

**Holy Matrimony, the Church, and the Mystery of the Gospel**  
**ICCEC U. S. Theological Commission**  
**Spring 2021**

How great is the marriage between two believers! They have one hope, one desire, one way of life, the same religion. They are brother and sister, fellow servants, divided neither in flesh nor in spirit—truly “two in one flesh,” for where there is one flesh there is also one spirit. They pray together; they prostrate themselves together; they carry out fasts together. They instruct one another and exhort one another. They are present in the church of God and at the banquet of God side by side; side by side they stand in difficulties and in consolations. Neither one hides anything from the other; neither one avoids the other; nor is either one a grief to the other. Freely the sick are visited and the poor sustained. Without anxiety, misgivings, or hindrance to one another they give alms, attend the sacrifices [of the church], and carry out their daily duties [of piety]. They are not secretive about making the sign of the cross; they are not fearful about greetings, nor silent in offering benedictions. They sing psalms and hymns to one another, challenging one another as to who sings better to God. When Christ sees and hears such things, he rejoices.<sup>1</sup> —Tertullian, *To His Wife*

Tertullian describes for us the beauty of a married couple’s life in Christ. He describes marriage as great because of their faith in Christ, their unity of heart and mind because of their purpose in Christ, their passionate devotion to Christ because of their love for Christ. They walk through trials together, they attend church together, they encourage each other, they are transparent with one another, they minister to the poor together, they give financially as one, they attend Eucharist, they make the sign of the cross, and they worship God in unity—all because of Christ. As a result, Tertullian says that Christ rejoices over their marriage.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this essay: to glorify God for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony and examine carefully all that God has done in establishing marriage as the First Society.<sup>3</sup> A society, that is a community of human beings, which was not formed by God by creating an individual, or a clan, or a country, but a couple—male and female. This first couple, Adam and Eve, is the foundation for all community in human society.

Even wasn’t just the first woman; she completed the *first family*. The first human community created by God was not a pair of roommates or simple friends, but a married couple. The union of man and woman as husband and wife (and, God willing, father and mother) is the very foundation of not just every human society, but of all humanity . . . as it was at the beginning, so it remains today: the family is the *first society*, both in order of time and importance.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *To His Wife* quoted in Christopher A. Hall, *Living Wisely with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2017), Kindle Edition, 159.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this position paper, the terms, “marriage” and “Holy Matrimony,” will be used interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> Scott Hahn, *The First Society: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Restoration of the Social Order* (Emmaus Road Publishing, 2018), Kindle Edition, location 324.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

### What is Holy Matrimony?

Holy Matrimony is a divinely-instituted, covenant relationship which unites one man and one woman in physical, emotional, and Spiritual oneness that they might together forever be a witness to the world of Christ's unsurpassing, sacrificial love (1 Cor 6:15-20). Marriage is not a human invention, but divinely granted as a gift to human beings at creation. A gift which fulfills both the man and the woman in three ways: deep emotional *companionship* (Gen 2:18), heart-felt, physically-expressed *passionate* love (Song 2:16-18), and the divine *purpose* of reflecting to the world Christ's deep, all encompassing love for his church (Eph 5: 25-33).<sup>5</sup> From the beginning God's word proclaimed, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).<sup>6</sup>

Jesus Christ affirmed this original intent when correcting the Pharisees' understanding of divorce, "He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate'" (Matt 19:4-6). One man, one woman, one flesh, one Christ, together in indissoluble union proclaiming to the world: God's great grace, Christ's enduring forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit's enabling power.

### Holy Matrimony as Creation-Mandate

Not only is marriage God's design, the Lord purposed in this union to provide for a life-long, joyful friendship, providing emotional and spiritual support through the struggles of life, and in God's timing, the procreation of children to be raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.<sup>7</sup> In the creation of Eve from the side of Adam, marriage unites the natural relationship between a man and a woman restoring the "one flesh" aspect of their relationship by physically reuniting.<sup>8</sup> The Lord himself declared this relationship, "very good" (Gen 1:31). "Good," in Genesis 1, is not a moral, or ethical term, or a statement regarding the quality of the work, but a declaration that creation is "functioning properly."<sup>9</sup> Good is that "all functions were operating well and in accord with God's purposes and direction."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, "the human condition is not functionally complete without the woman."<sup>11</sup>

The Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him (Gen 2:18-25). The word, "helper," is not intended to convey a womanly state of inferiority

<sup>5</sup> Chris Grace, "Three Gifts of Marriage: Companionship, Passion and Purpose," Biola Center for Marriage and Relationships website: <http://cmr.biola.edu/blog/2015/jul/17/three-gifts-marriage-companionship-passion-and-purpose/>; accessed May 20, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scripture texts are taken from the *English Standard Version (ESV). The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> "XVIII: On the State of Matrimony," *The Second Book of Homilies*, <http://anglicanlibrary.org/homilies/bk2hom18.htm>; accessed May 23, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Carson, D. A., ed. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2015), Logos Bible Software Edition, Gen 2:24.

