

**A Christian philosophy of sex, marriage, and the family as the pinnacle of
creation and the Image of God**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the subject

PHILOSOPHY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: Prof C D Scott

25^h October 2023

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Abstract (English)

The second half of the 20th century saw a sexual revolution against both human nature and God, which turned into widespread confusion and a culture of death. This thesis provides a vital response to the underlying philosophy that upholds this movement. The invention and popularization of the “birth control pill” altered the way people understand male-female relations, the meaning and purpose of sexual intercourse, the definition of marriage, and the sacredness of human life. In reaction, the Catholic Church moved to combat this unprecedented attack with an approach to philosophical anthropology that combines natural law with personalist values, seeking to restore right order to sex, marriage, and the family. Continuing in that vein, and to support and augment these efforts, this thesis provides a Christian philosophy grounded in phenomenological observation and metaphysical personalism that reveals marriage and family to be the summation of creation and the image of the Trinitarian God.

Abstract (isiZulu): Okucashuniwe

Ingxenye yesibili yekhulu lama-20 yaba nenguquko engokobulili ngokumelene nemvelo yomuntu noNkulunkulu, eyaphenduka indida esabalele kanye nesiko lokufa. Lo mbhalo wemfundo ephakeme unikeza impendulo ebalulekile esimeni somqondo wokuziphatha oyisisekelo osekela le nhlango. Ukusungulwa kanye nokudlondlobalisa “iphilisi lokulawula ukuzalwa” kwashintsha indlela abantu abaqonda ngayo ubuhlobo babesilisa nabesifazane, incazelo nenhloso yobuhlobo bobulili, incazelo yomshado, nobungcwele bokuphila komuntu. Ngokusabela, iSonto LamaKatolika lathuthela ekulweni nalokhu kuhlasela okungakaze kubonwe ngendlela yomkhakha ohlola ingqikithi yemvelo yomuntu kanye nesimo somuntu ehlanganisa umthetho wemvelo nezindinganiso zobuntu, ifuna ukubuyisela ukuhleleka okufanele kwezocansi, umshado kanye nomndeni. Ngokuqhubeka kulowo mbono, nokweseka nokwengeza le mizamo, lo mbhalo wemfundo ephakeme unikeza umqondo wokuziphatha wobuKristu osekelwe ekuqapheliseni okwenzekayo kanye nokuqondisisa ubukhona bomuntu obuveza umshado nomndeni ukuthi kube ukufinyezwa kwendalo kanye nomfanekiso kaNkulunkulu onguZiqu-zintathu.

Abstract (seSotho): Kgutsufatso

Karolong ya bobedi ya lekgolo la bo20 la dilemo ho bile le phetohelo ya dikamano tsa botona le botshehadi kgahlanong le botho ba motho le Modimo, e ileng ya fetoha pherekano e atileng le moetlo wa lefu. Thuto ena e fana ka karabelo ya bohlokwa ho filosofi ya motheo e tshehetsang mokgatlo ona. Ho qaptjwa le ho tuma ha “pilisi e thibelang pelehi” ho ile ha fetola tsela eo batho ba utlwisang dikamano tsa monna le mosadi, moelelo le morero wa ho kopanela diphate, tlhaloso ya lenyalo le kgalalelo ya bophelo ba motho. Ha e arabela, Kereke e Khatholike e ile ya hlahisa ho lwantsha tlhaselo ena e e so ka e e-ba teng ka mokgwa wa thuto ya filosofi e kopanyang molao wa tlhaho le ditekanyetso tsa botho, ho batla ho tsosolosa taolo e nepahetseng ya thobalano, lenyalo le lelapa. Ho tswelapele ka mokgwa oo, le ho tshehetsa le ho eketsa boiteko bona, thuto ena e fana ka filosofi ya Bokreste e thehilweng ho dipatlisiso tse batlang ho hlalosa dintho ka tsela eo batho ba itemohelang ka yona le mohopolo o beilweng kante ho temoho ya maikutlo a motho a tiisang boteng ba moya e senolang lenyalo le lelapa e le kakaretso ya popo le setshwantsho sa Modimo wa Boraro bo bong.

Dedication

For the glory of God and the good of His image on earth.

Acknowledgements

In gratitude to the angels and saints for their constant intercession and to my own living saint, my wife, Jennifer.

Chapter 1: Introduction: examining the problem

Marriage and the family is the foundation of human civilization as the fundamental unit of every society. With its roots in human nature as confirmed in divine Revelation, the Church has understood marriage to be the covenantal union of two persons representing the two halves of humanity, together enjoying the goods of fidelity, permanent union, and potential offspring for the natural ends of procreation and mutual help.¹ If lived well, marriage can lead to marital fulfillment and societal prosperity.

This thesis – which will take a close look at the meaning of human sexuality and the institution of marriage – has been granted approval and ethical clearance by the appropriate structures of the University and does not involve human participants or animals.

1.1 Natural and sacramental marriage in Catholic teaching

Some form of marriage as a familial and social institution is found in every age, culture, and religion. Although there are accidental differences cross-culturally,² there is also a general commonality shared that corresponds with common human nature written on the hearts of all (Rm 2:15), albeit obscured by sin (1 Cor 13:12). The institution of marriage unites the sexes and welcomes offspring – whether it be practiced in the form of monogamy or polygamy, whether it be understood as permanent or semi-permanent, and whether it be recognized as necessitating exclusive fidelity of both sexes or not. Natural marriage centers on social and sexual intercourse between spouses, and the consequent raising of children that forms the family. This calling, chosen by many, is necessary for the propagation and stability of

¹ The essence and ends of marriage as understood by the Catholic Church are summarized in §1601 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

² Tucker (2014, p. 1), explains that while monogamy was the norm of Western civilizations from the time of antiquity, polygamy had been widespread throughout non-Christian cultures found in the Middle East, Africa, Native America, and some of the Island peoples.

society. While natural marriage serves these ends, secondary motivations differ cross-culturally.³

In addition to marriage being an institution of the natural order, the Catholic Church teaches it has been raised to a sacrament.⁴ The institution that is the mutual covenantal exchange of natural life between a man and woman has become for baptized Christians a mutual covenantal exchange of natural *and* supernatural life.⁵ The free, exclusive gift of oneself to the other, sealed and made permanent in the one-flesh union, has become a means of grace for baptized couples. And it is a means of grace not solely for the spouses, but it also serves as a reservoir of grace that transcends the couple to sanctify the world. Nevertheless, the sacramental aspect of marriage is something that is added to the natural institution of marriage, elevating it to encompass divine life, perfecting it from within. It does not replace or essentially change it. This is because, although marriage has existed in various forms over the centuries, natural marriage true to its nature is a permanent, exclusive union of a man and woman for the exchange of love and life – to unite and potentially procreate (CCC §1603).

Aquinas articulates three levels of gift bestowed by God: nature, grace, and glory, grace justifies the sinner and glory is bestowed on the just (ST I-II, q. 113, a. 9). Christians believe Christ came to restore human nature, and then to elevate it (Phil 2:6-11), which is destined to glory after the general resurrection. For marriage to become sacramental and grace-giving, it must first be grounded in the natural order, i.e., true marriage with its proper ends and goods.⁶ Christ came to restore this and elevate it. Since grace perfects nature, sacramental marriage is built on the natural

³ For example, in pre-Modern times, property sharing was a main consideration; whereas in contemporary Western societies this has largely been replaced by love. The quality or type of love adopted as the motivation for marriage, however, may be questioned as a sufficient criterion.

⁴ See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), §1601 and *Code of Canon Law* (CCL), canon 1055. By virtue of winning sanctifying grace for humanity, the baptized become conduits and channels of grace for others. In this sense, Christ was able to make it a sacrament.

⁵ The word “covenant” is used here since it is an exchange of persons (rather than goods or services), and is not (necessarily) linked with sacrament, which is an exchange of grace, or divine life. Tom Nash (2022) explains that covenants are indissoluble unions of persons, modeled on God’s covenants initiated with humanity throughout salvation history.

⁶ The fundamental goods of marriage, as Augustine of Hippo argued against the Manicheans, are fidelity, openness to children, and permanence (Augustine AD 401, §32). Canon 1057, §2 states: “[m]atrimonial consent is an act of the will by which a man and a woman mutually give and accept each other through an irrevocable covenant in order to establish marriage.”

form of marriage. It does not replace it (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-I, q. 8 ad. 2).⁷ Hence, the Church recognizes that non-sacramental marriages, when at least one party is not baptized, contracted with mutual consent to its essential properties (i.e., the faithful and permanent union of man and woman open to children), are valid marriages (Archdiocese of Detroit, n.d.). Marriage is destined for glory in its archetypical form after the resurrection when all the saints will be fully wedded to their bridegroom for all eternity in Heaven, Jesus Christ.

The Church also teaches that marriage reflects the union of Christ and His Church (Eph 5:21-35). It is the faith of Christians that this Christ-Church union is the one that will continue forever. As living members of His bride, each new member of the Church consents to the marital-like covenant offered by Christ the groom at baptism (often vicariously given by parents and godparents in the name of those under the age of reason). The baptized Christian no longer belongs to themselves, but to Christ, as a bride to her groom. The consummation between Christ and His bride occurs in the reception of the sacraments of initiation. In Eucharistic intercourse between Christ and members of his bride, Christ enters their bodies in Holy Communion and fills them with His life-giving love, making them a more embedded part of Himself, of His mystical body. This perfect and everlasting Christ-Church marriage, according to the Christian faith, is the model that all earthly marriages are meant to reflect, in form and matter, even if they are not sacramentally grace-giving. Grace, on the other hand, if received with proper disposition, enables baptized couples to live more easily the sacrifices necessary in a fallen world, and to be ever mindful of life's supernatural end to which earthly marriage is but a reflection.⁸

Further, marriage in general – natural or sacramental – reflects the eternal union of Persons of the Blessed Trinity. All marriages can be said to reflect the life-giving union that marks the perfect and infinite love between the Father and the Son; a love that is the Holy Spirit. Later in this thesis we will turn our focus squarely on this mystery of marriage in the natural order of creation being triadic in nature, reflecting the inner

⁷ Henceforth, "ST" stands for the *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas Aquinas.

⁸ See CCC §1608. Sin disfigured marriage but "*the order of creation persists...as it was in the beginning.*" CCC §§1602-1617 for the distinctions made by the Church between marriage in God's (original) plan, marriage under the reign of sin, and marriage in Christ.

life-giving love of the eternal Trinitarian God. This will be detailed in Chapter Seven.

This paradigm of life-giving conjugal love reflecting the Trinity is also analogously reflected in Scripture in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, where Eve proceeds from Adam's side, and their love-union of one flesh (Gn 2:24) results in Cain (Gn 4:1), then Abel (Gn 4:2), and eventually Seth (Gn 4:25). The Trinitarian paradigm of lover, beloved and love is also reflected in the new Adam, Jesus Christ, in His "deep sleep" on the cross⁹, whose bride, like the old Adam's, comes forth from His side – in the form of water and blood signifying baptism and the Eucharist (Jn 19:34) and representing the Church. Spousal love, whether it be the eternal Christ-Church union or each earthly marital covenant reflecting that, is ordered to personal union, whose fruit or teleological end is the physical and spiritual nurturing and education of offspring.

The nature of love, reflected in creation from the eternal Source of all who *is* Love, is unitive and trinitive¹⁰, love-giving and life-giving; it becomes one and it becomes three. We will further look at three constituent elements of conjugal life in accordance with natural human inclination, that are integrally linked as one: formal union (union of wills), real union (union of bodies), and the fruit of this union (love, potentially in the form of a child). This triadic unity that defines marriage provides the grounding for the father-mother-child relation. And this flowering of three persons in one family unit reflects the eternal relation between the divine Lover, Beloved, and Love within the Holy Trinity. The family is a finite living icon of God, who is distinct Persons sharing one Life. This is the mystery of love imprinted in the natural order of creation and culminating in marriage and the family. It is what this thesis will be exploring and developing, particularly within Chapter Seven.

1.2 The disintegration of marriage and family

Nature creates, sin disintegrates, and grace reintegrates. The past half century has seen Modern and Postmodern philosophy – generally atheistic in its ideology and

⁹ Here Jesus' death on the cross as the *new Adam* metaphorically fulfills the "deep sleep" the first Adam experienced (Gn 2:21).

¹⁰ This is just another way of saying *procreative*. Two become one, which results in becoming three.

approach – greatly influencing the Western world and obscuring the worldview of Christians and other people of good will. According to Thomistic epistemology, truth, including moral truth, is objective, knowable, and exists independent of human perception, desire, and opinion (ST I-II, q. 94, a. 4); Kreeft 2001, p. 168). Yet, constituent of Modern philosophy, scepticism doubts this on the epistemological level (Kreeft 1996, pp. 25-36) and relativism doubts it on the volitional level (Ibid., pp. 67-81). A steadily growing secular humanist movement stemming from these subjective tenets has gained enough popularity to challenge the Christian world view for dominance¹¹, winning more battles as it progresses through the Western world and beyond. It holds generally that we, not God, are the creators of our own truth and have a right to define it at will.¹² This premise has had radical implications on culture, society, and perhaps especially on relations between the sexes and their respective ability to love. This thesis will present a fresh approach to sex, marriage and family that will inculcate theistic presuppositions, despite the world’s prevailing ideology.

1.3 The challenge

As experience shows us, individuals suffer and society weakens without strong intact families. In the contemporary secular Western world, marriage has been facing many challenges. A recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News survey finds that considerably more and more young people are choosing not to marry or have children (Day 2019). Another 2021 finding of the *Pew Research Center* says that a “[r]ising share of US adults are living without a spouse or partner” (Pew Research Center 2021), The invention of the internet has led to a pornography explosion that has produced an industry that garners a \$2.5 billion a year revenue stream in the U.S. alone. This has followed a sexual revolution that has “normalized” premarital sex and divorce.¹³ The institution of marriage and family has been a primary victim of Modern

¹¹ According to *Free Inquiry* (secularhumanism.org), secular humanism is a naturalistic philosophy void of religious ideas and belief, that has its foundation in science and with consequentialism as its ethics. It has challenged Christianity as the dominant worldview in the Western world over the past century.

¹² See Bowers 2015, *Secular Humanism: The Official Religion of the United States*, where in the preface he summarizes, “[s]ecular humanism has succeeded in becoming the state religion of our great nation. The word ‘secular’ has actually drawn attention away from the fact that humanism is a faith system.”

¹³ According to NBC News, in 2015 “globally, porn [was] a \$97 billion industry, according to Kassia Wosick, assistant professor of sociology at New Mexico State University. At present, between \$10 and \$12 billion of that comes from the United States” (NBC 2015), which is larger than the annual revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC CBS combined. Internet porn generates \$2.5 billion of that (Family Safe Media 2007).

Philosophy as implemented on the popular level. In short, the new scepticism, relativism, materialism, dualism, egoism, and nihilism of our age have converged to affect the social ethos of the Modern world, leading to a rejection of natural law and moral objectivity (Pius X 1907). With this, marriage, and the family have suffered; a problem that will be analysed more in depth in chapters four and five of this thesis.

People of good will seek the true and the good about human nature and attempt to live it. This thesis will present a Christian philosophical reflection on marriage that appeals to the good will in people and their openness to truth that transcends the senses. Along the journey, it will tackle four basic inquiries represented in the following four questions:

- Is there objective meaning to love, sex, and marriage; and can traces of it be found in the form and structure of the physical universe?
- In light of natural reason and one central Christian dogma, is there a compelling way to understand and articulate the meaning of sexual union and the family that is reasonable and clear, that integrates truth, love, and life into a unified whole.
- Is there a philosophically sound approach that ties together the life-giving love of marriage to the eternal essence of the Tri-Personal God, which could elucidate the meaning of human nature, sexual love, and the family?
- Can such a philosophical reflection enable people of faith to more appreciate the special and unique institution of marriage and the paramount importance of chastity?

This thesis will eventually answer each of these questions in the affirmative, with accompanying explanations and elaboration on how creation reflects its Creator, and more specifically how the natural order of sex, marriage, and the family personify the paradigm of creation and image the Trinitarian love of God. The philosophical interest of this thesis can be found in the creative reasoning that elucidates the

analogous comparisons made in a three-step process, by tying together nature, marriage, and God.

The reason this may be called *Christian philosophy* is because by utilizing the central dogma of Christianity – the existence of one Trinitarian God of love – it presupposes something radically different from what is allowed within the ideological framework of the establishment. The influence of Modern philosophy on academia will be examined in chapter four, and its playing out on the popular level we will elaborate in chapter five.

The thesis is in line with Catholic tradition as it reflects philosophically on the anthropological norms of sexual intercourse, marriage, and the family. The aim is to offer a hopeful alternative to the contemporary individualist, utilitarian, dualist and relativist approaches to sexuality and marriage that are currently popular.

1.4 Encapsulation

In our journey analyzing the nature and practice of marriage, we will travel through fallen humanity's practice of marriage, to a reestablishment of true principles of sexuality and marriage, to its gradual disintegration before offering a solution as a guidepost for restoring the pristine state of marital life. To pave the way to Chapter Seven on which a new approach is proposed, the next three chapters will survey marriage from cultural viewpoints representing three different eras of history. The eras chosen have Christ as the compass point, as does the calendar for Western civilization (and beyond) for the past two millennia. In this thesis there will be a trifold distinction, however, between pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian eras. Chapters two through five will gradually formulate the status of the challenge, and Chapter six will develop a philosophical foundation from which to approach the problem. From there, in the penultimate chapter, the unique thesis contribution will be proposed.

More specifically, Chapter Two includes a descriptive look at common norms and practices in antiquity. This chapter will survey a slice of history representing the pre-Christian world, looking at the beliefs and practices of fallen humanity in ancient Rome and ancient Israel. With the latter, we will examine sexual norms and beliefs in

Old Testament biblical times and how marriage was understood differently in Israel than with her pagan neighbors.

Chapter Three examines sexual intercourse and marriage in the Christian era, what scholars now insist on calling the Common Era. Moving from the order of nature to the order of grace, we will look at some of the affects that Christianity and the New Covenant with God in Christ has had on marriage and the family. Jesus of Nazareth started a revolution by forbidding men to divorce their wives, reestablishing the full sense of monogamy spoken of in the book of Genesis, as it was “at the beginning” before sin distorted and disfigured it (Mt 19:8). Sexual intercourse and marriage from a Christian perspective will consequently be examined, as well as the affect it had on the world.

After this “reset” of the order of sexual intercourse and marriage, Chapter Four focuses on the subsequent disintegration of marriage that the influence of Modern philosophy has imposed on humanity, by deconstructing and disintegrating human nature philosophically, and in turn the institution of marriage. By deconstructing and unraveling what had been united in the synthesis of faith and reason at the zenith of the Christian era by scholastic philosophers in the Church¹⁴, we will examine what may be called the beginning of the post-Christian era. Here we will observe the philosophical turn to the self and to the domination of nature – including human nature – and how a new utilitarianism began to affect relations between the sexes.

In Chapter Five we will follow how this utilitarian movement coupled with a prevailing Cartesian dualism led to more familial and social disintegration and general unhappiness. We propose this is due largely to the widespread use of contraception and skyrocketing divorce rates that accompanied the “sexual revolution” of the 20th and 21st centuries. With the invention of the so-called “birth control pill”, premarital sex for both sexes became the societal norm for the first time in recorded history. We will observe other profound ramifications that contraception’s legacy has had on the world, especially for marriage and the family. Further in chapter five we will look at the Church’s inadequate response to this sexual and secular revolution and will expose

¹⁴ When the author refers to “Church”, what is meant is the “Catholic Church”.

more clearly the ways that marriage and the family – as a communion of persons – has been largely distorted.

There has been an unprecedented attack on marriage in contemporary times that is reflected in people’s attitudes (Wells and Twenge 2005).¹⁵ The moral order has been challenged and called into question and a general malaise and confusion has ensued. The subjectivity of the times has led to people seeing marriage as a private relationship rather than a public covenant with an intrinsic order and purpose. In fact, formal joining, real union, and procreative responsibility are now often thought of as three separate entities with no natural or moral linkage – as is seen in the increasing number in non-marital cohabitation, sex outside marriage (fornication), and abortion, respectively. In chapter five we will look closely at the causes of this through the lens of what will have been demonstrated in the previous chapters.

Chapter six lays down the philosophical foundation from which we build the heart of the thesis. It begins with a summary of Aquinas’ *Treatise on Man* (ST I, qq. 75-102), which includes the Church’s traditional understanding of human nature. Afterwards, we look at human nature with the incorporation of a personalist philosophy, as exemplified by the phenomenological writings of Pope St John Paul II and those who had influenced him.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I offer my own contribution to the project, a fresh approach to understanding the *what* and *why* of marriage as a one-flesh union. In linking the temporal with the eternal, we hope to deepen understanding of the natural order and diffuse some of the chaos and confusion surrounding sex and marriage today.

This thesis will be presented as a reasonable framework for further contemplation and discussion. The hope is that it may provide food for thought and begin a conversation to assist people in bridging gaps – between traditional natural

¹⁵ A meta-analysis about attitudes regarding premarital sexual relations in the latter half of the twentieth century indicates “[a]ttitudes toward premarital intercourse became more lenient, with approval increasing from 12% to 73% among young women and from 40% to 79% among young men” (Wells and Twenge 2005). Also, Finer 2007, 73-78, whose study concludes that now, “[a]lmost all Americans have sex before marrying.”

law theory and contemporary personalist philosophy, between natural marriage and sacramental marriage, and between marriage as it is popularly understood and practiced today and marriage as it was intended “*at the beginning*” (Mt 19:8). The more people that come to know and live the fullness of the truth of their being, the more they can flourish.

Advancing the notion that creation reflects the form of its Creator, bearing traces of Him in its being, this thesis will further develop how the following statement from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) document *Dignitatis Personae* can be understood within a new philosophy of one-flesh union:

God, who is love and life, has inscribed in man and woman the vocation to share in a special way in his mystery of personal *communion* and in his work as *Creator*... **The acts that permit a new human being to come into existence, in which a man and a woman give themselves to each other, are a reflection of Trinitarian love** (2008).^{16 17}

Expounding on this point, we will expose more clearly the common moral disorders that disfigure this image of God on earth. Observing the far-reaching ramifications of their damaging effects will help us understand more clearly Pope Francis’ recent lament, that “[w]e are living a moment of the annihilation of man as the image of God” (Francis 2016b). Additionally, we will better understand the words of Pope Benedict XVI that Francis repeated: “[t]his is the age of sin against God the Creator” (Francis 2016b). The pope was referring to, among other things, gender ideology now taught in public schools, which is gaining traction and popular acceptance in the wider culture.¹⁸ Just in the last ten years have the so-called cultural elites created the ideas and language constructs that now undergird this ideology. In the U.S. it was first promoted by the Obama administration.¹⁹ Under the Biden administration there has been an attempt to

¹⁶ The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) is an office of the Vatican that is responsible for the teaching and clarifying the doctrine of the Catholic Church. As per Pope Francis 2022 *Praedicate Evangelium*, the CDF is now known as the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

¹⁷ Emphasis added.

¹⁸ Schools are now teaching gender ideology beginning in kindergarten in the United States. A simple Google search immediately brings up sites like these, documenting the battle that is now occurring between parents and school boards on such curricula: McCaughey 2021; Foley 2022; and Nerozzi 2022.

¹⁹ In May 2016, President Obama’s Justice and Education Departments sent an official letter to schools across the country (United States Dept, of Justice and Education 2016) reminding them they must accept a student’s so-called “gender identity” when it comes to single-sex sports, bathrooms, locker

normalize it – for not only adults, but for impressionable children.²⁰ Many parents today oppose so-called LGBT ideology being taught to their young children in schools, over 60 percent of Americans in general are opposed to state laws aimed at prohibiting the teaching of it in elementary schools. This is according to an ABC News/Ipsos poll, which found that 62 percent of Americans oppose legislation that bans teaching gender identity or sexual orientation to younger children, while only 37 percent support it (ABC News/Ipsos 2022).

This is just the latest in a string of moral aberrations stemming from the confused sexual ethos of our age. To illumine the truth about our being and to counteract the sexual chaos, moral confusion and distortion of our age is the goal of this thesis.

rooms; single-sex schools and classrooms, housing accommodations, and fraternities/sororities. In Mezey (2020), the author, who is sympathetic to the “transgender” movement, compares Obama’s favorable moves to increase so-called rights of “transgender” persons in the workplace, schools, public facilities and armed forces, against Donald Trump’s moves to reverse them.

²⁰ On March 1, 2022, after condemning state laws that do not create special rights for people identifying as their opposite sex, U.S. President Joe Biden on national television assured “transgender” Americans that he “*has their back*” (NBC 2022).

At the end of the same month Biden made a video on the so-called “Transgender day of visibility”, outlining all the things his administration is doing and will do for the “transgender community,” which includes restoring the initiatives of the Obama administration before Trump rolled them back (White House 2022).

Chapter 2: The order of nature: sexual intercourse and the marital covenant in the pre-Christian era

2.1 Human sexuality in the order of nature

Before embarking on a philosophical reflection of marital anthropology, we distinguish marriage and sexuality as understood and lived out within three different eras: pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian. In the current chapter we look at philosophical and cultural influences of marriage in pre-Christian times, especially with the people of Rome and Jerusalem.

2.1.1 'Pre-Christian'

Of the three cultural/religious eras this thesis delineates, this chapter begins with analyzing sexual intercourse and marriage in the pre-Christian world. We now look at marriage and the family in an era often referred to as “antiquity”, within two general cultural milieus – that of the pre-Christian pagan world of ancient Rome and that of the pre-Christian monotheistic world of ancient Israel.

We look at these two cultures as examples that exemplify the pre-Christian era because of their great contributions to Western civilization technologically, socially, and religiously (Goodman 2008).²¹ Particularly, though, in this respect, Rome and Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Christ and His Church: the Church considers herself the new Israel (CCC §877).²² Further, before any influence of Christianity or the establishing of Christ raising marriage to a sacrament, this historical era of marital

²¹ Goodman writes of these two very distinct advanced nations and what they offered the world in lifestyles and government (2008: 273-308). A nice summary can be found in chapter one: “A Tale of Two Cities”. For an angle on the struggles between the two cities, particularly in the first couple of centuries of the common era, see J Hadas-Lebel 2006. Also see Perry 2015, pp. 55-66, on how the Hellenization of Europe contributed to Western civilization; and Woods 2012, pp. 205-217, on how the Catholic Church influenced morality in the building of Western civilization.

²² Part of section 877 reads, “*From the beginning of his ministry, the Lord Jesus instituted the Twelve as the seeds of the new Israel...*” For more on the new Jerusalem, see CCC §§2016 and 2788.

relations in a budding Western civilization maintained certain natural laws, common to all forms of marriage. Due to human selfishness, however, this natural institution became distorted, mixing injustices and suffering with the joys of living the unitive and procreative aspects of conjugal life.

According to the biblical model, the natural order of marriage and family present in Eden has been disfigured and needs repair. St Thomas Aquinas' adage that grace perfects nature (ST I, q.1, a. 8, r. 2) is a theological point that presupposes a human nature and a natural order that transcends any particular religion or culture. The essential form of marriage is universal even though its accidental variations are influenced by cultural factors, religious belief, social and economic factors, and provisions for human weakness that form a society's norms and mores with regard to sexual intercourse and marriage.

As we survey the norms, beliefs, and practices of fallen humanity in pre-Christian times – without the aid of said sanctifying grace that Christians believe was won on the cross by the world's Redeemer – it enables us to more clearly appreciate marriage as a natural institution that corresponds to human nature, which everybody shares. From a Catholic Christian perspective, ancient times are generally seen as the period between the fall of humanity and its Redemption. Now, to illustrate how a slice of fallen humanity acted out its vocation to give and receive life-giving love, we examine the highly developed pagan civilization of ancient polytheistic Rome; and then we turn our attention to ancient Israel, entrenched in regulations and practices born out of ethical monotheism.

2.2 Sexual intercourse, marriage, and pre-monotheistic paganism

Similar to what would be recognized by the Church, ancient Roman law saw the purpose of marriage as the procreation of children (Plinius, n.d., §4.15; Williams 1958, pp. 16, 28). Although this basic tenet of natural law was put forth by government officials as a civic duty, and certainly shared with the people of Israel who deemed important one's patriarchal lineage and descendancy (Campbell 2003, p. 72), upper-class Romans were not convinced that having many children was the mark of a happy marriage (Williams 1958, pp. 16, 28). Nor did Romans in general value male fidelity or

the permanent nature of marriage. Despite the ideal held by the state, sexual relations for men in antiquity were marked by polygyny, concubinage, and divorce (Campbell 2003, pp. 48, 70, 93-94).

The moral norm in conventional Roman society, as has been the case in many societies globally, was that — for women — sexual intercourse was decent only within marriage (Stone 2017, p. 11). Polygamy and concubinage were generally permissible for men (Noonan 1986, p. 32), but not women. This inequality did not stop there. Beginning as early as the fifth century B.C. (Johnson, et al. 1961) a man had the right to dissolve his marriage unilaterally at will, repudiating his wife, for his own reasons (Reynolds 2001, p. 53). From this time until the commencement of the empire, the transaction of a man taking a wife was seen as a transfer of authority from her father. The woman never escaped the moral status given to her as daughter, conferred to her husband, of being absolutely ruled – even to the point of the husband being able to dismiss her permanently in divorce (MacKin 1984, pp. 91-92). No reasons were necessary to be filed with the state or expressed publicly to the community (Ibid. pp. 91-92).

Later, however, in the era of the Roman Empire, marriage became the free association of men and women in which both parties freely entered, and whereby both parties were permitted to initiate divorce (Ibid. pp. 91-92). Divorce would occur by mutual consent with no need for accusations, or by either the man or woman accusing the other of a fault specified by the law (Ibid. pp. 91-92). Unlike the Christian era (Mt 5:28; 19:9; Lk 16:18; Mk 10:6-11), there were no requirements or expectations for men to be sexually faithful to their wives (Mackin 1984, p. 93). Rather, men were allowed to keep concubines or visit prostitutes. As with Jewish law, adultery was viewed asymmetrically. While it was considered grounds for divorce for both sexes, it was defined differently for each sex (Ibid. p. 93): a woman committed adultery by having intercourse with anyone other than her husband (Ibid. p. 93). A husband, on the other hand, committed adultery only by having intercourse with another man's wife (Ibid. p. 93).

Along with divorce and sexual inequality presumed in the culture and proscribed

by law, the use of contraceptives in the pre-Christian Mediterranean world was well established (Campbell 2003, p. 175). The oldest surviving documents that provide recipes for contraception date back from 1900 to 1000 B.C. (Noonan 1986, p. 9). Among the classical writers, so-called potions were the most often mentioned form of contraception; the only method described in the Hippocratic writings, although the Greco-Roman world had many techniques for contraception (Ibid. p. 13). These documents include potions women would use to block or kill sperm cells in order to prevent pregnancy.

Although large families were desired throughout premodern times — due to high infant mortality rates and the need for family labor — various methods to avoid conception were used in antiquity. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, these included chemical anti-spermicides, *coitus interruptus* as well as castration, charms, amulets, pessaries, and traditional knowledge of plants (Campbell 2003, pp. 21, 175). While artificial birth control was generally condemned in ancient Israel, among the rabbinic literature are three methods of birth prevention: spilling of seed or Onanism, *mokh* or absorbent material inserted into the woman, and drinking a cup of roots, indicating knowledge and usage of plant-based herbal contraception (Ibid. p. 225).²³

Outside of the Genesis account of Onan (Gn 38:7-9), the earliest evidence of a particular practice of unnatural coitus comes from the historian Herodotus' account of Pisistratus who lived in the fifth century B.C. He avoided natural procreative intercourse “because he already had adolescent children and because the family of the Alcmeonids was said to be under a curse” (Herodotus 1920, 1.61.1). The information collected from these ancient papyri, however, makes it difficult to assess how common contraception may have been, since it gave no indications of the degree of popular usage. Nonetheless, it does reveal a people not completely unfamiliar with artificial birth control techniques.

²³ John Riddle in *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West* (1999), admits very little is known about the composition of contraceptive methods in the ancient world, since most of its knowledge was handed down from woman to woman orally. What has been found in Western medical tracts as well as Vedic and Chinese sources is that the herbal potions used had been known and effective (1999). He adds that when these herbal potions used to prevent childbearing were handed down and used in the Middle Ages, women were accused of witchcraft (1999).

Also, not uncommon throughout the classical world were the practices of abortion and infanticide (Noonan 1986, pp. 85-87). Even so, since each child was born a citizen of the state, and males had the added burden of defending the state from aggressors, the government discouraged these kinds of practices and conversely encouraged having children. The Greek historian Plutarch (1878) has recorded testimony encouraging parenthood (Noonan 1986, pp. 22-27). Both condemned “*medicine in regard to children*” and Plutarch, in addition, denounced the use of this kind of “medicine” by one’s wife as a legitimate reason for divorcing her (Plutarch, *Leges Regiae: Romulus* 1.9; Romulus 22 in *Parallel Lives*).

Regarding both traditions, the key word to consider is translated as “medicine”— which is *pharmakeia* in Greek and *veneficium* in Latin. In both these languages the term is used to specify the use of magic or drugs. When they are used in relation to the act of thwarting procreation, the terms refer to abortifacients²⁴ and probably contraceptive drugs as well (Noonan 1986, pp. 25-26). In these cultures, drug potions and magic potions were spoken of synonymously, for drugs are intimately associated with magic in the Greco-Roman worldview (Pharr 1932, pp. 272-273).²⁵ The ancients apparently saw no reason to create a second term to differentiate the two, as in the Modern West (Noonan 1986, p. 25). Noonan suggests *medicine* is probably the best English translation for *pharmakeia* and *veneficium*, but as understood in the sense of how the Native North American healer makes and uses medicine, not in how the contemporary West understands it (Ibid. p. 25). The ambiguity of the terms may be born of a lack of understanding in physical laws and allows for no differentiation between drugs used for good or for evil.

Roman law at that time did not recognize the unborn fetus as a human being (*Digest of Justinian*, 25.4.1.1. and 35.2.9.1). Nonetheless, government discouragement of using these kinds of medicines must have had an impact (MacKin

²⁴ Drugs that can cause abortion (even though some may have as their primary mechanism to contracept).

²⁵ “In both languages (Greek and Latin) the term means the use of magic or drugs.... and reflects the attitude of the Greco-Roman culture. Drugs are intimately associated by this culture with magic; the users of Greek and Latin see no need to have two words to differentiate magic and the drugs” (Noonan 1986, p. 25). Underlying this mindset is, perhaps, a less scientific view of the world than most people in the 21st century are familiar with.

1986, p. 25). Such discouragement at the time, legal and social, helped maintain a population that kept the state strong and prosperous. Nevertheless, by the end of the classical period, according to rabbinic writings at the time (Campbell 2003, p. 125), conception-prevention and birth-prevention methods (contraception and abortion) were established and at least known within the cultural environment within which both Jews and Christians lived at the beginning of the first millennium.

When Jesus of Nazareth taught and preached in the first century A.D., He broke from longstanding tradition by emphasizing, as recorded in the Synoptic gospels, that the sin of adultery was defined equally for both husbands and wives, and that divorce was forbidden (Mt 5:28; 19:9; Lk 16:18; Mk 10:6-11). As we will see in the next chapter, Jesus is believed to have come to restore the natural order of creation, including marriage, “*as it was in the beginning*” (Mt 19:8). Before Christianity and its doctrine began to take root within the empire and spread throughout the world, its precursor, Judaism, beginning with Abraham and the people of Israel, would make its mark. Ethical monotheism and the Ten Commandments were introduced to the world, making a profound impact on marriage and the family (Schmidt 2004, pp. 79-124).

2.3 Ancient Israel: Judaism and the Old Testament

The people of Israel introduced ethical monotheism to the world. The Old Testament reveals a belief that the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who took Abraham from the land of Ur to what eventually became Israel, sought a marital-like covenantal relationship with the people He would form (Gn 12:1). In the light of this biblical theme, the God of Israel sought covenants with His people that would serve as a biblical model for earthly marriage between the human sexes. When Israel would break a covenant, the inspired word of God in Scripture would call it adultery, pointing to the analogy that God is covenantally bonded, or ‘married’, to His people. Within the Old Testament, we see this perhaps most clearly in the book of Hosea and in Ezekiel 16:1-63.

In Israelite theology, the kind of union God sought with His people was to be reflected in the type of union a Jewish man and woman would contract with each other. The book of Genesis, in chapter three, speaks of these two personal communions in

paradise, before sin entered the world. The union between God and man was so intimate that it was as if God were walking with the first parents of humanity in paradise (Gn 3:8). Before humanity sinned, rejecting God's covenantal offer, the man and woman were both naked but felt no shame (Gn 2:25).

The first divine command to the two persons made in His image was to “*be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it*” (Gn 1:26-28) pointing to the goodness of sex and marriage in creation. The general gist of the story is that God made man in His image (Gn 1:26-27), and offered them eternal life in union with Him (Gn 2:9).²⁶ Like any earthly husband to be, He offered to share His life with them (Ibid.).²⁷ Unlike earthly husbands, God's life is divine eternal life, which would have raised humanity to a god-like status resulting in immortality. The original man and woman rejected God's covenantal offer, which, in the context of God's warning, was ultimately choosing death (Gn 2:17).

What happens immediately after this profound and unspeakable transgression in the Hebrew Scriptures depicts God as not only just, but merciful. In His divine mercy, He seeks to restore humanity to grace, i.e., to the union of friendship with Him, by giving them another opportunity to say “yes” to His offer, to be restored to the likeness of God (Gn 3:15). This work of God to save humanity from their self-imposed state of death is what divine Revelation is about. This salvation can only come about by reunion with God by accepting His covenant.

The doctrine of original sin begins with the belief that human beings, the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26-27), have been dis-graced and wounded as a result of rejecting God's offer of a communion of love. The biblical story shows that human beings are persons, who, like God who is three Persons, are made to live in personal communion with God and each other. However, in rejecting God's authority, humanity

²⁶ The tree of life and its fruit was offered to the first parents, humanity's representatives. Christian tradition has the Cross of Christ as the new tree of Life, following the first one that was rejected.

²⁷ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* §375 states:

The Church, interpreting the symbolism of biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original 'state of holiness and justice.' This grace of original holiness was 'to share in...divine life'.

fell from its lofty place and became unable to realize its potentiality. Being stripped of grace, and feeling naked as a result, disgraced fallen human nature has been passed on to each person in each generation. Having disobeyed God, individuals turn in on themselves, and man and woman are no longer able to be fully open to each other. Original sanctifying grace was the glue that kept the rational, animal, and vegetative elements of human life together in harmony in a subordinate hierarchical union with He Who Is infinite Truth and Goodness. That glue was lost due to sin and human nature, man's relationship with woman and vice versa, and humanity's relationship with God became unhinged.²⁸

The book of Genesis in the Old Testament reveals, to a degree, God's plan for what conjugal life is meant to be. Christians believe Christ came centuries later to restore it. In the narrative of the third chapter of the first book of the Pentateuch (Blenkinsopp 1992), after the split of humanity²⁹, humanity's first parents lived in an unbroken union with God and with each other in justice and harmony. There was a nakedness of soul and body that signified a total openness between the man and the woman; a result of both being completely open to God, the Source of life and love. Man and woman were designed to be complementary gifts for each other, given and received without fear of being abused by either lust or domination. The two halves of humanity that emerged from the same flesh (Gn 2:22), were to become one flesh (again) in a covenantal union of life-giving love (Gn 2:24). Such a union, realized in a way that is open to offspring (Gn 4:1), was pleasing to God. The Genesis story illustrates the principle that life is ordered to love, which, in turn, is ordered to (begetting) life – within permanent personal triadic communion.³⁰ The family is an image of God as Trinitarian Love.

The serpent eventually entered the picture, the seduction followed, Adam fell from grace, and hell broke loose upon the earth.³¹ Living the full truth of human nature

²⁸ The third chapter of Genesis illustrates this three-fold punishment of disharmony: between man and God, between the sexes, and with the earth.

²⁹ Adam represents humanity, both male and female, before Eve is created from the rib of Adam (John Paul II, 2006).

³⁰ This is a core principle of this thesis, which asserts traces of the Trinity are found covertly throughout creation as well as divine Revelation, as analogously reflecting the Trinitarian God. This will be elaborated on in the final chapter.

³¹ Gn 3:4-19; Rev 12:7. According to Jewish and Christian tradition humanity's relationship with God,

was no longer easy. Dis-graced and wounded, God began anew with fallen humanity, His now distorted image on earth: first with His covenant with Noah (Gn 9:8-27), and then later with Abraham (Gn 17:2-27)..

For the people of Israel, families played a significant role forming marriages. The father of the young woman (or girl) would usually make some kind of deal with a potential suitor (Campbell 2003, p. 54), often exchanging money or labor³² for the right to marry his daughter. Wedding celebrations often lasted around a week (Ibid., p. 46).³³ In ancient times, to bear and raise children was the primary reason for getting married (Ibid. p. 72), with economic and other family considerations playing a secondary role (Ibid. pp. 107-109). The Old Testament witness is that for ancient Israelites the most important contribution a woman could make to a household was to bear children (Ibid. p.72). Although this would be considered offensive today, virginity and fertility were highly valued in a potential wife; and being a good helpmate to her husband as reflecting “Eve”³⁴ was to earn her praise: a good wife is “*far more precious than jewels*” (Ibid. p. 73; Prov 31:10).

