

The linking of death and marriage is not original: we found it already in *Lk.* 20, 36, and we remember Origen's exegesis [47]. The interesting point in Basil's text is that the absence of death (and, consequently, of marriage) is neither projected into the future world, nor conceived as yet being realized in the virgin's life (as we have seen, the lukan text is open to both interpretations); here it is, to speak so, 'projected' into the past, even into the ἀρχή, the πρῶτα. The relation between death and marriage here receives an etiological, or protological, explanation, which, in fact, exactly mirrors the eschatological interpretation. The world to come where there will be neither death nor marriage, is the restoration of Paradise where these realities were also absent [48].

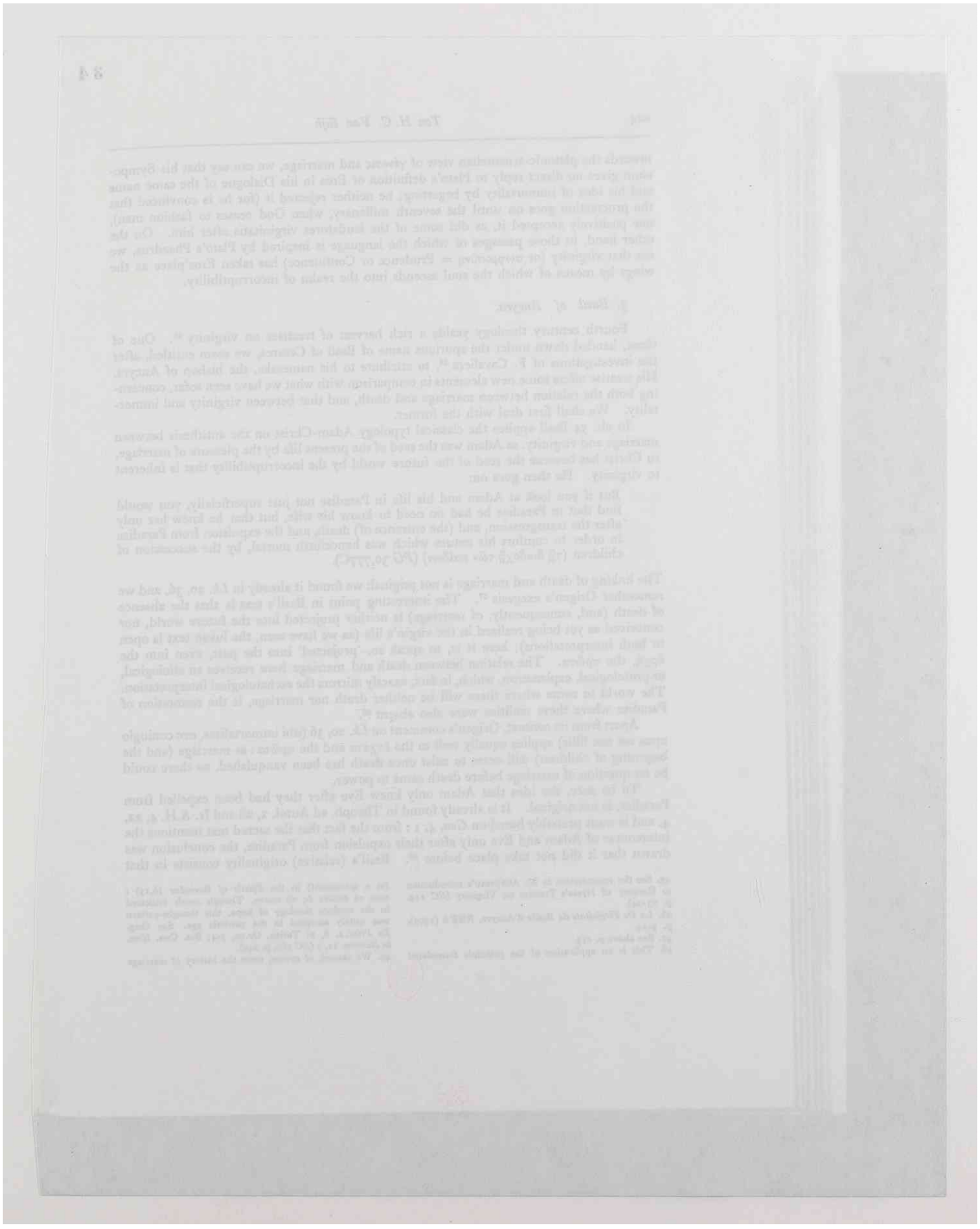
Apart from its context, Origen's comment on *Lk.* 20, 36 (ubi immortalitas, nec coniugio opus est nec filiis) applies equally well to the ἔσχατα and the πρῶτα: as marriage (and the begetting of children) will cease to exist once death has been vanquished, so there could be no question of marriage before death came to power.

To be sure, the idea that Adam only knew Eve after they had been expelled from Paradise, is not original. It is already found in Theoph. ad Autol. 2, 28 and Ir. A.H. 4, 22, 4, and is most probably based on *Gen.* 4, 1 : from the fact that the sacred text mentions the intercourse of Adam and Eve only after their expulsion from Paradise, the conclusion was drawn that it did not take place before [49]. Basil's (relative) originality consists in that

45. See the enumeration in M. AUBINEAU's introduction to Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on Virginity (*SC* 119, p. 23-24).
46. Le *De Virginitate* de Basile d'Ancyre, *RHE* 6 (1905), p. 5-14.
47. See above p. 215.
48. This is an application of the principle formulated (as a quotation!) in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (6,13) : ποιῶ τὰ ἔσχατα ὡς τὰ πρῶτα. Though much criticized in the modern theology of hope, this thought-pattern was widely accepted in the patristic age. See Orig. *De Princ.* 1, 6, 2; Tatian, *Or.*20, 3-4; Bas. Cæs. *Hom. in Hexaem.* 11, 7 (*SC* 160, p. 242).
49. We cannot, of course, trace the history of marriage

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