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Présentation de la fiche

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he links the necessity of marriage (cf. τὸ ἀναγκαῖον τοῦ γάμου, 780A), not only with the fall and the expulsion, but more precisely with death (θάνατος): marriage (procreation) is necessitated by death. Consequently, he considers the engendering of children as a consolation for the mortality of human nature. This is stated even more clearly a few lines later (in ch. 55), where he argues, that the world had to be filled with new-born people because of the slaughters in wars, and that, therefore, virginity could not be made a law (νομοθετεῖν):

> For how could He, who... had prepared (ἐπισκευάσας) for those who from immortal (ἀθανάτων) had become mortal the succession of their race (τὴν διαδοχὴν τοῦ γένους), finding [for them], as has been said somewhere, immortality (τὴν ὡς εἴρηταί που ἀθανασίαν εὑράμενος), and therefore saying: "Be fruitful and multiply",—how could He at that time command virginity by law? (780A).

Not only is the permanence of the human race (by the bringing forth of posterity) seen as a consequence of death and as a compensation for it, it is also called immortality. In this treatise on virginity the platonic (-aristotelian) conception of immortality-by-posterity is not rejected, as in second century encratite literature; on the contrary, it is appreciated as a gift of God. The platonic idea is incorporated in christian theology. But is Basil really referring here to the platonic tradition? He hints that he found the idea somewhere else (ὡς εἴρηταί που) [50]. If we have a closer look at the words he uses, it will not be difficult to recognize some of the terms in which Clement of Alexandria phrased Plato's conception of marriage [51]: ἐπισκευάσας τὴν ἀθανασίαν τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν. As Clement's words are part of a doxography of philosophers on marriage, which is also used by Theodoretus of Cyrus (Therap. 12, 74, again with the key-word ἀθανασία), it is possible that Basil took his information from this source. Even if the theologians of the christian Church did not always have a direct knowledge of Plato's writings, the idea of immortality-by-posterity could have been handed down to them by this sort of doxography.

But in spite of the ἀθανασία it gives marriage remains predominantly linked with θάνατος (as its origin) and φθορά (or ἡδονή). Basil speaks of the corruption that is inherent to marriage (τῆς κατὰ τόν γάμον φθορᾶς, 777B) and of the lust of marriage (776D; 777B). This leads us to our second point: the relation between virginity and incorruptibility. Basil is anxious to underscore the contrast between marriage and virginity. In the same passage where he uses the Adam-Christ typology and explains that sexual intercourse only took place after the expulsion from Paradise, he says:

> On the other hand, the virgin who has followed Him who leads to Paradise, already enjoys with Him in Paradise, being incorruptible (ἄφθορος) (777C).

It follows from this text, that the virgin *already* lives in Paradise and *already* is incorruptible. This is not just one incidental statement; throughout ch. 51-55 the author argues that the virgin already possesses the likeness with the angels and incorruptibility; he

in Paradise. Irenæus is far from saying that both are incompatible. He only says that Adam and Eve, "paulo ante facti", had no knowledge yet of begetting children, they had to grow up first, and then to multiply. Against the Encratites, for whom the union with God and the fleshly union of man and woman were incompatible, Clement argues that the fall of Adam and Eve did not consist in marriage as such, but in the fact that they united before the moment determined by God, so that the actual sin was disobedience. But even for Clement, as for his opponents, the tree of knowledge means marriage (γνῶσις-ἔγνω, *Gen.* 4, 1), and one wonders why the order not to touch it is considered as temporary, and why the idea of growing up (Irenaeus) had to be introduced. Is this because of the complete silence of the sacred text on any intercourse of the protoplasts in Paradise?—See further ORBE's articles, referred to above (n. 22), and also, by the same author: *Homo nuper factus* (Ir. *A.H.* 4, 38, 1), *Greg.* 46 (1965), p. 481-544.

50. The latin translation in Migne ("ut diximus") is wrong: this is the first place in the treatise where the idea appears.

51. Above, p. 220.

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