The marriage of a man and woman under Mosaic Law generally began with affection and the assent of wills (MacKin 1984, pp. 28-29). Since Mosaic law permitted divorce, marriage may also be dissolved by the reverse action – the rescinding of *affectio maritalis* – which is the withdrawal of the will and affection (Ibid., p. 24). The practice of divorce, however, in ancient Israel like in early Roman times, was usually permitted solely at the initiation of the husband. Further, divorce legislation was not uniformly agreed to by the rabbis. At around the start of the Common Era, there were two competing schools of thought on the subject of divorce – one led by Rabbi

with woman, and with the earth has been tainted due to original sin, creating the inner disorder of concupiscence in each person that desires selfishness and sin. This disordered love of self is clearly illustrated in the imperfection and inequality of every marital relationship ever since. As a result of succumbing to the temptation of the serpent (Gn 3:6) the man will lord over the woman (Gn 3:16). They will both experience suffering in the work of their vocations - the woman having increased pangs in childbirth and the man working to support his family through thorns, thistles, and the sweat of his brow (Gn 3:16). This break with God also invited in the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41) to “*prowl about the world seeking the ruins of souls*” (from the traditional St. Michael prayer attributed to Pope Leo XIII, cf. www.ewtn.com/devotionals/prayers/michael.htm).

³² This is seen between Laban and Jacob in Gn 29:18-19, which landed for Jacob, Leah; and then his beloved Rachel as wives. Leah became his wife in Gn 29:24, and Rachel became his wife in Gn 29:30.

³³ Gn 29:27-28, gives an example.

³⁴ Gn 2:18. “Eve” means “helpmate”.

Shammai and the other by Rabbi Hillel (Ibid., pp. 24-28). According to the Mishnah Gittin 9:10 (Sefaria, n.d.) – the oral tradition of the Talmud – Shammai claimed that a man may not divorce his wife unless there is found unchastity in her (citing Deuteronomy 24:1).³⁵ Hillel, on the other hand, declared that a wife may be divorced if her husband finds anything displeasing, even if she simply spoils a dish for him (Mishna Gitten 9:10; Campbell 2003, p. 257).

In ancient Israel there was great value placed on the procreation of children, as is seen throughout the Old Testament canon.³⁶ Children were understood to be a great blessing from God and a desirable good for the family. Nowhere in Scripture or tradition is it ever mentioned that it was the wish of any married couple to have no children.³⁷ In fact the opposite appears to be true, for it is through one's posterity that a man is seen as living on into the future. Even the children conceived in non-marital unions were still considered a blessing from God (Gn 21:13). In both the Old and new Covenants large families were seen as a sign of God's blessing and the parents' generosity (CCC §2372). This is made clear in scripture beginning with Exodus 23:25-26, Deuteronomy 7:13-14, Psalms 127:3-5, Psalms 128:1-4, and Malachi 2:14-15.

Scripture illustrates the high value put on fertility and procreation from the very beginning in Genesis 1:28 with his command to be fertile and multiply, and later when God repeats the command twice in His post-flood blessing to Noah (Gn 9:1-7). In further signposts pointing to the value and sacred character on passing on human life, God slays Onan for refusing to impregnate his late brother's wife by perverting the marital act (Gn 38:10). Then stated in Exodus and Deuteronomy, the author of the Pentateuch exhorts the people of Israel that God "*will love and bless and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb...no man or woman among you shall be childless, nor shall your livestock be barren*" (Ex 23:26; Dt 7:13-14).

³⁵ In the next chapter we will explore what "finding unchastity in her" may mean.

³⁶ This theme underlies the Old Testament and the people of Israel, beginning with God's command: "*Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it*" (Gn 1:28). Other OT passages indicating procreation is a great gift and blessing include Gn 9:1, Gn 22:17, Ps 127:3-5, Ps 139:13-18, Prov 17:6, Prov 22:6, Jer 1:5, and Jer 29:11.

³⁷ The only Old Testament figure mentioned that is unmarried by choice is Jeremiah (Jer 16:2). His singlehood, however, could be seen as a symbolic acting out of the sterility that is about to befall Israel. Further, the story of Onan reveals a man unhappy about siring offspring from his late brother's wife via the Levirate law, but there is no indication that Tamar had consented to his desire or his unnatural intercourse with her (Gn 38:8-9).

The story of Abram and his covenant with God also has fertility and procreation as a major theme, as being part of the covenant promise. God promises Abraham posterity as “*numerous as the stars*” (Gn 15:5, 26:4), “*countless*” (Gn 16:10) and “*as the sands on the sea shore*” (Gn 22:17). Abraham's wife Sarah, who carried the shame of being barren for many years, was able to conceive in her old age. The covenant promises continued through Isaac and the lineage of first-born sons through what would become the chosen people of Israel. Later, Mosaic Law put men to death for performing unnatural sexual acts with other men (Lv 18:23; 20:13), possibly signaling God's displeasure with the wasting of “seed”, i.e. the perverted abuse of the procreative faculties, mentioned already in Genesis 38.³⁸

Couples who have given birth to many children are seen as being highly favored by God, as in the case of Hemen (1 Chr 6:33), the king's seer and grandson of the prophet Samuel, who was blessed with 14 sons and 3 daughters to “*enhance his prestige*” (1 Chr 25:5). One's offspring in Old Testament times are like “*arrows in the hand*”; and “*happy are those whose quiver is filled*” (Ps 127:4-5). On the other hand, not to conceive or to miscarry is seen as a curse, a punishment from God (Hos 9:11). Scripture abounds with instances pointing to fertile union as being a great gift. Malachi speaks of the union of the one “*flesh and spirit*” of marriage and its “*required godly offspring*” (Mal 2:14-16).

The union of a man and his bride in the Old Testament is a typological foreshadowing of the relationship between God and Israel. Israel is promised many children through the Abrahamic covenant by her divine Lover, but she “*plays the harlot*” as an adulterous woman when cavorting with idols (Jer 3:8; Hos 9:1, 4:15). Israel is seen as a very imperfect spouse; but nevertheless, God “*hate(s) divorce*” (Mal 2:16).

Also roundly condemned in the Pentateuch are fornication, seduction, and incestuous relations, literally (Dt 22:13-29) and figuratively, as a man's wife is

³⁸ The “*wasting of seed*” in Genesis 38 was planted on the ground, rendering the act infertile, whereas in Leviticus 18 and 20 the wasted seed is implanted in the body of another male, rendering the act infertile. Insemination into the body of the earth or of a male is unnatural, resulting in neither union nor offspring.

metaphorically alluded to as his vineyard (Gn 9:20; Dt 20:6-7; Ps 128:3; Is 27:2).³⁹ It (his vineyard) shall not be sown with two kinds of seed (Dt 22:9)⁴⁰, nor shall he wear the cloth of two different kinds of thread woven together (Dt 22:11).⁴¹ In the Torah, according to Mosaic Law, females could be killed for consenting to fornication (Dt 22:21-22), while both males and females were killed for fornicating if the woman was betrothed (Dt 22:23-24), or living with her spouse.

Along with the Song of Songs, Tobias' prayer in the Book of Tobit shows that that the tenderness of marital love was valued alongside procreation for the people of the Old Covenant. His beautiful prayer to God with his wife at his side included:

You made Adam, and you made his wife Eve
to be his helper and support;
and from these two the human race has come.
You said, *'It is not good for the man to be alone;
let us make him a helper like himself.'*
Now, not with lust,
but with fidelity I take this kinswoman as my wife.
Send down your mercy on me and on her,
and grant that we may grow old together.
Bless us with children (Tobit 3:5-7).

The petition that God blesses them with children finalizes the prayer, but it is *“with fidelity”*, not lust, that he takes Sarah as his wife, with the hope that they *“may grow old together.”*

³⁹ A man's wife is his vineyard, which is pure and inviolable. In Gn 9:20, for example, Ham *“saw his father's nakedness”* and was greatly cursed. The seeing of one's father's nakedness is commonly believed to be a Jewish idiom that refers to having sexual relations with one's father's wife – condemned in the Leviticus purity code (Lv 18:7-8; 20:11). Noah's *“vineyard”* that he had cultivated and of which he enjoyed the fruits (21) after God told him to be fertile and multiply (7), was violated by Ham. Ezekiel 22:10-11 using the same terminology (*“his father's nakedness”*) seems to be speaking within the context of incest, thus giving support to this interpretation. Uncovering a man's nakedness refers to a man's wife, since the two are one flesh, and nakedness is a euphemism for sexual intimacy – as found in Dt 24:1: *“When a man, after marrying a woman, is later displeased with her because he finds in her the nakedness of a thing (Hebrew: transliterated ervah), and he writes out a bill of divorce...”* Here, this *“nakedness”* of something may refer to non-virginity or sexual impurity with another man. Dt 24:1 justifies divorce. Further, according to Dt 24:4, it would be *“an abomination”* to take her as his wife after *“she has become defiled.”*

⁴⁰ If a man's vineyard is his wife (see footnote 90 above), and she has been sown with two kinds of seed, this could speak of her having been sexually active with two different men, one not being her husband. As mentioned earlier, this kind of infidelity was severely dealt with under Mosaic law.

⁴¹ The cloth may refer to the undergarment given the bride at betrothal. A cloth being woven with two threads could be symbolic of a woman being sexually united to more than one man. Such a multi-woven cloth pollutes the one who wears it.

Faithful conjugal love is not an uncommon narrative in the Old Testament. One may see examples of it expressed here in Tobit as well as throughout the books of the Song of Songs and Hosea.

With the words “*be fertile and multiply*” of the priestly narrative in the first chapter of Genesis echoing throughout the centuries (Gn 1:28), it is understandable that the people of Israel understood fertility and procreation as a sign of great blessing and barrenness as a curse. Yet, despite all of the scriptural support for the goodness of fertility and the curse of the barren, contraception was not unknown to the people of God in the Old Covenant.

The story of Onan in Genesis 38:8-10, as alluded to earlier, has Onan performing *coitus interruptus* with his late brother's wife to avoid impregnating her. God slew Onan because of this action (Gn 39:10). As a backdrop to this story, the tradition should be recalled of the Levirate law in ancient Israel, which was that a man should father a child with his late brother's wife – in his brother's name – in order to continue his brother's lineage.⁴²

The only penalty documented in the Old Testament for breaking the Levirate law is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10: it is not death, but public humiliation. It remains unclear as to whether Onan was slain by God for his obstinate refusal to impregnate his late brother's wife or his specific act of avoiding conception that directly violates natural law. Perhaps it was both. If Onan, however, simply avoided having intercourse with her, it is not clear whether God would have slain him. It seems unlikely.

In the Babylonian Talmud document *Niddah* 13a (Torah, n.d.), of the third century A.D., Palestinian Rabbi Johanan ben Nappaha of the school at Tiberius was quoted in *Niddah* 13a on the deadly sin of Onan: “[w]hoever emits semen in vain deserves death”. Here the sin of Onan is clearly interpreted as a contraceptive act.

In the Talmud, *Niddah* 13b (Ibid.), Rabbi Jose links loss of ‘seed’ to the delayed

⁴² As mentioned in Gn 38:8.

coming of the Messiah: The Son of David will not come until all the souls of the unborn have been born. In *Yebamoth 34b* (Ibid.) of the Babylonian Talmud, the rabbis explicitly teach that the acts of both Onan and his older brother Er were unnatural.⁴³ Relatedly, *Shabbath 110b* (Ibid.) seems to indicate that castration and drinking potions for sterilization were also prohibited.

The Talmud, however, also contains directives that are exceptions to the rule on contraception. In *Lebomoth 34b* (Ibid.) *coitus interruptus* is justified by Rabbi Eliezer for women who are latescent, as according to nature. Rabbi Bibi, a teacher in Babylon at around 330 A.D., is reported in *Niddah 45a* to permit the use of absorbent or pessary contraception by a nursing mother, a pregnant woman, and an 11-year-old girl (Ibid.). The irony cannot be lost here, that in the Talmud these exceptions to contraception were permitted only when conception was highly unlikely. It further raises the question as to whether or not these instances were contraception at all.⁴⁴

2.3.1 Ritual pattern of the marital covenant in Old Testament times

Covenants were not uncommon with people of the ancient world, both Jews and gentiles (Trumbull 1975, p. 5). Covenants were often marked by a sharing of blood, signifying the union of a shared life. Covenants in Scripture are a central theme in both the Old and New Testaments, and elements common to the ritual have a certain form for the chosen people of Israel.

Covenants are universally recognized as binding mechanisms, usually to bind together people, tribes, or kingdoms.⁴⁵ Judaism understood the notion of covenant via

⁴³ The text of Genesis 38:7 contains no information about the specific nature of Er's behavior: "[b]ut Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death."

⁴⁴ "If you practice ecological breastfeeding: Chance of pregnancy is practically zero during the first three months, less than 2% between 3 and 6 months, and about 6% after 6 months" (Bonyata, 2018). Bonyata is an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). According to the London Lactation consultants, the IBCLC credential is the highest-regarded professional qualification in breastfeeding knowledge and support, recognized all over the world.

⁴⁵ There is a relevant link between covenant and faith. Indeed, the English word "*religion*" originates from the Latin "*religare*" – "to bind together." While human beings have practiced some form of this ritual of binding themselves together since the beginning of recorded history, Jewish and Christian faith see this attempt at sharing life through union as but a shadow of the premier and everlasting covenantal union, which is that between God and his earthly image, humanity (Trumbull 1975, pp. 272-276). In this respect, the Jewish, and even more-so, the Christian, religion, are covenantal unions with God. More will be elaborated on this in Chapter Seven.

divine Revelation as securing a union between God and humanity (Trumbull 1975, pp. 216-218). Later in the New Testament, St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians will take this metaphor and apply it to the relationship between Christ and His Church – and between a man and woman in marriage as well, as its analogical type (Eph 5:21-35).⁴⁶

Scripture and tradition attest to four essential elements that make up the covenant ritual norm: 1) a deal/purchase, 2) a sign of the union, 3) a consummation of the union, and 4) a celebration of the union.⁴⁷ Covenants signify love, and love begets life – which may or may not produce offspring. Covenantal unions are fruitful in principle, and do not turn in on themselves.⁴⁸

In both the God-man and man-woman covenants, the covenantal formula begins with a deal or purchase coupled with a proposal and oath. Betrothal or *formal* union occurs here, when the man offers, and the woman either directly or through her father accepts. The betrothed female is then given a ritual bath signifying a washing away of the old self to be presented anew to her lover. A garment, a piece of clothing, is given for her to wear, signifying her new identity as being part of him.⁴⁹ This important step is followed afterwards by real union or consummation, when the two parties unite to become one flesh (Gn 2:24). Pursuant to this monumental moment is a celebration or some other kind of public expression of joy. Covenantal unions are worth celebrating.

⁴⁶ In biblical typology, a “type” is a prefigurement of something or someone that will fulfill that type in the future. It is a foreshadowing of something greater to come.

⁴⁷ For the Christian, the new and everlasting Covenant, which human marriage is meant to reflect (Eph 5:21-35), is: 1) the purchase is Christ’s crucifixion, 2) the sign is the sign of the cross and baptismal garment, 3) consummation of a sort occurs when the fullness of God’s life is imparted unto the *Confirmadi*, and 4) the celebration is the Eucharist. The covenant of each Catholic with God is complete after the celebrations of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

⁴⁸ Seeing that *eros* love seeks *union* with the beloved, covenantal *unions* objectively – in their essence – can be said to be rituals of love. Since human beings are persons, covenants should also include *agape* love, a sacrificial willing of the objective good of the other. For a look at the covenant of marriage as a metaphorical reflection of God’s covenant with Israel, see Baumann 2003, pp. 29, 39, 41-52.

⁴⁹ We see patterns like this from the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures. For example, the first man, Adam, was created by virtue of this *bath* (Gn 2:7) and was *clothed* with grace before being stripped naked by sin. After Adam and Eve hid themselves and denied their sin, God re-clothed them – not in grace for which they were originally made, nor in the fig leaves that they had clothed themselves with, but in animal skins. Although Adam kept his personhood, this clothing signified that their fall from grace and consequent wounded nature lowered their condition to become closer to non-rational animals. In the third chapter of Genesis, we can already see the covenant pattern. Analogically, for the Christian, in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, members of the bride of Christ adorn a new garment and a new identity, and are clothed, again, with salvific grace.

In these four elements of covenant, two persons are mutually given and received, and life is exchanged and mingled between them. Formal union exists with consent; real union with consummation. Between both parties, *I* and *thou* are transformed into *we*. Furthermore, this union of '*we*' is not only dyadic, but is actualized by a third principle of life between them, which is the bridge and glue that results from the love between lover and beloved. When the two become one, they become three. More will be discussed on this dynamic in Chapter Seven of the thesis.

The ritual signification of marriage for the people of Israel in biblical times points to the mystery of covenant as an expression of love, and to the eternal nature of God Who *Is* Love. As mentioned above, the marital covenant begins with the initial *deal and consent* (Campbell 2003, p.45). The bride is then ritually bathed (Ibid. pp. 44-45) and clothed with her husband's garment (Ibid. p.44); a sign of *formal union* expressing her new identity.⁵⁰ After a period of time, which could be as long as a year post-betrothal for the allowance of time for the groom to prepare a home for his new bride as a married couple, a week-long wedding feast is *celebrated* (Ibid. p. 46). In conjunction with this, the man and wife *consummate* their marriage in their bridal chamber (Ibid. pp. 46-47). This chamber is often on the grounds of the father's property, where the celebratory feast is held (Ibid. pp. 44-46).⁵¹

For the people of Israel in biblical times, tokens of virginity from the woman were required to demonstrate the covenantal vow at betrothal had not been violated (Dt 22:13-21; Mackin 1984, p. 62).⁵² Evidence was required that she had not become one-flesh with another man (Ibid., p. 62). If no blood-letting occurred, and if this absence was proven to be a sign that the woman had already become sexually united as one-flesh with another, the covenant would not be sealed and the woman could

⁵⁰ Western tradition in contemporary times replaces the garment with some kind of engagement ring and the woman taking the last name of the man, signifying the altered identity.

⁵¹ The ordering of these Israelite rituals can be found in Dan 1.

⁵² Contentiously, but nevertheless, extant, around the world an exhibit of blood stains as the indubitable proof of virginity is still practiced. According to WHO, some nations continuing this ancient practice to ensure virginity are, in alphabetical order: Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe (World Health Organization 2018, p. 7).

face the death penalty for adultery.⁵³ This is because the covenant of marriage is a sign of the covenant between God and humanity, which could only be validly ratified with a “spotless lamb” in its prime, as pristine, whole and entire (Ex 12:5; 1 Pt 1:19). As this indicates, and will be expounded on in Chapter Seven, it appears that the OT covenant form requires purity, particularly in the feminine element of a covenant, as essential for covenantal union to actually occur.

The Latin words *consummare* (“to sum up” or “finish”) and *consumere* (“to use up” or “to eat”), are usually translated into English as “consummate” and “consume”. “Consummation” of a marriage is the act of taking another into oneself to seal the formal agreement; but consummation can also ratify other agreements in the form of a handshake, signature, or seal. Consummation of covenants, which is the exchange of persons rather than goods or services, includes the exchange of body-persons and the mingling of their bodily fluids, signifying a sharing of life, uniting two selves into one life; or two lives into one shared self. With marriage, this consummation comes with the exchange of genetic material in the marital act, configuring two body-persons into one flesh.

Further, I propose that every covenant has three essential elements – the initiator, the acceptor, and the deal between them. The first two may be called the active and receptive principles, which are the masculine and feminine dimensions of the new whole. We will use the terms *active* and *receptive* principles later on in this thesis when referring to this dyadic mystery that becomes a triadic union. In every marital covenant there is lover, beloved, and love, which, as we will illustrate, is the earthly reflection of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This, too, will be explained more in Chapter Seven.

The fruit of the union between lover (husband) and beloved (wife) is their love, sometimes concretely expressed in the form of a child, which proceeds from the father and mother. The parents’ life-giving (unitive-procreative) love is fulfilled in the two becoming one flesh, which is ordered to becoming three persons. Since children are

⁵³ Despite that at the time of Christ Israelites were unable to put man to death without going through Roman authorities, the scene in Jn 8:3-11, where Jesus confronts the woman caught in adultery, shows they were willing to stone people to death for serious violations of Mosaic law.

the concrete expression of a fruitful marriage, infertility in the Old Testament was seen as a curse,⁵⁴ as it remains a painful cross for many couples today.

Three common sins that were tolerated in ancient Israel and in the ancient world in general were slavery, polygyny and divorce (Edwards 2020).⁵⁵ Although non-virginity and infertility were both understood to be impediments to the ancient Israelites (Ex 23:26), as a concession to “the hardness of their hearts” the chosen people were allowed a compromise to the fullness of the truth of the marital covenant (Mt 19:8). Some sins stemming from humanity’s fall were so ingrained in human nature and society that they were impossible to overcome without a new dispensation of grace – which was to come with the future Messiah in His self-sacrifice as Savior. Despite the essential nature of marriage that includes unity and indissolubility, weakness due to sin severely impacts the ability of men to live its truth. The acceptance among the Israelites of polygyny and divorce for men is an example of this compromise (Mt 19:8). Interestingly, although these were concessions accepted in Mosaic Law, nowhere in all of Scripture is there any indication that premarital sex for women or polyandry were ever morally or socially acceptable, even as a concessionary temporary compromise.⁵⁶

As evidenced in Mosaic law and ingrained in ancient Israelite culture, it seems the difficulty of controlling the male paternal instinct or procreative urge because of the imbalance in his nature due to original sin was acknowledged at least implicitly. Yet, the value of the initial marital act consummating the union of a man and his virgin bride was not diminished. This is exemplified in Old Testament law of men having to pay a high price for virgin brides. It is also exemplified in the Mosaic Law that legislates that a man

⁵⁴ Alexander Carlebach writes that:

[B]arrenness was a curse and a punishment (Lev. 20:20–21; Jer. 22:30, and MK 27b [Moed Katan is a text of the Torah]); Abimelech and his wives were punished, though only temporarily, with barrenness (Gen. 20:17–18), and so was Michal, Saul’s daughter and David’s wife (II Sam. 6:23). Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Samson’s mother, Hannah, and the Shunamite woman were all barren at first, but God, who holds the key to fecundity (Ta’an. 2a; cf. Men. 98a), granted their and their husbands’ prayers (cf. Ps. 113:9) (2008).

He also mentions “*the characterization of Zion as a barren woman in Isaiah 54:1*” (2008).

⁵⁵ Edwards (2020) summarizes the allowances lived by the people of God in the Old Testament, as the *Principle of Accommodation*. Chapters three, four, and five cover divorce, polygamy, and slavery respectively.

⁵⁶ “*Remarkably, the Old Testament knows nothing of polyandry*” (Block in Campbell, 2003, p. 69).

must submit to marrying a girl he had sexually seduced (Lv 1:3, 1:10, 22:19-25; Dt 15:21, 17:1).⁵⁷ The father of the seduced virgin had a right to enforce the marriage according to the law.⁵⁸ Further, the fact that Mosaic Law had provision to put to death a woman found to be a non-virgin during the attempted consummation of her marriage motivated “shotgun weddings” to be enacted between seducer and seduced (Dt 22:13). This high value placed on the virginity of the woman, as feminine principle of the covenant, is significant due to the fact that they figuratively not only typify the spotless lamb, but also the holy Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, and are the harbinger of life. The feminine principle signifies the home in which life dwells – whether that be God’s life as in the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple, or a man’s life in the marital act and/or the conception of a child.⁵⁹ No, living or stone of the temple, may be desecrated.⁶⁰

Additionally, Old Testament priests were required by law to marry virgins, with the rare exception of marrying the widow of a fellow priest who is deceased. The high priest, however, did not even have that unique option (Ez 44:22; Lev 21:7, 13-14). For the sake of purity, high priests were morally obligated to marry a virgin (Lv 21:14; Ez 44:22). The law relating to Old Testament priests was consistent with the covenant principle in divine Revelation that the feminine element of covenantal union must be pure, set apart exclusively for her lover.⁶¹ There is a school of thought that claims the requirement for priestly purity has carried over to today’s universal priesthood of the baptized, in Christ.⁶²

2.3.2 The importance of blood in covenants

⁵⁷ Right before Deuteronomy's discourse on crimes against marriage, Dt 22:9 reads: “*You shall not sow your vineyard with two different kinds of seed; if you do, its produce shall become forfeit, both the crop you have sown and the yield of the vineyard.*” As mentioned above, one possible interpretation of this is that the vineyard is woman. The two kinds of seed are from two different men. Offspring from such a woman will be forfeited to the sanctuary for adoption.

⁵⁸ Lv 19:29: “*Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry and the land become full of wickedness.*”

⁵⁹ The masculine principle is the active element and the feminine the receptive or passive element in the unions that turn two elements into one new entity – whether this be a sperm cell and an ovum, oil and a lamp, a plug and a socket, or the sky (sun, rain, etc.) and the earth (vegetation, life). More literal examples and figurative analogies will be provided in chapter six, as the thesis theme is developed.

⁶⁰ No Israelites could even enter the heart of the Temple except for the high priest once a year. Also, Jesus would not allow the Temple to be desecrated by money changers and thieves: Mt 17:12-21; Mk 11:15-19; Lk 19:45-48; Jn 2:12-22.

⁶¹ Like Mary, the feminine principle of a covenant must be a virgin. Among other passages in Scripture, this necessity is pointed to in the gospels in Jesus’ riding into Jerusalem to experience His passion. Christ the Head is seated on a donkey symbolizing His body, the Church, which was “*a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat*” (Mk 11:2).

⁶² We will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

Although water, blood, and spirit have all played a role in covenantal theology, blood has a special place in the God-human union. As water is necessary for life in general⁶³, and blood is necessary for sensate or animal life, grace is requisite for personal or spiritual life.⁶⁴ With regard to humanity in Adam, it is *water* that sprung from the dry earth that enabled the Father to form him from the clay of the ground (Gn 2:6); it is *blood* that redeems him from sin and death, and it is *ruah*, the *breath* or Spirit of God, that sanctifies him (Gn 2:7; Acts 2:1-4). Additionally, God used *water* to wash away sin in the Noahic covenant, *blood* to blot out sin in the Mosaic covenant, and the *grace* of the Spirit to wash away sin in the new and everlasting covenant in Christ – the latter of which was initiated by the water (baptism) and blood (Eucharist) that came forth from Christ’s side as he lay “asleep” on the cross (Jn 19:34), typologically fulfilling the first Adam “giving birth” to *his* bride after being put into his deep sleep (Gn 2:21) in Eden (Gn 2:7).

In the Old Testament there is usually some kind of real or potential blood sacrifice⁶⁵ that accompanies every covenant renewal between God and Israel. This vicarious offering of life to the God of life, at times coupled with a ritual meal, was believed to bring about a conditional, temporary, union with God. The underlying principle is that one must give the gift of life to share with the other. In one’s relationship with God, physical death is the fullest and most complete way of offering oneself and one’s life to accomplish this.

Covenantal union, therefore, normally requires life to be exchanged and blood to seal the bond. Performing this signifies the dying of the two parties to the autonomous individuality of self that preceded the merger to forge a new entity, a new mixed self, rising in its stead. It signifies the feminine principle being broken and penetrated so that the masculine principle may enter her and unite his life with hers,

⁶³ There can be no life as we know it without the preexistence of water.

⁶⁴ The breath of God forms and animates bodies of a vegetative and animal composition into persons, with spiritual souls. See Gn 2:7.

⁶⁵ Blood covenants that have included blood exchanges between parties have been common practice throughout history in the pagan world in various forms. For example, blood exchanges are used in the uniting of two friends, two warring parties, two tribes, and two nations into one common life. It has also been used to ward away evil spirits, to protect homes from evil entities, and to appease the gods.

consummating or making real the legal union that has already formally occurred with marital consent. The essential role of blood in the marital covenant also has its roots deep in history, as we see embedded in the Hebrew and Arabic languages:

The Hebrew word *khathan*, here translated 'bridegroom', has, as its root idea, the *binding through severing*, the covenanting by blood; an idea that is in the marriage rite, as the Orientals view it, and that is in the rite of circumcision, also. Indeed, in the Arabic, the corresponding term (*khatan*), is applied interchangeably to one who is a relation by way of one's wife, and to one who is circumcised (Trumbull 1975, p. 223).

Within the Ancient Near-Eastern lexicon (and mindset) the concept and word for the tearing and blood-letting of circumcision, which is the sign and seal of the Old Covenant between God (active) and His people (receptive), is akin to the one for the tearing and blood-letting of the wife by her husband in the consummation of a marriage. It is by nature the sign and seal of the covenant: in the first one, the divine Groom (God) severs His virgin bride (Israel) in the act of circumcision, sealing their covenant; whereas and in the latter, the groom (husband) seals the marital covenant with his bride (wife) by leading her from virginal individual wholeness to the state of being one-flesh as a couple. In these instances, the receptive/feminine principle permeated by the active/masculine principle results in a real union between the two parties involved.

In summary, the blood of Old Testament sacrifices represents the life of the Israelites offered to Yahweh in their covenantal exchange. Human nature as feminine principle in the God-man relationship must be broken in order that God's Life may penetrate and permeate. Likewise, the bloodshed of Christ preceded the Life of the Father permeating and glorifying His human nature; and the blood of the bride in the form of the consummating marital act enables the husband's life to permeate her. While sin is in the flesh (Rom 8:3, 6, 10), life is in the blood (Lv 17:11), which is shared covenantally (Mt 26:28). Scripture attests to this.

Blood not only serves a vital role in sealing the bond of a covenantal union, but it is also important for the nourishing of any child conceived of the two becoming one

flesh. A child depends on a mother's blood *in utero* to nourish him through his first nine months of life.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been defended that marriage in ancient Rome, as it was in ancient Israel, was lived as a natural institution that united a man and woman for the sake of producing and raising children and other, secondary, ends.

In both pre-Christian cultures, men were more at liberty than women to have illicit sexual encounters and to initiate divorce. In both cultures, polygyny was accepted while polyandry was not. Women were expected to be chaste before marriage and faithful during it, whereas men were not. The major difference between the two cultures stems from religion. The Romans did not equate morality with their gods, but with the state. Israel, on the other hand, formed its wedding rituals around divine Revelation, understanding marriage to be not only the natural human institution that its neighboring Romans believed, but also an icon of the great marriage between YHWH and His people.

It is from this religious and cultural context that Jesus of Nazareth came as a Jew to radically clarify and purify the meaning of marriage and human sexuality for the world.

Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17). While many may interpret this to mean He did not come to abolish the natural law articulated in the commandments, we contend that He also did not come to abolish marriage as a natural institution, but to fulfill it by raising it to a sacrament.

Marriage, therein, is first and foremost a natural human institution born of the natural law, present in all human societies as far back as history is recorded. One theme that will make the next chapter different from this one is the disallowance of what was permitted as the result of the humanity's "*hardness of heart*" (Mt 19:8). Jesus came to restore and to elevate: to restore marriage and family to its original form before sin distorted it, and to elevate it inasmuch as it will become an exchange not only of

natural life, but also of supernatural life for those who are married in Christ. It is this supernatural life of grace that enables people of the new Covenant to overcome the disordered desires and passions due to sin in order to live the whole truth of marriage.

The following chapter will elaborate on the distinctions that can be made between living out the vocation of marriage and family in a fallen world and living it out in a redeemed world, that is, in the pre-Christian era vs. the Christian era.

Chapter 3: The order of grace: sexual intercourse and marriage in the Early and Medieval Christian Era

“But at the beginning it was not so.” ~ Mt. 19:8

In the last chapter we saw sexuality being played out within the context of a fallen world. This chapter focuses on redeemed humanity of the New Covenant, challenged to live the fullness of truth of marriage as it was *“at the beginning”* before sin distorted its nature (Mt 19:4), as originally designed by God and communicated in the book of Genesis (2:24).

While future chapters will be more philosophical in nature, this chapter relies heavily on scripture and theology, since it primarily covers how the Western world, through the establishment of Christianity, began to restore the truth and meaning of human sexuality and the family to its original state.

As seen in the last chapter, much of what was written in pre-Modern times may seem harsh to contemporary sensibilities. It was customary to communicate in a straightforward manner⁶⁶, with a greater concern for truth and justice than for people’s feelings. New Testament Scripture is no different.

In this chapter we specifically look at New Testament covenantal theology to describe the new Covenant as being akin to a marital union. We will examine how Christians understand God as restoring the truth and goodness of marriage and family to its original state. This means that the dignity of the human person, a notion long lost due to the fall of original sin, is gradually being restored by virtue of a new Covenant

⁶⁶ This was the case even with Jesus’ words at times. Contemporary biases and sensibilities might be tempted to interpret some passages as Jesus falling into sin, which is of course heretical, as in when He rebuked His disciples (Lk 9:41), the Pharisees (Mt 12:34, 23:33), and when He metaphorically referred to the Syrophenician woman as a dog (Mk 7:28). Indeed, in our post-Christian times there is a movement afoot to label as ‘hate speech’ New Testament passages that condemn homosexual behavior, too.

between God and humanity won by Christ on the cross. The accumulation of sin hardening hearts and blinding souls had distorted the man-woman relationship and disfigured the family. One of Christ's clear messages to His disciples in the New Testament was that human nature was to be restored to the natural order of how it was "*in the beginning*" (Mt 19:8).

The God of the Bible as understood within both Judaism and Christianity "broke into" history in a special way to offer humanity redemption by forming covenants with the creatures He made in His image and likeness: first with Noah (Gn 9:9-13), then Abraham (Gn12:1-3), then Moses (Ex 19:5-6) and David (2 Sm 7:10-16). Finally (Eph 5:21-35), as Christians acclaim, God established the new and eternal covenant with humanity in Jesus Christ, a covenant that is to fulfill and usurp all previous covenants established (Lk 22:20). We can see that each covenant represents God's relationship with humanity in its various forms, in ascending order: with Noah it was the family, with Abraham the tribe, with Moses it was the nation, and with David the Kingdom. Jesus, fulfilling all, represented universal Lordship. The everlasting covenant with God through Christ combines the magnitude of each of the covenantal relationships before Him, even the one that was rejected: the unrealized covenant between God and Adam represented marriage. The new and everlasting covenant in Christ and His subsequent union with His people, according to the Christian faith; is the archetype that reveals the true meaning of marriage.

3.1 From Judaism to Christianity

The Passover ritual, which is an Old Covenant "type"⁶⁷ of the New Covenant Eucharist, includes a meal that is a foreshadowing of the eternal wedding banquet between God and humanity. It also prefigured the Passover of Jesus Christ from death to life and anticipated the Passover of the rest of Christ's body from death to life, as the Catechism explains (CCC §1340), Foreshadowing Christ's self-sacrifice, the Passover sacrifice required a spotless lamb to be slain (Ex 12:5), signifying purity or virginity. This was a necessity for the consummation of the Old Covenant, as the pure

⁶⁷ Typology is a biblical hermeneutic that compares analogously corresponding passages, tying together the Old Testament with the New – prefigurements of persons or events in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New. For a more detailed explanation, see Maas 1912.

virginal Jesus being slain, the new Lamb (Jn 1:29), was necessary to consummate the New Covenant. This purity on the part of the receptive principle of each covenant is requisite for the validity of the covenant. Neither a blemished lamb for the Old Covenant nor a sinner for the New Covenant could have sufficed as legitimate replacements. We will look at how this principle of purity in the receptive element of valid covenants related to marriage later in the thesis.

3.1.1 Matter matters

Formal consent of words and wills is vital to the creation of a covenant, but it is not enough. Matter matters. The body and blood exchange of the partners is essential for real union. As explained in the last chapter, blood-letting was characteristic and requisite for each covenantal seal: animal sacrifice to God on the altar, Christ's sacrifice to the Father on the cross and on the altar at every celebrated Mass; and, as well, a bride's sacrifice of herself on the altar of the marriage bed, fulfilling and completing the formal union brought about through the couple's consent of oath. In the prototype covenant between God and humanity in Christ, Jesus' *formal* consent to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:42) was necessary for covenantal union but was not enough: the *material* bloodletting on the cross was also necessary for the covenant to be sealed.⁶⁸ Likewise, the formal consent of marriage anticipates the material bodily consummation of coitus.

As head of His body the Church, the shed blood of Christ on the marriage bed of the cross signifies the openness of the receptive principle of the new Covenant to receiving life from the active principle (God). This life-exchange creates a new union. And the bloodletting of the severed flesh of Christ, results in the offspring of the Church (Jn 19:6). Accordingly, as members of His body, Christians offer themselves in union with Christ to God, and exchange their natural life for divine life.⁶⁹ This self-giving life-

⁶⁸ One could say that Christ's self-sacrifice – His 'yes' to the Father – was accomplished *formally* by His consent in Gethsemane: "*Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done*" (Lk 22:42). The acting out of what is consented to, however, the crucifixion, is vital for the covenant to be complete and its effects to take place (Jn 19:30). Afterward, the renewing of the union with the flow of continuous unimpeded lifegiving love is important. Analogously, both consent and consummation create a marriage, and non-contracepted coitus is necessary for the continued health of the one-flesh union.

⁶⁹ Such an exchange of life brings about a union with God that is traditionally known as being in the state of grace (CCC §1325).

exchange is archetypal of the natural institution of marriage.

Belatedly, there remains a school of thought that Christians, by virtue of the universal priesthood bestowed on them at their baptism, are spiritual heirs of Old Testament priests⁷⁰, and that what was prescribed to priests in the Old Covenant is what is continued to be prescribed for all baptized Christians. The rationale behind this assertion by Jewish scholar Abel Isaksson (1965) seems to further point to a specific covenant form that is harmonious with natural law and divine Revelation. In short, the royal priesthood of the New Covenant laity is in moral continuity with the Old Covenant priesthood and harkens back to the order ordained by God before sin entered the world. As mentioned in the last chapter, Old Testament priests were not allowed to marry non-virgins. This fulfills the covenant form for the receptive principle as exemplified in the spotless lamb of the old Passover, and the spotless Lamb of the New Passover.⁷¹

3.1.2 Body and bride

The New Covenant between God and humanity includes two metaphors worth considering: the Church as the *body* of Christ and the Church as the *bride* of Christ. Each has distinct covenantal implications.

With the Church as the mystical body of Christ, and with Head (Christ) and body (Church) being linked as one with the same soul (the Holy Spirit), it reasonably follows that the entire mystical Person of Jesus Christ is offered to the Father as a pure sacrifice at each Mass – head and body. Hence, it would also follow that the resultant covenantal union between the Father and the mystical body of the Incarnate Son, which allows for the glorification of Jesus' risen human nature, would permeate His entire mystical body – i.e., those who are in Christ secretly share in His glory.

In the Christ-Church marriage paradigm, it can be posited that the bride of Christ receives her groom's body and blood in Eucharistic intercourse, which

⁷⁰ This is the thesis in Isaksson, 1965.

⁷¹ The typological fulfillment of the spotless lamb in the book of Exodus that was sacrificed and fed the people of Israel for their journey to the promised land is Jesus Christ, who also was sacrificed and feeds His people in the Eucharist on route to their "promised land", Heaven.

nourishes their union.⁷² By it, their covenant is strengthened. In a comparable way, one may postulate the earthly marriage union of a man and woman is nourished, strengthened, and renewed. With each conjugal act of life-giving love, the mingling of selves with the exchange of genetic material, hormones, proteins, enzymes, and spirit-life of each partner facilitates and strengthens their union – whether or not a child is ever conceived.⁷³

3.1.3 Marriage in Ancient Israel

The ancient Jewish marriage ceremony at the time of Christ was considerably more complex than the common Western Christian religious wedding of the twenty-first century. The following is a breakdown of a typical marriage ritual at the beginning of the first century AD of a Jewish man and woman.⁷⁴ Added in *italics* for speculative consideration are correlative typological fulfillments from a Christian perspective to each historical point.⁷⁵ They are extracted from New Testament Scripture and point to the marriage of a Jewish man and woman as a type of union that is fulfilled in the marriage between Christ and His bride, the Church. The Israelite rituals pertaining to marriage have literal meaning in themselves, but from a Christian perspective can also be seen as prefigurements of God's plan to obtain for His only begotten Son a worthy bride (the Church). As was the case with the typical Jewish groom, this divine quest begins with Christ coming to “the home” of His prospective bride – by descending to earth to take on a human nature in the Incarnation. It concludes with Him returning to take His bride away to His heavenly home or *yichud* for consummation, a prefigurement of the second coming of Christ at the end of history.

⁷² Jesus' hypostatic union explains this dual blessing. According to the language of Aristotelian metaphysics, His hypostasis, or underlying substance as opposed to His attributes, is both divine and human. When Jesus gives His life *for* us, and then *to* us in the Eucharist, one can surmise His divine life is imparted through the conduit of His blood, i.e., the life of His human nature. As Christ's human and divine natures cannot be separated, so too His blood and His grace. When you receive His blood offered *for* us on the cross and *to* us in the Eucharist, you receive His grace, i.e., divine life.

⁷³ Love as a tertiary principle between lover and beloved, and remains even when a child is not conceived. Yet, this life-giving love is not exchanged when contraception intentionally impedes the marital act.

⁷⁴ This summary of the Jewish marriage ceremony was derived from Daniel I (Block in Campbell 2003, pp. 33-91).

⁷⁵ These italicized typological fulfillments or anti-types are added by the author of this thesis. Each corresponds to the historical points from Campbell (2003) book relating to Jewish marriage ceremonial rituals at the time of Christ.