<sup>9</sup> John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* [The Lost World Series] (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, 51.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

for God himself is declared to be our helper, “Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life” (Ps 54:4).<sup>12</sup> The Biblical idea of “helper”:

The woman was made to complement and support the man and to strengthen his exertions for God in this world. The man needed a companion like himself, and yet unlike himself, as the friend and ally he could absolutely depend on. The woman completed the man, and he knew it, for he greeted her with relief: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh (Gen. 2:23).<sup>13</sup>

Evangelical pastor, Raymond Ortlund Jr., affirms the divinely instituted nature of the marriage bond when he writes,

Marriage did not arise from historical forces. It came down by heavenly grace as a permanent good for mankind. God gave it, and God gives it. It was, and it is, his to define. And he did define it in Genesis 2:24 as one mortal life fully shared between one man and one woman.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, since God designed the institution of marriage and gifted it to mankind from the beginning, mankind cannot change or alter the intent, design or purpose of marriage. Marriage is God’s creation, not our invention.

The creation story makes clear that God created only one Eve for Adam, not several women or another man. The Genesis creation texts (Gen 1: 26-28; 2:18-24) point to heterosexual monogamy as the divine intention for marriage that God established from the very beginning.<sup>15</sup> The idea of one man and one woman joined together rules out both polygamy (Lev 18:18; Deut 17:17; Matt 19:3-9) and homosexual behavior (Lev 18:22; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:8-11).

### **Catholic Consensus**

All the historic branches of Christianity, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Eastern Orthodox, have affirmed the same definition of marriage though the centuries with each tradition bringing to the discussion of marriage special emphases and qualities that all Christ-followers can appreciate. Ryan Anderson, commentator for The Heritage Foundation writes as a Roman Catholic with special focus on the natural law tradition:

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<sup>12</sup> Timothy J. Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle Edition, 276, footnote 6. "See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 68. “Elsewhere ’ezer usually refers to divine assistance, but it is used in three prophetic passages to denote military aid (Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:14; Hosea 13:9). To help someone does not imply that the helper is stronger [or weaker] than the helped: simply that the latter’s strength is inadequate by itself.”

<sup>13</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), Kindle Edition, 21-22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>15</sup> T. Desmond Alexander, “Genesis,” in *The ESV Study Bible*, ed., Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 54.

Marriage exists to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their union produces. It is based on the *anthropological truth* (emphasis mine) that men and women are different and complementary, the *biological fact* (emphasis mine) that reproduction depends on a man and a woman, and the social reality that children need both a mother and a father. Marriage *predates* (emphasis mine) government. It is the fundamental building block of all human civilization. Marriage has public purposes that transcend its private purposes.<sup>16</sup>

Anderson declares that marriage was a creation-mandated institution, not of human origin, the institution preceded human governments, it was not church-established, therefore marriage transcends diverse human cultures, and that marriage is not the sole possession of a particular religion. The Roman Catholic Church further declares:

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.<sup>17</sup>

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that Holy Matrimony is good, benefitting both husband and wife. By design, Holy Matrimony is a covenant, lifelong in commitment with the goal of raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Marriage is to be churchly that is a bond between two baptized people who recognize that Christ himself has blessed this relationship by imparting his sacramental grace to the couple.

Timothy J. Keller, with Kathy Keller, in their book, *The Meaning of Marriage*, defines marriage:

This means we are defining marriage as a lifelong, monogamous relationship between a man and a woman. According to the Bible, God devised marriage to reflect his saving love for us in Christ to refine our character, to create stable human community for the birth and nurture of children, and to accomplish all this by bringing the complementary sexes into an enduring whole-life union.<sup>18</sup>

Keller's definition drawn from the Reformed tradition places special focus on the Gospel as presented in the sacrificial love of Christ depicted in Eph 5:25-33: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." So, what is marriage according to Keller? Reflecting the Apostle Paul, Keller explains that marriage is to be a reflection to the world—be a model—that is, a tangible sign and symbol, of Christ's sacrificial, unconditional love for his people. For the love that sent Jesus to the Cross, love your spouse with that kind of

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<sup>16</sup> Ryan T. Anderson, "Marriage: What It Is, Why It Matters, and the Consequences of Redefining It," Backgrounder, The Newsletter of The Heritage Foundation (No. 2775, March 11, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Complete and Updated* (New York: Image, 1995), 446.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy J. Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle Edition, 9.

love. In other words, our marriages are to reflect back to the world what Christ's love looks like in a tangible human relationship.