Table 1: Marriage in Ancient Israel

Israelite Marriage Traditions and Rituals	Typologically fulfilled in Christ and His Bride, the Church
<p>⤴ A Jewish young man would come to his chosen girl's home, to propose a marital covenant.</p>	<p><i>"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (Jn 1:14)</i></p>
<p>⤴ If accepted, the young woman and man would seal the deal by consuming a cup of wine together. The cup signified the couple's willingness to sacrifice for each other,</p>	<p><i>"He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it... He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant.'" (Mk 14:23-24)</i> <i>"Whoever...drinks my blood remains in me and I in him." (Jn 6:56)</i></p>
<p>⤴ Then the groom would pay a price for his beloved.</p>	<p><i>"You have been purchased at a price." (1 Cor 6:20, 7:23)</i></p>
<p>⤴ After the deal was complete, the prospective groom would prepare a place for her at his father's house; a 'bridal chamber' or small house.</p>	<p><i>"When I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (Jn 14:3)</i></p>
<p>⤴ The father of the groom decides when the construction is finished and when the wedding ceremony will take place. If anyone asks the groom when the wedding will be, he will respond with honesty: "Only my father knows."</p>	<p><i>"But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." (Mt 24:36)</i></p>
<p>⤴ The bride waited a prolonged period of time before her groom would come to take her. Custom had it that the bride would have to be ready to go even if her groom came for her late at night.</p>	<p><i>"For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night." (1 Thes 5:2)</i></p>
<p>⤴ Her preparedness was vital, and was secured by having an oil lamp ready.⁷⁶</p>	<p><i>"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom... The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps." (Mt 25:1-4)</i></p>
<p>⤴ During the considerable time of waiting, the betrothed young woman was called "consecrated" or "set apart," for her groom.</p>	<p><i>"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood; a nation set apart, a people of his own." (1 Pt 2:9)</i></p>

⁷⁶ I compare this reflection to the following metaphor: *The soul is the lamp and grace the oil*. For more on oil signifying life-giving love, see the explanation of clothing, food, and oil later on in this thesis.

<p>⤴ When the groom's father finally gives the word, the groom with his friends proceed to the girl's home to claim his bride.</p>	<p><i>"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?"</i> (Jn 14:2)</p>
<p>⤴ When the waiting time was complete, the bride was excited to be abducted and taken into the night by her lover.</p>	<p><i>"At midnight, there was a cry 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"</i> (Mt 25:5-6)</p>
<p>⤴ However, the custom was to give the bride a brief warning. A friend of the groom gave her a shout as they approached her home.</p>	<p>John the Baptist: <i>"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths."</i> (Is 40:3; Mal 3:1; Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Jn 1:23)</p>
<p>⤴ The bride, however, had time only to light her lamp and clothing for the honeymoon and light her lamp.</p>	<p><i>"Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps."</i> (Mt 25:7)</p>
<p>⤴ The couple would enter the bridal chamber prepared for them at his father's house and consummate the marriage. and shut the door. The wedding celebration lasted a week, with the young consummated couple eventually joining the guests.</p>	<p><i>"It is consummated."</i> (Jn 19:30)</p>
<p>⤴ The groom's "best man" stood guard outside the bridal chamber, waiting for the groom to tell him the marriage was consummated. He would then announce the good news to the guests</p>	<p><i>"Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, 'You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words.'"</i> (Acts 2:4, 14)</p>
<p>⤴ The celebration of the wedding guests would then begin and last through the week. At the end of the week the bride and groom would appear and join the guests for the wedding supper.</p>	<p><i>"You have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering."</i> (Heb 12:22)</p>

3.1.4 Food, clothing, and "oil"

Further insight into how the fruits of the New Covenant in Christ is dispensed to His bride the Church is given in Exodus 21:10. This passage matches neighboring near-eastern law as well as other Old Testament passages in stating that a man has a trifold obligation to his wife to provide her with food, clothing, and oil. The Hebrew word "*onah*", translated here as "oil," is often translated as *conjugal rights* or *sexual intimacy* (Eskenazi 2007, p. 432).⁷⁷ Elaine Goodfriend explains that while this word is not found anywhere else in sacred scripture, it is found in nations neighboring Israel

⁷⁷ For the term *onah* as understood to mean as conjugal rights or sexual intercourse, see also Gross and Gross 1996, pp. 30, 48, 82-83, 103, 164, and 235; Campbell 2003, p. 48; Noonan 1986, p. 52.

(Goodfriend in Eskenazi 2007, p. 432). Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh says that “in marital relations the husband symbolizes the prophet anointing the king, who is symbolized by his wife, since it is she who will develop his seed into a new “kingdom” (Ginsburgh 1999, p. 352). The husband ‘anoints’ her by the marital act.

Even if the true meaning ‘*onah*’ is questionable, this translation of sexual intercourse or intimacy seems fitting. Oil is the ‘life-giving’ liquid of the olive that gives light to their lamps, as is seen in the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13). It is also poured onto the consecrated priest, prophet, and king to give them new life in order to perform well their new leadership role. And is given as the sacramental conduit to impart the Life of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. Further, Jesus went up to the Mount of *Olives* and prayed fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane, which means *olive press*. As an olive press crushes olives, Jesus was crushed for the sins of humanity, and His divine life given to His Church. Hence, it is not unfitting that *oil* would be used as a symbol for the life-giving love shared by a husband to his wife.

Further, there are indications that the ancients indeed euphemized oil to convey the life-giving exchange between husband and wife in coitus. In Hebrew the essential extract of a plant or fruit (such as the olive) is its *shemen* (שמן). Translated from Old Testament Hebrew as “oil”, it is literally, sacramentally, and maritally pressed to give new life to people. The word is found 170 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Ironically, שמן, sometimes transliterated as *shemen*, is pronounced “semen.” As oil is to the olive, the essential extract of a man is his semen, which contains his genetic code representing him, whose life-giving power is given to his wife and potential offspring.

Recalling that a *clothing* garment was given by a man to the young woman as soon as betrothal was arranged to signify her new identity with him, and that *food* was consumed later to celebrate the union between the two, “oil” is seen as the life-giving gift that substantiates the two becoming one flesh and signifies the consummation of a marriage.⁷⁸ These three necessities of marriage reflect the sacramental signs of the

⁷⁸ Biblically symbolizing life and strength, it is reasonable to assess that in relation to marriage, oil for the ancient Israelites was used as a euphemism for the male life-giving exchange shared with his bride, which includes hormones, enzymes, and his genetic material representing himself, more generally, this euphemism could mean the conjugal life of the man given to his bride in the conjugal act.

three steps of initiation into the bride of Christ with her Groom: Baptism is the sacrament in which one is ‘clothed’ with grace (after being stripped in Eden) and given a new identity (‘Christian’); Confirmation is the action of the Holy Spirit confirming this new identity by which divine life strengthens and marks the soul⁷⁹; and the Eucharist is the celebratory nourishment for the journey. Clothing (Baptism), oil (Confirmation), and food (Eucharist) and are what is given to the bride of Christ on behalf of the love of her divine Groom. Likewise, they are required for a husband to provide these gifts for his wife.

To encapsulate this mystery, these correlatives annunciated above are represented below in tabular format, with their sign, meaning, and object that they point to. This signifies the initiation of the man-woman marriage covenant as practiced in biblical times *and* the everlasting Christ-Church ‘marital’ covenant of the New Testament:

Table 2: Ritual, consummation, celebration

Groom to his bride	Bath/Clothing	Oil	Food
Christ to his bride	Baptism	Confirmation	Eucharist
The ratifying acts	Consent	Consummation	Celebration
The transforming power	Identity/Form	Life/Anima	Nourishment
The sacramental signs/conduits	Water	Olive Oil	Bread, Wine

Sacramentally, we can see that baptism gives form/identity to the member of Christ’s bride, being *clothed* with the new identifying garment of God’s grace that makes him a Christian. Confirmation is a sharing in the divine life of the Incarnate Groom with his bride in a way that consummates the union, and impregnates the bride with grace in order to go out and make baby Christians.⁸⁰ Eucharist provides the celebratory sharing of divine life for nourishment. With water (baptism), blood (Eucharist), and spirit (Confirmation) – summarized as clothing, food, and oil – these sacraments of initiation represent the life-giving elements of the three levels of life: vegetative life (water),

⁷⁹ Oil is used as the matter of the Sacrament of Confirmation signifying the life-giving grace conferred by God (CCC §1242).

⁸⁰ “*Make disciples of all nations...*” (Mt 28:19).

animal life (blood), and personal or rational life (spirit) respectively. So, while Leviticus explains “*the life of the flesh is in the blood*” (Lev 17:11), St John goes further in stating “*the spirit, the water, and the blood*” are of one accord (1 Jn 5:8), pointing to the new Life in Christ signified in His blood and water poured out from His side (Jn 19:34), with His Spirit released to the world on Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4).

In ancient times people were anointed with a unique perfumed olive oil from the olive tree, stored in a bull’s horn, symbolizing the imparting of a new strength. It was poured on those leaders who served in one of the trifold roles of reflecting the love of God: priest, prophet, and king. *Priests* were anointed with oil, who were given the power to offer sacrifice for the people. *Prophets* were empowered by anointing to proclaim God’s challenging word, in season and out of season (2 Tm 4:2). *Kings* were anointed to defend the people the people from enemies.⁸¹ The reigning king of Judah was called “the anointed one” – “*messiah*” in Hebrew and “*christos*” in Greek.⁸² After a centuries-long hiatus from the throne due to exile, the Son of God and 'son of David' becomes the ultimate fulfillment of the messianic priest, prophet, and king – the fulfillment of *the Christos* whose kingdom will have no end.⁸³ He establishes the sacraments in His blood and water (Jn 19:34) and sends His Spirit so that others may be grafted onto His mystical body (Acts 2:38). The Church, therefore, as the extension of Jesus Christ in time and space as His body, shares in His mission as priest, prophet, and king for the salvation of the world.

The mystical body of Christ is also His mystical bride (Eph 5:21-35).⁸⁴ Hence, after consent is given by members of His bride at their baptism⁸⁵, the union is then consummated and sealed through the chrism-oil of God coming forth from His 'bullhorn' (“*Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”), sharing His divine life and

⁸¹ As CCC §695 explains, oil symbolizing the Holy Spirit in Scripture, is spoken of implicitly in the OT and explicitly in the New. The preeminent king to be anointed in the Old Testament was David (1 Sam 16:13), who was to be the forefather and prefigurement of Jesus, who, too, was anointed in the New Testament (Lk 4:18-19).

⁸² Messiah is translated to English as “anointed one”. Each king of Judah was anointed, from David to Jesus. The prophet Isaiah even called Cyrus, the Persian emperor, the Messiah in Is 45:1.

⁸³ Found in Dan 7:27, Lk 1:33. and the Nicene Creed.

⁸⁴ For a good explanation of this metaphor, see CCC §796.

⁸⁵ The repetition of “I do” while confirming the faith during the baptismal liturgy is reminiscent of the “I do” repeatedly said by a bride and groom on their wedding.

marking her with an indelible seal and the theological virtues.⁸⁶ The wedding banquet (Eucharist) follows, celebrating that union ratified at Baptism and consummated at Confirmation. These sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist – signify the marriage between Christ and His Church by using marital imagery from Jesus' time: the ritual bath and betrothal garment at baptism signifying a new identity, the sealing of the marriage in consummation in the oil of Confirmation, and the wedding banquet feast to celebrate the covenant in the Eucharist. Hence, we can see the initial steps of marriage are a reflection of the great marriage between Christ and His Church, played out in each member sacramentally.

3.1.5 Sealing the bond and renewing the covenant

While the Church shares in the mystery of the New Covenant, it is essentially a covenant made between the Father and the incarnate Son, resulting in countless offspring called 'Christians'. This covenantal union can be seen in its consummation,⁸⁷ when Christ gives the Father His body on the wooden 'marital bed' of the cross in order that the Father through the incarnate Son may propagate new adopted children with His divine life. The intercourse of the divine nature with human nature cannot be contained in the post-lapsarian human body Christ assumed in the Incarnation. His death and glorious resurrection were the necessary effect of His "Yes" to the Father and their consequent union. And, of course, this union has offspring. The blood and water poured out from His side on the cross is symbolic of this (Jn 19:34). The water (vegetative life) and blood (animal life), which is constituent of the life of Christ's human nature, is not only subsumed by his spiritual soul, but is also hypostatically joined to His divinity as second Person of the Trinity.⁸⁸ In this consummation between God and Christ on the cross, the Father permeates the human nature of the Incarnate Word, who is representing on the cross all fallen humanity. This results in the glorified body

⁸⁶ Metaphorical sexual imagery is not lost in what can be seen as typological prefiguring of profound supernatural realities.

⁸⁷ "*It is consummated*" (Jn 19:30).

⁸⁸ This is why communicants receive Jesus' body, blood, soul, and divinity (divine life) in the Eucharist; not only His body and blood. Corresponding to humanity's higher spiritual nature this divine life was given to the world as shown in Acts 2 on Pentecost, when Christ's Spirit poured out for believers to be grafted onto Him. The water and blood of Christ signifying baptism and the Eucharist (the form and life of the mystical body) are the harbingers of Christ's Spirit-Life sent to all humanity by virtue of His Self-oblation. His human life poured out contains His divine Life, enabling people to be adopted sons and daughters of the Father in Him.

of Christ and the eventual glorified bodies of His followers. In the meantime, the offspring from this ultimate covenantal union of God and humanity concentrated in the Father and His incarnate Son, are washed in the water of Baptism, are nourished by His Eucharistic flesh and blood, and given life in the Spirit in Confirmation. As a groom enters his bride to share His life with her, transforming the two persons into a life-sharing union, God *faithfully* enters human nature to transform it *permanently* – first in the human nature of Christ as “*first fruits*” (1 Cor 15:20), and then in His spiritual *offspring* at the “harvest” of the general resurrection. It is reasonable that in imaging this profound act of union between God and humanity in Christ that produces spiritual offspring for eternal life, we may assess that marriage would include the goods of love that include faithfulness, permanence, and the potentiality of offspring.⁸⁹

3.1.6 The power of becoming one-flesh

As is the case for human nature in general, Jesus came to restore and elevate the institution of marriage.⁹⁰ Since God is a permanent communion of Persons exchanging life and love, Christ came to restore God’s living Trinitarian image on earth, the family.

One question to consider in pondering this great mystery of marriage in the New Covenant is the meaning of the term “one-flesh” as found throughout Scripture, first in the Old Testament and then in the New (Gn 2:24; Mt 19:5, 6; Mk 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:28, 29, 31). It is first written in the second chapter of Genesis, where the sacred author speaks of the natural order of sexual intercourse and marriage as designed by the Creator (Gn 2:24), which Jesus comes to reestablish (Mt 19:8).

Not always is the term tied to marriage, however, as we see in 1 Corinthians 6:16. In this jarring passage, Paul chastises a Corinthian for becoming one-flesh with a harlot. Two distinctions must be made here. First, the distinction between the Greek words “*soma*” (σώμα) and “*sarx*” (σαρξ), both relating to the body and used in New

⁸⁹ These are the three goods of marriage as expressed by St Augustine of Hippo in *On the Good of Marriage* (410).

⁹⁰ “By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God” (CCC §1765).

Testament writings. The second is the word used for *joining*. The term speaks of the bonding of two persons together as one.

The narrator in Genesis writes that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his woman/wife, and they shall become 'one-flesh'. In 1 Corinthians 6:16, St Paul uses the terms that mean "joining" and "one-flesh", mirroring Genesis, for what occurs when a man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute. There, Paul says *"Don't you know that in joining with a harlot you become one body with her?"* (1 Cor 6:16) The word for body here is "soma". "Soma" refers to the idea of the human body, and sometimes the glorified body or the mystical body of Christ. "Sarx", on the other hand, speaks of the concrete stuff of the body – the flesh, the bones – that make up the mortal body of our fallen nature. "Sarx" is used in the next phrase in 1 Corinthians 16, when Paul quotes Genesis and the natural order of male-female relations, just as Jesus did in the Gospel of Matthew when explaining the truth of marriage. *"For it is said that the two shall become one flesh,"* St Paul continues (1 Cor 6:17). "Flesh", or "Sarx", is exchanged in sexual union, he explains, 'joining' two persons into one "soma".

The root word in the New Testament Greek for "joining" is "kollao", meaning to cement together two things into one. In this case, it is the man and woman who are cemented or joined by exchanging "sarx". Paul is using a Greek word that refers to the Hebrew "וַדָּבַק" – the joining of the man and woman in Genesis 2:24. It is clear that Paul is not referring to marriage here but is saying that this 'joining' that occurs by virtue of coitus does not occur from any formal consent to marriage, but rather from the union of body-selves in the act of sexual intercourse. One "joins" himself to a prostitute in the act of becoming one flesh, i.e., sexual intercourse, the term used for the act that bonded Adam and Eve (Gn 2:24), resulting in Adam becoming one "soma" or body with her. The horror of this problem, Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 6:17 that in the new Covenant the mysterious union with a prostitute that occurs by fornication grafts a 'harlot' onto the body of Christ, weakening the mystical body and making it less effective for the salvation of souls. Since the baptized are covenantally united with Christ in His mystical body, and the Christian uniting with a harlot becomes one body with her after exchanging and comingling their flesh, Paul

indicates the act is a kind of desecration to the mystical body. Yet, although the two exchanged flesh (“*sarx*”) and became one “*soma*”, no indissoluble marital bond pre-existed between the two. One could say the two have entered into a marital-like state of being one-flesh while remaining unmarried.

In chapter five of Ephesians, Paul speaks of Christ as Head of His mystical “*soma*”, as a husband is metaphorically head of his wife. In Ephesians 5:28 he exhorts a husband ought to love his wife as he does his own “*soma*”. In John 6:51, Jesus loves His “*soma*” so much that He is willing to give His life: “*The bread that I will give is my ‘sarx’ for the life of the world.*” In giving His “flesh”/“*sarx*” to His bride (the Church) in Eucharistic intercourse, He gives His life to her, deepening their union. There is a mysterious connection between flesh and life, as we know experientially, being omnivores. In Holy Communion, Christ and His bride become one flesh (“*sarx*”), sharing one life, in the one mystical body (“*soma*”) of Christ (Eph 5:25, 30).

As the gospels attest, Jesus came to restore marriage to its original truth according to the goods of human nature. He also raised marriage to a sacrament (Mt 19:4-10; CCC §1601). I propose He restored to marriage its original dignity, which had been grace-giving “*in the beginning*” (Mt 19:8). When intimacy with God had not yet been interrupted by sin,⁹¹ the natural covenant made between man and woman included God, as grace building upon nature. It is noteworthy to mention that of the seven sacraments of the Church, three make an indelible mark of the soul – and marriage is not one of them. Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders make an indelible mark.⁹² It is interesting that the two sacraments that include an exchange of bodies – marriage and Eucharist⁹³ – do not mark the soul in such a way. The eternal marriage between Christ and the members of His bride, whose consent is ratified at Baptism and is consummated at Confirmation – each indelibly marking the soul – is literally soul-changing. Consent and consummation of man-woman marriage is not. Perhaps

⁹¹ Gn 3:8. God is seen as being in union with the original parents in paradise before original sin changed this dynamic.

⁹² See CCC §§1304 and 1317. The latter states: “*Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark or indelible character on the Christian’s soul; for this reason, one can receive this sacrament only once in one’s life.*”

⁹³ The one body/“*soma*” of the Christ-Church marriage is nourished in one, and the one-body-“*soma*” of the man-woman marriage in the other.

this is because the Church's marriage to Christ is eternal whereas earthly marriage between spouses is temporal, the latter being a sacramental sign of former.

3.1.7 The “*porneia*” challenge

The synoptic gospels⁹⁴ show that Jesus came to restore marriage to its right form, which was radical monogamy. In fact, due to sin's deformation of marriage with the concurrent hardness of heart, the restoration seemed so radical at the time that Jesus' followers were not only surprised at His words but questioned whether it was possible to live (Mt 19:10). During this exchange in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus uses the Greek word “*porneia*”. It is the word at the heart of Matthew's mysterious so-called *exceptive clause*⁹⁵, in which Jesus condemns divorce – “*except for porneia*”. Luke (16:18) and Mark (10:1-12) have versions of Jesus condemning *all* divorce – without exception. Unique to Matthew is this one exception: *porneia*.

This mystery of apparent scriptural inconsistency could unlock a key ingredient in one's quest to understand the nature of covenant and conjugal chastity. Translated into the LXX⁹⁶, the Hebrew word “*Zanah*” (זָנָה), meaning “illicit sexual activity”, was translated into the Greek “*porneia*”⁹⁷, the language in which the New Testament was written. In English, this term in Matthew 5 and 19 has been translated as “fornication”, “sexual morality”, “unchastity”, “adultery”, “lewd conduct”, and “unlawful marriage” – depending on the translation. Scripture scholars have never formed a consensus on its true meaning. In other passages, the word has been translated as “fornication”, “prostitution”, and “incest”. Taking into consideration the context of Matthew 5 and 19, biblical translators until recently have used the English terms “fornication” or “lewd conduct” and have often understood it to mean “*adultery*”. The custom that followed was the allowance of separation for marital infidelity, but not divorce. However, limiting the meaning of the word to adultery can lead to misunderstandings. Jimmy Akin, a popular American Catholic apologist, opines why Jesus may not have been speaking simply about adultery:

⁹⁴ The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

⁹⁵ This clause appears exclusively, twice in the gospel of Mt: 5:32 and 19:19.

⁹⁶ The Septuagint - the Greek translation of the bible for the early Christians

⁹⁷ This word is used in Matthew's exceptive clause regarding adultery found in Mt 19:9.

... [P]orneia is not the usual Greek term for adultery. Indeed [in other passages] Jesus uses the term for adultery (*moicheia*) and does not identify it with *porneia*. These advocates point out also that many peoples in the eastern-Mediterranean region had marriage practices that allowed unions forbidden by Leviticus 18. This caused problems when individuals wanted to convert to Judaism and Christianity. In Acts 15:29, it is proposed that, to avoid offending Jewish believers, Gentile converts abstain from eating idol meat, blood, strangled animals, and from *porneia*. These objections are often regarded as being based directly on Leviticus 17–18, where the same things are prohibited in the same order (2009).

As Akin attests, it is reasonable to consider that in Matthew's gospel, written for a Jewish audience, Jesus was referring back to the Torah with "*porneia*", which, in Mosaic Law, was used to indicate various illicit sexual unions.⁹⁸ This is significant because it may enable us to see a hidden essential component of the marriage covenant.

In the Pentateuch, the Greek *porneia*, and its Hebrew counterpart "*servah*" (עֲרֻוּהָ)⁹⁹ and "*zanah*" (זָנָה), is used specifically to condemn two illicit kinds of sexual activity – incest and sex before marriage (Lev 18:6-23; Dt 21:14, 22:13-29; Ex 22:16). Since the concern of the latter at the time was particularly for females, the word has been at times translated as "harlotry" or "prostitution". Relating to this, Deuteronomy 24:1 states that if a man finds something "sexually indecent" (*porneia*) in his woman after coming together with her for the first time, he may put her away.¹⁰⁰ To illustrate this, marriage legislation under Mosaic Law shown in Deuteronomy 22:13-29 conveys

⁹⁸ Lev 18:6-23 delineates the holiness code that sets the people of Israel apart from their pagan neighbors – condemning incest (consanguinity and affinity), adultery, child-sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality. It is repeated in Lev 20. In Dt 22:13-21, illustrates the severe Mosaic law regarding a new wife's discovered non-virginity. Dt 22:28-29 spells out the norm and consequence of a man being forced to marry a young woman with whom he had fornicating, without being given the possibility of ever divorcing her. This norm is repeated in Ex 22:16. Dt :22-23 tells of the severe punishment (death) for fornication of, and with, a betrothed virgin.

⁹⁹ In the Torah "*ervah*" is at times used with the term "*dbr*" (דָּבַר) to create the idiom or euphemism for illicit sexual union, '*nakedness of a thing*' (cf. Dt 21:1-4). This word '*dbr*' (דָּבַר), transliterated into English as "*dabar*", is translated into the Greek as *Logos* – found in John's gospel as meaning the Word – the second Person of the Trinity who would become incarnate. I propose that it may be no coincidence that "*nakedness of a thing*", which could also mean "*nakedness of the word*", speaks of woman as the heart-thought begotten of the man, as Eve was to Adam (Gn 2:21), reflecting the *Logos* eternally begotten of the Father.

¹⁰⁰This is an ancient Hebrew colloquialism for divorce.

the seriousness of female virginity before marriage consummation:

If a man comes upon a young woman, a virgin who is not betrothed, seizes her and lies with her, and they are discovered, the man who lay with her shall give the young woman's father fifty silver shekels and she will be his wife, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her as long as he lives.

Notice that, even if the act was consensual, the conviction was that the female was 'violated'. This understanding of female nature has been lost over time, particularly lately due to cultural factors accrued by Modernity's 'sexual revolution'. Nonetheless, Jesus in Matthew's gospel may have been referencing not only the law against incest, as contemporary scripture scholars tend to lean toward, but He may (also) be referring to Old Testament Law related to premarital female virginity. This would be consistent with Jesus being "*the new Moses*" on the "*mount*" in Matthew's gospel (i.e., Mount Sinai as foreshadowing the Sermon on the Mount), explaining to the Jewish people the fullness of the law of God to His people.¹⁰¹

This interpretation also seems consistent with the nature of covenant as seen in biblical and extra biblical literature, where the feminine element of a covenant is pure and has its blood shed (Isaac, the paschal lamb, Jesus, etc.) to secure the union and ratify the covenant. Abel Isaksson writes that the exceptive clause in Matthew did indeed refer to invalid marriages due to the non-virginity of the new bride. His argument is that Christians, who St Peter called a *royal priesthood* (1 Pt 2:9), are heirs of the priesthood of Israel¹⁰², a class of people who were directed by God to live by higher standards than the rest of Israel. One absolute standard included was the law that OT priests could marry only a virgin; unless, that is, the woman was a widow of a deceased

¹⁰¹ The text refers to 'new' as *renewed*. Jesus Himself said, "*I came to fulfill the law, not abolish it*" (Mt 5:17).

¹⁰² Old Testament priests were anointed with oil similarly to how Catholics are today in the sacrament of Confirmation. See Exodus 30:30-32. One could postulate, with Isaksson's theory, that Confirmation chrism oil is the extension and fulfillment of that anointing with olive oil given to Old Testament priests (1 Sam 10:1 and 16:13; 1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 9:6). A Christian might point out Jesus, believed to be the final King who sums up in His Person all formerly anointed kings, accepted His reign, which would begin with great suffering, at the Mount of *Olives*, in the Garden of Gethsemane, which literally means "*olive press*".

See Isaksson pp. 9-13 for his reasoning that the holiness code of the temple ascribed to Old Testament priests was funneled through Essenes within the Qumran community, to Christ who called Himself the new temple (Jn 2:19), and to His Church in the Messianic age, the new temple of God.

priest of Israel (Lev 21:13-14; Isaksson 1965). Isaksson explains the legislation and mentality behind the relationship between marriage and chastity in ancient Israel:

The betrothal meant that the marriage was legally valid. The betrothed girl was called wife and if the husband wishes to be free of her, he must give her a bill of divorce. But when a husband wanted to divorce a wife who was not a virgin, although he had married her on the understanding that she was, it is not really a question of divorce, although this term is used. It is rather a question of the marriage being annulled (1965, p. 137).

An interesting paradox can be seen in Mosaic Law in that while female premarital virginity was highly valued, male continence was not and divorce was allowed “*because of the hardness of their hearts*” (Mt 19:8). Consequentially, second and third marriages were also allowed. It took Jesus to disillusion His followers of these inconsistencies (Lk 16:18). Since it was His mission to restore marriage, it would not be unreasonable to surmise that *porneia* in the exceptive clause could be referring to both meanings found in the Pentateuch that make a marriage unlawful – incest and premarital non-virginity for first marriages. If so, each would render a putative marriage invalid.

3.2 Early Christianity

Theological reflection of the nature of the marital covenant, extrapolated from human nature and divine Revelation, continued to grow in the people of the New Covenant. The Old Testament gave the world the law and the prophets, paving the way for Jesus to restore the truth, beauty, and pristine nature of marriage as it was “*at the beginning*” (Mt 19:8). Sin and selfishness had become so embedded in the human heart that redemption from its grasp proved to be a challenging, if not difficult, journey for each sinner. This became a primary order of business for Christ and His apostles – to call out sin for what it is. The following words are from Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter five, which must have sounded disorienting to his followers who were formed in a pre-Christian world – as they do today for those living in our post-Christian world:

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery. ‘But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:27-28).

Also, from Jesus:

Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female ‘and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

They are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate. ... Whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery (Mt 19:4-6, 9).

Christ came to restore the truth and goodness of marriage, and His followers were not excited to hear it. They challenged Him with the Law of Moses, and Jesus responded: *“It is because of the hardness of your hearts that Moses allowed divorce; but from the beginning it was not so”* (Mt 19:8). In the world in which Jesus was born, even among the people of Israel, marriage had been severely disfigured by divorce, polygamy, concubinage, and contraception.

The road ahead was a difficult one for believers. Overcoming vice with the aid of grace does not occur overnight. And since humanity remains fallen, other heresies and challenges would regularly emerge. As mentioned above, *pharmakeia* and *veneficium*, the Greek and Latin words respectively for drugs/potions/medicine, were often used for the destruction of conceived embryos and the killing or blocking of sperm cells for contraceptive purposes. The practice signified by these terms is condemned in several New Testament passages.¹⁰³ The use of these anti-life “medicines” will keep one from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21). The reason for this explicit condemnation in scripture may be due to its widespread usage throughout the lands that were first being preached the Gospel.

It was within this moral and cultural milieu that the first disciples of Christ heard Him condemn adultery and divorce – for both husband *and* wife (Mt 19:9). It is not difficult to understand why Jesus’ disciples responded with bewilderment and perhaps a little disbelief to the new law of Christ usurping that of Moses on conjugal life, as

¹⁰³ Some of these include Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21, 21:8, 22:15.

recorded in Matthew¹⁰⁴, Mark, and Luke. To His disciples, who at the time did not yet have access to the new order of grace won for humanity by Christ's sacrifice on the cross, it seemed quite extreme, if not impossible. This model of conjugal life Jesus espoused was commanded to a people weakened by sin and without the sanctifying grace to overcome it. It was undoubtedly thought to be a standard too difficult for most men to live up to.¹⁰⁵ The reaction was similar to the one His disciples expressed when Jesus told them they must eat His body and drink His blood to have eternal life (Jn 6:51-58). In both scenarios, the reactions elicited a form of grumbling that ended up with many of his disciples leaving Him.

Even though the New Testament, like the Old, is replete with passages that support the goodness of marriage and child-bearing, Church Fathers believed perpetual virginity was preferable to marriage.¹⁰⁶ And while they all held that sexual intercourse was a sin outside of marriage, most believed it was permissible within marriage only when intended for the purpose of procreation. A minority of the Fathers took a less rigorous approach that sexual intercourse within marriage is permissible as long as it is not performed against nature (Noonan 1986, p. 58).¹⁰⁷ This is the approach the contemporary Church holds.¹⁰⁸

The first century *Didache* (2021)¹⁰⁹, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, §5.2 presented a way of death and its causative sins. These sins included *pharmakeia* as well as the use of the magic arts. In this section, the people who follow this way of life are called “*killers of offspring.*”

In the second century, the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas 10.8 condemns sexual conduct meant to avoid pregnancy between spouses, such as oral copulation

¹⁰⁴ See also Mt 5:27-32; 19:3-11.

¹⁰⁵ This is the case in Mt 19 when His disciples, with apparent surprise, question Jesus about the possibility of living according to this redefinition of adultery and forbidding of divorce. The only other time in the gospels that Jesus was so openly rejected was in Jn 8, when He states that men must eat His body and drink His blood if they were to have Life within them. Each of these two "hard" teachings relate to the uni-creative meaning of marriage – the marital act between a man and his bride and Eucharistic intercourse between Christ and His bride (the Church).

¹⁰⁶ See St Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*; St Jerome, *On Marriage and Virginity* (n.d.); St Ambrose, *Concerning Virginity* (Book 1); St Augustine, *On Virginity*.

¹⁰⁷ This is the common approach taken by Church moralists today.

¹⁰⁸ We can infer this from the writings of Popes Pius XI, Pius XII, Paul VI, and John Paul II.

¹⁰⁹ The *Didache* is an original apostolic decree.

(Lightfoot (trans), n.d.). Later that century, the dialogue “Octavius” features a Roman lawyer that attempts to convince cultivated pagans of the virtues and sound rationality of becoming Christian. In doing so he contrasts the conduct of Christians with that of pagan women, who “*by drinking drugs extinguish the beginning of a future man, and, before they bear, commit parricide*” (Minucius Felix, second century, 30.2.).

The first record of Christians intentionally seeking to thwart the conception of offspring is found in the writings of Soranus of Ephesus, a Greek physician. At issue was “*atokiois pharmakois*,” which meant anti-bearing drugs. Soranos testifies that these drug potions were primarily used to impede conception, although such drugs were also abortifacients (Soranus 1956, 1.19, pp. 60-63). Whether it be due to faulty science, a conviction that a potential human being has the moral equivalency of an actual one, or both, the Talmud, Philo (*Special Laws*, 3.20.110-113), and the *Didache* (2.1-2; 5.2.)¹¹⁰, all consider the species of this sin to be murder. The *Elenchus* assumed all Christians understood the act of contraception to be murder.¹¹¹

In the fourth Century, as Gnosticism was gaining traction and Christianity became legally recognized with the Edict of Milan¹¹², Christian writers like Epiphanius and later Augustine of Hippo condemned “*intercourse disjoined from procreation*” (Epiphanius 2009), a practice seen as common among the Gnostics. In about 390 AD, the bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, condemned the practices of prostitution and contraception (Chrysostom n.d. [Homily 24])¹¹³; and in a separate sermon condemned people who value money over procreation, see children as a burden rather than a blessing – and who “*mutilate nature, not only killing the newborn, but even acting to prevent their beginning to live*” (Chrysostom n.d. [Homily 28]).¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Note that in 2.2 the condemnation of *pharmakeia*, often translated into English as “magic”, is placed right before a potion for sexual arousal, procured abortion, and infanticide. Before *pharmakeia*, which is understood now to include various potions to incur contraception and abortion, is found fornication.

¹¹¹ *The Elenchus*, a work of refutation of errors, when it was recovered in 1851 was attributed to St. Hippolytus of the 2nd to 3rd century AD.

¹¹² The Edict of Milan was a political agreement between the Roman emperors Constantine I and Licinius in February 313, enabling for the first-time religious freedom for Christians (Internet Medieval Sourcebook 2021).

¹¹³ Homily 24 on the Epistle to the Romans, PG 60:626-627.

¹¹⁴ Homily 28 on Mt 8,:23-24, §5; PG 57:357. For more on the Church Fathers on contraception and sterilization, (Catholic Answers 2014).

In Western Christianity, Ambrose condemned any “*parricidal potion*” that would “*extinguish the pledges of their womb in their genital belly*” because “*the life is taken away before it is transmitted.*”¹¹⁵ It is possible Ambrose may have been including abortifacients with contraceptive potions, since it was not widely believed that an unborn child was immediately ensouled at fertilization. However, it is difficult to attribute an additional meaning to contraception with the term “*before it [i.e., life] is transmitted.*”¹¹⁶ Jerome in the fourth century would repeat similar thinking in his treatise on virginity, seemingly placing contraception on a moral par with abortion (Jerome 2023a). Based on a summary of Jerome's letters, the Latin scholar held that contraceptive acts, not only abortive ones, were a form of homicide (Jerome 2023b, 52.17).¹¹⁷ Granted, it was not uncommon in the first few centuries AD to believe that the life principle was solely within the male “seed.” Ambrose condemned women using “*a parricidal potion extinguishing the pledges of their womb*” in which the active principle of human life, the sperm, was being impeded (Ambrose, n.d., 5.18.58, CSEL 32/1:184). His language was ambiguous enough to infer he was speaking of an anti-life act that killed either a potential human being or an actual one.

It was common for Christian philosophers and theologians of the first few centuries to hold that the act of intentionally thwarting the coming into being of a potential human person is a greater evil than intentionally killing an actual human being conceived in his or her embryonic stage of life. As curious as this may seem, reasonable arguments can be made to support the claim, at least in view of the consequences.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ambrose, n.d. 5.18.58, CSEL 32:184. See also Noonan 1986, p. 99.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Letter 52.17.*

¹¹⁸ One such argument could go like this: If your parents had decided to use contraception on the night you were conceived, X number of years ago, you never would have existed. Nor would you ever exist in the future, since your actual existence depends on that one sperm combining with that one ovum. If, instead, your parents decided to abort you after you were brought into existence through conception, X number of years ago, you never would have experienced the outside of your mother's womb in this life, but would live forever, possibly in never-ending bliss with God – if unbaptized babies go to heaven rather than a Limbo-like state.

The two options would be: a) you are missing out on this life due to being aborted but living forever in at least the state of natural happiness vs. b) the negation of you *ever* existing due to contraception. Which is the better alternative?

The Church recognizes the possibility of God saving the unbaptized (International Theological Commission 2007).

In the first few centuries of the Common Era, the Church explicitly condemned abortion and penalized the guilty party from receiving Holy Communion for ten years to a lifetime.¹¹⁹ Yet, along with the Church's condemnation of abortion was the underlying assumption that the life-giving act itself was sacred and not to be tampered with. Sexual union is cooperation with God, says St John Chrysostom, and must be immune from interference.¹²⁰

After three centuries of refuting the dualist tendencies of the Gnostics, Augustine and the fourth century Church found themselves fighting against the thought of the Manicheans, not the least of which was their damaging dogma dissociating sexual activity from procreation. In the first half of the fourth century, Hegemonius, a Christian living in Asia Minor, gave an account of a debate conducted between Mani, the founder of the Manicheans, and Archelaus, the Catholic bishop of Charchar in Mesopotamia. There is no certainty as to whether the following was a literal account of Mani's words or a fictitious one, but they are meant to summarize Manichean thought on marriage:

If you truly consider how the sons of man were generated, you will not find the Lord the creator of man, but the creator is another who is of that nature of which there is no builder nor creator nor maker, for only his own wickedness bore him. The intercourse with you men with your wives comes from this kind of happening. When you are satiated with fleshly food, your concupiscence is excited. The fruits of generation are in this way multiplied – not virtuously nor philosophically nor rationally, but from a mere satiety of food and from lust and fornication (Hegemonius, *Acts of Archelaus*).

It is apparent the Manicheans saw procreation as simply the fruit of concupiscence, with no redeeming value. In response, Augustine, the bishop of Bostra in Asia Minor, wrote in "Against the Manichees":

But indulging in pleasure more frequently they hate the fruit that necessarily comes from their acts; and they command that bodies be joined beyond what is lawful and restrict and expel

¹¹⁹ See *The Didache*, 2.2. and 5.2. The former condemns abortion and infanticide while the latter condemns "murders of children".

¹²⁰ See Chrysostom's homily, *Peccata fratrum non evulganda*, PG 51.213.

what is conceived and do not await births at their proper time, as if birth alone were dangerous and difficult (Augustine 1944, 2.33).

Chrysostom condemned the Manicheans as people who praised virginity for the wrong reasons: “*The continence of the heretics is worse than all lust*” (Chrysostom 1983).” The Manicheans condemned marriage, and sexual union.

For Epiphanius and Titus, Catholic writers of the fourth century, the Manicheans view was just a repetition of the Gnostic one, of denigrating marriage and utilizing sex to satisfy lust. The first known legal decree against the Manicheans was at about AD 320, and it included the accusation of them of using “medicines”, i.e., *venena* (Riccobono 1941, pp. 580-581). In AD 372, Catholic emperors began to crack down on the Manichean movement, whose adherents “*met in unlawful and profane ‘coitiones’*” – which could have meant either coitus or assembly (Carey, n.d.; *Theodosian Code*, 15.8.2.).

After his conversion to Christianity from the Manichean religion, Augustine issued in a new understanding of sexuality and conjugal life as good. He wrote two books refuting the Manicheans after his reversion and baptism into Christ, condemning their anti-marriage beliefs and practices. In *The Morals of the Manicheans*, Augustine writes:

From this it follows that you consider marriage is not to procreate children, but to satiate lust. Marriage... joins male and female for the procreation of children. [You] make the woman no more a wife than a harlot, who...is joined to man to satisfy his lust. If there is a wife there is matrimony. But there is no matrimony where motherhood is prevented; for then there is no wife (AD 388, 18.65).

Augustine’s aim was to unite conjugal life with procreation and defend the goodness of marriage.

In “On the Good of Marriage” (410), Augustine compares the act of eating with that of sexual union, one being naturally ordered to the health of the body and the other for the species (388, 16, 18). In *Against Faustus* (n.d.), commenting on the Manichean

aim of thwarting the natural end of sexual intercourse, which is procreation, Augustine speaks of these people as making “*the bridal chamber a brothel.*” Since their aim and intention is contraceptive sterility, he compares these unions to adultery, the husbands as shameful, and their wives as harlots (Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 1.15.17.).

Born of his revulsion for the attitude and practices promoted by his former religion, Augustine comes to an understanding of what tradition calls the *three goods of marriage*: fidelity, offspring, and the sign of permanence that signifies the unbreakable bond between Christ and His Church (*Of the Good of Marriage*). *Fidelity* is contrary to lust and adultery; *offspring* contradict contraception, and *permanence* contradicts divorce.¹²¹ Augustine saw sexual intercourse and marriage as a natural good, but not a higher good than that of celibacy/virginity, which is a more direct reflection of living out our supernatural end (Augustine 410).

Augustine wrote that although there is no sin in sexual relations with one's spouse when conception is consciously intended, there is venial fault in sexual relations when it is primarily motivated by pleasure. About this, in “*Marriage and Concupiscence*” he writes:

I am supposing then, although you are not lying for the sake of procreating offspring, you are not for the sake of lust obstructing their procreation by an evil prayer or an evil deed (Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 1.15.17.).

Noteworthy is Augustine's rejection not only of the contraceptive act, but also the contraceptive will. He continues: “*Those who do this, although they are called husband and wife, are not; nor do they retain any reality of marriage, but with a respectable name [to] cover a shame*” (Ibid.).

Augustine boldly proclaims a couple is not actually married if they will to contracept, and appears to say that true marital consummation does occur as long as the couple uses artificial contraception:

¹²¹ Lust, fornication/adultery, contraception, and divorce are the acts that counteract these goods.

Assuredly if both husband and wife are like this they are not married... and if they were like this from the beginning they come together not joined in matrimony but in seduction... I dare to say that either the wife is in a fashion the harlot of her husband or he is an adulterer with his own wife (Ibid, 1.15.19.).

Perhaps Augustine is indicating here that a marriage is null and void because the choice to use contraception points to an anti-life will that pre-existed the marriage. Or, perhaps he is only speaking of the natural marriages of pagans and was not including those of Christ's baptized followers. Regardless, Augustine describes using contraception as making a mockery out of marriage, which is in direct contradiction to human nature and the will of God.

Augustine used the Latin word “*venena*” in writing about spousal misuse of conjugal relations (Augustine, *Marriage and Concupiscence*, 1.15.17). Being profoundly knowledgeable of sacred scripture, it is fair to assume he was aware of the scriptural condemnations of contraception and abortion in Galatians 5:20 and Revelation 9:21 and 21:8. He also was most assuredly aware of the Roman law against “*veneficia*” (Noonan 1986, p. 137). At around AD 419, Augustine was once asked if an innocent spouse may divorce by reason of infidelity. Augustine responded that although remarriage was not possible, “*In this time of refraining from embrace it is not necessary to beget children*” (Augustine, *Adulterous Marriages*, 2.12.12.). On the other hand, he also made it clear that a married couple may never prevent the conception of offspring by impeding the natural end of the sexual act: “[t]his is what Onan, the son of Judah, did, and God killed him for it. You ought not...exterminate the good of marriage, that is, the propagation of children” (Ibid.).

Also noteworthy are the distinctions Augustine makes for “wife” and “harlot”. A wife is one that is open to life (motherhood is the meaning of *matrimony*) and a harlot is one that is used for lust (Augustine n.d., *Marriage and Concupiscence*, book one). The unitive dimension of conjugal love is explicitly ignored, or simply assumed without acknowledgment, in many of the writings of Augustine. There is little consideration that love, and the pleasures that accompany the natural act that expresses conjugal love – even if there is no conscious intent to procreate – is itself an objective good (Aquinas,

See ST II-II, Supplement, 49, 5-6). It will not be until centuries later that the marital act is explicitly taught as being an act of love that is both good and holy even when procreation is impossible.¹²²

The answer is unclear as to whether Augustine would have condemned the practice of periodic continence during fertile times, if the intent was for loving spouses to responsibly space offspring in the midst of difficult times. “Natural family planning” (NFP) is deemed morally acceptable today by the Catholic Church and has been promoted as morally acceptable by popes and theologians alike.¹²³ It was not too long after the discoveries of modern genetics by the Augustinian Gregor Mendel in the latter 19th century that popes begin acknowledging the morality of sexual engagement in “unfertile times” to avoid pregnancy.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, as the synthesizer of the doctrine of the Fathers, many insights of Augustine have been held as sacrosanct for sixteen centuries.

3.3 The Medieval Era

With the aid of Thomistic philosophy, the Middle Ages saw the institution of marriage taking shape theologically. Aquinas articulated the primary and secondary ends of marriage¹²⁵, which was later to be codified into Church doctrine by Pope Pius XI (1930). Duns Scotus added an important eternal perspective on the good of marriage, declaring “*the purpose of marriage was to populate heaven*” (Duns Scotus n.d., 4.28). Others making significant contributions were Popes Alexander III, Innocent

¹²² The personalist notion that the sexual act is a grace-giving act can be seen as being partly responsible for the deepened appreciation of the unitive value of sexual love. In what seems to be an alteration from the past, Pope Paul VI, for example, speaks specifically of the unitive and procreative ends of the marital act in *Humanae Vitae* rather than focusing strictly on the natural end that we share with other animals, which is procreation (sec. 12).

¹²³ For a good apologetic on the Church’s teaching about Natural Family Planning (NFP) from 1853 onward, from Pope Pius IX to the present, see Harrison 2005.

¹²⁴ This includes Pope Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*, Pope Pius XII in his *Addresses to Italian Midwives*, Pope Paul VI with *Humanae Vitae*, and Pope John Paul II with his theology of the body that was dispersed within many of his writings.

¹²⁵ The procreation and nurture/education of children were taught as the primary end, and mutual help and remedy for concupiscence were seen as its secondary ends. We must note that natural end is not identical to the personal meaning or personal motive. For Aquinas’ treatment on the primary end of marriage can be found in ST supplement, q. 67, a. 1.

III and Celestine III¹²⁶; and Hugh of St Victor (Reynolds 2016, p. 388)¹²⁷, all had important roles in shaping the Church's understanding of matrimony¹²⁸, as did the *Decretalists* of the thirteenth century.¹²⁹ There was development in doctrine on the ratification of marriage, the conjugal act and consummation, the marital bond, separation and divorce, and indissolubility. However, marital chastity was deemed less urgent at the time.

In November 1439, inculcating the insights of both Augustine's goods of marriage with Aquinas' ends, the local ecumenical council of Florence in its bull *Exultate* summarized marriage:

[T]he sacrament of matrimony, [is the] sign of union of Christ with His Church, as the apostle says, "*this is a great mystery, I mean in reference to Christ and His Church*" (Eph 5:32). The efficient cause of matrimony is mutual consent, ordinarily expressed though words and having reference to the present. Three blessings are assigned to matrimony. The first is the procreation and education of children for the worship of God. The second is the fidelity that each of the spouses must observe towards each other. The third is the indissolubility of the matrimony, indissoluble because it signifies the indivisible union between Christ and the Church. Although a separation from bed may be permitted by reason of marital infidelity, nevertheless it is not permitted to contract another matrimony since the bond of marriage lawfully contracted is perpetual (Gracia de Haro 1993, pp. 63-64).

Here we can see the understanding that a marital bond that is perpetual in its nature exists in every valid marriage – even despite attacks as severe as infidelity. We also see the medieval development of marriage being created by the words of free consent communicated between the man and woman. This agreement or consent is essential to the existence of a marriage. Consummation ratifies the mutual consent and makes marriage intrinsically indissoluble.

¹²⁶ In *Christianity and Family Law* (Witte and Hawk 2017), Charles Donahue recounts how these popes shaped Christian marriage by decretals altering rules and regulations. It is important to note that Innocent III, knowledgeable about the law, corrected the error of Pope Celestine before him when he misinterpreted the Pauline Privilege for a difficult marriage case.

¹²⁷ Philip Reynolds argues Hugh of St Victor made the case that marriage is in one sense the greatest sacrament of all, since it is the only one instituted before the fall (Reynolds 2016, p. 388).

¹²⁸ Matrimony comes from the Latin word *Mater*, signifying an institution whose end is motherhood.

¹²⁹ See MacKin 1984, chapters 12 and 13 for a historical account of their many contributions.

Forms of marriage have changed very little since the Middle Ages. *Sacramental marriage* when at least one party is Catholic, unless there is a dispensation, must have a Catholic clergyman or another official as delegated by the local ordinary witness the vows (Code of Canon Law 1983, canon 1112, §2), along with two other witnesses in a Catholic church. Mutual consent ratifies this as valid and sacramental, and consummation makes it indissoluble.

Natural marriage in rare situations may be dissolved by Church authority. The baptized party may be released from conjugal responsibilities by the pope for just cause (i.e., the Petrine Privilege, cf. *Ibid.*, Canon 1150). In natural marriage when the unbaptized party leaves the baptized party because of the latter's conversion to Catholicism, the converted party may be released from his/her responsibilities (Pauline Privilege, *Ibid.*, Canon 1143, §1). Sacramental *non*-consummated marriages can also be dissolved by the pope for just cause.

This understanding of natural and sacramental marriage will remain the same during the next several centuries, although differing emphases are given within any given culture.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we saw how divine Revelation as understood through the Judeo-Christian heritage gradually lifted up and redefined marriage. We saw Jesus particularly in the gospel of Matthew taking the Mosaic Law in the Torah to elevate it and perfect it, and to restore marriage to how it was "*at the beginning*" (Mt 19:8) – before sin began to distort it.

With the grace won for humanity by Christ on the cross that enables fallen humanity to live the truth of marriage with all its joys and sacrifices, the redemption of marriage and the family, to restore the dignity of the union between man, woman and their offspring, was underway.

We also saw how early Christians inculcated their vision of the human person

into the institution of marriage, respecting matter and the body as godly, unlike some of the popular heresies at the time. Hence, the union of one flesh was understood to be a profound reality that other more dualistic views of human nature could not appreciate. We will make the argument later in the thesis that Modern Western cultures, deeply affected by Cartesian dualism, do not adequately appreciate the affect that bodily human acts have on the human person, including the bodily act of becoming one-flesh with another, which, by its nature, is meant to permanently consummate a lifelong union.

The one-flesh union, therefore, is understood to be ontological and not just emotional or juridical. We saw the reasoning of Jewish scholar Able Isaksson, who traced baptized Christians back to the priesthood of Israel, and explored the moral implications this may have.

We came to appreciate that Christian anthropology and marriage are built upon the foundation that Judaism had provided. While the people of the Old Testament became increasingly aware of their covenantal unions with God through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, they gradually came to understand their relationship with God as analogous to marriage. The sin of idolatry was referred to as adultery. While their burgeoning awareness of the covenantal love of God was bolstered by the beautiful stories of Hosea and the Song of Songs, it was in the New Covenant in Jesus that this understanding came to fruition in the marriage between Christ and His Church.

We also saw in this chapter that the early Church hammered out its understanding of God, Christ, and the Church itself, and how the great synthesis of faith and reason, begun with the marriage of Hebrew and Greek cultures, saw its pinnacle in the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor.

In the next chapter, we will see how the heights of understanding human nature and marital love – born of the marriage of faith and reason – would be seriously challenged in the Modern age's philosophy. This is a philosophical movement that calls into question principles previously assumed that were born out of the great synthesis

of faith and reason – which Pope St. John Paul II would later call the “*two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth*” (1998).

The following chapter outlines the beginning of the unraveling of what was integrated within Christendom. We will see the profound impact this philosophical disintegration of human nature has had on the family and society, and the consequent legacy of social and sexual confusion that ensued as being characteristic of a new post-Christian era. Eventually, this deconstruction of being will give impetus to a new appreciation of the concept of personhood, which we will examine in Chapter Six.

Chapter 4: Disintegration and disunity: Modern philosophy and the Post-Christian Era

In the last chapter we looked at marriage and the family in what we loosely call the “Christian era.” This is when the world was introduced to a new order of living, from whom Christians believe to be the incarnate second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is believed to be an era of grace from which the sacrifice of Christ unleashed the third Person of God unto the world, offering divine Life to the souls of people with good will,¹³⁰ attaining union with God that was lost due to the fall. The conjoining of divine grace with human nature, elucidating the moral sense in human hearts, increased the prospect of marriage flourishing and civilization prospering, strengthening the family.

Modern philosophy, however, by its delinking of faith from reason and grace from nature, became more and more a harbinger for a naturalistic view of life. Rationalism, dualism, and materialism – as we will see in this chapter – began to deconstruct the synthesis that Christian philosophy had accomplished for centuries.

This chapter will focus on the consequences of Modern philosophy in its effects on human nature, marriage and the family. It is at its heart, we will argue, minds turning away from God, and more particularly, away from Christian philosophy, onto the self. We will look at some of the results on the institution of marriage and the family in Western society. We will see how the era of integration of faith and reason in Christian philosophy (Christianity and Hellenism) gave way to what we will call a post-Christian era, highlighted by deconstructionism, reductionism, disintegration, existentialism, and the lack of a sense of the transcendent. What the ancients hoped for, moderns rejected. This produces serious consequences.

Aquinas had integrated many sources of knowledge of his time, not the least of

¹³⁰ See Acts 2 to understand this unleashing of the Holy Spirit onto the world, which is a fruit of the self-sacrifice to the Father that Christ made for humanity.

which was Aristotelian philosophy, into a Christian framework distinguishing between theology based on divine Revelation, or dogmatic) theology, and theology based on reason, or (philosophical theology (Swindal, n.d., §e). The complementary and harmonious integration of faith and reason, so vital to a civilization of life that respects the dignity of the human person (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 2022, *Life and Dignity of the Human Person*), was about to unravel.

In the preceding two chapters we examined the practical and theoretical aspects of marriage and sexuality from three different foundational perspectives: pre-Christian, pre-Christian monotheist, and Christian. This chapter will reveal the beginnings of what we will call the post-Christian era¹³¹, turning from theology to philosophy as the secular sciences begin to play a more dominant role in shaping Western culture. Human nature, marriage and sexuality that found a certain cohesion under the Logos of the Christian world view, falls into chaos in post-Christianity. We observe how Modern philosophy systematically tears apart reason from faith, ruptures mind from body, and rebuilds in their stead a “post-Christian”, non-theist philosophical framework marked by subjectivism, scientific positivism, and radical individualism, that tend to deify the self.

Catholicism has suffered from the ravages of Modern philosophy, which has little interest in working with supernatural faith. A recent example has Cardinal Anders Arborelius, OCD, Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, recently informing the *National Catholic Register* about an irony with many of today’s Swedes:

[They] know what the Catholic Church teaches; they don’t accept it, but they somehow [still] have an admiration that we stick to what we believe, and that gives us a certain respect, even if they don’t accept it (Arborelius in Pentin 2022).

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, “secular humanism”¹³² became the

¹³¹ For this thesis, I propose the term ‘pre-Christian societies’ to mean those social entities in history and presently that have not known Christ in a meaningful way and/or whose cultures have not been significantly affected by Him and the teaching of His Church. ‘Post-Christian’, on the other hand, will refer to nations and cultures that generally had embraced Christ and Christianity in the past, but have subsequently abandoned Christian influence for Modern secularism. It is this latter worldview for which Modern philosophy cleared the path.

¹³² For a summary of the term secular humanism as a naturalistic world view whose basic ethic is

leading worldview to challenge Christian culture in the Western world. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the redefining of morality, particularly with regard to the sixth precept of the natural moral law.¹³³ On the political level, its presumptions manifest themselves in laws that support contraception¹³⁴ and protect abortion, homosexuality, and now so-called transgenderism. On the cultural level it includes the women's liberation and feminist movements that deeply affect relations between the sexes, the sexual revolution, and the breakdown of the foundational unit of society – the family. Modern philosophy has strongly influenced the Modern world in social movements such as these.

This chapter outlines the disintegration of faith and reason, leading to a collapse of both, and eventually leading to the dismantling of the family unit.

4.1 Disintegration and human nature

By the term “human nature”, this thesis points to the commonality of essence that all individual human beings share, which makes the human species unique among all species of beings. Among our basic presumptions is that the individual human person is a rational animal, a personal substance that is a body-soul composite, which comes into being at the moment of conception and dies as an integrated organism at the moment when the spiritual soul permanently separates from the physical body.¹³⁵

consequentialism, see *What is Secular Humanism?*, Free Inquiry Magazine.

¹³³ This is the natural law precept relating to human sexuality and marriage. Its religious counterpart is the sixth commandment, whose primary precept is summarized at Sinai as “*You shall not commit adultery*” (Ex 20:14)..

¹³⁴ In the United States, contraception was legalized (in 1965) before abortion was widely demanded and legalized in 1973. The Supreme Court case of *Griswold vs. Connecticut* eventually led to *Roe vs. Wade*. There is an inner logic to this. The contraception mentality separates sex from marriage and sex from babies. As a result of its legalization and popular usage, the widespread demand for abortion in a society already affected by secular humanism was inevitable. Concurring with Pope St. John Paul II's claim that contraception and abortion are morally evil “fruits of the same tree”, Franciscan University theology professor William Newton summarizes the relationship between contraception and abortion: “Contraception is a ‘game-changer’ in the sense that it changes the way we think about some very fundamental realities such as attitudes to sex, to life, to science, to the human person, and to morality. Any one of these changes would have a significant impact on a society in terms of promoting a culture of death: together they are devastating” (Newton 2015).

¹³⁵ Although the term “rational animal” is attributed to Aristotle, a careful reading of his survived works does not find this. It is true, nonetheless, that Aristotle sees rationality as what separates human beings from all other animals. See Keil and Kreft (2019). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk 1, Ch 13, Aristotle distinguishes between the nutritive and rational dimensions of the soul, and speaks of the virtues that can be known through reason, that discipline and direct the sensate soul according to what is true and good (Aristotle 1987, pp. 16-18).

This presumably occurs at the point of irreversible cessation of vital bodily organs. Another basic premise built on the last chapter is that human nature includes a physical, intellectual, familial, social, and religious nature, innate to each individual. The most common lived-out expression of this multidimensional human nature, sometimes referred to as a *state of life* or a *calling*, is marriage.

Born from the intellectual soul of the human person are thoughts and ideas, which lead to creativity and culture. Thoughts, ideas, propositions and arguments, along with self-consciousness and freedom of the will are what distinguish the human being from all other animals. Born of this rational nature is the institution of marriage and the family, which is the basic unit of civilization. Good ideas create good societies and good people, as Plato alluded in *The Republic* (Plato BC 375). Inspired ideas that have formed the Catholic intellectual tradition, some of which were mentioned in Chapter 3 of this thesis, have led to a deeper understanding of human nature as that which is ordered to life-giving love as male and female. We will see in Chapter Seven how this is a reflection of the Trinitarian Creator.

Christian ideas and Christian charity have contributed to the flourishing of the family, society, and Western civilization by respecting and promoting the integral unity of the physical, intellectual, familial, social and religious dimensions of human nature in each unique individual.

Modern philosophy is certainly not monolithic in its approach or methodology. Yet, generally, by its turning to the subject, both faith and reason became secondary considerations, as objective truth and morality become passé, and personal preference supersedes the objective natural moral order to which we are created to conform. We follow in this chapter a lineage of Modern thought that clearly exemplifies the unraveling of the medieval project.

Human flourishing necessarily includes the integration of sex, marriage, and family. Its dis-integration leads to the death of marriage, of the family, and of society,

not to mention countless individuals from the act of abortion.¹³⁶ With regard to this point, one may see that in pre-Christian times the common understanding of human nature was *pre*-integrative, in post-Christian times *dis*-integrative, and in neither of these times were philosophical principles conducive to the promotion of justice, human dignity, and a civilization of life. Both extreme historical epochs have little foundation on which human life can naturally propagate and flourish over the selfish desires and tendencies inherited from original sin.¹³⁷

This is not a minor point. The integrated unity of human nature is ordered to the fulfillment of certain ends, brought about by goods that lead to human flourishing. When self-knowledge is missing, individuals suffer and society breaks down into moral chaos. In this chapter and the next we will explore the ideas that began the disintegration and unraveling of the unity of faith and reason, and the real-life implications that have followed. Implications, thereof, have eventually paved the way to what Pope St John Paul II called the “*culture of death*”.¹³⁸

Modern philosophy, it can be repeated, can be seen to be the uncoordinated effort of unraveling the great synthesis of faith and reason that reached its zenith in the Middle Ages under the guidance of St Thomas Aquinas.¹³⁹ This Modern movement gradually re-introduced humanity back to a vision of human nature that respects

¹³⁶ While a consensus of statistics estimates around 65 million surgical abortions performed in the U.S. since *Roe vs. Wade*, the Guttmacher Institute reports that more than half of induced abortions (54%) now in the U.S. are chemical abortions – induced through hormonal/chemical pills (2022-b). And this does not even include the abortions that occur through common birth control pills that fail to block gametes from meeting and mingling (*ibid*).

¹³⁷ It is fundamental Christian doctrine that human nature was deprived of grace and original justice when the first parents of humanity disobeyed God and rejected His command *not* to choose death. As a result, selfish tendencies reign and must be disciplined for the individual and the common good (CCC §§385-409).

¹³⁸ The term “culture of death” was used by Pope St John Paul II twelve times in his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, to explain the turn to death as a solution in the modern Western world.

¹³⁹ Obviously, this is debated among philosophers and historians. The Thomistic school of thought, though, would have little problem with this as a generality. As Pope St John Paul II wrote in his 1998 encyclical *Faith and Reason*, that especially after rediscovering the works of Aristotle:

[St] Thomas had the great merit of giving pride of place to the harmony which exists between faith and reason. Both the light of reason and the light of faith come from God, he argued; hence there can be no contradiction between them (§43).

Other thinkers like Kant and Kierkegaard also took faith and reason as complementary avenues to truth but had different primary starting points. As James Swindal mentions: “*if Kant argued for religion within the limits of reason alone, Kierkegaard called for reason with the limits of religion alone*” (n.d., sec. 6c).

neither true equality nor true liberty. We will see how these two terms have been redefined for the Modern project. Further, we will conclude that Modern philosophy helped inaugurate a post-Christian, and what some call a post-Modern, era that, in many respects, is morally worse off than the pre-Christian world of paganism. While ancient Rome was no stranger to practices that included concubinage, divorce, polygamy, contraception and abortion, as mentioned above in chapter 2.2, these existed within a world open to possibilities. The traditional Christmas song, *Oh Holy Night* captures this universal, albeit subconscious, anticipation and longing of a world in darkness seeking light, particularly within the line:

Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
The thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.¹⁴⁰

What the ancient world anticipated, the Modern world rejected. While the pre-Christian world has been, in many respects, brutal and unjust, the post-Christian world is infected with a widespread cynicism that reflects a people who have lost hope. A culture of death, even if sophisticated and covert, harbors little hope. It is considerably worse, morally and consequentially, to have embraced He Who Is (Ex 3:14) Truth (Jn 14:6) and Love (1 Jn 4:8) and rejected Him, than to not (yet) have encountered and known Him.

4.2 Nominalism: beginning the unraveling

One of the first significant cracks in the synthesis of faith and reason came before Modernity arose from the foundation of medieval times, in the late Middle Ages with Englishman William of Ockham. Mostly known for what is now called *Ockham's razor*¹⁴¹, Ockham was a 14th century Franciscan philosopher and theologian who, by his writings, is credited for introducing Nominalism to the Christian world.¹⁴² In short,

¹⁴⁰ Composed by Adolphe Adam, 1803-1856.

¹⁴¹ This suggests one should accept the simplest explanation for something unless a more complex one is demonstrably true. This principle has been attributed to Ockham, since he seemed to use it, but it preceded him with writers like French theologian Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, who, in the 14th century, used the principle to refute Thomism (Fitzpatrick n.d.). While Ockham's razor is not specifically found in any of Ockham's writings, quotes like "*plurality must never be posited without necessity*" are found in his work on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard* (Ockham 1495).

¹⁴² For a good working definition of nominalism, see Rodriguez-Pereyra 2015.

Nominalism is the school of thought that held that there are no universal truths, but only thought-expressions using linguistic terminology to make perceived phenomenon more intelligible (Weisheipl 1987). A universal truth, or simply a universal, is the essence of a concrete object abstracted by the active intellect in order to know what something is, according to its species of being. The essence “car”, for example, is the abstracted universal category of being that includes racing cars, station wagons, old Model Ts, and even toy cars played with by children. It includes all concrete motorized objects, i.e., individual cars, whose end, literally or in the imagination (as is the case with toy cars), is to transport on the ground a small number of people and/or objects.

To Aquinas, these universals are real, albeit non-sensible. They are immaterial truth-objects that the mind can grasp (ST I, q. 85, a.3.). A typical nominalist, on the other hand, holds that there are no immaterial universal truth-objects, but rather are simply *named* as such; hence, the term nominalist whose etymological root is “names”. While Aristotle (as well as Aquinas) rejected Plato’s notion that these universal forms exist on their own independent of the concrete particular objects they inform, Ockham denied the concept of essential forms altogether (William of Ockham 1998, p, 79-81).

To make one further distinction, there are two distinct schools of thought that claim to be “Nominalist” today that have divided Nominalism: those that reject universals and those that reject abstract objects (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2015) Abstract objects are immaterial objects that have no concrete structure within time and space, such as ‘justice’, ‘truth’, or ‘love’. One cannot see, hear, touch or taste justice literally; but metaphysicians in the Thomistic tradition have no problem claiming these objects really exist. Universals, on the other hand, signify the essence of a group of objects. The universal “chair”, for example, includes concrete particular rocking chairs, recliners, wooden kitchen chairs, and doll house chairs. The universal term signifies the essence of all particular objects that share in chair-ness, whose formal cause, according to the Aristotelian-Thomistic school of thought, may be found by virtue of its final cause (Aristotle 1991, pp. 43-46).¹⁴³ Thomistic epistemology is metaphysically friendly with both universals and abstract objects.

¹⁴³ This means that we can understand what a thing is by virtue of its purpose.

In short, the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of universal essences alters Plato's view of ontological idealism¹⁴⁴, but still holds that forms or essences that exist in concrete objects are abstracted by the intellect, enabling the human person to understand the *kind* of being an object is. Ockham, on the other hand, held that individual substances exist in the real world, but they possess no shared essence that corresponds to anything real that the human mind can abstract (1998). He rejected the notion that universals actually exist, but saw them as simply a mental construct used to categorize objects for the sake of utility, to assist in making phenomena more intelligible. Ockham did not see the verbal signification as having any real meaning for other objects of the same kind or species. In other words, Ockham made the intellect impotent in what was understood as one essential human power that distinguishes humanity from all other species of animal.

This de-linking of the mind from the knowledge of essences by rejecting universals has significant consequences. Ontological error leads to moral error, as it is written in John's gospel that the devil is the father of lies (Jn 8:44). The order of being and the order of doing are integrally linked in the natures of all things, including human nature. Christians believe the unraveling of the original unity of creation began with original sin was based on a lie: "[y]ou surely will not die..." (Gn 3:4). Sin is an act of the will, which often chooses the lesser good, causing disorder, and at times moral chaos. Indulging in disordered goods can tap into pleasure centers in the brain that cloud the intellect, and such acts can gradually devolve into a cycle of habit, vice, obsession, and addiction.¹⁴⁵ Freedom and fullness of life are diminished with moral evil, which often begins with intellectual error.

It is Christian doctrine that God created humanity to live in union with Him, with no obstacles between the human intellect and the divine will. Subsequently, there would be no de-linking in each individual of the intellect and will, the will and the body, and the body and the natural world (Gn 3.). What Aquinas saw as the natural operation of the intellect, to abstract immaterial essences from particular concrete objects in

¹⁴⁴ The belief that forms or essences of individual concrete objects are substances in themselves that exist independently of the material objects they inform.

¹⁴⁵ Seeking inordinate pleasure for its own sake can cause harmful consequences. For a scientific study of the relationship between pleasure and addiction, see Kennett, Matthews, and Snoek (2013).

order to understand the world around him, points to the existence of a subsistent spiritual soul that transcends the physical body, whose proper operation is made optimal by grace resulting from union with God. (ST 1, q. 75, a. 2). This unobstructed operation was to know and choose the goods needed for human flourishing. Since nominalism sees the human intellect as little more than an animal's mental capacity that perceives and reacts to stimuli without universals, it is not a mystery that morality would be altered for those who are influenced by it.

Ramifications of nominalism also include the depreciation of the intellect and distrust of reason. Still another profound problem is that it tends to separate morality from nature, which has borne tragic fruit over the centuries. By moving the locus of the moral law from the nature of an act to the subject's will, often triggered by desire, we empty reason of its power to discover moral truth (Hill 2016, p. 123), which, again, renders us little more than animals.

A great difference between humans and other animals is the ability not only to perceive but to conceive; the ability not only to sense but to understand. Nominalism calls this into question.

Apprehension is one of three immediate acts of the mind (Kreeft 2010, p. 28)¹⁴⁶, according to the rules of logic. If we perceive things without understanding the essence of the object perceived; or if we accept only concrete stimuli that can only be experienced through the senses, we call into question the spiritual soul. The act of understanding necessitates abstraction of essences from particulars, judging not only *that* something is but *what* something is; and being able to reasonably follow propositions to their logical conclusion. Nominalism depersonalizes in the sense that it de-spiritualizes the operation of the brain and its potential to grasp immaterial objects.

Only a material object can grasp another material object, like a hand to a pencil.

¹⁴⁶ This refers to primary acts of the mind of *apprehending*, *judging*, and *reasoning*, which lead to understanding concepts, affirming, or denying something about them, and arguing to a sound conclusion. Before understanding, we perceive with the bodily senses. This ability we share with other animals.

Likewise, only an immaterial object can grasp another immaterial object, like an intellect to an idea or concept. The human acts of thinking, understanding, and reasoning point to this immaterial component in the human person that transcends the physical brain, able to grasp immaterial objects (like justice, love, and truth).

A typical nominalist does not trust the mind's ability to abstract and to reason. Human knowledge is claimed to be exclusively the fruit of sensual experience and/or faith. Because of this, religious nominalists are more apt to fall into doctrinal fideism, holding fast to divine command theory in religion that believes in a voluntaristic God commanding through a divine will that is arbitrary.¹⁴⁷ Although there may be fundamentalist groups that hold to this model of God, Christianity is not a voluntaristic religion, for the eternal second Person of the Trinity who established His Church is eternal Reason Itself (Jn 1:1).¹⁴⁸

Ockham's nominalism ignited the beginning of a long journey in philosophy that would eventually turn the focus of philosophical inquiry from the object to the subject. Like going from a child's wonder of the world to an adolescent's self-consciousness, this movement in philosophy has led to a self-centered, at times self-absorbed, subjectivism – which has skepticism¹⁴⁹, cynicism¹⁵⁰, materialism¹⁵¹, relativism¹⁵², and nihilism¹⁵³ as its philosophical children.

It is reasonable to assess that the Nominalist rejection of universal forms and essences leads to a distrust of the mind's ability to know truth. It is easier for many to trust sensory perception than intellectual conception. However, there is no room for objective truth if all that is known is the subjective experience that everyone perceives. And this kind of skepticism can easily lead to cynicism: where there is no objective truth there is no objective meaning to life. Without an objective meaning that is spiritual

¹⁴⁷ This is a God who exercises His divine will, which is not necessarily informed by His divine Reason. (Murphy 2019b).

¹⁴⁸ The word translated as 'Word,' *Logos*, can also be translated as Reason.

¹⁴⁹ A philosophy that holds there is no objective truth.

¹⁵⁰ The philosophy that there is no objective meaning to life.

¹⁵¹ Matter is all that exists; immaterial/spiritual things do not.

¹⁵² There is no objective goodness or morality.

¹⁵³ A conglomeration of the above subjective philosophies, leading to a belief that there is no sound reason to live.

rather than just physical, temporal and random rather than united to the eternal, then materialism – the philosophy that all that exists is matter – may soon follow. Humans are seen here as simply random bodies of atoms temporarily bumping into each other to form human animals, which will soon die and be annihilated and forgotten.

It follows that from ontological materialism would come moral relativism – holding that there is no divine order of life that must be conformed to, which is accessible to right reason and/or accepted through divine Revelation. In short, moral relativism holds that there is no objective goodness. From this point it follows that walking, talking animals with no objective meaning or purpose transcending this short life of suffering, with no objective good and evil to guide them, would create their own moral codes according to whim, desire, and by the power of the will, and, if necessary, the state.

Being formed in this kind of worldview, whose aim is meaningless pleasure, keeps the soul striving for truth and the heart from pining for meaning. It follows that, without believing there are objects that satiate these natural longings, nihilism in the form of hedonism and/or depression would then follow. Integral human fulfillment depends on objective morality, which depends on objective meaning and purpose, which depends on knowledge of objective truth. Nominalism is the first domino to fall that eventually leads people to this dark place without hope, from which only an analogically higher power from above can save. This is now the experience of much of the post-Christian Western world, which, by essentially seeking to be its own god, is now stuck in a milieu of death.¹⁵⁴

Using a developmental analogy, pre-Modern philosophy was more child-like in curiosity and wonder, while Modern philosophy left that behind to focus on the self. Seeking to understand the world by virtue of reason, wonder began to lose its luster. The subjectivist movement, away from seeking objective truth and goodness and onto focusing on the subject, went through several stages, as alluded to above. One of those stages, which relates directly to humanity's self-image, self-identity and understanding of its nature is anthropological dualism. It rivaled materialism as being

¹⁵⁴ For a helpful metaphorical synopsis of this journey from subjectivism to nihilism, see Kreeft 1997.

an alternative to hylomorphism, the theory of the human person as being a body-soul composite, the soul being the form and principle of life of the body.

Post-scholastic Cartesian rationalism gave birth to Modern dualism, which has had a profound impact on Modernity's self-understanding. We now turn our gaze to whom history calls the "Father of Modern Philosophy".

4.3 The body-soul problem: dualism and the disintegration of hylomorphism¹⁵⁵

René Descartes, a 17th century French mathematician and philosopher, represents another significant point in the history of the unraveling of integrated human nature. No single person can be the sole demarcation point between one era of philosophy and another. Nevertheless, as Socrates is known as the father of philosophy, Descartes is popularly known as the father of *Modern* philosophy. He took an approach to philosophical inquiry that integrated modern scientific principles to increase certainty of results. However, while nominalism tends to separate the mind from knowledge of essences and universal truths, Cartesian anthropological dualism separates the mind from the body (Skirry n.d.). Descartes' "radical doubt" inaugurated a new beginning in philosophy's turning to the subject (Ibid.). His intellectual journey, which he wrote about in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* and *Discourse on Method* (1998) eventually led to more profound disintegration of human nature. A brilliant mathematician, Descartes found it appropriate to follow the emerging Modern scientific method of his time by scaling back all assumptions that cannot be proven by mathematical formulae (1998, p. 11, §20). This inevitably led Descartes to doubt his own existence as well as the existence of all beings outside himself (Ibid. p 19, §33). In short, while meditating on this problem he eventually realized he was thinking and therefore existed. The mind recognized itself. He was, at the very least, a thinking thing (Ibid.). Hence, his now-famous line, "*I think, therefore I am*" (Ibid.).

Descartes' Christian faith – which eventually led him to realize that a good God

¹⁵⁵ "Hylomorphism" is the doctrine that all living things are a composite of form and matter, which makes it follow that the human being, hence, is a body-soul composite, with the soul being the spiritual form of the material body, giving it identity and life (Aristotle 1991, §195 a 6-8, p.24). Hylomorphism differs from dualism, the latter of which being the notion that the soul/mind/spirit is the person and the body is simply an accidental addition or covering. Further, hylomorphism can be compared with materialism that sees the human person as only a concrete material body.

would not trick humanity into believing in a world of falsehood – helped reel him in from the intellectual emptiness of radical doubt (Ibid. pp. 69-71, §35-37). Descartes gradually began to trust his senses and his mind again to know the truth (Ibid. p 94, §74-75). Nevertheless, the popularization of Cartesian methodic doubt and its mind-body dichotomy has had a profound impact on Modern philosophy and the Western world for half a millennium.

Descartes reintroduced a brand of dualism into Western thought centuries after Plato's dualism of Ancient Greek philosophy. Descartes subjugated the body to the mind, in the sense of making the former a thing that is owned and can be manipulated at will (Hill 2016, p. 128). People are not "rational animals" in the Cartesian model, in the same sense that they were under Aristotle and even Aquinas. Rather, the movement that heralded Cartesian body-mind dualism would eventually see human beings as persons with body-appendages that may be objectified at the command of the will for purposes of pleasure or power. This rupture of mind and body had further, multiple, implications. Deconstructing the mind and soul from the body left both entities as separate substances. Depending on one's predisposed world view, emphasis could be placed on one substance at the expense of the other. Both Modern dualism and materialism can trace their new incarnations back, at least in part, to Cartesian rationalism.

To unpack this a little, a fundamental principle of Cartesian dualism, indicated in "*I think therefore I am*", is that epistemology must precede metaphysics as a method of knowing truth with certainty (Skirry, n.d.). With Cartesian radical doubt, nothing about being can be accepted or presumed without scientific rational examination. This kind of skepticism does not accept what the senses perceive about oneself or the external world, but trusts the mind as the arbiter of reality. As mentioned above, Descartes began to accept his own existence only after recognizing he was thinking about existence (1998, p. 19, §33).

In the metaphysical tradition of Scholastic philosophy, however, being comes first. Being is accepted and presumed as a prerequisite for thinking, willing or doing. Nonetheless, Descartes places the bar high with regard to his method for knowing

truth: “[f]or I will indeed attain [truth], if only I pay enough attention to all the things that I perfectly understand, and separate them off from the rest.” (Descartes 1998, p. 87, §62).

Cartesian rationalism, by flipping the order of epistemology and metaphysics, paved the way for a new ontological dualism and moral subjectivism. In Cartesian dualism, the human being is not *one* substance of hylomorphic unity of body/matter and soul/form, as Aquinas and Catholic tradition held (Hill 2016, p. 146). Rather, the human being is understood as *two* substances – mind and matter – the person and his physiological machine, to be manipulated at will (Ibid., p. 148; Descartes 1998, p. 19, §33). The body is thus accidental to the human person, not essential. The mind, which thinks, is understood to be the actual person. The person has a body in the sense that a person wears clothes. It is not essential to his or her being.

This view of human nature gradually led to ample unintended consequences – anthropologically, morally, and theologically. The separation of mind from body was a first step to divorcing spirit from matter, and God from nature. The integrity of creation includes the complementarity of spirit and matter, as most pre-Moderns believed. But a philosophical movement that separates spirit from matter and mind from body is not a logically distant step from divorcing God from His physical creation and rationalizing Deism.

Descartes’ understanding of God was one of a perfect Deity who would not deceive. Akin to St Anselm’s ontological argument for the existence of God, Descartes held a similar syllogism:

Indeed I have no choice but to conclude that the mere fact of my existing and of there being in me an idea of a most perfect being, that is, God, demonstrates most evidently that God too exists” (Descartes 1998, p. 81, §50).

It is no coincidence that religious belief in Deism¹⁵⁶ became more popular after the onset of Cartesian dualism.

¹⁵⁶ Deism holds that the creator of the universe has no relation with His creation, or any interest in such. Usually, the Deist god is an impersonal deity whose essence is mind, and not love.

Nonetheless, it is Christian tradition that the union of spirit and matter, as well as that of grace and nature, is essential to the human person. Securing the goods for this hylomorphic unity is necessary for true freedom and human flourishing. Ironically, Descartes, himself a Christian philosopher and mathematician, delinks spirit from physiology, gutting traditional natural law theory of its foundation and meaning.¹⁵⁷ The , for Descartes, was seen more as a mechanistic object to be ruled by the mind than an integral component of the human person.

Isaac Newton's *Principia*, published in 1687, made Newton's popularity equivalent to a contemporary rock star. In short, what Descartes did with reason, Newton did with science. Whereas, before Newton, the cosmos was seen as "the heavens", i.e., the realm of supernatural consciousness and mysterious spiritual activity intriguing to the human imagination. After Newton, the cosmos became a lifeless mechanistic conglomeration of physical bodies moving according to impersonal scientific mechanistic principles and gravitational forces (1687, p. 588).

Natural law theory, largely kept alive by the Catholic Church, presupposes the human being as a body-soul composite, with the soul being the body's form and life principle.¹⁵⁸ Properly speaking, humans do not *have* bodies as in *own* them. They *are* bodies, informed by souls. Bodies are an integral part of their substantial being.¹⁵⁹

This point is also important for Christian morality. According to the hylomorphic anthropology that correlates with natural law theory, anatomy and physiology are constituents of human nature and are integrally necessary for discerning the proper goods that lead to human flourishing. Although the soul may be distinguished from the body, ethics cannot be discerned properly without the body as an integral component of the substance of the person.

With Cartesian rationalism chipping away at this metaphysical truth, however,

¹⁵⁷ Natural law depends on the body and its natural physiology to discern through reason what is good (Murphy 2019a, §2.1).

¹⁵⁸ This tenet of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy was defined by the Catholic Church as a matter of faith at the 14th century *Council of Vienne* (Maher and Bolland, 1912).

¹⁵⁹ To say one *has* a body rather than one *is* a body connotes possession rather than integration.

moral acts are no longer seen as corresponding to intrinsic teleological ends. The human body is seen as more of a thing, an object, like other bodies in the cosmos of creation. Nature becomes something to manipulate and dominate rather than to discover and harmoniously conform to. The notion of a natural order to which humanity must use reason in order to conform was gradually usurped by a mechanistic world view that sees the proper role of mind as to dominate matter. The material body becomes an instrument to do this, not a constituent part of the self to discipline in order to attain the good, but rather to dominate according to one's will, to use for the desired ends of pleasure, power, and utility.

In a fallen world, this continuous propensity to dominate taints human nature. It is a primary consequence of original sin (Gn 3:16). Cartesian dualism indirectly supports this propensity to dominate the natural world, others, and even oneself. We will see in the next chapter the role that contraception has taken as a consequence of this sinful tendency to dominate and alter human physiology, i.e., what non-dualists would call *the self*.

4.4 Post-Cartesian disintegration

In reaction to Cartesian rationalism and its over-emphasis on the mind at the expense of the body, John Locke introduced a new empiricism that would over-emphasize the body and sensual knowledge at the expense of the mind and reason (Cahn 1995, p. 646).

Fellow 17th Century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes brought a new materialism to the movement of disintegration. While Descartes held that humans are essentially minds, Hobbes claimed the opposite, that they are essentially bodies (1981, 4.20-1). He held a rather dark view of human nature, observing that unchecked appetites inevitably lead to chaos and brutality in the social order, necessitating a powerful central government (1981, 17.12-15). It follows as Hobbes would say, that if the human being is a compilation of impulses, passions and desires, a social contract would give rise to a "Leviathan" to enforce order at the expense of individual freedoms (Cahn 1995, p. 523).