Eastern Orthodoxy agrees with the Western church on the all major points regarding marriage, but with one slight nuance:

Christian marriage is essentially a meeting of two beings in love, a human love which can be transformed, by the sacramental grace of the Holy Spirit, into an eternal bond, indissoluble even by death. But this sacramental transformation does not suppress the human character of the whole complex of emotions, actions, joys, or vicissitudes connected with marriage: acquaintance, dating, courtship, the decision itself, and, finally, common life with its difficult responsibilities.<sup>19</sup>

Russian Orthodoxy agrees with churches of the West that marriage is between a man and woman united in love for a lifetime. Orthodoxy stresses the sacramental grace that is imparted to the couple by the Holy Spirit at the wedding and throughout their lives to strengthen the couple to nurture, love, and serve one another. Unique among the historic churches, Orthodoxy teaches the eternity of the marital bond. Even after death, according to the Orthodox East, couples remain married even into eternity, therefore in the ideal, remarriage is not allowed even after the death of a spouse.

That marriage is a sacrament conferred upon the partners in the Body of the Church through the priest's blessing; that, as any sacrament, it pertains to the eternal life in the Kingdom of God; and that it is, therefore, not dissolved by the death of one of the partners, but creates between them—if they so wish and if “it is given to them” (Matthew 19:11)—an eternal bond.<sup>20</sup>

The East affirms Jesus's teaching in Mark 12:25, “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven,” that at the Second Coming of Christ our bodies will be made incorruptible and that there will be no marriage or the procreation of children, but the Orthodox church maintains that family relationships will not be broken or forgotten in eternity.<sup>21</sup>

The Church Catholic is in agreement about the divine origination of marriage, its centrality as the building block of social order, and that this relationship is between one man and one woman. All are in consensus that a marriage is a lifetime commitment and that children born from that relationship are blessing from the Lord. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals may disagree over the sacramental quality of marriage, but they both agree that Holy Matrimony creates a special union between the man and the woman, “Marriage creates ‘one body,’ a new reality, ennobling

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<sup>19</sup> John Meyendorff, *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Meyendorff, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Fr. Peter E. Gillquist, ed., *NKJV Orthodox Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 116.

the sexual union of a man and a woman by ordering it toward a common life that promotes the good of the couple, the family, and the community as a whole.”<sup>22</sup>

We know from Scripture that marriage was inaugurated by God, directed by his own commandments and blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:1-9; Eph. 5:22-33). What God began he also governed. Since God invented marriage, those who enter into that covenant should be dedicated to grasping God’s purposes for it and live their lives according to God’s intentions in it.<sup>23</sup> We buy expensive phones and expect the phone to work exactly as the owner’s manual describes, but often in today’s marriages we follow our feelings and listen to the selfish admonitions of the world and expect our marriage relationships to be smooth sailing. As a culture, we ignore God’s clear instructions and commands about the meaning of marriage, and as a result, our marriage relationships suffer and are often irreparably broken.

God has a higher view of marriage than many can conceive, or are willing to acknowledge: “The Bible has its eye primarily on the ultimate marriage between the Son of God and his redeemed bride. That eternal romance is the biblical view of marriage, offering both instruction and hope for our own marriages today.”<sup>24</sup> A great sacred love story is unfolding between Christ and his Church and individual marriages are to tangibly reflect back to the world the sacrificial, unselfish, forgiving love of Christ. In reference to Ephesians five, “Paul saw that when God designed the original marriage, He already had Christ and the church in mind. This is one of God’s great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people forever!”<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

The Marriage Canons of the Charismatic Episcopal Church are in agreement with beliefs and practices of the Church Catholic as stated in Canon One under the heading, On Holy Matrimony:

The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation. The marriage covenant, by which a man and woman establish a union for the whole of life, is by nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and nurturing of children according to God’s will.<sup>26</sup>

*The Catechism of the Charismatic Episcopal Church* develops this idea further of Holy Matrimony as a God-ordained institution between one man and one woman:

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<sup>22</sup> “The Two Shall Become One Flesh: Reclaiming Marriage,” Evangelicals and Catholics Together, *First Things*, March 2015, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/the-two-shall-become-one-flesh>; accessed May 31, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2011), Kindle Edition, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway) Kindle Edition, 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> George W. Knight quoted in Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (Penguin Publishing Group). Kindle Edition, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Canon One, Marriage and Holy Matrimony, The Covenant of Marriage, section I. A. 1., *The Canon Law of the Charismatic Episcopal Church in the United States of America*, adopted October 22, 1999.

Holy Matrimony is a covenant established by God in creation, and a sacramental sign of the mystery of the unity and love between Christ and His Church. It is the union of one man and one woman in heart, body and mind. This is for their mutual joy, for their health, for the comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and for the procreation of children they will nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.<sup>27</sup>

The teaching of the International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church on Holy Matrimony stands in consensus with the doctrines of the Church Catholic, held by both East and West for more than two thousand years.

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<sup>27</sup> Question 204, “What is Holy Matrimony?”, *Catechism of International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church* (2014), 41.