Descartes' rationalism and Hobbes' materialism created a path for a more complete turn to the subject with the rational idealism of 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant's "Copernican revolution" in philosophy ushered in a subjectivism that ruptured laws of nature from laws of freedom. Kant claimed that we cannot know anything about God through reason alone, and that morality is not based on any correspondence between human acts and how they correspond to the ends of human nature (Kant 1997, 1.402). Rather, he proposed a deontological duty-based ethic grounded in the categorical imperative.¹⁶⁰

By divorcing the subject and the object, and focusing on motive rather than objective morality (Cahn 1995, p. 1097), Kant divorced morality from physiology and separated faith from reason, paving the way for a fundamentalist fideism in religion.¹⁶¹ In other words, when morality simply becomes a duty to follow principles, based on either reason that is divorced from physiology or teleology, i.e., that is arbitrary rules handed down by an authority figure or subjective principles that do not necessarily fulfill the ends of human nature, it is the will rather than reason that actually determines one's moral code. This means obedience to either one's own dictates or those from a higher authority. It is not based on obedience to God or to the moral principles that derive from natural law.

Since the great synthesis of faith and reason in the Middle Ages began to unravel, various threads continued to come apart: nominalism separated the mind from objective truth; rationalism separated reason from experience and faith; empiricism separated sensual experience from reason; and dualism separated mind and body. Further, this unraveling affected religion. The disintegration of faith and reason, which was so beautifully synthesized in Aquinas, created a polarization of a rationalist approach on one hand, and a fideism on the other.¹⁶²

All these philosophical movements since Aquinas have inordinately over-

¹⁶⁰ The categorical imperative for Kant is the universal principle on which his deontological ethics are based: "*Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law*" [Kant 1997].

¹⁶¹ Fideism is the imbalanced emphasis on faith to the detriment of reason (John Paul II 1998).

¹⁶² This led to polarized movements of fundamentalism and deism, spurred on by fideism and rationalism.

emphasized one aspect of human nature while under-emphasizing or rejecting others, offering an imbalanced view of human nature. The ideas of Ockham and Descartes along with Locke, Hobbes, and Kant inaugurated an era of separation and disintegration – of faith from reason, mind from body, spirit from matter, and God from the universe. This movement of rupturing reality would have devastating ramifications for morality.¹⁶³

Knowing oneself as an integral whole is a primary step to properly seeking the goods that lead to integral human fulfillment. On the contrary, a skewed vision of self-due to an imbalanced view of human nature inevitably leads to a skewed understanding of what brings about fulfillment. The disintegration of human nature carries moral consequences that extend past the individual to the family, to the nation, and to the entire world.

The human person is physiological, intellectual, and volitional. The senses, mind, and will are essential components of human nature and are the basis of experience, reason, and faith respectively – the three avenues to certitude – which work in tandem. Experience, reason, and faith are also the basis for science, philosophy, and religion respectively. Overemphasizing one avenue of knowledge over others is a common danger that will often lead to error. Over-emphasizing the will at the expense of the intellect can lead to voluntarism or fideism. Over-emphasizing the intellect at the expense of the will and sensual experience can lead to rationalism. Similarly, overemphasizing the body and its senses at the expense of the intellect may lead to materialism. Further, whereas faith and reason are meant to be two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth separating them does serious damage: fideism often accompanies religious fundamentalism, rationalism leads to philosophical skepticism, and empiricism to a philosophy of materialism (John Paul II 1998:§52). All these are results of the deconstruction and disintegration of being, which, beneath the surface, is a primary consequence of sin.

To recapitulate, the legacy of disconnecting the mind from Reality (i.e., God) is

¹⁶³ As we will see in the following chapter, the trajectory of such rupturing of integral wholeness will eventually see the widespread separation of the unitive from the procreative significance of sexual love in a contraceptive culture, that would contribute to the separation of the husband from the wife in a divorce culture.

the rupturing of human nature. Without faith in God, the mind and will are disconnected from their life Source, which results in the soul no longer being in harmony with the body, relations between the sexes being damaged, and humanity being alienated from the environment.¹⁶⁴

Descartes broke with Aquinas on mind-body integrity, but John Locke went in the opposite direction, claiming there is no inherent component of human nature that mediates a person and his experience (Locke 1689).¹⁶⁵ The rationalist model of human nature sees the human mind as the immaterial person running his organic exterior physiological object, which is accidental and not essential to his being. On the other hand, the materialist model of human nature sees the human being as simply a physiologically refined animal. Since Descartes, Modernity has had three competing notions of human nature: hylomorphism and Modern versions of dualism and materialism. Hylomorphism, in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, came to be taught and defended almost exclusively by the Catholic Church as we entered the 20th century (CCC ¶¶364-366).

4.5 Redefining key terms

Contributing to the confusion that such a turn to the subject has caused was the evolving meaning of key terms, not the least of which are the Modern notions of freedom, liberty, and rights.

Perhaps John Locke's largest contribution to Modern philosophy was his view of liberty and rights. Whereas Aquinas understood liberty to mean the freedom to do the good in accord with the natural inclinations of human nature (ST II, q.57, a.1), Locke saw liberty more as the freedom to do what an autonomous person wills, with limitations only on action that would cause direct violence to another's person or

¹⁶⁴ Gn 3:17-19 shows the effects that sin has on the environment, rendering nature much more difficult to subdue and live in harmony with. The legacy of Modern world has been one of dominating nature as a solution, so as not to be dominated by it. Such a movement throws out the proverbial baby with the bath water.

¹⁶⁵ Locke was a materialist. His error was the mirror-image of that which Descartes made. The rationalist and empiricist movements in Modern philosophy are a keen illustration of what happens when the mind disintegrates the elements of the human condition by overemphasizing one vital component over another.

property¹⁶⁶; a clear break from the Scholasticism before him. In the United States and other Western countries, which garnered individualism as a primary value, this definition would become the norm.

Locke represents the Modern emphasis on negative freedom, that is, a freedom *from* rather than freedom *to*. German philosopher Otfried Höffe explains the essential differences between both sides of freedom (2020). Höffe understands the limits of concentrating on only the negative aspect of freedom and liberty:

Those who concentrate on the negative side of freedom like to bring it down to volition, to doing or not doing as we please. What they mean is more than an option we have in mind or a wish that overcomes us. What they also mean is the opportunity, preferably also the right and the power, to actualize an option. Freedom then becomes realizable potential (2020, pp. 21-22).

This is a pertinent point regarding nations and families. Freedom from external restraint had become the popular definition of liberty in the 20th century, seemingly even among Christians.

Individualist values are not necessarily family values. In the early 1990s, U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle, when running for re-election in 1991 with then-President George H.W. Bush, decided to make the return to “family values” his campaign theme.¹⁶⁷ He was lambasted by the mainstream media and characterized as a fool. Two years later, after the election, *Atlantic Magazine* placed on their cover, *Dan Quayle Was Right* (Whitehead 1993). Nonetheless, since human nature and natural law are rooted in metaphysics, and metaphysics by this time had come to be thought of as an archaic and irrelevant mode of thinking, objective morality with regard to sexual intercourse, procreation, and the family had lost its footing. In a world that inherited a cauldron of errors due to Modern philosophy, the United States and other Western

¹⁶⁶ To Locke, “[l]iberty...is the power a man has to do or forbear doing any particular action, according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the Mind, which is the same thing as to say, according as he himself wills it” (Locke 1689, book II, chapter 21, §15. Note how there is no mention of such action being in accord with the objective good of humanity’s social nature.

¹⁶⁷ Twenty years later, liberal newspapers like *The Washington Post* that usually militate against conservative values and ideas, allowed an opinion piece explaining that Quayle had been right on his crusade on family values (Sawhill 2012).

countries became wedded to a radical individualism that devalued family values and family rights. Ethically, secular moral theories were overtaking natural law as the default mode of understanding good and evil. Not only was moral relativism gaining ground, but so were consequentialist ethical theories; utilitarianism being the most popular.¹⁶⁸

Piggy-backing on Locke, when the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham became popular in the early Modern era, liberty came to be understood as freedom to do what derives pleasure rather than to do what one ought – as long as the action does not directly harm someone (Cahn 1995, p. 1171). It was inevitable that the philosophical turn to the self of Modern philosophy would gradually include the ethical turn to self. The individualist attitudes derived from the gradual disintegration of social life coincided with the rise of utilitarianism; both contributing to the eventual breakdown of the family. The ontological and moral turn to self, contradicted humanity's social nature. Since the family is the basic unit of society, and marriage is its building block, this all-important mediating buffer between the individual and the state was now under attack.

In 1907, Pope St Pius X condemned the errors of Modernism in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* as a conglomeration of all the errors of Modern philosophy. This came not too long after Pope Leo XIII in 1879 in *Aeterni Patris* called for a renewal of the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas. There was a reason for this: Cartesian rationalism, Hobbesian materialism, and Kantian subjectivism all took their toll on the philosophy of human nature, as utilitarianism and relativism did to moral philosophy. Ideas have consequences, and these consequences have consequences.

4.6 Disintegration of the family, signifying a post-Christian era

In the wake of the American and French revolutions, which centered on liberty and equality, the invention of certain technologies led to an industrial revolution that

¹⁶⁸ Utilitarianism's root word is "utility", which means usefulness. It is essentially an ethical system that values consequences of usefulness and pleasure over pain. Rather than looking at the act itself to determine moral value, as does the natural law theorist, a utilitarian looks solely at the results of the act (Mill 1863, pp. 6-26).

would change the world. It proved to be a monumental moment in history, both for the family and the social order. While family farming was common and communities were often built around mutual help and the exchange of goods and services, the world's first great revolution since the Neolithic revolution some ten thousand years ago was beginning to emerge (Cole 1961).¹⁶⁹ Means of production created capital, which was invested to produce more capital and goods for human consumption. Parents and even children left their family farms to work in the factories. The economy was reshaping, and so were families.¹⁷⁰

Societal forces began to militate against family cohesion. The separation of the husband/father from his home became the norm with the industrial revolution. Men left their homes and their families to work in factories or office buildings for the better part of the day, and sometimes for longer extended periods of time. And these social and economic pressures militated not only against family unity, but also family size. When the farm was exchanged for city life, it was no longer seen as an asset to have many children. In fact, it came to be seen as a practical liability. The *Marriage and Family Encyclopedia* summarizes it this way:

Industrialization changed the family by converting it from a unit of production into a unit of consumption, causing a decline in fertility and a transformation in the relationship between spouses and between parents and children. This change occurred unevenly and gradually, and varied by social class and occupation (n.d.).

Power and money that came via the industrial revolution proved to be dangerous, at least for the opulent class. As St Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy, the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tm 6:10). Abuses that sprung from this era were addressed in the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII (1891), a letter that included Church teaching on the meaning of work and the dignity of the human person, and contained what would become the foundation of Catholic social teaching.

¹⁶⁹ The Neolithic revolution is when humanity transitioned from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural communities (Bowles and Choi 2019).

¹⁷⁰ For a summary of the impact of industrialization and urbanization on modern life, see Boyle 2021.

While this was happening, another 19th century movement was afoot. Instead of seeking to fix the injustices of unbridled capitalism to purify the existing social order, this would be the catalyst of another revolution – one that claimed to be in favor of the worker: communism.

In 1848, as a reaction to the widespread abuses in the workplace and society at the time, along with Friedrich Engels, German philosopher Karl Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 2014). By 1917 a Bolshevik revolution was taking place in Russia that would eventually take the banner of Communism across the globe, producing hot and cold wars for decades.

In 1991, Pope St John Paul II condemned both socialism and radical capitalism in *Centesimus Annus*, emphasizing that the dignity of the human person was not served by either extreme form of social and economic life (John Paul II 1991). Both see the human person as a means to an end, to use for utilitarian benefit, while each serves a different god – the state for socialist communism and profit for extreme capitalism.

Back in the latter part of the eighteenth century, concerns over decreasing populations were also being expressed publicly. Before the so-called overpopulation scare of the 20th century, there was an underpopulation scare in Europe in the 19th century. While the industrial revolution was kicking into high gear and the advancement of medicine began to allow for longer and healthier lives, birth rates in the United States, Britain, and especially France – the most populous Catholic nation in the world – were descending (Wrigley 1985). In an industrial, rather than agrarian, society, the declining population elicited concern within the Church. French historian Philippe Aries suggested that this diminishing birth rate was the result of a new emerging mentality, fueled by Enlightenment philosophy, “the new rationalism,” that humanity can conquer nature, even his own nature, to be manipulated and perfected according to his own will (1948, p. 470). Hence, not only was the earth and its natural resources to be dominated for personal gain via capitalism, but so too the person’s own body was seen as fair game for the sake of pleasure. With the help of the dualistic philosophy of man inherited by Descartes, both earth-nature and human nature were

seen as objects for manipulation. It is reasonable to conclude that amid an industrial revolution that took families into the factories, coupled with an anthropological dualism that permeated the collective consciousness of the culture, birth control (really conception-prevention) would become an issue.

Gradually, the intentional rupture of sexual union from procreation seemed less grievous to the Christian conscience. If the body is an object to be manipulated and dominated for utilitarian purposes, and the social order no longer renders large families beneficial for their survival, then, at least to the weak in faith, contraception as a solution seemed to make sense. Theologically and catechetically, there was very little development at the time about the unitive aspect of human sexuality. Even though it was a constant teaching of the Catholic Church that interfering with the marital act ordered to the propagation of children was sinful, those without a deep supernatural faith would follow the world's reasoning, presumably unaided by grace. The temptation to space, or even avoid children through morally unlawful means was looming larger. Regardless, families, due to social pressures, were diminishing in size.

In addition to the new social order, Modern medicine enabled more people to cheat death by conquering certain diseases. People were also adopting a more mechanized notion of nature and the human body. Countries across the continent beginning with France made civil marriage legal for Catholics, divorce became more socially acceptable, and contraception gained popularity and acceptance throughout Christian Europe.¹⁷¹

It was a display of rational consistency. When beginning with a false premise, a false conclusion logically follows. When the essence of the human being is seen as the mind or spirit while the physical body is seen as a temporary physical attachment not essential to the person, the notion of two becoming one-flesh being an act of personal and permanent union becomes virtually meaningless. If the body has no intrinsic meaning as a constituent part of the person, and is seen only as an accidental appendage, it is logical to conclude that the end or purpose of sexual intercourse may be pleasure, and therefore acts of fornication, contraception, and divorce could be

¹⁷¹ See Noonan 1986, pp. 389-390 for a more elaborated hypothesis.

justified. In a highly individualistic era, in which the family and the social order were being reconstructed for a capitalist system undergirded by materialism, personal choices were seen as proper impositions of the will on one's organic machine. Individual bodies may come together in the sexual act, but persons were not joined. Each man and woman become the ultimate arbitrator of the meaning of love and life, manipulating its ends and redefining for themselves a morality of their own. With such radical individualism, the person's will is the dominant factor, not reason or faith. The individualistic tendency of the era militated against any form of necessary union that the natural order would impose. Sexual activity becomes, rather, a matter of privacy and personal choice, not to be interfered with by the state, the Church, or any other entity – regardless of the injustice or short- and long-term damage it may cause the family.

4.7 Conclusion: Disintegration and deconstruction leads to moral chaos

This is the social and religious context in which the Church found herself in Modern times. With the help of Modern philosophy, the Christian worldview has become incongruent with the newer anti-theist worldview. And the strands of thought that carried subjectivism, skepticism, cynicism, materialism, nihilism and atheism into the Modern world would begin to trickle down to the masses. As it did, and as corporate and governmental powers got involved in pushing the falsehoods about a human nature disintegrated, it had immeasurable effects on marriage and the family, relations between the sexes, and our future on the planet as a complementary binary-sexed species with reason and free will. At first the unraveling of human nature felt like freedom, as does the sinner's attempt to find fulfillment without God (exemplified in the sin of our first parents) (Gn 3:6). The creation of a new morality gleaned from a new skewed, subjective and self-centered vision of reality, felt exciting. Until, that is, the Modern project began to fall apart.

In the following chapter (5) we will look closer at this redefinition of morality, especially in how it affects sexuality and marriage in the Modern world, and then follow the inevitable breakdown of the family. More so, we will look at the Catholic Church's response to "Modernism" as it affects the family, a movement that has been condemned by the likes of Popes Gregory XVI (1832 *Mirari Vos*), Pius IX (1864a

Quanta Cura, 1864b *Syllabus of Errors*), Leo XIII (1881 *Diuturnum*, 1884 *Humanum Genus*, 1888 *Libertas Praestantissimum*, 1891 *Rerum Novarum*, 1901 *Graves de Communi Re*), and Pius X (1907 *Lamentabili Sane*, 1907 *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 1910a *Notre Charge Apostolique*, 1910b *Oath Against Modernism*.). Popes Pius XI (1925 *Quas Primas*, 1928 *Mortalium Animos*, 1937 *Divini Redemptoris*, 1930 *Casti Connubii*) and Pius XII (1951 *Address to Italian Catholic Union of Midwives*) had the added burden of dealing with a first-wave sexual revolution influenced by Margaret Sanger and her Birth Control League.¹⁷² But it was Popes Paul VI (1968, *Humanae Vitae*) and John Paul II (1995, *Familiaris Consortio*; 1997 *Theology of the Body*) that confronted the “contraception revolution” and its fallout head-on in the 20th century, in an attempt to save the family and society.

Christian faith holds that Christ (with His Church) came to restore creation to its original pristine condition, and then to elevate it into the divine life of God. This restoration primarily includes fixing what had been broken through sin, uniting and integrating all the division that sin has caused due to humanity’s separation from the Source of life and love (Gn 3:6). In the Western world, that restoration and redemption was operative in the Christian era, illustrated in the fabric of the culture and its social institutions, and grounded in the great synthesis of faith and reason in philosophy, theology, epistemology, and the study of human nature. Marriage and the family were a beneficiary of this pre-Modern movement.

However, it has been argued in this chapter that trends in Modern philosophy disintegrated and dismantled much of what had been restored in the Christian era, and deconstructed what had been rebuilt by Scholastic philosophy. In the next chapter, the disintegration and deconstruction of post-Christian modernity will be further illustrated. Its impact upon sexual relations, marriage and the family, and its ensuing moral chaos that had begun to be described in this chapter, will be more fully considered.

¹⁷² Margaret Sanger, founder of the Birth Control League, which would eventually become Planned Parenthood, spoke openly about her disdain for large families and disadvantaged children. Quotes of hers from 1920 that would never be acceptable today include, “The most merciful thing that the large family does to one of its infant members is to kill it” (Sanger 2017, ch. 5); and “The most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families. The most immoral practice of the day is breeding too many children” (Ibid.). She was a champion of artificial birth control for women.

Chapter 5: Modernity's Fruit of the Tree of Death, and the Church's Response

In the previous chapter we observed the different strands of thought born of Modern philosophy that served to dismantle the great synthesis of faith and reason achieved by the medieval scholastics. This intellectual movement, which has led to disintegration and deconstruction, may be metaphorically referred to as Modernity's tree of the knowledge of good and evil, reminiscent of the Edenic tree whose fruit held the promise of death if consumed. We discussed in the last chapter how the philosophical double-aim of the Modern project was to turn to the subject and to dominate nature – including *human* nature. This domination of the latter was made plausible first by embracing in philosophical anthropology alternatives to hylomorphism, namely materialism or dualism.

This chapter will focus on some of the deadly fruits of this philosophical tree, eventually looking squarely at one of its more consequential fruits that inaugurated a (sexual) revolution – against human nature and God – that would inevitably devolve into a culture of rationalized murder. Referring to the original forbidden fruit in Eden, God warned humanity that if they chose to consume it they would surely die (Gn 2:17). We will see here how a *new* forbidden fruit of the tree of Modern philosophy and secular science causes death – on multiple levels.

To continue the metaphor, in the new and eternal Covenant between God and humanity in Christ, the cross has become the new tree of life, which Jesus planted on Mount Calvary, and its hanging fruit of supernatural life is the incarnate Son of God – transformed from corpse to glorified God-man, and then to the sacred Host of the Eucharist. This holy fruit of divine life is able to heal and elevate human nature, weakened by sin (CCC §1129). Nonetheless, while the tree of life has been replanted in the new Eden of the Church by virtue of the new Adam's self-sacrifice on Calvary,

the tree of death remains clearly within our grasp.

5.1 A culture of death

Twenty centuries after Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, much of the world has devolved into what Pope St John Paul II called a “culture of death”. The first time he uses the term he speaks in the context of a virtual Tower of Babel being rebuilt by Modern humanity out of selfish pride:

[I]t is no less true that we are confronted by an even larger reality, which can be described as a veritable structure of sin. This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable "culture of death" (1995, §12).

This *culture of death* is marked by a profound disrespect for human life whose disdain emerges to attack the beginning and end of the human lifecycle, when individuals are in their most vulnerable states. Abortion and euthanasia are sure signs of this culture:

While it is true that the taking of life not yet born or in its final stages is sometimes marked by a mistaken sense of altruism and human compassion, it cannot be denied that such a culture of death, taken as a whole, betrays a completely individualistic concept of freedom, which ends up by becoming the freedom of "the strong" against the weak who have no choice but to submit (Ibid., §19).

The pope and future saint bemoans the utilitarian ethic that has swept through Modernity, reducing the worth of human beings to what they are able to accomplish:

We are faced with one of the more alarming symptoms of the “culture of death”, which is advancing above all in prosperous societies, marked by an attitude of excessive preoccupation with efficiency and which sees the growing number of elderly and disabled people as intolerable and too burdensome (Ibid. §64).

We can never capitulate, John Paul warns, to adopting a redefinition of freedom that turns in on itself, as mentioned in Chapter Four of this thesis:

In seeking the deepest roots of the struggle between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death”, we cannot restrict ourselves to the perverse idea of freedom ... typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism (Ibid. §21).

Despite this Modern culture of death, however, the former pope remained hopeful. In section 50 of *Evangelium Vitae*, he places things into a Christian theological perspective, referring to a great battle in which we find ourselves today, between good and evil, life and death:

[The cross] is the symbol of a great cosmic disturbance and a massive conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between life and death. Today we too find ourselves in the midst of a dramatic conflict between the “culture of death” and the “culture of life” (Ibid. §50).

Modernity has experienced wars, intentional famines, and genocides that, within the 20th century alone, have totaled around 231 million (University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Center of International and Security Studies 2006). If you add to this tragic number the intentional killings of unborn children via surgical abortion, estimated at around 50 million per year (Henshaw 1987); and then add to that the number of annual abortions that occur by abortifacient hormonal methods and the Intra-uterine device (IUD), it raises the abortion rate from 50 million a year to twelve times that amount (Kuhar 1998). These are truly untenable numbers. The amount of intentional killing of innocents performed in the 20th century and the first part of the 21st has been nothing less than astounding. These statistics point to the rationale of John Paul’s assessment that we have entered a *culture of death* and, as a result, a post-Christian era.¹⁷³

It seems apropos to note that these conclusions by John Paul came at a time when four great upheavals in the world were of distant history: the French revolution, the Bolshevik revolution, World War I and World War II. Even the Cold War between

¹⁷³ This statement is in conjunction with the layout of this thesis that divides recorded history into three distinct eras: the pre-Christian era, the Christian era, and post-Christian era. The assumption shared among faithful Christians in this particular statement is that one can no longer consider himself living in a Christian era amidst a growing international acceptance and practice of killing defenseless innocent human beings before their day of birth.

the Soviet empire and the West had been over for several years. John Paul II was not so much writing about conflicts between nations (which had certainly taken their toll) – unfortunately the like has been with us since there have been nation-states (and before that with tribal warfare) – but rather he was speaking more about a certain and deep malaise that has overtaken the spiritual and cultural ethos of the Western world, that has led to a moral, cultural, and population depression; and with it a profound disrespect for human life (1995 §18).

Author and social commentator Pat Buchanan summarized the problem succinctly:

The new hedonism seems unable to give people a reason to go on living. ... Now that all the Western empires are gone, Western Man [sic], relieved of his duty to civilize and Christianize mankind [sic], reveling in luxury in our age of self-indulgence, seems to have lost his will to live and reconciled himself to his impending death (2002).

Opulence, lack of purpose, and an underlying secular-humanist philosophy that erodes the objective meaning of life, is the dangerous social cocktail that has greeted the Western world in the 21st century. The results have not been positive. When a person, a group, a nation, or a group of nations that share a common culture lose their will to live, they become dangerous to themselves. Hence, it is no surprise that Buchanan followed up his best seller “Death of the West” with two other books, aptly titled *State of Emergency* (2007) and the *Suicide of a Superpower* (2011).

In the midst of widespread spiritual malaise and cultural depression – when objective meaning and purpose are obscured, confusion reigns, and human life itself is seen as expendable – it is the perfect time for the serpent (“*nakhash*”/נֶחֱשֶׁת) to re-enter the garden with another suicide pill. Like the first one in Genesis amidst the divine warning that “[i]f you eat it, you will surely die” (Gn 2:17), the same plan seems to be playing out today: seduce the woman and count on the man to follow – amidst the echo of the same divine warning.

We contend that the most lethal fruit of Modernity’s tree of knowledge is not the

abortion suction machine, nor the atomic bomb, although these are certainly deadly fruits; but rather the contraception *bomb*¹⁷⁴, i.e., the popular widespread use of the hormonal, so-called “birth control pill”. This is because, by rupturing the unitive from the procreative significance of the marital act, the very basic constituents of being are split, love and life; for God Himself *is* Being, which is Love (1 Jn 4:8) and Life (Jn 14:6). And creation is a reflection of His eternal and infinite essence.¹⁷⁵ The splitting of the atom, which is the basic unit of *physical* being, was just a foreshadowing of the splitting of the basic unit of *metaphysical* being, which is life-love. The intrinsically evil act of contraception (CCC §2370) causes *death*: to innocence, to the soul¹⁷⁶, to marriage, to the family (Chaput 2018), to the nation, and to the community of nations across the world suffering an underpopulation crisis from steep declines in population growth and family breakdown. This is leading to an international “*demographic winter*” (Stout 2008).

5.2 The “Pill of Death”

Like the serpent approved of the fruit of the tree of death in the prehistoric garden (Gn 3:5), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved “the pill” for use in the United States in 1960 (Junod 1998). Reminiscent of original sin, it quickly spread across the globe.

Eating from the tree of life, from which man and woman were originally invited to eat (Gn 2:9), would have preserved humanity from concupiscence, suffering and the corruption of death (Aquinas, ST, I-I, q.97, a.1). However, as conveyed in Genesis 2:17, and confirmed in St Paul’s Letter to the Romans (6:23), death is the ultimate punishment for sin. Analogous to the prototypical forbidden fruit in Genesis 3, *this* fruit of abortifacient contraception is also expressly forbidden by God – through the Magisterium of the Catholic Church¹⁷⁷, which faith tells us was established by the incarnate Son and is guided by the Spirit. In both instances with both fruits,

¹⁷⁴ The metaphor of the “bomb” stands for all the objective disorder and moral fallout due to the invention and promulgation of the contraception pill.

¹⁷⁵ This point will be broadly elaborated on in Chapter Seven.

¹⁷⁶ For the act of contraception as being intrinsically evil, cf. Pope Pius XI 1930, Pope Paul VI 1968, and CCC §2270.

¹⁷⁷ Pius XI, 1930; Paul VI, 1968; John Paul II, 1995, 2006, and others are discussed later in this chapter.

disobedience has sealed humanity's fate (Gn 3:6).

5.2.1 The continuing legacy of death

Not only do certain oral (chemical) contraceptives, subcutaneous injections, and IUDs cause early abortion (Harrison, Buskmiller, Chireau, Ruppertsberger and Yeung 2019; Barillas 2019), being responsible for countless millions of lives each year, but the contraceptive mentality that has permeated the culture due to its widespread popular usage – which in effect separates in the minds of men and women sexual intercourse from babies *and* sexual intercourse from marriage – creates a demand for abortion.¹⁷⁸ It is no coincidence that in the United States, the Supreme Court case *Griswold vs. Connecticut*, which legalized contraception, preceded by less than eight years *Roe vs. Wade*, which legalized abortion. Even more poignant, the Supreme Court decision legalizing contraception *for the unmarried* in 1972, *Eisenstadt vs. Baird*, preceded *Roe vs. Wade* by less than one year. It is very reasonable to expect that in a fallen world, once technology makes it easy to sterilize women at will, the natural and sacred link of sexual union to marriage will gradually be eroded. Following the logic, it is not difficult to see that such an unprecedented erosion of the bond between the marital act and marriage would lower moral standards considerably; causing what may be called a “fornication society”, as prophetically predicted by Pope St. Paul VI (*Humanae Vitae*, §17). And if young people no longer are encouraged by nature (pregnancy) and the greater society (shame) to wait until marriage, it is easy to see that this will, in turn, demand abortion. Spain legalized contraception in 1978 (Navarro 1984), seven years later, in 1985, abortion was legalized (Gasco 1991). More recently, Ireland legalized contraception in the 1979 Family Planning Act (Kelly 2020), which preceded by three decades Northern Ireland's decriminalized abortion in 2019 (Armitage 2022), one of the last holdouts to the great ongoing genocide of unborn children across Europe, and increasingly across the world. Argentina legalized contraception in 2002 (Sutton and Borland 2019), which laid the groundwork for its legalizing abortion in 2020 (Laje and Fox 2020).

The statistical pattern indicates that the popularization of contraception

¹⁷⁸ On contraception creating an abortion culture, see Clowes 2021.

precedes abortion in one Western country after another. It appears that disrespecting the procreative act (with contraception) inevitably leads to disrespecting the human beings that it procreates (by abortion). Further, it is unsurprising that a contraception culture that has led to a premarital sex society would engender more disrespect between the sexes, less trust, and a decreased bonding between present and future spouses. This, along with a divorce culture that followed, were all predicted by Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*, §17. In the United States, it was not long after contraception was legalized in 1965 and “the pill” popularized soon afterwards, that “no-fault divorce” became the law of the land beginning in California (Hershkowitz and Liebert, n.d.). Divorces have greatly increased as a result.¹⁷⁹

Theologian William Newton summarizes the contraception mentality this way:

Contraception, when generally accepted in a society, helps to bring about a radical change in social perceptions of sexual intercourse, human life, the human person, science, and morality in general. On account of this, contraception helps to ingrain abortion and other anti-life practices into the culture that accepts it (2015, 135-148).

He also affirms a causal relationship between contraceptive use and abortion in Spain as well as in England and Wales:

In Spain, a marked increase in the use of contraception between 1997 and 2007 (30%) was matched by a significant increase in abortion (48%). This represents an increase from 5.5 to 11.5 abortions per 1,000 women of child-bearing age (Duenãs, Lete, Bermejo, Arbat, Pérez-Campos, Martínez-Salmean, Serrano, Doval and Col 2011, 82–87).

Something similar can be seen in England and Wales, in which the use of contraception increased significantly among sexually active unmarried women between 1970 and 1990 from 26 to 97 percent (the use among married woman was already at saturation point), and this paralleled a similar increase in abortion from 8.8 to 19.9 per 1,000 women (Ibid.).

Contraception and abortion, which Pope St John Paul II called “*two fruits of the*

¹⁷⁹ In 1960, the state of California had a rate of 16% of first marriages ending in divorce. Today, since “no-fault divorce”, the rate is almost 50% (Hershkowitz and Liebert, n.d.).

same tree” (1995, §13)¹⁸⁰, have contributed significantly to the demographic crisis around the world, a depopulation crisis spreading around the world and producing the slow death of nations. Most of these used to be Christian in their heritage but have allowed Enlightenment philosophy and secular values to overtake their Christian values (Stout 2008).

5.3 The “Sexual Revolution” and the Church’s Response

Following the Council of Trent of the 16th century, Popes Pius VI, Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius XI all confirmed three basic marital doctrines that began to be formulated at Trent: 1) that Christ raised marriage to be a sacrament; 2) that there can be no contract (of marriage) without the sacrament, when both parties are baptized; and 3) as it does with the other six sacraments (Council of Trent, n.d., s. 23, c. 1-12.), the divine authority of the Church has jurisdiction over Catholic marriages. Further, the Church explicitly recognized its power in rare cases to dissolve these contracts or to declare them null and void.¹⁸¹

The Counter Reformation in the Catholic Church – through which Church teaching was defined and defended against the heterodoxic doctrines of Protestant reformers – came at a time when deconstruction and disintegration caused by Modern philosophy was beginning to take root. By the 20th century, a cauldron of post-World War II opulence, rising technology, and social change led to what sociologists and Western culture at large called *the sexual revolution*.

The term “sexual revolution” was coined by Austrian psychoanalyst and author Wilhelm Reich (Allyn 2000, p. 4). Scott Yenor, author and professor of political science at Boise State University, had this to say about the “sexual revolution”:

This transformative revolution was intentionally advanced under two distinct banners: liberalism and sexual liberation. Liberals, in the name of greater openness and progress, hoped to revoke laws that protected sexual morality. Their victories ended up

¹⁸⁰“*Despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree*” (John Paul II, 1995, §13).

¹⁸¹ *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1140-1149 relate to the Petrine and Pauline privileges. A declaration of nullity, on the other hand, recognizes a putative marriage to be invalid.

delivering a new culture of sexual liberation, the beating heart of the sexual revolution.

The theorists and scientists of the sexual revolution thought sexual repression or “civilized” sexual morality undermined human happiness. Liberation from divine proscription, parental authority, and traditional morality would, they thought, make people both happier and healthier. They succeeded in creating a much more permissive society, one which presumed, in theory at least, that any sexual expression was just as good as any other as long as it reached orgasm. Initially, they spawned the “free love” movement that has normalized sex outside of marriage. They brought about an approach to sexual education that emphasized safety and consent, instead of connecting sex to both procreation and marriage. They launched a critique of femininity that embraced sexual independence for women and attacked female modesty. No-fault divorce laws accompanied this revolution (2020).

Alain Giami explains the sexual revolution, as a “... *long-term process... founded on the cultural and scientific transformations initiated in the 1950s.*” He added:

Between 1960 and 1980, sexual liberation movements flourished in Northern countries, and gave rise to what is commonly referred to as the sexual revolution. This liberation resided in the struggle for a sexual life that was not exclusively reproductive, and that was extricated from the institution of marriage. This revolution consisted of a profound change in mentalities, values, knowledge, and behavior... (Giami 2023).

Back in the 19th century, while Christian values were still imbedded in the Western cultural landscape, the United States passed laws against sending contraceptives through the mail, importing contraceptives, and general distribution of contraception (Smith 1991, p. 5). More stringent laws against abortion were also proscribed around the time Modern science began to uncover the facts of how human reproduction works, showing that individual human beings begin their lives at conception, with the mingling and union of a sperm cell and an ovum. Gregor Mendel, was very instrumental in this scientific revolution in understanding procreation (Sootin 1959). By the year 1900, all 50 states in the American union had adopted laws that prohibited chemical or surgical abortion at any stage in a woman’s pregnancy

(Holland, n.d.).

These laws stood until the time of the *Griswold vs. Connecticut* case in 1965, when the U.S. Supreme Court decriminalized contraception – for married people. In the *Griswold* decision (Holland, n.d.), a “right to privacy” was conjured up by the justices as being constitutional, even though it is not found in the Constitution.

David Allyn, fascinated by the sexual revolution, explains the connection between the *Griswold* decision and the taking off of so-called sexual liberation:

[T]he advent of the pill and the decision in *Griswold vs. Connecticut* were both major victories for secular humanism. After 1965, of all the major religious denominations, only the Catholic Church would continue to oppose birth control. ... As sexual pleasure became distinct from reproduction in the public mind, whole new possibilities emerged for both the individual and society. It is almost impossible to overstate the impact of the pill on American culture (2000, p. 40).

The so-called right to privacy articulated in *Griswold* laid the groundwork for *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973 that legalized abortion (*Roe v. Wade* 1968), *Lawrence vs. Texas* in 2003 (*Lawrence v. Texas* 2003) that decriminalized sodomy, and *Obergefell vs. Hodges* in 2015 that legalized so-called same-sex marriage throughout this country (i.e., the United States) (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015). Logic dictates that when sexual union is delinked from procreation – which is what undergirds the *Griswold* decision – it becomes easier for the Court and the public in general to rationalize both sodomy and abortion.

To take a step back, in the latter part of the nineteenth century Pope Leo XIII wrote *Arcanum* (1880), and in 1930 Pope Pius XI published *Casti Connubii* (Pius XI 1930). Both encyclicals were about the truth and beauty of sexual intercourse and marriage. *Casti Connubii* was clearly a response to the Anglican Communion’s Lambeth Conference of 1930 (Majewski 2021). This singular conference in London opened the proverbial door a crack for the use of contraception. Until then, contraception was condemned by all Christian denominations. From that monumental

point in history, however, virtually all non-Catholic Christian ecclesial communions followed suit. The Lambeth declaration severed the universality of Christian condemnation of contraception for some 1900 years. It was not too long after this that the Catholic Church stood alone as the Christian body still condemning the practice of contraception as intrinsically evil and morally unacceptable.

5.3.1 Casti Connubii

After the Anglicans in 1930 sent shockwaves throughout Christendom, Pope Pius XI, in his straightforward manner of speaking, responded with his landmark encyclical (Pius XI 1930), confirming the constant teaching of the Catholic Church on the use of marital rights:

No reason, however grave, can be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become comfortable to nature and morally good. Since therefore the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately render it inapt for this purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious (Pius XI 1930, sec. 56).

Pius XI underscored the gravity of violating the fundamental moral principle that the conjugal act is intrinsically linked to procreation:

Any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin (Ibid. sec. 56).

Nonetheless, the pope acknowledged as good the unitive dimension of marital intercourse, as included of the secondary ends of marriage:

Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right in the proper manner although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects, new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the

quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved (Ibid. sec. 59).

The above phrase “*of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects*” (Ibid.) indicates the Holy See recognizes that post-menopausal and infertile couples may engage in marital intercourse even though there is little or no hope of conceiving a child.¹⁸² It also may also be referring to the infertile portion of a woman's monthly cycle.

The practice of abstaining from sexual union during fertile time periods in order to avoid pregnancy had been initially addressed by the Sacred Penitentiary in 1853 and 1880. It declared the practice to be morally licit. This occurred, in part, due to Auguste Lecomte's publication (1873a, col. 721)¹⁸³, which was to take a theological account of the discovery of female physiology of the ovum in 1827 by Karl Ernst von Baer (Buettner 2007). Lecomte was a theologian from Louvain who had a strong knowledge of biology. He argued that with this new knowledge of physiology, it was morally licit for couples to utilize infertile periods to avoid procreation (Lecomte 1893b). No sin against nature is committed with periodic continence. Although there would be no clear confirmation on the question for 57 years, it was explicitly treated by Pius XI in *Casti Connubii*.

5.3.2 Allocution to Midwives

Pope Pius XII continued the mission of clarifying the Church's doctrine of marriage and sexual morality with exhortations in his *Allocution to Midwives*:

Our Predecessor, Pius XI, of happy memory, in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, of December 31, 1930, once again solemnly proclaimed the fundamental law of the conjugal act and conjugal relations: that every attempt of either husband or wife in the performance of the conjugal act or in the development of its natural consequences which aims at depriving it of its inherent force and hinders the procreation of new life is immoral... (Pius XII

¹⁸² Menopause and other involuntary conditions of infertility differ morally from contraception in as much as the former are not deliberately chosen conditions; there is no intentional impeding of the unitive or procreative meaning of the marital act from its natural end.

¹⁸³ *Analecta Juris Pontificii*. Lecomte's theological account of biology influenced the decrees of the sacred Penitentiary.

1951, §21).

As Pius XI stated two decades earlier, the act is a moral absolute, meaning no intent or circumstance can ever make it a good act:

...and that no "indication" or need can convert an act which is intrinsically immoral into a moral and lawful one (Ibid.).

Pius XII reminds Catholics that natural law violations will always be evil and that we can never change their moral value:

This precept is in full force today, as it was in the past, and so it will be in the future also, and always, because it is not a simple human whim, but the expression of a natural and divine law. ... (Ibid. §22).

According to Pope Pius XII, the conjugal act is the *"admirable collaboration of the parents, of nature, and of God, from which is born a new human being in the image and likeness of God"* (Ibid. §1). One *"must know the order which the Creator wishes maintained and the laws which govern it,"* and one has *"a duty which forbids him [sic] to arrest nature's work or halt its natural development"* (Ibid. §2).

After these papal pronouncements clarifying marital sexuality, in the aftermath of two World Wars, a woman's movement that would challenge traditional roles of men and women in society was about to change the world significantly.

5.4 The politics of conjugal love

As human nature carries with it the wages of sin from the primordial fall, which is death (Rm 6:23), the post-World War II world in the 1960s began to take this curse inward: the international struggle *between* nations became more an intranational struggle *within* nations. Many elements converged in the Western world to spur on social change in various nations (Barker 2008).¹⁸⁴

In both the Church and the social ethos before that time, the natural law tenet

¹⁸⁴ As Barker mentions, much of the spirit of the movement came from student protests in colleges and universities (2008).

that marriage, sexual union, and procreation are linked as three elements of one whole had not been seriously challenged. It was not always practiced as such, but before “the pill’s” popularization it was the prevailing moral presumption that marriage, sexual intercourse, and family were one. However, when the strategy of the Sangerites¹⁸⁵ became political, the courts began to play a major role (Smith 2008, p. 35).

In the United States, at the Supreme Court level, where *Poe vs. Ullman* (1961) failed at challenging the constitutionality of anti-contraceptive laws, *Griswold vs. Connecticut* (1965) succeeded (Smith 2008, p. 85). A “right to privacy” from “the emanations of liberty” was cited by Justice Douglas (Ibid.). And although this so-called right is never mentioned in the U.S. Constitution or Bill of Rights, it was claimed by a majority of high court justices¹⁸⁶ to be “in the penumbra of specific guarantees of the Bill of Rights” (Smith 2008, p. 36). This same elusive right to privacy, still not clearly defined jurisprudentially, was again utilized eight years later in the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* case that legalized abortion (Ibid. *Roe v Wade* 1973).

In the Catholic Church, the first popular public uprising of dissent to official doctrine in Church history was about sexual morality. In 1963, articles defending oral contraceptives by three Catholic theologians appeared simultaneously in European journals.¹⁸⁷ Self-proclaimed Catholic and co-inventor of the birth control pill, John Rock wrote *The Time Has Come* (Rock 1963), wherein he challenged the Church's teaching on anti-ovulant drugs. It was the precursor for much literature in support of a change in Church teaching on contraception (Lynch 1965, p. 253).

These few voices gathering some steam led to Pope St Paul VI's famous speech on July 31, 1964, to a group of cardinals.

[There is] no adequate reason for the considering the relevant norms of Pius XII to be superseded and therefore no longer

¹⁸⁵ Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), founder of the American Birth Control League that gradually morphed into Planned Parenthood, was the mother and forerunner of the modern contraception movement (Nunez-Eddy and Lakshmeerama 2016).

¹⁸⁶ These judges included justices Warren, Douglas, Clark, Harlan, Brennan, White, and Goldberg (*Griswold v. Connecticut* 1965).

¹⁸⁷ These included Janssens 1963; Van der Marck 1963; and Reuss 1963. For further elaboration, see Smith 1991, p. 8.

obligatory; they should, therefore, be regarded as valid, as long as we do not consider in conscience obliged to modify them (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 56, 588-89).

As the birth control pill was being studied by a papal commission begun by Pope St John XXIII and expanded by Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council reminded Catholics that there had been no doctrinal change regarding contraception or abortion:

The Church issues the reminder that a true contradiction cannot exist between the divine laws pertaining to the transmission of life and those pertaining to authentic conjugal love. ...Relying on these principles, sons of the Church may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law.

All should be persuaded that human life and the task of transmitting it are not realities bound up with this world alone. Hence they cannot be measured or perceived only in terms of it, but always have a bearing on the eternal destiny of men (*Gaudium et Spes*, §51).

The papal commission created by John XXIII concluded that Pius XI's condemnation of all contraception in *Casti Connubii* was valid but wanted to study the new so-called birth control pill.¹⁸⁸ They said the mechanics of the birth control pill required greater study before any conclusions about it could be reached (Horn 2018).

Still, the doctrine that life must not be intentionally impeded in the life-making act from attaining its end was not questioned at this time, and was assumed to be immutable.

Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, with the popularization of the contraceptive pill in both married and unmarried couples, a "new morality"¹⁸⁹ set the stage for what may be the most consequential papal encyclical of Modern times: *Humanae Vitae* (Paul VI

¹⁸⁸ The oral birth control pill was new medical technology at the time, and it was not yet clear to Paul VI or his contemporaries as to whether it was contraceptive in nature or an aid to the woman's natural cycle to cooperate with her body rhythm in ways that are natural and good for the enhancement of conjugal love.

¹⁸⁹ As *Time Magazine* expressed it in the mid-1970s, "...the new morality. It is a condition in which pleasure is the principle, living in sin is no sin, and more or less anything, between consenting adults, goes" (1977).

1968).¹⁹⁰

5.4.1 *Humanae Vitae*: the magisterial dam to stop the moral tsunami

Humanae Vitae, Paul VI's controversial encyclical letter dealing directly with contraception and abortion, was published in 1968, eight years after “the pill” was marketed and sold to the public. Catholic as well as non-Catholic women had already settled into the habit of contracepting. By 1970, two years after the promulgation of the encyclical, a majority of Catholic women (two-thirds) were using “the Pill” and other morally forbidden methods of contraception; and this includes three-quarters of those under the age of 30 (PBS n.d.).

It was in this environment that the encyclical was published, on July 25, 1968, after years of anticipation from Catholic couples around the world. In it, Paul VI reaffirmed the Church's constant teaching on the immorality of contraception and abortion. It unequivocally stated that the transmission of human life through the marital act must never be intentionally impeded¹⁹¹ before or after intercourse, in anticipation or after the conception of a child (1968, §14). It was taught as an immutable moral tenet of natural law, and explained with a personalist touch, expounding on the importance of love, union, and total self-gift of one partner to the other. In short, it incorporated personalist values into traditional natural law teaching.¹⁹² In this respect, the encyclical revealed a shift at the highest level of the Church in the way she expresses her doctrine on conjugal love.

We learn from *Humanae Vitae* the marital embrace not only has primary and secondary teleological ends, but also has a double significance – a unitive and procreative dimension that expresses life-giving love, which cannot be separated. To

¹⁹⁰ This is Pope Paul VI's answer to the question of contraception, in encyclical form.

¹⁹¹ Pope Paul VI mentioned nothing about the opposite kind of intervention – to increase rather than impede the chances of conception with reproductive technologies for couples who want a child – such as in vitro fertilization. The Holy See would not need to address this issue for two more decades. Then came *Donum Vitae* (CDF 1987), which was followed two decades later by *Dignitas Personae* (2008).

¹⁹² Just the fact that Paul VI did not write with the terminology of primary and secondary ends, but rather emphasized the dual signification of the unitive and the procreative dimensions of the act, was a significant shift in focus.

intentionally rupture this double significance is to sever the image of God at its deepest level. God is Love (1 Jn 4:8) and love unites and creates. Intentionally separating the unitive love-giving aspect from the creative life-giving aspect of the conjugal act remains morally forbidden as a “*moral evil*” that is “*intrinsically wrong*” (Ibid. §14).

It has been revealed in recent years that Karol Wojtyla, the then-Archbishop of Krakow and future Pope John Paul II, may have been highly influential in Pope Paul VI’s effort to properly deal with the question of birth regulation or conception control (Galuszka 2018).¹⁹³

From the time *Humanae Vitae* was promulgated, the Church’s teaching has been rigorously challenged: intellectually through moral philosophers and theologians, and existentially through the experience and common practice of Catholic couples¹⁹⁴, at that time living in the industrialized world.¹⁹⁵ In this cultural environment it was easy to remain ignorant of the fact that condemnation of contraception was simply a reaffirmation of the Church’s constant teaching, unchanged and virtually unchallenged from the first centuries AD – until the invention of the birth control pill (Smith 2008, p. 34).

Despite proclamations of “*the new morality*” (Lunn and Lean 1964), the Church’s teaching on natural law and contraception cannot change (*Catholic Answers* 2014). Offspring is one of the three goods of marriage as taught by Augustine (410), and openness to them is essential for its validity. Even though most Catholics still reject Church teaching on contraception (Rocca 2018)¹⁹⁶, and the Church’s authority to teach infallibly on faith and morals, some non-Catholic Christians have come back to the Catholic point of view on this issue.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Galuszka (2018), lays out the case that philosopher Karol Wojtyla, was part of an inner circle of collaborators from Krakow that influenced Paul VI.

¹⁹⁴ An Apostolate study in 2007 by Mark Gray, Paul Perl and Tricia Bruce, *Marriage in the Catholic Church: A Survey of U.S. Catholics*, shows the varying views of marriage among Catholics in the 21st century, and how little interest there is in learning about marital intimacy and natural family planning.

¹⁹⁵ The industrial age was generally less conducive to large families than was the agricultural age.

¹⁹⁶ The *Wall Street Journal* summarizes earlier polls conducted by Univision and Pew Research that show an overwhelming percentage of Catholics use contraception, even among regular Mass attendees (Rocca 2018).

¹⁹⁷ It is not surprising to note that some Evangelicals have been coming to see the wisdom in the doctrine of non-contraception. The liberal *New York Times* recognized this phenomenon in 2012, when a U.S. presidential election illustrated a shift in thinking in Evangelical Protestants.

With the popularization of the pill, the term “sexual freedom” became part of the lexicon, and with this an abortion culture was demanded to support the new found “freedom”. Contraception and abortion were, and still are, lynchpins that make possible and uphold the false freedom that this kind of equality demanded.¹⁹⁸ There was a growing acceptance of solutions to social and economic problems that disregard the dignity of human life and the family.¹⁹⁹

5.4.2 The fallout

When manifested on the popular and political levels, the polarity in society came to be known in the United States as the “culture wars”.²⁰⁰ It would be played out very publicly through the political process and in the media, and more quietly within the Church. In essence, the sexual revolution was a revolution against God and the sixth precept of the natural law. It created a generation gap in the 1960's that deeply divided the World War II generation from its baby-boomer children.²⁰¹

By the 1970's and 80's, the birth control pill generation had considerable influence in public life. Conservative Catholic and former presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan spoke of a deep societal divide in his “Culture War” speech at the U.S. Republican National Convention in 1992. But by then the culture war was already decades in the making.²⁰² The cultural ethos had devolved from being undergirded by Christian values to embracing the values of secular agnosticism – from believing in objective morality to holding to new subjectivist mores based on consenting adults and

¹⁹⁸ A United Nations working group on discrimination against women declared that “[t]he right of a woman or girl to make autonomous decisions about her own body reproductive functions is at the very core of her fundamental right to equality and privacy” (2017). This purportedly means having access to contraception and abortion.

¹⁹⁹ Some of these solutions have been contraception, abortion, and euthanasia.

²⁰⁰ In an interview conducted by Politico’s Zack Stanton, he writes “*Thirty years ago sociologist James Davison Hunter popularized the term ‘culture war’ in the U.S. Today he sees it as a much more serious war than he imagined*” (2021).

²⁰¹ For a good look at American life in the 1960s with all its turbulence (Addison 2019).

²⁰² This speech at the 1992 U.S. Republican National Convention angered Republicans for two reasons: it caused a controversy that many feared could damage the party at the polls in November with more independent minded voters, and the length of the speech pushed former president Ronald Reagan’s speech out of the prime-time spotlight. Reagan was meant to be the highlight of the convention. For a good summation of Buchanan’s Culture War speech, see Sempa 2020.

a “right” to privacy.²⁰³

As the second half of the twentieth century moved into the twenty-first, the Western world saw sexual ‘revolution’ inevitably morph into a culture of death, where one of four children conceived were intentionally killed before birth in the U.S.²⁰⁴ That number increases exponentially when chemical and IUD abortions are included.²⁰⁵ Disavowing the sixth Commandment inevitably leads to disavowing the fifth, for it reasonably follows that disrespecting the life-making process would lead to disrespecting life.²⁰⁶

While sexual revolution morphing into a culture of death has been the pattern for much of the Western world in the 20th century, it is important to note that not all nations have followed this pattern. In the early 20th century, as the Communists took power in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution, they were the first nation to legalize abortion. Their Christian worldview molded by Russian Orthodoxy was exchanged for a communist atheistic world view at an accelerated rate. According to 2019 research, Russia has the world’s highest abortion rate:

In the 1960s, when the contraceptive revolution spread in the West, Russia knew little about new means of protection [sic]. There were no family planning services. According to a survey of married women of reproductive age at Moscow enterprises (1966, a sample of 1,351 people), only a quarter of the

²⁰³ In summary, the tenets of Modern philosophy rooted in the Enlightenment era were taking root among the masses in Western societies and becoming cultural norms, assisted greatly by the Modern culture-molding establishments of mass media (journalism and entertainment) and universities.

²⁰⁴ The BBC reported in 2016 that a study by the World Health Organization and Guttmacher Institute shows that about one in four pregnancies globally end in abortion (Mundasad 2016).

²⁰⁵ The American Life League estimates 14 million abortions each year in the U.S. due to common birth control pills:

Since 1965, an average of 11 million women have used abortifacient methods of birth control in the United States at any given time. Using formulas based on the way the birth control pill works, pharmacy experts project that about 14 million chemical abortions occur in the United States each year, providing a projected total well in excess of 610 million chemical abortions between 1965 and 2009 (n.d.).

Dr Bogomir Kuhar of Pharmacists for Life International estimated chemical abortions at around somewhere between 8 million and 13 million each year in the U.S. (1998).

²⁰⁶ Other factors would include the movement of the emancipation of women, the opulence of the post-WWII West, the weakening of religious doctrine, and the movement from an agrarian to an industrial and then post-industrial economy (Schneiders 2000, pp. 7-51).

respondents had never had an abortion.

Until 2007, for several decades, the annual number of abortions in Russia exceeded the number of births, and sometimes the ratio was more than two abortions for every one birth.

In 2018, the situation was already completely different: for every 100 births in Russia, there were 41 abortions (Sobolevskaya 2019).

The main thrust of the report is that the number of abortions is decreasing since newer forms of contraception have been introduced to Russian women, decades after they became popular in the West – not the least of which is the hormonal birth control pill. Two important points, however, are missing from the report. First, as mentioned in more detail above, most hormonal, contraceptive pills are abortifacients, which means they have a backup mechanism that aborts tiny fertilized ova without their mothers knowing it after they fail to attach to their mother's uterine lining due to the effect of the medication which makes the lining hostile to embryos. Secondly, there have been initiatives between Church and state in Russia with the aim of reducing abortion (Sobolevskaya 2019). One-third of Russian women seeking abortion in 2021 changed their minds after pre-abortion counseling (RIA Novosti 2021).

The way that the sexual revolution has infiltrated the Church is a travesty. Decades of scandalous silence from clergy has led many laity to fall amidst the pressure or at least question the Church's longstanding doctrine on human sexuality and conjugal life (Smith 2008, p. 34). Also, the lack of a clear defense of *Humanae Vitae* in its aftermath led Catholics to question the authority of the Church to bind consciences on matters of faith and morals. More specifically, the secular tsunami along with the sexual revolt beginning in the second half of the 20th century – and the Church's timid response as a whole to it – created doubt as to whether the Church has the authority to bind consciences on concrete moral norms, such as contraception, fornication, abortion, homosexual acts, cohabitation, and divorce and remarriage.²⁰⁷

John Paul II spent a significant portion of his pontificate elaborating on the

²⁰⁷ This references precepts under the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, with the exception of abortion, being of the fifth.

meaning of conjugal love and the language of the body that *Humanae Vitae* had begun to explore. On December 7, 1981, John Paul II continued the Church's message that love and life in the conjugal act must never be intentionally separated:

... [T]he vocation to the gift of life is inseparably connected with the vocation to love. The Church has always taught this inseparable connection: conjugal love is the source of human life, and the gift of human life requires conjugal love at its origin. It is in the light of this relationship, established by God, that we understand how the family community... is the place where love generates life and life is born of love. Neither of these two realities, that is, love and life, would be authentic if it were separated from the other (1981a, §2).

So, despite the challenges from without and the heterodoxy from within, official Church doctrine is clear as it always has been: in the twenty-first century, in an unbroken line of tradition, the successors of the apostles in union with their collegial head, the supreme pontiff, still teach that contraception, premarital sex, divorce and remarriage, and homosexual acts are all objectively wrong, even for consenting adults.²⁰⁸ These doctrines cannot change.

John Paul II attempted to speak to Modern humanity in their own language by using a phenomenological approach to marriage and human sexuality. Without ignoring human nature and traditional natural law, John Paul brought to light that the human body has an inherent language that communicates by virtue of certain acts. With sexual union, the body speaks the language of total and complete communion and commitment. If the will does not conform to this, the person is lying through their body. After this pontificate, Pope Francis expounded upon what is necessary in the day-to-day life of a married couple to ensure that conjugal love grows, and does not become inward or self-centered. In his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Francis elaborated on the meaning of the beautiful hymn of St Paul found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (Francis 2016a, ch. 4), often used in wedding liturgies. It is not only the way to follow Christ in loving one's neighbor, but it may also be seen as a recipe for a good

²⁰⁸ See then-Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith (CDF) document *Persona Humana* (1975) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, section three. Note that individual bishops and even groups of bishops can be wrong when they are not in union with the pope. Bishops are protected from error as teachers of the ordinary Magisterium when this moral union is in place.

marriage.

5.5 Encapsulation

The legacy of Modern philosophy stemming from the “Enlightenment” age has been ubiquitous for the contemporary world. Its influence has reintroduced a new skepticism, cynicism, materialism, hedonism, relativism, nihilism, and general atheism to Modernity, leaving humanity to flounder like a ship without an anchor or compass. We have come to the point when people are no longer certain of what “gender” they are; and this latest domino to fall that bridges our age of insanity with the sexual revolution is no longer just a foolish fad.

In this chapter, we have seen how the invention of the birth control pill and the popularization of contraception have laid the foundation for this revolution, that was to change attitudes about sexual intercourse, male-female relations, marriage, and the family. And since the sexual revolution devolved into a culture of death, attitudes about human life have descended to barbaric levels, particularly toward the most vulnerable humans, those who are currently in their prenatal stage of life.

We have spoken about how dreadfully the Catholic Church has responded to the secular onslaught of the past 50 years, particularly through the deafening silence coming forth from the pulpits and with watered-down catechesis. By virtue of taking “the pill”, which the Church condemned in *Humanae Vitae*, Catholics contributed to the degradation of marriage by fornicating as any other group of people²⁰⁹ – despite

²⁰⁹ In a Roper poll in 1939, only 10% of respondents thought premarital sex was morally acceptable. By 2016 a General Social Survey from the University of Chicago found that number was up to 74% (Bowman 2018).

As for activity, by the 1990s it was unusual for young people to wait for sexual union until marriage. Sociologist Pierre Hegy finds:

According to the General Social Survey (a yearly survey), the condemnation of premarital sex as always wrong dropped among Catholics from 75% in 1962 to about 17% in 1992, but to 22% among Protestants (these percentages would be lower today [in 1998], and much lower among young people)... indeed the very topics of chastity, masturbation, and homosexuality have become non-issues, for students and researchers alike” (Hegy in Kaczor 1999).

Church doctrine and despite the fact that it affects one's ability to bond to one's future spouse. Indeed, one recent survey links premarital sex to increased divorced rates (Wolfinger 2016), while another related survey has unmarried Catholics engaging in fornication in considerably *larger* numbers than unmarried Protestants.²¹⁰

If marriage and the family is to survive, the Church must be true to her beliefs, and the disconnect between faith and life cannot stand. In the next chapter, we begin to build a philosophical framework on our journey toward offering a solution. As Medieval philosophy synthesized faith and reason, the following chapter will attempt to synthesize natural law and personalism, to offer a cogent understanding of the depth of becoming one flesh. And similar to the inspired boost that Scholastic philosophy gave the Catholic Church, and through it the world, there is hope that this synthesis will eventually provide a fresh perspective for the Church militant to fight the enemies of truth and love with more clarity and vigor. Afterward, in order to rejuvenate discussion on male-female relations, we will proffer a philosophy of one-flesh union that links human nature and personhood with sexuality, marriage and the family, forming one orderly and harmonious whole reflecting the Trinity.

²¹⁰ *“Many Catholics do not follow the Church’s teaching. One study found that unmarried Catholics were about twice as likely as unmarried Protestants to have engaged in sex during the previous year”* (Kaczor 1999).

Chapter 6: Fusing Natural Law and Personalism: a philosophical foundation on which to build

In recent chapters we have looked at some of the effects of Modern philosophy on the Western world, particularly on relations between the sexes, marriage, and the family. In short, we saw how Enlightenment-era philosophy prompted disintegration and deconstruction of being – and led to a separation of reason from faith, the individual from the community, and sundered the person from their own nature. It has had a corrosive effect on how we value human life and the basic unit of human society, the family.

We saw in the last chapter how errors in Modern philosophy helped create a false freedom that contributed to an intellectual foundation that would justify the redefining of sexual intercourse and the replacement of its end, from permanent union and procreation to utilitarian pleasure. Radical individualism and unhealthy skepticism coupled with amoral scientific technology helped launch the advent of a sexual revolution that inevitably devolved into a culture of death. We saw how the breakdown of the basic building block of society, the family, began to unravel; and we were able to trace how all this disintegration of thought and basic confusion led to an epidemic of sex addiction, a loss of supernatural faith, and the culmination of an abortion holocaust that extended across the globe, which encompasses some 73 million prenatal homicides each year (Guttmacher 2022a). It is safe to say we have entered a post-Christian era when traditional ideas of human nature have been discarded, sexual activity has been de-lined to marriage and family, and human life has become a commodity of which we are the ultimate arbiters.

In the last chapter we also saw how the Catholic Church officially responded to some of these great problems born out of Modern philosophy, particularly pertaining to sexual morality and marriage. Much of this reaction was defensive, not offensive, and saw the Magisterium condemning errors of Modernism while defending Church

doctrine from its onslaught.

The Church, we must add, has yet to articulate a comprehensive alternative philosophical framework on which to understand the essence of the human person and the meaning of marriage, sex and family; other than, perhaps, Pope St John Paul II's "theology of the body" (John Paul II 1997), which is philosophically rooted in his earlier work, *Love and Responsibility* (Wojtyla 1993).

In this chapter, we offer a particular school of thought, recently proposed by philosopher Peter Kreeft, that will conjoin traditional Thomism with philosophical personalism. The argument is made that while the human being is an individual substance of a rational nature, he also has a distinct and unique personhood that is ordered to communion with others in the exchange of life-giving love. In marriage this translates into unity and procreativity. This metaphysical personalism will provide an intellectual foundation for a fresh way of understanding the objective meaning and purpose of personhood, sexuality and marriage, for consideration in the next chapter.

This merger of the concepts of nature and person, ordered to the relational exchange of love and life, joins two great schools of thought that provide a balance of the *natural* and the *personal* in philosophical anthropology. It is a merger needed in within the intellectual milieu of deconstructionism and subjectivism. As Peter Kreeft says of this potential union,

It's about what I consider the highest achievements of *premodern* philosophy, which is the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas ... and the highest achievement of *modern* philosophy, which is, to my mind, the anthropology of personalism (2023).

One of Kreeft's mentors, W. Norris Clarke, S.J., believes Aquinas implicitly began this process, which lays the foundation for a personalist complement to metaphysics (1993, p. 9). Clarke claims that although Aquinas' essentialist claim, borrowed from Boethius (n.d.), is that the human person is an individual substance of a rational nature (Aquinas, ST, I, I, q. 29, a. 4), he also had an understanding of being as not only substantive and self-contained, but also self-diffusive (Clarke 1993, p. 10).

Hence, he claims that in the thought of Aquinas, not only are all things in the act of being, but they naturally seek perfection as being part of a greater system:

This innate fecundity and generosity proper to being as existent, by which it is naturally self-communicating to others, is St. Thomas' way of integrating into his own metaphysics of being the rich Platonic and neo-Platonic tradition of the self-diffusiveness of the good. Existence itself (*esse*) now becomes for Thomas the ultimate root of all perfection, with unity and goodness as its transubstantial properties or attributes, facets of the inexhaustible richness of being itself (*Ibid.*).²¹¹

The dynamism of unity and goodness permeates all beings. Along with truth and beauty, they are included as transcendental properties of all beings. Relatedly, the dynamism of unity and goodness or self-diffusiveness translates into marriage and family as its unitive and procreative properties – the double significance of marriage, and more specifically, the marital act (Paul VI 1968, §12).

This chapter will attempt to combine nature and person in a way that is better able to communicate *what* we are as human beings with *who* we are as spiritual persons – called to love as God loves. We take a particular look at the personalism of Pope St John Paul II as it organically blossoms out of the metaphysical philosophy of human nature taught by St Thomas Aquinas.²¹² This chapter is dedicated to this combination, or more specifically this harmonious blending, of the thought of these two great Catholic philosophical giants of the past millennium – Aquinas and Wojtyla – in order to provide a philosophical platform on which to offer a fruitful reflection of a one-flesh theology, which will be explored in Chapter Seven.

6.1 Redeeming philosophy

In the 21st century, the truth and goodness of sexuality, marriage, and the family

²¹¹ It is also worth noting that Bernhard-Thomas Blankenhorn, O.P., in responding to Clarke's assessment, saw Aquinas as subordinating the good as *self-diffusive* to the good as *final cause*. This way, he claims, Aquinas could keep the act of creation to be a free act of God's eternal will rather than a necessary and involuntary act necessarily emanating from His divine goodness (2002, p. 803).

²¹² This is something, in this author's opinion, whose time has come.

has become obscured, particularly within the minds of the young²¹³, many of whom have been formed in broken homes²¹⁴, whose intellectual and moral formation has been highly influenced by the hedonism and materialism that permeates mass media, the liberal academic establishment, radical feminism, gender ideology, internet pornography, seductive advertising, and other elements of the contemporary world contributing to the unleashing of the passions and the breakdown of the family. As the world enters its third generation of sexual revolution against God, many living Westerners have lost sight of the objective meaning and purpose of not only human sexuality and marriage, but of human nature itself. The ideology of the age has all but rejected the notion of human nature, and has replaced it with a skewed notion of human freedom – a “freedom” to create one’s own reality.²¹⁵ To the contemporary world, human nature no longer refers to a common essence or way of being shared by every member of the human species. This inward-looking individualistic self-understanding has devolved from its intellectual zenith of scholastic philosophy, having been slowly diminished by the influence of Ockham’s nominalism, Descartes’ dualism, Kant’s subjective “Copernican Revolution” in epistemology, the various schools of rationalism, empiricism, fideism, existentialism and deconstructionism – all of which, at best, reduce human nature to its smallest component, as physical science reduces

²¹³ A group of seven medical and social service professionals surveyed over 4200 adolescents and found more than 9% were “*gender diverse youth*”, i.e., so-called transgender or nonbinary (Szoko, Sequeira, Coulter, Kobey, Ridenour, Burnett and Kidd 2023, pp. 153-155). According to a 2021 Gallup Poll, some 20% of ‘Generation Z’ (those born between 1997 and 2002) claimed to be “LGBT”. That can be compared to 1.3% of those born before 1946 (Jones 2023). Dale O’Leary, believes much of the confusion stems from the nefarious agenda of the contemporary feminist movement, as she explains:

I find the feminist theory of female universal oppression insulting. I simply refuse to believe that all my foremothers and all the women of the world had been so stupid that they had allowed themselves to be enslaved and abused, or that all the men in the world were so smart that they had been able to create this massive conspiracy. (1997, p. 13).

²¹⁴ Patrick Fagan of the Heritage Foundation writes:

It has become clear that federal policies over the past three decades have promoted Welfare dependency and single-parent families over married parents while frittering away the benefits of a vigorous free market and strong economy. Today, the economic and social future of children in the poor and the middle class is being undermined by a culture that promotes teenage sex, divorce, cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock birth (1999).

Fagan was referring to the United States, but its gist could be extended to all developed countries.

²¹⁵ Being of the majority opinion in the 1992 U.S. Supreme decision of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote: “[a]t the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life” (Kennedy in Goldstein 1997)

people to atoms, which often ends up emphasizing one aspect of human nature while ignoring the others.

Unlike the Western world, most Eastern and Southern cultures seemed to have maintained a worldview in which community and family life remained at their center. Ubuntu philosophy, for example, entrenched throughout sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizes collectivism over individualism.²¹⁶ It is encapsulated in the maxim, “*I am because we are*” (Ramosé 1999), reflecting a oneness of being where the human and divine are inseparably related.

All persons live in community – familial and social – but the focus of essence vs. person is a fascinating one that can be traced to the two aspects of God in His oneness and threeness. More of this line of thought will be expounded in the following chapter. Nonetheless, Modern philosophy influenced the Western world toward a more radical individualism, which prompts people to the extreme measure of creating their own identities and moral codes – irrespective of objective truth knowable to common sense and right reason. Personal autonomy and personal freedom — independent of an objective order of nature — are what is valued and prioritized in liberal societies.

In Chapter Four we referred to this kind of thinking as emblematic of the inauguration of a post-Christian, post-reason era. This is mainly because by rejecting the *Logos* (Jn 1:1), who *is* Reason, reason itself is rejected. And when reason is replaced by desire and passion, objective truth, with which we are created to be aligned, is lost, and human fulfillment sacrificed. Reminiscent of Genesis 3:5, when humanity chose to ‘be their own gods’ at the prompting of the serpent, we attempt to create our own reality and morality comfortable to us rather than to discover and conform to the reality that actually exists.

Without a concrete understanding of human nature and natural law, we are left with an enormous void to fill. By virtue of the human intellect darkened due to original sin, to fill that void humanity has generally tended metaphorically toward Hegelian-like

²¹⁶ The word “*ubuntu*” originates from the Nguni language group, translated as “*humanity towards others.*” (*New World Encyclopedia*).

“pendulum thinking ” between the two poles of a paradox, choosing one side over the other until the pendulum swings in the opposite direction. The two extremes of the human social order, for example, are collectivism and individualism; the former being common to pre-Christians and the latter to post-Christians. Finding and remaining on the proper balance has never been easy for post-lapsarian humanity.

Natural law metaphysics provides the foundation for that balance. But it may not be enough. To fully account for the objective and subjective orders, an appreciation of the internal personal realm is in order. Before embarking on the project to elucidate the organic union between traditional philosophy of human nature and distinct personhood, let us first look a little closer at the foundation itself, which is the relationship between human nature and natural law.

While natural law was conceived by the ancient Greeks, it was elevated, ‘Christianized’ and ‘perfected’ by Scholastic philosophy. Respect for the sacredness and inviolability of the human person, with all its propensities, goods and rights, was born from this Christian heritage (Kretzmer 2002, p. 81), which permeated Western civilization. One can surmise that placing such a high value on human life and human dignity was the fruit of supernatural faith in the Source of all, who created us in His image and likeness (Gn 1:26-27), God, from whose necessary being all things participate (Aquinas, ST I, q. 44, a. 1).

6.2 Human nature

The traditional Catholic view of natural law is an intrinsic law written on every human heart (Rom 2:15; Aquinas, ST I, q. 94, a. 6; CCC ¶1954), based on human nature, which is accessible through reason. A primary source for understanding human nature is Aquinas’ philosophical anthropology in his *Treatise on Man* [sic], near the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae* (ST i-I, qq. 75-102).

Human nature as understood by St Thomas, and the Catholic tradition by extension, begins with the human person as a composite substance of soul and body, its spiritual and corporeal components (ST I, q. 75, a. 1). This composite is both animal and spiritual, earthly and heavenly; that is, one part is similar to beasts, the other to

angels. As a hylomorphic union of body and soul, with the spiritual soul informing the material body, human beings do not live simply by instinct as do the other animals; nor do they acquire immediate conceptual knowledge as do the angels (ST I, q. 54, a. 4). Rather, the human being is somewhat of a bridge between earth and heaven; between time and eternity.

Aquinas began his *Treatise on Man* by considering the nature of the human soul. In the first part of the treatise (ST I, q. 75, a. 1) Aquinas quotes Augustine of Hippo who said that the human soul is simple; it does not occupy space by bulk (Augustine, *De Trinitate* vi, 6). Aquinas explains that the soul is the principle of life in a living body (ST I, q. 76). If the body were the first principle as such, *every* body would be living; and that is not so. Therefore, there must be an incorporeal principle that animates certain bodies, which is not a body in itself. Following this Aristotelian point, Aquinas held that plants, animals, and humans all have souls (ST I, q. 75, art. 1).

Nevertheless, specific to the human soul is its operation *per se*, distinct from the operations of the body (ST I, q. 75, art. 3). While the senses grasp particular material objects, the intellectual soul can abstract essences from these concrete particulars in order to understand its quiddity.²¹⁷ While non-human animal souls are the life principles of their bodies, they have no *per se* operations apart from the animal's bodily physiology. With no *per se* operations distinct from body function, particularly having no understanding, reason, or free will, the sensitive souls of non-human animals are not spiritual, they are not subsistent, and do not survive bodily death (ST I, q. 75, a. 3). The human soul, however, has *per se* operations of reason and free will that do not spring from the physicality of the body. Since the intellectual soul operates *per se* distinct from bodily organs, Aquinas claims, the soul of the human being is immaterial and subsistent (ST I, q. 75, a. 2).

Since the human soul is found to be spiritual and subsistent, it is incorruptible (ST I, q. 75, a. 6). However, the human soul is not of the same genre as an angelic spirit (ST I, q. 75, a. 7), whose essence and substance is pure spirit. The soul is incorruptible, since it is not material and does not disintegrate at death like physical

²¹⁷ "Quiddity" refers to a substance's *whatness*.

bodies do with their complexity of matter. Rather, Aquinas teaches, the soul by its nature is incorruptible and survives bodily death, for it is impossible for a subsistent form, like the human soul, by its nature to cease to exist (ST I, q. 75, a. 7), without a special divine act of annihilation. Greek philosophers and thinkers from various traditions around the world had come to this conclusion through the light of reason (Aristotle, *De Anima*).²¹⁸ And, trans-historically, people who practice pagan ancestor worship seem to know this through spiritual intuition (Steadman, Palmer and Tilley 1996, pp. 63-76). Yet, even though this spiritual component of the human being is subsistent, it is not a substance in itself. The human being is one substance, not two, a single union of spiritual soul informing physical body. The spiritual soul is not a complete being-in-itself, like a spiritual angel is. Tangentially, a disembodied soul in heaven, hell or purgatory is not properly speaking a human being, but rather a human soul.

In Book I, article 7 of question 75, Aquinas explains how this spiritual component of the human being, which is subsistent but not a substance, is essentially different from the essence of an angel. Since humans are material beings all sharing one essential form, there is no difference in species between human individuals. Each shares the one essence, *humanity*, which forms one species, the human.²¹⁹

In the following question, 76, Aquinas uses Aristotelian metaphysics to argue how the intellectual principle of the human being, the personal soul, is the form of the body. He elaborates on the three levels of life, or soul, in the human person – the *vegetative*, *sensate*, and *intellectual*. The human being encapsulates all three genres of life on earth – including that of the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom. Topping off the vegetative and sensate levels of soul is the highest part of human nature: the intellectual soul, or rational life.

In qq. 77-83, Aquinas elaborates on these powers of the human soul, culminating in intellect and will.

²¹⁸ See also Plato 2010, in which Socrates sees death as a freeing of the soul from its prison-like state to the body, where it will be fulfilled in the realm of forms.

²¹⁹ The scientific name for our species is *homo sapiens*, meaning “wise man” in Greek.

In qq. 84-89, he takes up epistemology, as he considers how the human soul obtains knowledge. Human beings are able not only to perceive things, like other animals, but to understand what the things are (ST I, q. 85, a. 1). Unlike angels, human knowing begins with sense perception, which creates phantasms, or images in the brain. From these, the intellect is able to abstract essences from the phantasms to understand universal forms from particular objects (ST I, q. 75, a. 7).

The *Summa Theologiae* Part I, question 89 focuses on separated souls, the dead whose souls are still alive in Christ. Aquinas explains that separated human souls still exist but are not complete human beings. A human being is a human soul informing matter into a human body. And since it is normative for a human being to gain knowledge first through the senses, the separated soul gains no new knowledge from concrete particulars, but only knowledge of spiritual substances; yet in a clouded, unclear way (ST I, q. 89, a. 3). The intellectual soul is the principle of reason that understands immaterial objects like concepts and ideas without the aid of the material body. It is then able to judge propositions, and argue to their conclusions – all of which are activities unique to the human being via the spiritual soul.²²⁰ Therefore, it makes sense that when separated from the body, the soul maintains the intellectual knowledge it had while the person was alive (ST I, q. 89, a. 5). Any knowledge it may gain in heaven cannot be obtained by its own power, but of divine assistance, derived from divine light (ST I, q. 75, a. 7), by virtue of being in the fullness of the essence of God. Of its own power, the separated soul cannot know anything new in a natural or clear manner, in the way angels do (ST I, q. 75, a. 3).

In q. 93, art. 3, Aquinas tackles the question on which is the more perfect image of God – angels or humans. In typical Thomistic fashion, he makes fine distinctions. In as much as angels naturally possess intellect for immediate conceptual knowledge, angels more perfectly image God. On the other hand, he asserts, in “*accidental qualities*” humans more perfectly image God. This is because with humans, one person proceeds from another as the Son eternally proceeds from the Father.

²²⁰ This illustrates the three acts of the mind. In the *Apologia*, Socrates used the three acts to defend himself against false allegations of corrupting the youth. Aquinas routinely refers to them when extrapolating on the powers of the intellect.

... in man [sic] a certain imitation of God, consisting in the fact that man proceeds from man, as God from God; and also in the fact that the whole human soul is in the whole body, and again in every part, as God is in regard to the whole world (ST I, q. 93, a. 3).

Aquinas notes here that generation of persons is not found in angels, but only in humans reflecting the ineffable mystery of “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God*”.²²¹ Here we see traces of a Trinitarian theology not fully developed in Aquinas, a theology that incorporates the processions, in that Adam begets Eve as the Father begets the Son, and the offspring proceeds from man and woman as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Nevertheless, Aquinas concedes that angels are more perfectly in the image of God than humans are by virtue of their intellectual nature:

[W]e must grant that, absolutely speaking, the angels are more to the image of God than man is, but that in some respects man is more like to God. (ST I, q. 93, a. 3).

In the fourth article of question 93 of the *Prima Pars*, Aquinas argues that the image of God is present in each individual human being, male and female. Both share in God’s image by possessing an intellectual soul (ST I, q. 93, a. 9). Plants and other animals share a likeness to God in the way of trace, but do not image God (ST I, q. 93, art. 6). Aquinas takes up the question of whether this image reflects God’s singular essence only or also His Trinity of Persons. Using Hilary of Poitiers as a source (n.d., book IV), Aquinas speaks in the affirmative that man’s image is both essential and tri-personal (ST I, q. 93, art. 5). However, in the sixth article, he indicates the image of the tri-personal God is limited to the individual; to his or her mind. Next chapter we will build on that thought by including this Trinitarian image as being also etched in the human family as a communion of persons.

In question seven, Aquinas concurs with Augustine in *On the Trinity (De Trinitate)*, book IX, that God’s image chiefly exists in the acts of the human soul, particularly in mind, knowledge, and love. In the second objection of article 6,

²²¹ From the Nicene Creed, describing the eternal Son.

considering God's image representing a plurality of persons, Augustine is mentioned as saying that some people consider that each human person would represent just one of the divine Persons. Aquinas calls this notion "absurd" (ST I, q. 93, art. 6, reply obj. 2). By quoting Augustine in *De Trin. XII, 5*, Aquinas steers clear of calling God's Trinitarian image a reflection of marriage and the family, pointing to Augustine's refutation of those claiming the woman images the Holy Spirit and children image the Son (Ibid.).

It is curious that Augustine and Aquinas, two Doctors of the Church, did not appear open to exploring the possibility that God's image may be found in *both* the individual human soul *and* in the communion of persons of the family. Centuries later Pope St John Paul II would connect some of those loose ends in his *Familiaris Consortio* (1981b), and theology of the body. We will offer a both/and solution in Chapter Seven to this question of God's image: the individual human being images God in his intellect and will, and the human family images God as a communion of persons sharing life-giving love.

6.2.1 Natural law

As mentioned above, natural law is born of metaphysical speculation and analysis. It is based on the human being's ability to understand himself and the goods that properly satisfy his inclinations. This is rooted in the inherent gift of reason and self-reflection, without which our human nature would be unintelligible.

Natural law has a long history. It was embraced in its embryonic stages by pre-Christian thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, and the Stoics (Hill 2016, pp. 34-35, 50-51). These ancient thought leaders understood virtue as the mean between two extremes that leads to teleological ends that satisfy, bringing about fulfillment and flourishing.²²² Anaxagoras, a sixth century pre-Socratic Greek philosopher known for being an atheist in a polytheistic world, believed in the concept of *Nous* (νοῦς) – an overarching mind or ordering force that is behind the universe (Ibid., pp. 24, 55, 87). Similarly, two centuries later the Stoics, known to be pantheist in

²²² For a good explanation of virtue ethics and how practicing the mean between two extremes of behavior lead to human flourishing, see Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle 1987).

their philosophy of life, adopted a similar concept called *Logos* [Λογος] (Ibid., pp. 50-56), resuscitated from the pre-Socratic Heraclitus who was otherwise known for his belief that everything was in flux and constant change (Heraclitus 1954, p. 19).

These notions of *Nous* and *Logos* hinted at the pre-Socratic world of Greek philosophy reaching beyond sense experience and its usual mythic and poetic explanations of human experience. Through this ordering principle of the cosmos, referred to as the *Logos*, the Stoics gave us natural law (Hill 2016, p. 56).

Roman statesman and philosopher Cicero in the first century B.C. summed up natural law like this:

Law is right reason in harmony with nature. It is spread through the whole community unchanging and eternal, calling people to their duty by its commands, and deterring them from wrongdoing by its prohibitions... The law cannot be countermanded, nor can it be amended, nor can it be totally rescinded... There will not be one such law in Rome and another in Athens, one now and another in the future, but all peoples at all times will be embraced by a single and eternal and unchangeable law (Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Republic* 3.33).

Natural law ethics, as iterated above, can be discovered through natural human reason and need not have any particular religious foundation from which to draw.

After Socrates and Plato replaced the common mythical and poetic pre-Socratic accounting of the world with reason and logic, ethical reasoning gained a foothold in ancient Greek philosophy. Aristotelian metaphysics gave natural law thinking a new shape, by placing Plato's forms within the concrete particular substances of the natural world (Aristotle 1991, Bk. 7, pp. 131-166). Thus, the human being, according to Aristotle, had a composite nature of a material body informed by a rational soul, which raises humanity above the level of irrational beasts (Aristotle 1994). In Aristotelian realism, the human body with its anatomy and physiology became an integral part of human nature, whose teleological ends cannot be contradicted (Ibid.). The end of earthly life was no longer seen as becoming free of the prison-like state of the body to live in forever in the immaterial world of ideals, as Socrates and Plato held. Rather,

with post-Aristotelian natural law, one's bodily nature was understood to have objective meaning as a constituent part of the human person.

In short, natural law took shape as the human being's mode of operation based on his or her bodily and spiritual nature, as sharing in the essence of 'humanity'. Aquinas would later concur with Cicero that the human being participates in the eternal law as a rational being (ST, I-II, 91, 2; 93, 6). And as a rational creature, the human being must freely choose to operate according to his or her essential nature to attain human flourishing and fulfillment (ST, I-II, 94, 4), as is the case with every individual within a species of being.

Traditional natural law theory is understood to be objective, discernible through reason²²³, and universally applicable – since all members of the human species share a common human nature. Goods are those acts and objects that properly satisfy natural human inclinations and fulfill teleological ends²²⁴, which the rational souls must freely choose. The basic ends, goods, and rights of each person to pursue those goods apply to all members of the human species; and theologically speaking, this applies to all descendants of Adam – regardless of sex, race, religion, culture, place or time.

When the Gospel of John in the New Testament, written at the end of the first century A.D., took up the Stoic notion of *Logos* by applying it to the second Person of God²²⁵, it was a first step in natural law reasoning being Christianized. The *Nous* or *Logos* of the ancient Greeks was understood to be the Mediator through which one is able to see the world as it is, including the truth of our being (Hill 2016, pp. 55-56). The Common Doctor²²⁶, St. Thomas Aquinas, in the thirteenth century synthesized faith

²²³ According to St Paul, all people are responsible before God, not only the faithful, for to some degree the created order reveals the will of God in every human heart (Rom 1:19-20). See also, Pope Pius IX, *Dei Filius*, Ch 4, §3.

²²⁴ Stemming from Aristotle (*The Metaphysics*), Scholastic thought held that a being's essence contained a certain *modus operandi* expressing its nature, that when operated properly would lead to its flourishing and fulfillment. See also Rice 1993, pp. 31, 223.

²²⁵ In John 1, the Evangelist begins by explaining that the eternal *Logos*, usually translated as "Word", became incarnate in taking on a human nature.

²²⁶ An honorary title traditionally given to St Thomas Aquinas as being the doctor of doctors of the Catholic Church (Miller 2010). In the words of Pope Leo XIII, "[a]mong the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all towers Thomas Aquinas, who, as Cajetan observes, because 'he most venerated the ancient doctors of the Church, in a certain way seems to have inherited the intellect of all' " (Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, §17.)

with reason, and surmised that natural law is how humanity participates in the truth and love that emanates from the eternal essence of the tri-personal God – who is Being (Ex 3:14), Truth (Jn 14:6) and Love (Jn 14:6). This eternal law permeates and governs all creation. For those made in God's image, reason can discern the dictates of natural law. For Aristotle as well as Aquinas, *eudaemonia*, which is often translated as *happiness* but is more adequately translated as human *fulfillment* or *flourishing*, can be attained through living the virtues²²⁷, and in contemplation (Aristotle 1987). In Aquinas it is completed in the beatific vision (ST I-II, 62, 2.). Aquinas held that while virtue and contemplation lead toward satisfying humanity's natural end, union with God after death brings about humanity's ultimate, *supernatural* end: intimate union with God, which satisfies and fulfills the totality of humanity's spiritual nature.

Natural law as perfected in Aquinas is seen to have primary and secondary precepts. The first fundamental law of practical reason is to do good and avoid evil (ST I-II, 94, a. 2). Everybody knows this, even the uneducated child with no moral formation. When children play games together, or when a parent favors one child over another, it is not long after such a perceived injustice occurs that a child will proclaim, "that's not fair!" This is because the primary precepts of natural law are written on every human heart and is detectable even in immature intellects. Nobody of sound mind believes it is best to avoid good and do evil, even if they have chosen to do evil for selfish reasons. The *Catechism* reinforces this idea that the basic precepts of natural law are known universally to people of all faiths:

By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man [sic] is endowed with freedom, an "outstanding manifestation of the divine image." By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil." Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor (CCC §§1705-1706).

Although virtually everyone concurs with this primary fundamental precept, the further we move from this foundation of natural law into its secondary precepts, the

²²⁷ For the Christian, the natural virtues are not enough. The theological virtues must be part of the equation in order to add the supernatural dimension of happiness and to elevate the natural influences of virtue (Aquinas, ST I-II, 62, 1-4).

more disagreement there will be. The primary tenets that begin to define what is actually good and what is evil are easy to see and most human societies have lived by them. But secondary precepts that spring forth from the primary seem more ambiguous to unaided reason. Stealing, lying, murder, committing adultery and disrespecting authority are valued by no known society. Nonetheless, in various cultures these easy-to-see precepts, encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, are not universally practiced and applied in the same manner. And as the precepts become more remote from the primary law of promoting the good, there is considerable disagreement. For example, the act of speaking an untruth to spare someone's feelings, particular acts of civil disobedience, and the act of marital contraception are all examples of secondary precepts that are not easily seen by the masses as contributing to the good of the individual and the common good, but result in disagreement among people of good will.

As a general prescription for human fulfillment, Aquinas lays out four primary positive precepts of the natural law that correspond to the four basic dimensions of human nature: preserve life, procreate, learn truth, and contribute to society (ST I-II, 94, 2). These correspond to biological, familial, intellectual, and social life, respectively (ibid.). Acts that enable these aspects of human nature to flourish are good; and those which contradict this end are evil. However, because of the imperfections in human nature and in the world that distort cultural mores and values, these goods are not always lucid to the human mind. Although some secondary precepts of natural law can be difficult to comprehend, and therefore personal culpability may be mitigated, all precepts of natural law are applicable to, and binding on, all human beings (ST I-II, 94, 4).

Natural law, therefore, is the law, or "way", of human nature to operate in order to realize its fulfillment. It is the way by which the rational animal is meant to flourish. Nevertheless, the natural law tradition focuses on the "what" of the human being, not the "who". One's unique who-ness was somewhat neglected in the rich intellectual tradition of natural law, which emphasized the common what-ness of our nature. Both dimensions of our being, our natural and our personal dimensions, are vitally important.

6.3 The personal nature of human beings

With Aquinas as the standard-bearer for Catholic thought since medieval times on the nature of the human person, the metaphysical notion of the human as a body-soul composite imaging God with intellect and will has withstood the test of time. The Church continues to hold to this doctrine that the human being is one substance, a hylomorphic union of soul and body²²⁸, which is separated at death as a result of sin (Gn 2:17; Rm 6:23). Nevertheless, the emphasis on what it means to be God's image in Catholic philosophy through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had gradually shifted in emphasis, from *nature* to *person*; from the objective common *what* of human *nature* to the subjective unique *who* of human *personhood*. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* underscores this:

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He [sic] is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead (§357).

As long as the focus on personal subjectivity does not divorce itself from the shared common human nature, it could make a positive contribution to Christian anthropology.

Popular movements in philosophy during the 19th and 20th centuries before Karol Wojtyla made his contribution of phenomenological personhood include pragmatism, existentialism, and analytic philosophy. Pragmatism as a school of

²²⁸ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §365 confirms what was defined at the Council of Vienne in 1312, the latter of which states:

With the approval of the said council, we reject as erroneous and contrary to the truth of the catholic faith every doctrine or proposition rashly asserting that the substance of the rational or intellectual soul is not of itself and essentially the form of the human body, or casting doubt on this matter. In order that all may know the truth of the faith in its purity and all error may be excluded, we define that anyone who presumes henceforth to assert defend or hold stubbornly that the rational or intellectual soul is not the form of the human body of itself and essentially, is to be considered a heretic.

thought holds that an idea possesses value not to the extent that it reflects truth or reality, but in its practicability or utility (Legg 2021). It appears that the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Pierce and William James shares as a commonality the value of utility with the utilitarian moral philosophy promoted by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Existentialism as a philosophy held that there are no moral absolutes, often accompanied with the claim that there is no God, and promoted a boundless freedom that did not correspond with the natural limits of human nature. Such a definition-free notion of humanity prompted Friedrich Nietzsche to quip that existence is not a gift to which we should respond in awe, but rather we are exposed to being “*in its most terrible form ... without meaning or aim*” (1887, §55). As Nietzsche illustrates, it is not a large leap to move from existentialism to nihilism. Analytical philosophy was concerned with simplifying thought and concepts by linguistic and mathematical methods to make intelligible practical problems. None of these philosophical movements held onto human nature and natural law as understood in its zenith of its synthesizing of faith and reason, and each was moving in the direction of human life having no objective meaning or purpose.

Thus, this was the philosophical milieu in which the future Pope John Paul II found himself. For the rest of this section, we will focus on his writings as Karol Wojtyła.

Personalism²²⁹, a largely twentieth century philosophical development, centers on the human person and his or her experience, understanding, volition, and inestimable value. The personalistic norm means basically that the only appropriate way to treat a person is with love (Wojtyła 1993, pp. 41, 65). We may use things, even animals if they contribute to the good of humanity, but must never use a human person as a means to an end (ibid.).

²²⁹ Although *personalism* became well known as a designate term of philosophical schools in the first part of the twentieth century, it did not abruptly appear out of nowhere. According to Williams and Bengtsson :

[P]ersonalist thought had developed throughout the nineteenth century as a reaction to perceived depersonalizing elements in Enlightenment rationalism, pantheism, Hegelian absolute idealism, individualism as well as collectivism in politics, and materialist, psychological, and evolutionary determinism. In its various strains, personalism always underscores the centrality of the person as the primary locus of investigation for philosophical, theological, and humanistic studies (2022).

This philosophical movement has its roots in phenomenology, which was made well known by the likes of German philosophers Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Edith Stein, and Max Scheler. Phenomenology generally focuses on personal consciousness of phenomena experienced by the human person, his or her intentionality, self-understanding, and values (Smith 2013). Unlike metaphysics, it does not seek to understand causes and ends, but rather to apprehend meaning through experience and reason (Williams and Bengtsson 2022, §1). Further, unlike other sentient creatures, phenomena are experienced by humans in a reflective manner, enabling them to gain a subjective knowledge of objective truth (Ibid., §6). This subjectivity is where phenomenology and personalism intersect.

Accordingly, focus on the subjective value of phenomena is a starting point that can take one in various directions. It can go in the direction of ontology or existentialism, as in Heidegger's fascination with human *being* (2010); or in the direction of realism, as in Stein's earlier work (Szanto ad Moran 2000); or, to a kind of idealism, as in Hegel's work before them (Hegel 2019).²³⁰

Although Aristotle and Aquinas were realists that had great respect for the concrete world that the senses can perceive, metaphysics is an exercise of the mind. Thomistic metaphysics is about the nature of things in themselves, grasped not by observation and experimentation, but by reason.²³¹

In the 20th century, Wojtyla and Max Scheler before him (Davis and Steinbock 2018, §7), presented Scholastic philosophy in a way to include subjective phenomenological experience, as did other thinkers of his time such as the French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Toadvine 2023, §3) and Jacques Maritain (Evans 1952, p. 166). Wojtyla's aim was to explain human sexuality by way of Christian philosophy to a confused world (1993). Among his poignant points was that human acts inherently communicate a certain *language of the body* (John Paul II 2006, pp.

²³⁰ Idealism is related to rationalism in that reality is seen as being reduced to the mind and its ideas rather than in the concrete things of the world.

²³¹ Although metaphysics is seen as a science in its broadest sense of a discipline in which we gain knowledge; it has a different methodology than Modern science.

560, 606, 682). This language with regard to sexual love is intrinsic to human nature and is expressed through bodily acts that speak the language of total commitment. This idea, which Wojtyla/John Paul II expounded on before and during his papacy, serves as an answer to the world's sexual revolution, which seems to be undergirded by the unspoken claim that sexual activity speaks no objective language, but rather a language so subjective that the individuals in each relationship create its meaning. Contradicting the thought of Wojtyla, this mode of thinking holds that no one necessarily lies with his or her body by remaining uncommitted.

In short, these personalistic schools of thought introduced a philosophical shift in emphasis, from human *nature* to human *person*²³²; from turning one's attention from *what* a human is to reflecting on *who* the person is.

6.4. A synthesis of natural law and personalism

This thesis upholds what Wojtyla began in his philosophy: combine Thomistic metaphysics with Christian personalism – i.e., take the Aristotelian tradition of metaphysical realism largely adopted by Aquinas and bring it into dialogue with a more contemporary subjective phenomenological personalistic approach. This melting pot of the objective and subjective, of nature and person, of the act and the intention, can be the springboard for the future of Christian philosophy that seeks to maintain a metaphysical foundation while developing the depth of personhood. Since human personhood is much different than angelic personhood and divine Personhood, the metaphysical foundation of what it means to be a human being is essential.

Twentieth Century Christian philosophy saw a resurgence of neo-Thomism, from Etienne Gilson through Karol Wojtyla/Pope John Paul II. The latter, as pope, wrote an elaboration of the project of St Thomas in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998) as the attempt to combine faith in divine Revelation with the gift of human reason,

²³² This may sound redundant since the human being has a personal nature, and is naturally personal. Yet, the higher personal dimension of the individual human that makes him or her unique and unrepeatable has been given a more focused analysis in contemporary times. This is a central theme in Pope John Paul II's writings. His works have impacted how Christians see the human person and morality in relation to subjectivity, freedom, and conscience.

which was championed by Gilson in modern times.²³³ The harmony worked out between faith and reason is necessary to explain human nature as a hylomorphic unity of spiritual soul and material body, made for natural and supernatural ends. This lays the foundation for a further union between the notions of human nature and human person.

The marriage between metaphysical nature and existential personhood is something Kreeft optimistically hopes will be the next great phase in philosophy; the “adult stage” of philosophical inquiry (2023). The child-like phase, highlighted by the question every baby asks, “*What’s this?*”, signifying the natural human desire to know the objects around him, lasted throughout the ancient and medieval world. The adolescent stage of philosophy, highlighted by the question “*Who am I?*” after the focus of inquiry turned from objective truth to subjective experience (ibid.), was what every adolescent does when his curiosity devolves into self-obsession. The next step, according to Kreeft, will see a fusing of the best of both worlds philosophically, the objective and subjective.

Metaphysics and anthropology, objective and subjective, child and teenager, existence and personality – can they marry? If you marry a horse to a donkey you make a mule, which is sterile and produces no offspring. If you marry Thomism with personalism, do you get a marriage of minds made in heaven, or do you get a mule made in hell? (2023).

We propose this is a marriage that will bear much fruit. Christian *personalism* in the Catholic tradition does not contradict the Thomistic metaphysical model of human nature, but offers it an added dimension to invite further intelligibility to the mystery of what it means to be, and to act, as the image and likeness of God as persons in relationship.²³⁴ When coupled with traditional natural law theory, it does not contradict, but enriches the Catholic patrimony of anthropology and moral philosophy.

6.4.1 The problem with synthesis

²³³ For an historical look at the ebb and flow of scholarly engagement of Thomism with the twentieth century, see Gilson 1962.

²³⁴ The term personalism is traced back to 1799 to German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (Schleiermacher and Ernst, 1799). The movement was made popular among non-scholars through Wojtyła (1993), and then *Theology of the Body* as he developed it as Pope John Paul II (1997).

Like many new movements, intellectual or otherwise, this one came with exciting possibilities as well as hidden dangers. One danger was that a new emphasis on the uniqueness of each person had the potential to go too far and lead to a de-emphasis on their common human nature. As mentioned above, imperfect post-lapsarian people tend to gravitate toward the poles of paradoxes without seeing a way to reconcile them. In that vein, a personalist approach to the human being, if divorced from the grounding of human nature and traditional natural law theory, can pave the way for a radical individualism and subsequent revision of morality, marked by proportionalism, consequentialism, and/or situational ethics.²³⁵ Without maintaining the common human nature with its ends and laws, it leads down the path of subjectivism epistemologically, and relativism ethically, where law is based on popularity or power rooted in self-interest rather than on objective truth and the common good.

This indeed did come to pass after the Second Vatican Council, when moral theologians were willing to cut philosophical ties with metaphysics and traditional natural law theory on sexual morality in favor of a revisionist approach to ethics that overemphasized personal freedom. Francis DiLorenzo spelled out seven great challenges to the Church's Magisterium in the post-Vatican II era: reductionism, distorted ecclesiology, dissent and relativity, fundamentalism, secular humanism, excessive rationalism, and Marxist-Communism (1984, pp. 69-77). None of these movements of dissent held a healthy respect for traditional natural law theory. A revisionist herself, Lisa Sowle Cahill sympathetically explains why a handful of popular revisionists at the time could not accept the Church's teaching on moral absolutes and exceptionless moral norms:

Revisionist moral theologians such as Richard McCormack, Charles Curran, Joseph Fuchs, Bruno Schuller, and Louis Jannsens share certain fundamental presuppositions with the tradition of Thomistic ethics... What is distinctive about the revisionist approaches is their recognition of the historicity of human persons and communities, and thus the development of human nature itself; of epistemological limits and the partial and

²³⁵ Personal freedom without natural definition is dangerous and left with no foundation on which freedom can be properly expressed.

progressive character of human knowing, which has implications for the formulation of norms which express what nature is and demands; and the responsibility of each person to consider how the values protected by norms best can be realized in concrete situations (1984, p. 125).

As we can see by her writing, Cahill expresses how moral dissenters of the 20th century have been influenced by the subjectivism and reductionist tendencies of Modernist philosophy. Some of their claims include that human nature is fluid and in a state of flux depending on one's culture and community; that *knowledge* of human nature and its parameters is also growing and changing with a variety of factors, rendering the formulation of moral absolutes irresponsible; and that situational ethics that renders all acts dependent on one's own concrete situation and circumstances must be considered when evaluating every act. At the same time, Cahill claims, these moral theologians are committed to an objective moral order (Ibid).

While one may say the depth of exploration into the mystery of personhood had been considerably underdeveloped until relatively recently in the history of philosophy²³⁶, it can also be observed that many have now lost touch with the critical foundation from which a personalist philosophical approach must be rooted – the common human nature that all human individuals possess.

Mentioned above, but worth repeating here, the general movement of Modern philosophy has been to turn to the subject (Rohlf 2017). This turning inward is – according to Kreeft – the tendency of adolescence (2023). It may be some time before the children of Adam and Eve mature into acquiring a more philosophically adult view of the world. This thesis strongly contends again that the philosophical turn to the subject, which may have been a natural collective movement away from humanity's child-like wonder of the world, becomes unhealthy when it is divorced from metaphysics and natural law.²³⁷

²³⁶ See the above definition of personalism articulated by Wojtyla (1993, pp. 20-21, 41, 65). Also, Williams and Bengtsson said this about Catholic personalism: "*Catholic Personalists* [particularly] *emphasize more specifically the decisive role of medieval thought, and in particular scholasticism, for the development of personalism*" (2022).

²³⁷ This point cannot be overemphasized. While overemphasizing *nature* at the expense of *person* is incomplete and wanting, the converse of overemphasizing *person* at the expense of *nature* is dangerous to the health and wellbeing of humanity. Post-Christian morality plunging into a culture of death points to this dilemma.

When considering this problem of the collapse of the distinction between nature and person, where human nature is reduced to the absolute person, one cannot ignore the contribution of 18th Century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, a so-called “Enlightenment thinker”, whose rupturing of subject from object gave birth to what is known as “the Copernican revolution” in philosophy; more specifically, in epistemology.²³⁸ Kant’s “critical” philosophy is summed up in three critiques²³⁹, which illustrate his general synthesis of rationalism and empiricism.

Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” substitutes the object of philosophical inquiry from the reality of the things of the world to the self. Kant claims that the laws of nature that structure human experience find their source in human understanding. Hence, our basis for believing in freedom, and immortality, and God is really human reason giving itself the moral law (Rohlf 2020). In other words, from the Modern Kantian perspective, truth is created by the human subject; it is not discovered as a reality independent of the human mind and human experience.

This kind of subjectivism heralded by Kant and his followers cuts ties with the metaphysics of Aquinas and is inconsistent with the phenomenological personalism of Wojtyla. It rather opens the door to a radical subjectivism that Catholic personalism in the 20th century sought to overcome. Such imbalance renders an incomplete account of bodily personhood in community, which is how human nature flowers: imaging God as personal communions of life-giving Love.²⁴⁰

In the 20th century, Wojtyla was able to introduce to the people the blending of Thomism with phenomenological personalism.²⁴¹ My goal in the next chapter is to present a philosophy of one-flesh union upon this balanced approach of Christian

²³⁸ “We can have no cognition of an object, as a thing in itself, but only as an object of sensible intuition, that is, phenomenon...” (Kant [1787]2021, p. xviii).

²³⁹ These three are his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). See Kant 2021.

²⁴⁰ 1 Jn 4:8. This author contends that two examples of such imbalance would include physicalism on the one hand, and angelism on the other. For more on physicalism, see Stoljar 2010. For more on angelism, see Maritain 1923.

²⁴¹ Wojtyla’s philosophy was known in some circles as “Thomistic personalism”, piggy backing on Dietrich von Hildebrand (1991) and Edith Stein (2009), Wojtyla mixed a phenomenological approach to persons with a metaphysical approach to nature (Donovan 2011).

anthropology; and to foster insight on how human persons as a family community image Reality²⁴², as free Persons in communion.²⁴³

In the Catholic Church, the personalist approach to Christian anthropology and morality was catapulted into official Church teachings in the twentieth century, during the papal Magisteria of Pius XI (*Casti Connubii*, 1930), Pius XII (“Address to Midwives”, 1951), Paul VI (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968), and John Paul II (*Familiaris Consortio*, 1981b). The homiletic contribution of John Paul II (1997), later referred to as his “theology of the body”²⁴⁴, offered a phenomenological personalist approach to understanding the human person, without negating human nature, natural law, and divine Revelation.

In this same century, while the goods of personal freedom and human rights were being embraced and fought for in the popular culture, a new era of personal and social awareness was born. In societies throughout the Western world, a collective demand for equality and civil rights for minority populations and women were being demanded, and people of minority races and creeds began standing up for their perceived rights (Gains 2007). It can be argued that a greater respect for the human individual was gained in the process, for racial injustice was addressed at the highest levels and blatant sexism in the popular consciousness was also addressed. None of this would have any philosophical foundation without the Judeo-Christian notion that each individual human person is equally “*created in God’s image, in the divine image He created him, male and female He created them*” (Gn 1:27). A purely scientific

²⁴² This thesis refers to Reality with a capital R as God. In the Thomistic sense, God is Being by essence, and all other things that exist simply participate in being (ST 1a, 4.3 ad 3).

²⁴³ It is no coincidence that in contemporary times there seems to be more attention paid to the three Persons of God than the one Being of God. As Williams and Bengtsson, wrote in *Personalism* (2022, Part 2):

These discussions focused primarily on two doctrines: the Trinity (three “persons” in one God) and the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity (the “hypostatic” union of two natures—divine and human—in one “person”)...Though the concept of person first developed in this theological context, with reference to the persons of the Trinity, the general Greek philosophical concepts involved in these Trinitological origins facilitated its application to human beings as well.

²⁴⁴ See John Paul II 1997. This is a compilation of John Paul II’s papal audiences from September of 1979 to November of 1984 on the subjectivity of the human person and the call to live in relationship of conjugal love.

evolutionary assessment of the value of the human being would not have produced these conclusions. “Rights” is also a natural law concept. “Rights” are natural claims to the goods that enable human nature to flourish. As Dr Martin Luther King, Jr stated, concurring with St Augustine, when civil rights do not line up with human rights, the law negating said rights is in essence null and void (1963).

On the other hand, even though the intellectual foundation for equality of value and dignity of all people can be found in Genesis 1:26-27, the example and conduct of colonizers and missionaries in developing nations did not always match the divine message. Wilson Zivave explains how missionary work and colonialism in Africa was a scandal to Africans who already believed in a sovereign God, and had already possessed a very strong moral and religious fabric (2023, pp. 217-232).

It was amidst this cultural milieu of change, struggle, and of raised consciousness on personal rights that these movements would emerge. Unfortunately, they eventually went too far by generally discarding the dictates of natural law with radical feminism, “the sexual revolution”, and the replacing of the civil rights movement characterized in King’s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*²⁴⁵ with the segregationist Black Lives Matter movement and Critical Race Theory.

6.4.2 A harmonious synthesis

The Catholic notion of human nature and natural law, when linked with personalism and personalist values, address a wider scope of the human condition. It places at the forefront that even though individuals possess a *common* human nature, they do so as *unique* persons called to communion. One may even say personalism is a natural flowering of the traditional metaphysical notion of human nature, just as personalist values are born out of natural law theory. The harmony that can be found

²⁴⁵ King’s iconic letter summed up freedom and natural law as understood by Ss. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. One excerpt reads:

A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust (King 1963).

in a personalist approach to natural law, without compromising essential human nature, more clearly illustrates how human nature is ordered to permanent life-giving love – that each personal subject is ordered to possess oneself in order to give oneself totally and completely, and to receive the other. This is because persons are not only individual substances of a rational nature, as Boethius once said (n.d.); but are also images of God made for relationship and communion, reflecting the triadic union of lover, beloved and love.

Wojtyla's philosophy presupposes a human nature that is shared by each person; one that brings rationality and animality into one substance. And while a Thomistic metaphysical approach recognizes the commonality among all individuals, a personalist philosophy recognizes difference. For those adamant about erasing differences for the sake of equality, the personalism of Wojtyla can seem offensive. Wojtyla writes:

The love of two persons, man and woman, leads in matrimony to their mutual dedication one to the other. From the point of view of each individual person this is a clear surrender of the self to another person, while in the interpersonal relationship it is surrender of each to the other. 'Self-giving', in the sense that we are discussing it, should not be identified (confused) with 'giving oneself' in a merely psychological sense, with the sensation of self-surrender, still less with surrender in a merely physical sense. As far as surrender in the first (the psychological) sense is concerned, it is only the woman, or at any rate it is above all the woman, who feels that her role in marriage is to give herself; the man's experience of marriage is different, since, 'giving oneself' has as its psychological correlative 'possession' (1993, pp. 98-99).

Here we can see how difference between two human beings equal in dignity, allows for a kind of union that is real, and permanent in nature; not just forensic or theoretical. The mutual self-gift creates a union in which she is the possessed and he possesses. Such language today, in a culture so conditioned by existentialism, reductionism, and subjectivism – coupled with societal overreach with regard to righting the wrongs of sexism and racism – would be seen as misogynist, and may even be labeled "hate speech".

But, Wojtyla clearly differentiates ‘possessing’ and ‘using’ in the utilitarian sense. In fact, he affirms that the personalist norm demands that men have a grave responsibility to harness their natural role as possessor, and direct it into selfless love, intentionally staving off all disordered tendencies to dominate and abuse:

Although his conscious experience of it differs from the woman’s it must nonetheless be a real giving of himself to another person. If it is not, there is a danger that the man may treat the woman as an object, and indeed an object to be used. If marriage is to satisfy the demands of the personalistic norm it must embody reciprocal self-giving, a mutual betrothed love... and though they are different psychologically in kind, ontologically they combine to produce a perfect whole, an act of mutual self-surrender (Ibid., p. 99).

In one sense, since the subjectivity and the unrepeatable uniqueness of each individual person is an indispensable dimension of human nature, one can propose that the philosophy of personalism is a flowering of traditional metaphysics²⁴⁶, and that the personalistic norm is an outgrowth of natural law. In this respect the invaluable *who-ness* of the human person with its masculine and feminine characteristics along with all the personal gifts that are unique to each individual, springs forth from of the irreplaceable *what-ness* of his or her human nature. Thenceforth, this view of the splendor of humanity as being a sexually binary species endowed with reason and free-will, with great complementary differences amidst its equality of dignity, is currently dissipating. The apparent paradox that perplexes contemporary humanity is that these two propositions are simultaneously true: that the life of each individual has equal dignity and immeasurable inviolability,²⁴⁷ *and* that differences, including sexual differences, in all their masculine and feminine splendor, do not tarnish this splendor, but upholds it.

Personalism highlights the personal knowledge, self-awareness, and freedom

²⁴⁶ Analogically, one could say the strong stem of metaphysics prepared the way for personalism to flower and complete the project. *“Nothing is born in a vacuum, and personalism is no exception. In fact, even more than other intellectual schools, personalism grew up as a reaction to intellectual and social trends, perceived as dehumanizing”* (Williams, 2004, p.166).

²⁴⁷ Despite this, there have been great strides in Modern times in respecting the dignity of individual persons regardless of their social status, race, wealth, sex, upbringing, or class, as evidenced by the December 19, 1948 United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

that each human being possesses, working within the natural limits of a common human nature. Whereas, in one sense, individual substances of a rational nature are wholes in themselves, in another sense they are not. Personalist philosophy tends to illuminate the incompleteness of the interdependent person, who naturally seeks communion with others as interdependent agents of love. Persons are ordered to relationships with others, and the male–female dynamic is designed by God for a special relationship that culminates in two becoming one flesh (Gn 2:24). They do so not just as animated bodies as do other animals, but as unique body-persons in time. This familial instinct is what Pope John Paul II wrote about in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*:

Conjugal communion constitutes the foundation on which is built the broader communion of the family, of parents and children, of brothers and sisters with each other, of relatives and other members of the household... All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building, day by day, the communion of persons, making the family "a school of deeper humanity": this happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows (1981b, §21).

6.5 Obstacles to overcome

The ideal of Thomistic personalism is one that I propose can help humanity more clearly see and attain its natural end, which is true human fulfillment. However, as with any project this side of Eden, popularizing such a worldview is fraught with challenges. There is a reason the Modern world has rejected Thomism and embraced an existential hedonism: sin. Giving into the disordered desires of the flesh has always been a temptation. Up until recently, however, social stigma often accompanied such choices, as did the natural consequences of our actions. In our post-Christian era today both of those deterrents have been pushed aside to make room for a false freedom without recognized objective boundaries. Everyone can see there has been a widespread movement in Western society to normalize sexual deviancy, divorce and remarriage, and the killing of the innocent unborn; and as a result, society has reshaped itself economically, socially, and psychologically to adjust. Some of these details have been covered in previous chapters.

When intrinsic evils and moral absolutes are mentioned, as in the salient papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (John Paul II 1993), there is pushback from the academic and media establishments. And this is often accompanied by politically orchestrated pressure to coerce people into accepting one new proposal after another that is imposed on the people. Therefore, popularizing a Thomistic metaphysics to expose clear moral reasoning that would challenge people's comfort zones would have to be a grassroots effort of faith-filled people who are willing to go against the societal currents, and be punished for it. Civilization depends on those who are willing to suffer for the truth.

As for the unbridled "freedom" that most of the Western world is currently caught up in, which is a stumbling block to the teaching of sacrificial total self-giving that marks authentic personalism, there is a need for re-education on the meanings of the terms "love", "freedom", and "happiness" to recapture hope, meaning and purpose that lead to flourishing. One cannot combine a utilitarian brand of personalism onto a revived Thomism, or apply an authentic Christian personalism without a metaphysical foundation. Such are fruitless endeavors. A reductionist mentality with embedded vices leads one to lose sight of the notion that sacrificial love, contingent freedom, and integral human fulfillment of soul, mind, and body can only be achieved through self-discipline and sacrifice.

Although it is much more difficult for the post-Christian world to accept the truth of our being than it is for the pre-Christian world, if history is any indication, there seems to be only two general possibilities that such an intellectual revival can occur: a great religious and spiritual renewal, or an economic and social collapse. Whichever one occurs, and people of good will hope it will be the former, it should sober up the masses to be open to grace, fostering an unselfish attitude that will practice the virtues, enabling the mind to contemplate eternal truths. Without this self-discipline and contemplation, there can be no peace.

6.6 Summary

Natural law informed by personalist philosophy enables us to more clearly

understand not only the individual's bodily and spiritual nature, but also his social and communal nature. It will shed more light on the meaning of marriage as a natural institution of persons ordered to covenantal communion in order to give and receive a love that is inherently unitive and procreative. This thesis recognizes that the unique and unrepeatable personal subjectivity of each individual flourishes only by following the inherent law that corresponds to the ends of human nature. By recognizing and developing the complementary gifts of masculinity and femininity each individual naturally possesses, one may freely and joyfully give oneself to another in life-giving love. In the following chapter we will more specifically examine the relational nature of humanity imaging God as male and female, which is ordered to union with the opposite sex in order to form a new entity, a family, comprising a communion of persons.

Therefore, we now look at the wider scope of what it means to image God in our unitive and procreative personal nature, as personal beings in communion while sharing a common human nature. This paradigm of being and personhood ordered to love, union and family, we will see, is a profound reflection of God the Trinity, who is both Being and Persons, both one and three, for all eternity.

We will see how a Christian anthropology and moral philosophy that consists of an admixture of *human* and *person*, of natural law and personalism, points to marriage as the ultimate reflection of God in creation. We will look at how a personalist approach built upon traditional metaphysics deepens appreciation for the unique and free gift of oneself in marriage and the beautiful intimacy of the conjugal embrace, which eliminates all attempts at disordered love, which, in practice, is abuse. The natural purpose *and* personal meaning of the marital covenant can be enriched, making it easier to see how exclusive, permanent, and fruitful union satisfies both the nature of the human person and the personalistic demands of love and covenant.

Henceforth, in the next chapter the marriage between metaphysics and personalism will carry over in order to better position a new Christian philosophy of one-flesh. The communion of persons formed upon a new sharing of selves is a dynamic that images God who is *one* Being²⁴⁸ and *three* Persons. This paradigm,

²⁴⁸ Persons are naturally ordered to form relationships, which are triadic in nature. This concept will be

which the early and medieval Church had not fully developed, will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

It is important to re-present the truth of human sexuality and marriage in a way that people with open hearts and minds can understand. There is no more important endeavor than to speak to a new generation, utterly confused and deeply wounded due to the anthropological falsehoods and moral chaos resulting from the systematic breakdown of the family and morality.

expanded on in the next chapter. For more on persons being made for relationship and connection, see the Commission on Children at Risk 2001.

Chapter 7: Undivided unity: a philosophical theological reflection of the mystery of the one-flesh union imaging the Trinity

Thus far we have surveyed norms of sexuality and marriage during different periods of history through a Catholic philosophical lens. To present it more intelligibly, we divided history into three distinct eras: pre-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian – as illustrated in chapters two, three, and four respectively. From the perspective of Christian philosophy, these could be categorized as epochs of *anticipation*, *reception*, and *rejection*; or more simply as humanity *seeking*, *finding*, and *squandering* the Truth. Regardless of how history is categorized, the basic unit of human society and civilization – the family – has been universally regarded as the place within which people bring new human life into the world to raise, form, and nurture in order for the human race to continue on.

Despite its lofty place in society and the vital role it has as an institution and vocation, marriage and the family have become prime targets for those who wield temporal power and seek to destroy them. In a 2017 interview, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra²⁴⁹ told of his certainty that we were in a decisive battle now, a battle over the dignity of the human person and of marriage:

Satan is constructing an anti-creation. If we read the second chapter of Genesis, we see that the edifice of creation is founded on two pillars. First, man is not *something*; he is *someone*, and therefore he deserves absolute respect. The second pillar is the relationship between man and woman, which is sacred. Between the man and *the woman* (Ibid.).

This attack on human personhood and marriage, which culminates in the sexual revolution, is an international war on God, children, human nature, and the family.

²⁴⁹ Cardinal Caffara was then-President of the John Paul II Institute, member of the Presidential Committee for the Pontifical Council for the Family, and member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

In Chapter Two, we surveyed the order of nature and how sexual intercourse and marriage were normatively practiced among the pagans and the Jews in ancient times. We contrasted post-lapsarian humanity with those who also received the law and the prophets at the dawn of redemption history. In chapter three we looked at some of the typological relations between Israel of the Old Covenant and Christianity of the New; and how Christianity had affected sexual norms and mores. Having the potential to redeem and heal marriage at its roots, we saw later in chapter three that Christ came to restore it to what it was “*from the beginning*” (Mt 19:8), before sin entered the world to distort its integrity. In the same chapter we saw that the formation of Christendom in early medieval times was a result of combining the intellectual influence of Hellenism with the spiritual influence of Christianity; and that this great synthesis of reason and faith in the works of St Thomas Aquinas was a high point for understanding marriage as an outgrowth of human nature and the propagation of the species – through monogamous union with the opposite sex.

In Chapters Four and Five, we surveyed how the proverbial house of Christendom built upon the “marriage” of faith and reason was beginning to crack. Deconstruction and disintegration gradually became the norm among the intellectual class as it turned its attention to subjective experience and the domination of nature. With this move, much of what was built in the medieval era by the great Scholastic philosophers was questioned and replaced with subjectivist systems of thought and innovative constructs of human nature based on dualism and materialism. This movement eventually challenged metaphysics and natural law ethics. As we covered in those chapters, Modern philosophy is markedly responsible for creating a culture that separates the integral essential nature of the human person, the indissoluble nature of marriage, and the irreplaceable nature of the family as the basic unit of personal communion.

This disintegrative movement in philosophy was the fruit of various schools of thought that rejected Scholastic philosophy, metaphysics, and objective truth, while replacing integrated human nature with fragments of itself. One can see in Chapter Four how much the intellectual turn of Modern philosophy had diminished the dignity

of the human person in stature. We also analyzed the Catholic Church's response to it all as the breakdown of the family was progressing in the Western world with a culture of death ensuing.

To remedy the subjectivist and deconstructionist philosophies that contributed to the denigration of human nature, marriage and the family, it was put forth in Chapter Six that some Christian philosophers in the 19th and 20th centuries sought to restore the life-giving truth that had been lost. There was a resurgence of Thomism and a development of the notion of Christian personalism from a relatively new phenomenological approach to philosophy. And still, a few attempted to salvage the best of metaphysics and personalism to present a *Thomistic personalism in which a* blend of metaphysical truth with the recognition of the dignity and uniqueness of each individual was drawn out. It holds the promise of reviving both reason and religion while restoring meaning and purpose to the family, and hope for a dying Western world.

To that end, in Chapter Six we encouraged the development of Thomistic personalism, because by highlighting the meaning of being and person it has the potential to ignite another revolution – one that could counter Kant's so-called "Copernican revolution" in philosophy and the contemporary world's belligerent sexual revolution. By using human reason to comprehend the complementary distinction between human nature and human personhood, metaphysical personalism has the potential to enable a reimagining of marriage and family as it was meant "*from the beginning*" (Mt 19:9).

With this philosophical principle, that life is being-in-relation, we present a reasonable pathway to rebuilding the notion that marriage and family is a communion of life-giving love, necessary for society to flourish. In this proposal we rely on reason to connect the created order with marriage and family, and in turn come to grasp marriage as it is meant to be teleologically, as a living icon of its transcendent Source.

This begins with observing a certain paradigm in the nature of creation that seems to be universal in scope. It continues in proposing that this is personified and

fulfilled in the covenant of marriage as the personal living out of this blueprint within nature as a whole. Thirdly, we will trace this paradigm to its transcendent Source, and discern how God, like an artist leaving a trace of himself within his artwork, is reflected within His creation

Therefore, in this chapter, the case will be made that marriage and family is a full blossoming of the created order *and* an icon of the eternal Trinity, and should be revered as such. We will demonstrate that as mediator between God and creation, humanity fulfills what is below it in the natural unconscious movement of relation in non-personal beings, and is but a finite reflection of what is above it, i.e., the personal Trinitarian Being-in-relation, who is God. That is, while the earth's environment with its complex ecosystems is a beautiful life giving and sustaining mystery in itself, this thesis maintains that personal creatures are nature's highest form of being in the created order and are earth's pinnacle as God's image. So, whether you look at the institution of marriage from below as the personal fulfillment of nature, or from above as a reflection of the eternal Creator, denigrating sexual intercourse, marriage, and the family by violating natural law can be understood as a desecration of nature and a debasing of *imago Trinitatis*.

We will work our way up from raw matter to eternal unchanging Reality,²⁵⁰ tapping into the disciplines of philosophy, physics, and mathematics. Many of the claims and conclusions in this chapter are the fruit of thought and reasoned speculation unique to this author, so highlighting the unique contribution that this study makes.

Finally, this chapter – which offers an understanding of love and sexuality that is foreshadowed in nature and ultimately grounded in transcendent, eternal Reality – is critical for those who have a degree of supernatural faith (Heb 11:1) as well as those who, with an open mind, are willing to follow reason to its transcendent Source. What C.S. Lewis called “*the Tao*” of marriage will be more clearly articulated (2001, pp. 18-19)²⁵¹, and more difficult for people of good will to debase it by promoting or condoning

²⁵⁰ Whenever this thesis includes the word *Reality* with a capital R, it is referring to God.

²⁵¹ Lewis refers to “*the Tao*” as the natural order of goodness that emanates from the Divine Essence, which is known by reason:

transgressions of the fifth and sixth precepts of the natural moral law.²⁵² We hope to offer a new way of seeing marriage that will inspire some to counter the moral chaos and current malaise of the culture of death through which the world is now suffering, born of Modern philosophy and enabled by the birth control pill and abortion. It seems the trajectory of modern philosophy, formed in the rebellious existentialism of philosophers such as Sartre²⁵³ and Nietzsche and the subjectivism and deconstructionism that was to follow, has formed a synthesis that gradually permeated the intelligentsia and the cultural fabric of the Western world. It is inevitable that such underlying presumptions about life would gradually weaken marriage break down the family.

After exploring for scientific and mathematical clues, we allow for the intuitive and rational intellect to open up possibilities. After pondering the propensity of physical beings as an antecedent type of marriage and family, and the latter as a reflection of the divine nature etched into creation, we marvel at the truth and beauty of marriage and family as being the fulfillment of creation imaging the Trinitarian Creator. To Christians, the marriage act itself can be seen as a lived icon of God's eternal, total exchange of self-donating interpersonal love, which is life-giving and unimpeded between lover and beloved. Pope Benedict XVI shared his wisdom on this great mystery:

Three Persons who are one God because the Father is love, the Son is love, the Spirit is love. God is love and only love, most pure, infinite and eternal love. The Trinity does not live in a splendid solitude, but is rather an inexhaustible font of life that unceasingly gives itself and communicates itself. We can in some way intuit this, whether we observe the macro-universe: our earth, the planets, the stars, the galaxies; or the micro-universe:

It is the way in which the universe goes on, the way in which things everlastingly emerge... It is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are. ... [emotions and sentiments] can be reasonable or unreasonable as they conform to Reason or fail to conform (Lewis 2001, pp. 18-19).

²⁵² Although these two commandments Revealed in Exodus 20:13-14 are primary precepts, the prohibition against violating the whole range of transgressions relating to sexuality and human life are included in their secondary precepts.

²⁵³ Twentieth century French philosopher Jean-Paul Satre is another atheist existentialist philosopher. On his life and works, see Reynolds and Renaudie 2022.

cells, atoms, elementary particles. The ‘name’ of **the Most Holy Trinity is in a certain way impressed upon everything that exists, because everything that exists, down to the least particle, is a being in relation,**²⁵⁴ and thus God-relation shines forth, ultimately creative Love shines forth. All comes from love, tends toward love, and is moved by love, naturally, according to different grades of consciousness and freedom (2009).

By following Pope Benedict’s “intuition” intelligently, we now discuss its two main claims: 1) there is a profound pattern of being-in-relation that is intrinsic to all beings in the cosmos “*according to different grades of consciousness and freedom*” (Ibid.), and 2) that “the ‘name’ of the most Holy Trinity is in a certain way impressed upon everything that exists” (Ibid.). From there we shall discover that this triadic propensity “*shines forth*” in marriage and the family as its earthly pinnacle (Ibid.).

7.1 Triadic being in the Order of Creation

The more we understand the splendor of nature through contemporary physical and natural science, the more we are able to marvel at the order of creation. This order and design lead us to contemplate the meaning and purpose of human life as well as its transcendent source and end. Those with faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition believe God loves all things. But, as Peter Kreeft points out, intuitive wisdom proposes that all things are ordered in turn to “love” God back. With persons, this movement is freely chosen; but with non-personal beings it is unconscious and analogous:

Have you ever wondered *why* there is gravity? Science explains that every particle of matter attracts every other particle according to fixed laws, proportionate to mass and distance. But science does not explain why... The scientific answer is: because its angular momentum, which tends to move it straight away from the nucleus, is exactly counterbalanced by its electromagnetic attraction to its oppositely charged nucleus. But why? Why is it attracted to its nucleus? Why do negative and positive charges attract? Don't you see a real connection between this and love?

And the electron loves (unconsciously, of course) its proton because it's a proton. We can see the same principle at work on every level: gravity and electromagnetism on the inorganic level; a plant's attraction to the sun and to water and nutrients in the soil on the plant level; instinct on the animal level; and love on

²⁵⁴ Emphasis inserted.

the human level. And within the human sphere there is also a hierarchy beginning with the sexual desire (*eros*) and affection (*storge*) that we share with the animals up to the friendship (*philia*) and charity (*agape*) that we share with the angels. The universe is a hierarchy of love. This is not a myth (2004, p. 102).

This analogy may be difficult for some to see, especially from within a world where scientific precision — that has permeated most of the arts and sciences — has reductionist tendencies. The pre-Modern mind was much more open and malleable to poetic, metaphorical, and symbolic meaning all around us. While Modern science has assisted humanity in distinguishing between superstition and reality, it has also led some to proverbially throw the baby out with the bathwater. Many find it difficult to grasp the mystery of being in intuitive ways that our pre-Modern brethren were more able to do. Kreeft elaborates more.

Science's reductionistic method fails to see cosmic love. Modern science requires the use of the simplest possible explanation. This is the principle called "Occam's Razor." The modern mind always tends to reduce the greater to the lesser rather than seeing the lesser as reflecting the greater. It thinks of human love as only complex animal instinct, or even complex electrochemical attraction, rather than thinking of these subhuman attractions as love on a lesser level. Premodern thought saw lust as confused love. Modern thought sees love as rationalized lust. This is reductionism... (2004, pp. 102, 104).

As Kreeft so deftly articulates, the problem apparent in scientific reductionism and materialism is that they strip the mind of a thing's formal and final causes, rendering *meaning* and *purpose* unimportant. This reductionist tendency leads to acknowledging *that* something is but not *what* or *why* it is. Inquiries of that nature are deemed irrelevant to a significant portion of today's scientific community.²⁵⁵

The main point of Kreeft's passage is to show that even though only persons are self-conscious and able to reason and freely choose to love, everything in creation loves by analogy by following the will of God in its own way. Hence, not only does God love all things into being,²⁵⁶ and sustain all things in their being, but all things love God

²⁵⁵ In a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2009, 83% of Americans surveyed claimed to be religious, but less than half of all scientists did (2009).

²⁵⁶ As St Thomas states in ST 1, q.20, a. 2, "God's will is the cause of all things."

by analogy in return (Ibid. p. 102), in fulfilling His will and moving in ways that reflect the glory of God. However, as Kreeft points out, every *thing* “loves” God, not every *one* (Ibid., p. 104).²⁵⁷ Each non-personal creature by virtue of being made by love (1 Jn 4:14) and for love, unconsciously follows the eternal law (Aquinas, ST I-II, q. 93, a. 1)²⁵⁸ according to its nature unto its perfection; hence, returning the divine love analogically. Created persons, on the other hand, possess the wonderful burden of having to freely choose the divine will, which for humans is the natural law.²⁵⁹

The actualized union of beings that are drawn together by this non-personal law of attraction creates a new, third entity that transcends the original two. This is the case when particles come together to form an atom, atoms to form a molecule, molecules to form a cell; cells unite to form a body, bodies come together to form a family and community; and on a larger scale, stars agglomerate into a galaxy, and galaxies into clusters.

Before looking deeper into the question of *why* all things follow this law of attraction and expansion, we shall consider *how* this works.

Two individual entities becoming *one* is the result of a unitive force that moves all things, and which in turn produces a third entity that envelops and transcends the original two. When hydrogen and oxygen unite in a chemical reaction, for example, the result is water. When a sperm cell and egg cell unite and mingle, the result is a new human being. The tertiary principle of the unitive act is a new and distinct entity, combining and transcending the original two. The unitive force that brings physical entities together, depending on the size and mass of the physical object, includes nuclear, electromagnetic, and gravitational force (Bhuyan 2023).²⁶⁰ Tangentially,

²⁵⁷ Created persons given free will have the choice to love or reject God, which is ultimately the difference between heaven and hell. According to the biblical religions (Judaism and Christianity), personal creatures include angels and humans.

²⁵⁷ The mystery of “[t]he two become one to become three” as imaging the Trinitarian God is reflected throughout His creation.

²⁵⁸ Here St Thomas, in differentiating between four kinds of law, speaks of the eternal law as the overarching law of God, which permeates the entirety of creation. Natural law, on the other hand, is the rational human person’s participation in the eternal law.

²⁵⁹ It is part of the Catholic intellectual tradition that living according to the law of human nature is synonymous with doing the will of God.

²⁶⁰ With regard to plants, the unitive drive analogous to attraction-love is phototropism and gravitropism (Molas and Kiss 2009); and with animals it is instinct.

electromagnetic force is only 1/137th as strong nuclear force, but it is 10^{36} times stronger than gravitational force (Ibid.).

Let us now briefly and more closely examine the three distinct levels of attraction that physical science calls “force” and that Kreeft proposes is analogous to love.

Nuclear force attracts and unites elements in the most basic unit of matter, the atom, which is crucial for physical objects to exist. The two stabilizing movements in the nucleus, analogous to the unitive and procreative significance of personal love, are the attractive nuclear force between neutrons and protons and the repulsive electric force between protons (Jones 1999, pp. 243-245). In the last century, scientists discovered the explosive power that nuclear force can unleash by splitting the atom.²⁶¹

Electromagnetic force is the attraction to unity of opposite electrical charges (NASA Science 2022) intrinsic to molecules and living cells (Jones 1999, p. 85). As atoms produce molecules and molecules produce living cells (Molnar and Gair 2015), they in turn divide and unite under nature’s principle of unity and multiplicity with electromagnetic force.

Gravitational force is the principle of attraction and unity analogous to love that physical science attributes to larger bodies. Gravity maintains order in the universe, keeping the cosmos from becoming chaos. Gravitational attraction in our solar system keeps large bodies like planets, satellites, and meteors moving on an elliptical course through centripetal force around the sun, keeping them from escaping into outer space (NASA Science 2020).²⁶²

²⁶¹ It is useful to take this reflection further: if it is that explosive and destructive to split the basic unit of matter, the atom, consider the power and impact that rupturing the basic unit of society, the family, has in divorce, and the rupture of the unitive and procreative significance has on the basic act of marriage and love in contraception.

²⁶² Twentieth century scientist Ernest Rutherford came up with the theory that the atom is simply a tiny version of the solar system. There is a central figure (the atom’s nucleus, the sun) around which other elements are attracted (strong nuclear force, gravitational force) as well as repelled (weak nuclear force, centrifugal force) (Jones 1999, pp. 103-104). The unitive and creative forces of the atom are similar to that of the solar system, which is akin to the personal forces that make up the family.

In contemplating the dynamism of the cosmos, from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy, we can see the formation of what may analogously be called non-personal families and communities, which are predicated on the attraction of objects that result in continuous union and transformation. This unitive and transformative dynamic, when raised to the personal, spiritual level – whether it is between humans or between humans and God – is the dynamic of love. St John of the Cross speaks of the nature of personal love, which is willed by the self-conscious and free portion of creation, that usurps and represents all lower analogous foreshadowing of it:

It is true to say the Beloved lives in the lover and the lover in the Beloved. And in the transformation of the lovers, love causes such a likeness that it can be said that each is the other and that both one. The reason is that in the union and transformation of love the one gives possession of itself to the other, and each one surrenders and exchanges itself for the other. Thus, each one lives in the other, and the one is the other, and both are one through the transformation of love (*Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 11, no. 7, p. 56).²⁶³

The profound union of lover and beloved that St John speaks of raises the unitive dynamic of nature to the spiritual heights of personal love. We will see later in the chapter that this communion of persons manifested in marriage and the family is itself a reflection of the eternal personal dynamic of the Trinity.

7.1.1 Objections

Do these analogies hold, and are they helpful? One challenge to Kreeft's insight is that inanimate objects, plants, and animals do not knowingly and freely respond to God and His love. There is nothing in their natures that gives them the capability of rising above their material constitution or physiological instincts to freely move in a contrary manner because it is the "right thing to do".²⁶⁴ And since the essence of love

²⁶³ Also see Wojtyła 1981, p. 212.

²⁶⁴ This kind of action, to freely love the unlikable for the sake of the other when one's own lower nature is pulling in the opposite direction, is attributed to personal love of neighbor. Although researchers are discovering more complex behaviors in animals that appear to use memory and tools for problem solving, there is still no evidence that birds, dolphins, the great apes or other animals are able to think abstractly, understand concepts, declare propositions, and form arguments to demonstrate their beliefs. Nor have they been shown to use and understand symbolic, syntactical language or make moral choices that run contrary to their instincts.

is goodwill to others, and since goodwill must be freely chosen, non-personal beings cannot love. And since they cannot love, their movements are simply involuntary motions that follow physical laws, or instincts, played out in time and space – having no relation at all to love.

This counter-argument to Kreeft's intuitive wisdom is reasonable when taken in a literal sense. The essence of *agape* love is goodwill and ultimately this means willing the eternal salvation of others, even our enemies. In one's relationship with God this goodwill translates into humble, filial obedience.²⁶⁵ Inanimate matter is devoid of intellect and will and cannot freely will the good of anything. Therefore, the comparison is bogus.

What this counter-argument misses is that the analogy speaks less to what love *is* and more to what love *does*. From a theistic perspective, vertical love²⁶⁶ willingly follows the word/command of God, doing His will. In this respect, all non-personal creatures non-consciously move and actuate according to their natures as designed and willed by God – with no intentional deviation and no freewill. They move according to the laws of nature, i.e., according to the will of the Creator and first Cause of nature.

Another protestation can be found in that the principle of love of neighbor cannot be found analogously in inanimate objects since it is a principle that sees in the other "another self" – which is invaluable and is worth loving for its own sake. This is why the great commandment is stated as "Love your neighbor as *yourself*". Persons who possess the spiritual powers of intellect and will have the capacity to understand the significance of self and others and are able to will the good of another image of God, like oneself, even if the other may be deemed unlikable. Non-personal beings have no conscious interest in the welfare of others, except in the case when instinct takes over.

Finally, some may think the law of attraction and union in inanimate objects being proposed as an analogous prefigurement of personal love is offensive. Humanity is too far above minerals, plants, and animals in the hierarchical ontological order to

²⁶⁵ Jn 14:15: "If you love me you will keep my commandments."

²⁶⁶ This speaks of the love between creature and Creator, as explicated in the first three commandments of the Decalogue.

have anything substantially in common with them. Humans have the spiritual powers of intellect and will whose operations transcend their own physiological constitution, enabling them to reason and love, whereas that is not the case with impersonal creatures. Such an analogical comparison, they might claim, diminishes the true dignity of the human person.

These critiques are important when distinguishing between humans and other creatures. As for their dignity and ontological worth, there is no comparison.²⁶⁷ However, again, the analogy proposed is focused on what love does and looks like, not with what it essentially is. Moreover, while the essence of love is *agape*, which is selfless sacrificial love, love also includes *eros* or attraction-love, which to a degree we have in common with other animals. *Eros* is constituent of “horizontal love”, particularly with marital love. There is a reason and purpose for sexual attraction in animals including humans, whose end is fulfilled in the procreation and nurture of offspring. In inanimate matter, the law of attraction and movement toward union with other elements is similar. Bodies attract and unite, resultantly making new entities with chemical, cellular, or bodily intercourse; and humans are bodily creatures. The attraction and co-mingling of hydrogen and oxygen, for example, producing water, illustrates a similar principle found in conjugal love that unites two distinct persons into one flesh, forming a new family.

7.1.2 Lack of speculative inquiry

²⁶⁷ Common sense tells us that in the realm of non-personal creatures there are gradations of being in the ontological order. When persons are singled out as having unique dignity (whether they be divine, angelic, or human), as this thesis claims, then qualities like life, intelligence, freedom, and creativity are measures of value, or godliness. The vegetable kingdom is higher in this respect than the mineral kingdom, and the former is lower than the animal kingdom. Within the animal kingdom one can observe a certain level of animal intelligence, i.e., humanlike characteristics, in the great apes, dolphins and birds, as well as in domesticated animals like dogs and cats. One need only to attend a zoo or watch a documentary on animals in the wild to observe certain passions found in humans relating to fight-or-flight instinct, often when there is a perceived threat, when hunting prey or seeking to mate, or in protecting their young from predators.

One can postulate that animals uniquely analogously simulate “love” in their mating patterns, in protecting and nurturing their young, and in cooperating with others of their species, which is a phenomenon especially instinctual with pack animals. Nonetheless, animals also love analogously in the same way minerals and plants do – inasmuch as their movement and actions continuously follow the will of God through their instincts, and come together sexually to unite and share genetic material in order to procreate. The life-giving union of animal bodies reflects the Trinitarian nature of God in a distant, non-personal way.

It is rather bewildering that within the academic world and the popular culture in general, there seems to be very little interest in *why* these laws of physics exist, *why* there is gravity, *why* there is unitive force; why opposites are drawn together to bring about a new identity, and why things grow to their perfection and attract other things of its same nature to produce new unions. The general end with living beings seems to be survival of the species, but why creatures unwittingly mature to their potential and why in nature life is preferable to death, are philosophical questions that demand answers. It is common to acknowledge *that* these things happen, but we tend to ignore the question of *why* they happen. Metaphysical discourse is sorely lacking in today's cultural milieu.

Might the pattern of nature's movements exist because the first Cause of all things is Love (1 Jn 4:8), that love acts this way, and that Love is imprinted onto all of His creation? Regardless, the absence of rational inquiry, speculation, and dialogue on such matters, speaks more of Modernity's lack of intellectual depth and spiritual poverty²⁶⁸ than it does of its progress. In other words, the ideology that encourages people to deny the basic human inquiry of asking *what* and *why* (i.e., for meaning and purpose) leads to the denial of reason and encourages people to think more like other animals. For humanity at large this is not progress, but regress.

7.1.3 The arithmetic of being in relation

Along with the physical world foreshadowing the paradigm of human love and marriage as unitive and creative, which, we will see, is itself a reflection of a transcendent Reality, it can be helpful to abstract from this paradigm arithmetical formulae found in nature. We now peruse philosophical mathematics to uncover the arithmetic of love. We have thus articulated a hidden secret in the physics of creation. The propensity to unify and multiply is within the nature of being – to transform the duality that springs from unity and ends in trinity. Although we do not go so far as to say “*everything is number*” as the great Greek philosopher Pythagoras had claimed (Spencer 2023), numbers and patterns of numbers do symbolize truths about the world. One easily observable phenomenon is that there is something special and

²⁶⁸ It is uniquely human to inquire about *what* and *why*.

unique about the number three. The *threeness* of creation can be found ubiquitously in our human experience.

The following are just a few basic examples of the countless threes that permeate our lives, are manifested in nature, or are found in sacred Scripture: The 3 forms of matter (solid, liquid, gas); the 3 corresponding life-sustaining goods (food, water, air); 3 types of rock (sedimentary, igneous, metamorphic); 3 kingdoms of matter (animal, vegetable, mineral); 3 tenses of time (past, present, future); 3 dimensions of space (length, width, and breadth); 3 tones in a musical chord; 3 kinds of linguistic communication (command, statement, question); popular children's stories (3 little pigs, 3 blind mice, Goldilocks and the 3 bears, etc.); 3 levels of temperature (hot, warm, cold), 3 basic sizes (small, medium, large); 3 levels of soul (vegetative, sensitive, rational); 3 kinds of personhood (divine, angelic, human); 3 constituents of the universe (space, time, matter); the smallest unit of matter, the atom (proton, neutron, electron), 3-person congregation of language (I, you, he); 3 powers of the soul (memory, understanding, will);²⁶⁹ 3 acts of the mind (understanding, judging, reasoning); 3-fold matter on which the mind acts (concept, proposition, argument), 3-fold structure of an argument (thesis, antithesis, synthesis); 3 parts of man, according to St Paul (body, soul, spirit) (1 Thess. 5:23); 3 transcendental properties of all things (truth, goodness, beauty), 3 references to self (me, myself, I); the trifold repetition of a term to signify *good*, *better* and *best* in ancient languages (ex: "Holy, holy, holy"); 3 basic epochs of history (antiquity, middle ages, modernity); 3 theological divisions (creation, fall, redemption); 3 earthly roles reflecting divinity (priest, prophet, king); Jesus' inner circle (Peter, James, John); 3 sacred sources of truth (Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium); and the 3-fold pattern of every story (setup, upset, reset).²⁷⁰

There are countless such triads in the world that are part of the everyday experience of people. Many more are also found in Sacred Scripture, e.g., Jesus lived

²⁶⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, X, 11. With St Augustine's inspiration, Mother M. Angelica, P.C.P.A., was prompted to *proclaim*,

As we pray to the Trinity, we pray to empty our memory and fill it with the Father; to empty our reasoning power, to be humble and accept the mysteries, and to fill our intellect with Jesus; and to empty our will of ourselves so that we are one with the Spirit (n.d.).

²⁷⁰ "This is the basic pattern of all human history," claims Kreeft, (2005, pp. xiii-xiv).

three decades plus *three* years of earthly life [33] (Lk 3:23), preached for *three* years,²⁷¹ suffered during the original Holy *Triduum*, spent *three* hours on the cross and died at 3 *pm*,²⁷² while being accompanied by *three* women named Mary (Jn 19:25), and rose from the dead on the *third* day (1 Cor 15:4). It was, hence, fitting for Christ to warn His Jewish people:

No sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was *three* days and *three* nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be *three* days and *three* nights in the heart of the earth (Mt 12:39-40).

7.1.4 Oneness, twoness, and threeness: unity, polarity, and triunity

To further explore this mystery, we consider the most fundamental numerical pattern found in creation: *one*, which gives birth to *two*, and leads to *three*. God is *one* and *three* because of being *two*.²⁷³

The number *one* symbolizes unity. Everything springs forth from one. *Two* symbolizes polarity. Cold to hot, darkness to light, passive to active, the polarities of a magnet. *One* is a point. *Two* is a line. *Two* is a duality of polarity. *One* casts its own shadow, expressing itself in *duality*. Leonard Bosman uses the 'idea' as his exemplar:

The idea of polarization, of *two-ing*, can be seen in the illustration of the man [sic] and his idea. Undifferentiated from the man himself, the idea is useless; he has, as it were, to become aware of the idea, to be conscious of it as separate from himself; his mind must become as a mirror in which the idea is reflected as a picture. Then only can polarization ensue, and creation commence; the man, the idea, and the means by which he makes it known, the link between the two... (2005, p. 34).

Therefore, Bosman writes:

To two is to polarize oneself from one's idea, to differentiate life

²⁷¹ There is no biblical certainty pertaining to how long Jesus taught and preached. The Gospel of John includes three Passovers, leading to traditional beliefs that Jesus' mission lasted three years.

²⁷² While the synoptic gospels seem to indicate Jesus remained on the cross until 6pm, perhaps a portion of the time was His body after death, John indicates He suffered on the cross from around noon to 3pm.

²⁷³ More on this later in the chapter.

from substance, to pass from the stage of *one-ness* to that of *two-ing*, or, in other words, to polarize a one-ness and make duality (Ibid. p. 35).

Interestingly, Bosman – who is not a Christian -- speaks of the human and their idea similarly to how theologians speak of God and His word.

Furthermore, the number *three* symbolizes love, relationship, wholeness and God. Three is the blending of opposites and transformation into a new unified triadic entity. Three is the synthesis of thesis and antithesis. It represents a relationship in that two become one through its medium, a tertiary principle. *Three* is the glue between *one* and *two*. Two parties connect, collide, and relate through and by the force between them, which is the third element – whether that force be nuclear, electromagnetic, gravitational, or personal love.

Bosman adds his own take on 3: “[t]o three would mean, in this sense, to attract the “opposites” thus polarized, so that from the interaction all numbers or their offspring might be developed” (Ibid. p. 34).

One brings about *three* through *two*; and *three* unites *two* into *one*. As such, two mathematical equations symbolize this mystery within creation, within marital love, and within the inner Life of God: $1+1+1=1$ and $1+1=3$: the first symbolizes unity and the second, Trinity. The first symbolizes the unitive aspect of being, the second the creative aspect; that is, they symbolize contraction and expansion. By two becoming one it becomes three.

Relation often begins with attraction – between the primary and secondary principles that are different and complementary. Only complementary elements can join as one. The principles that are the active and receptive elements of being, are drawn together and converge by virtue of attraction.

7.1.5 Masculine and feminine dimensions of being

Now our argument progresses to greater specifics as we look at the nature of these two universal principles of attraction, which, like the magnet, has opposite

complementary poles that attract and lead to union. These complimentary active and receptive principles are found in inanimate, organic, and artifactual objects. It is no mistake that many human languages, including most Indo-European and Arabic languages, have divided nouns into two categories to reflect these co-principles, calling them masculine and feminine. Some have a third gender, neuter. Since pre-recorded history, gendered masculine and feminine nouns have illustrated what may be subconsciously embedded in the human intuitive intellect, that the world is permeated with masculine and feminine principles of being that are co-equal and complementary. The relation between male and female humans are but one example.

Because our culture today is popularly conditioned to find the source of *masculine* and *feminine* principles in men and women rather than seeing men and women as just another part of creation that share in these universal principles as sexed beings, we will use instead the terms *active* and *receptive* principles. These complementary co-principles are the primary and secondary elements of a thing drawn together by a force that is its transformative tertiary principle. Just as warm water is the mixture of hot and cold water, love is the balance of justice and mercy, humanity is a species of men and women, and marriage is the union of husband and wife; love is the tertiary principle in the relation between lover and beloved.²⁷⁴ These principles mainly are relational, not ontological.

Primary-active and secondary-receptive principles symbolized as head and heart (Pius XI 1930, §27), or head and body (Eph 5:21-35), are distinct but equal in their interdependent harmonious complementarity. They are necessary components of being-in-relation that, together, enable a body to survive. No body survives without a functioning head and functioning heart working together. A two-headed body without

²⁷⁴ As we will elaborate on later in the chapter, in the paradigm and Source of all being, these two principles within the relations of the Trinity have been revealed as the Father and the Son – the Son proceeds from the Father (as Eve does from Adam) as “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God*” (Nicene Creed). The duality of relation within God, as reflected in things of His creation, can be understood as masculine and feminine or active and passive principles. The incarnate Word is the *beloved* Son of the Father, who is *Lover* (Mt 3:17). In this relation, the lover is the masculine or active principle and the beloved is the feminine or receptive. Jesus became incarnate to do the will of His Father. Similar to how Christ is Head of His Church that is His body, likewise the Father is the Head of Christ, who is His body: “*He who has seen me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9). This does not mean the Incarnate, or even the pre-incarnate, eternal Son is the receptive principle in every relation. As just mentioned, He is the masculine principle in relation to His Church.

a heart (and a body with two hearts and no head) has no chance at life. Some complementary traits traditionally attributed to the head and the heart (the masculine and feminine) are comparatively illustrated in the two columns of Table 3 below.

Table 3: Sample comparison of complementary traits traditionally seen as masculine and feminine

Active/Masculine	Receptive/Feminine
<p>Exclusion Excludes that which diverts from attaining the goal and improving the body.</p>	<p>Inclusion Includes that which maximizes equality for the voiceless and underprivileged.</p>
<p>Emphasizes Individual Each person must seek his own happiness by doing good and avoiding evil.</p>	<p>Emphasizes Community All persons must be afforded equal power and opportunity in society.</p>
<p>Outward Looking Cultivates what is external, to direct/lead.</p>	<p>Inward Looking Cultivates what is internal, to nourish/love.</p>
<p>Justice is Primary Tough love, challenge, and affirmation</p>	<p>Mercy is Primary Soft love, acceptance, and consolation</p>
<p>Truth Clarity of the boundaries is paramount, in order to conform oneself to the truth.</p>	<p>Goodness Showing kindness is paramount, in order to assist the weak with their needs.</p>
<p>Righteousness Following commands comes first in the moral life</p>	<p>Forgiveness Forgiving others comes first in the moral life.</p>
<p>More Abstract Truth is known through reason.</p>	<p>More Concrete Truth is known through experience.</p>
<p>Rules Rules are laws made to be followed.</p>	<p>Exceptions Rules are guidelines made to be altered.</p>
<p>Duty to self After loving God, we must love ourselves.</p>	<p>Care for Others After loving God, we must love our neighbors.</p>
<p>Orientation toward Truth and Justice Punishment is necessary for justice.</p>	<p>Orientation toward Mercy and Compassion Compassion is necessary for (social) justice.</p>
<p>Emphasis on Liberty Maximize liberty for each individual to fulfill his potential.</p>	<p>Emphasis on Equality Maximize equality for each human <i>group</i> to fulfill its potential.</p>
<p>Obligation to What is Right Task-oriented</p>	<p>Toleration to What is Acceptable Person-oriented</p>

In the body politic, primary emphasis of one column over the other in Table 3 is usually an indicator of the difference between so-called conservatives and liberals.²⁷⁵ This analysis leads to consideration of what may be understood as the two complementary “sides” of love, and, in animate objects, the complementary sides of being. Within every individual there is a combination of active and passive traits and propensities (e.g., head and heart, reason and emotion, aggression and passivity, etc.). However, a new relation is formed when complementary poles in elements become prepotent in order that natural attraction may ensue, leading to a new potential union.

To convey the beauty of these co-principles in marriage, Scripture and papal authority have weighed in to capture it with the imagery of *head and heart* as well as *head and body*. While traditional marriage exhibits this more clearly than marriages in the contemporary West, one can also find two interdependent complementary roles that spring from the head and heart of the family body, one that looks outward and the other inward.

7.1.6 Difference is equal and complementary, as the head and heart of a body

The dynamic between the interdependent principles symbolized in head and heart includes complementary difference in the order of authority and in the order of love (Pius XI 1930, §27). While Pope Pius XI was speaking specifically about marriage here while explaining this, the head-heart dynamic is universal in its scope. In order to be a functioning body, every living entity – whether it be an organic body or a humanly-made organization – includes some form of head and heart in its constitution. They are cooperative elements that keep each body alive and moving. And while they are interdependent, one leads and the other sustains; one looks primarily outward and the other inward. In addition to husband and wife, this dynamic is found in various forms: the captain and first mate of a ship, the owner and chief executive officer of a company,

²⁷⁵ These dual principles are found in all human communities, including political society. Those who primarily focus on the internal challenges of the economy, inequality, and help for those less fortunate tend to be liberals. It is what the heart does within the body (politic). On the other hand, those who primarily look outward and value foreign policy, patriotism, and prioritize justice over mercy tend to be conservative. It is what a head does, to seek truth, protect the body, and strive for excellence.

the general manager and coach of a football team, the king and queen of a nation, the father and mother of a family, Jesus and Mary in the kingdom of God, etc.

Although the popularization of the birth control pill and its legacy in the sexual revolution have clouded this vision of difference and complementarity between the sexes, the distinction between husband (head) and wife (heart) as masculine and feminine or active and receptive principles in the traditional family body (Eph 5:21-35)²⁷⁶, and their interrelation with their children, is a beautiful phenomenon of human nature whose form is harmonious and life-giving.²⁷⁷

This dyadic complementary polarity, ubiquitous throughout the world and found in the male-female dynamic, has largely been lost on the Modern person, as Peter Kreeft summarizes:

We have lost the idea... that human sexuality is the human version of a universal principle. When other languages call the Sun "he" and the moon "she," they are not simply projecting the human reality out onto nature, but seeing something that is really there. One version of this is the famous Chinese yin and yang. Another is the Indian marriage ceremony in which the groom says to his bride, "I am heaven, you are earth." She responds, "I am earth, you are heaven" (2004, p. 100).²⁷⁸

7.2 The order of nature in marriage and the family

We have been leading up to the prospect that the unitive and creative nature and trajectory of the created order is personified and fulfilled in the being-in-relation of marriage and the family. In marriage, as mentioned above, when two become one flesh they become one ($1+1=1$), with the potential of becoming three ($1+1=3$). This unitive-trinitive principle of attraction between the sexes personifies the dynamic forces of nature between bodies. And the permanent union of marriage fulfills, on the human-

²⁷⁶ We need to keep in mind these are principles and not morally absolute specific norms.

²⁷⁷ Having the complementary principle in place, which is harmonious in the abstract, does not necessarily mean each marriage will be a peaceful harmonious one. This side of Eden, no marriage is perfect, and each needs attention, work, self-sacrifice, and forgiveness along the way.

²⁷⁸ This is the case with gendering nouns in many Western Indo-European languages today. However, along with English, there are some non-Western languages which also leave their nouns gender-neutral.

personal level, the universal phenomenon that unites elements to form various beings. We had referred to these phenomena of unitive forces as “analogous love” – the prefiguring of spiritualized, personified love that is fulfilled in the human institution of marriage.

Children are the personification of the love between husband and wife. They are the tertiary principle of the triadic unit of the family, the fruit of the man and woman becoming one flesh (Gn 2:24), that are born nine months later (Gn 4:1). Pope Pius XI, as mentioned above, wrote in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* that in the sanctuary of the family the man has primacy in authority while the woman has primacy in love (Pius XI 1930, §27). This duality of head and heart is important. Authority and love are what lead and nurture the family respectively unto its flourishing. Both are equal and interdependent centers of life and are necessary for the life and health of the family.

7.2.1 Exclusivity and the one-flesh union

The sacred paradigm of the family, therefore, has a certain form and matter. While public vows of lifelong fidelity and openness to children create a *formal* union between a man and woman, which is a union of wills (signified by their words “I will” or “I do”), it is the coming together and co-mingling of their bodies in sexual intercourse that creates *real* union. Sexual intercourse consummates what the verbal intercourse promised, and makes an unbreakable bond between the two parties that is indissoluble in nature. No more can two parties who have become one flesh return to their former way of being as individuals, than can a sperm cell and an ovum that have united to form a child return to their previous individual states of being. Real union makes the legal union an ontological union; it melds two former individual selves into one, to share one life. As fulfilling the paradigm of nature elaborated on earlier, the personal “death” of the “I” of individuality in each, both the active and receptive principles, is required in order to form the “we” of marriage.²⁷⁹ For this covenant communion of persons to fulfill the covenant paradigm as it was “*at the beginning*” (Mt 19:8), the partners must not enter marriage being one-flesh with other persons. It is

²⁷⁹ It is asserted in this approach that the giving of *self* is an act of *love* that gives *life*: self is life and the giving of it is love. This is keenly accomplished in the exchange of blood, genetic material and organic compounds that are deeply personal and, as we shall see, configure one party to the other.

not surprising, therefore, that statistics show that while the divorce rate in nations like the United States is at around 50%, divorce is still rare in those marriages whose bride married as a virgin.¹

Furthermore, in order to maintain the life flow of the new unified body that has been created with consummation, marriage as a communion of persons is held together, strengthened, and renewed by the exchange of life-giving love that the marital act affords, whether or not a child is ever conceived.²⁸⁰ Due to philosophy's contribution to Catholic intellectual thought over the centuries, the unitive dimension of marital love has been relatively ignored in comparison to the procreative dimension.²⁸¹ Yet, it is a crucial component of the covenant relationship. The personalism of John Paul II that contributed to his *theology of the body* helped alleviate this discrepancy (2006).

Modern science is also beginning to weigh in on the unitive significance of the one-flesh union, uncovering some of its mysteries.

7.2.2 Modern science and the one-flesh union

There have been some interesting findings with regard to the unitive aspect of sexual love in the past two decades that uncover profound possibilities of what sexual

²⁸⁰ This point is important when considering the morality of contraception. For life-giving love in the marital relationship to be exchanged without interruption that would weaken the bond, the mingling of selves cannot be impeded. Janet Smith notes:

A social scientist at the University of Stanford named Robert Michael who was intrigued by this and he wondered why it was that the divorce rate doubled in a ten year period (1965 to 1975). He actually discovered that as the contraceptive pill became more and more available, divorce became more and more popular... There's almost a non-existent divorce rate among couples using Natural Family Planning (Smith 2011).

²⁸¹ Between Augustine's "goods" and Aquinas' "ends" (primary and secondary) of marriage, the trajectory of realism and Scholastic philosophy was to emphasize children as the reason for the two sexes and for marriage. While Augustine mentioned fidelity of the spouses as one of its goods and Aquinas spoke of "*mutual help and the quieting of concupiscence*" as a secondary end, the Church did not begin to really focus upon love and covenantal communion as a loci in marriage until around the mid-twentieth century. Beginning with Pope Pius XII and onward with Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, the unitive aspect of marital love began to achieve a proper balance with the procreative aspect. For example, Pope Paul VI spoke of the double "*significance*" of the marital act in *Humanae Vitae* as "*the inseparable connection, established by God, which man [sic] on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act*" (Paul VI 1968, §14).

union entails – and how the one-flesh union is not simply a transient temporary act without longer-term consequences or significance. The following findings give scientific weight to religious prohibitions against premarital sex.

Here we briefly examine scientific studies on sexual union that have exposed chemical bonding hormones that configure the partners to each other, chemical mood-altering reactions, male DNA living in women's bodies, and the possibility of telegony.

7.2.3 Effects of sexual union on physical and psychological well-being

Sexual attraction and union are found to release hormones that foster monogamous bonding in mammals. There have been numerous studies that point to neuropeptides such as oxytocin, vasopressin, and dopamine having a major impact on pair-bonding.²⁸² Psychiatrist Larry Young confirms the findings: *“When you're first becoming intimate, you're releasing lots of dopamine and oxytocin. That's creating that link between the neural systems that are processing your facial cues, your voice and the reward system”* (Young in Goodman 2013). René Hurlemann concurs:

Sexual monogamy is actually quite costly for males, so there must be some form of mechanism binding males and females together, at least for some time. There must be some benefit, and reward is actually the strongest motivation underlying human behavior. Oxytocin triggers the reward system to activate on the partner's face, the presence of the partner (Hurlemann in Goodman 2013).

Three evolutionary psychologists conducted an experiment on 293 sexually active college women at the State University of New York in Albany to collect data on the effects that semen has on their mood and well-being (Gallup, Burch and Platek 2002, pp 289-293).²⁸³ It was revealed from their surveys that women who never used condoms seemed happier and were less likely to have suicidal thoughts than women who *“always”* or *“usually”* used condoms, by a margin of 5% to 20% (Ibid.). The

²⁸² See Young, et al. 2005; Wang and Aragona 2004; Curtis 2006; and Hammock 2006 as a few examples.

²⁸³ This thesis does not condone studies like these if they take advantage of those who are fornicating and contracepting, whether it be from invincible ignorance or sin – if an effort is not made to evangelize or Socratically challenge the moral turpitude of the lifestyles being tested.

researchers concluded that the antidepressant compounds in semen elevate mood in women, adding to their sense of well-being.

7.2.4 Microchimerism

A 2005 study of 120 women showed that over 20% of them were found to have male DNA living in their bodies (Yan, Guthrie, Hermes, Lambert, Loubiere, Madeleine, Nelson, Porter and Stevens 2005). This is a phenomenon called male microchimerism. In the study, these women were separated into four distinct groups corresponding to their personal history of pregnancy. Women in Group A had given birth to daughters only. Group B were women who have had miscarriages or spontaneous abortions. Group C included those who have had induced abortions, and Group D had never been pregnant. Male microchimerism was present in a significant percentage of each group, at 8%, 22%, 57%, and 10% respectively (Ibid.). The prevailing hypothesis is that the cause of male microchimerism in women is their male offspring who inadvertently shared their DNA with their mothers from in utero (Ibid.). However, this conclusion does not fully explain why male DNA was found in women who claimed to have never been pregnant with sons. The study concludes:

Male microchimerism was not infrequent in women without sons. Besides known pregnancies, other possible sources of male microchimerism include unrecognized spontaneous abortion, vanished male twin, an older brother transferred by the maternal circulation, **or sexual intercourse**. Further studies are needed to determine specific origins of male microchimerism in women (Ibid.).²⁸⁴

In a similar study on microchimerism published in 2012, male DNA was found specifically in the brains of deceased women (Chan, Gurnot, Montine, Sonnen, Guthrie and Nelson 2012). Researchers discovered it in 63% of the human female cadavers tested. Male DNA was discovered in various parts of their brains, especially the medulla (Ibid.). It turns out that many of the women had been pregnant with sons, but not all. Part of the conclusion to this study comprised this analysis:

At present, the biological significance of harboring

²⁸⁴ Bold emphasis added.

microchimerism [Mc] in the human brain requires further investigation. Mc appears to persist in the blood, bone, and bone marrow for decades, and is present among different hematopoietic lineages. Moreover, microchimerism appears to integrate and generate specific cell types in tissues... Thus, it is possible that microchimerism in the brain is able to differentiate into various mature phenotypes or undergoes fusion with pre-existing cells and acquires a new phenotype... **In conclusion, male Microchimerism is frequent and widely distributed in the human female brain** (Ibid.).²⁸⁵

The same study stated, “[o]ur results indicate that fetal DNA and likely cells can cross the human blood-brain barrier (BBB) and reside in the brain” (Ibid.). Taking both the 2005 and 2012 studies into consideration, Omega Golden fertility clinic of Ajah, Lagos in Nigeria is convinced the evidence points to DNA absorption through sexual intercourse:

Finding a man’s DNA in a woman’s brain from the first three sources applies to only a small percentage of women. The only likely option researchers could account for in the study of 63% of women who had it was through sexual intercourse (Omega Golden 2023).

A more recent study explained the findings of three researchers on how somatic cells in women are penetrated and affected by sperm cells (Nejabti, Roshanger and Noun 2022, pp. 55-56). Not only could this have ramifications regarding microchimerism, but also with a phenomenon called telegony.²⁸⁶

According to evidence, telegony may occur either through the infiltration of sperm into the somatic tissues of the female genital tract or the presence of fetal genes in the mother's blood. It is highlighted that sperm penetrates into the mucosa of the uterine and possibly alters the genetic structure, affecting the embryo and enduring from one pregnancy to the next, which may be one of the potential mechanisms of telegony (Ibid.).

Whether the extraneous living male DNA in the women originate from shared offspring with a sexual partner (born, miscarried, or aborted), or more directly through

²⁸⁵ Bold emphasis added.

²⁸⁶ Telegony is the phenomenon of semen and DNA of one male affecting the phenotype of children fathered by another male in the future, which has been demonstrated in other non-human animals.

sexual intercourse with DNA being absorbed through the woman's tissues, or perhaps both, studies of this genre indicate that male DNA from sexual encounters become a living part of the woman's constitution. The evidence points to the possibility that a man, directly or indirectly through his offspring in utero, becomes a living part of the woman with which he has had sexual intercourse, sharing his life with her until her death. It illustrates rather well that the act of becoming "one-flesh" — as it is referred to in Scripture — has meaning over and above the metaphorical and procreational meanings often attributed to it. More studies are needed to clarify or confirm what past studies seem to be pointing to, and to uncover the various repercussions involved.

These studies have related to the chemistry of pair bonding, mood alteration, microchimerism, and telegony and are signs of what the unitive significance of sexual intercourse may include. It seems we are just at the beginning of discovering more details that will illumine the depth of meaning of the biblical term "two becoming one flesh". As more studies are conducted, I suspect the Catholic Church's teaching on sexual intercourse and marriage, and the reasonableness of its moral doctrine on the sixth precept of the natural law, will become more deeply confirmed.

7.3 The transcendent paradigm: the nature of the tri-personal God

To this point in the chapter, we have analyzed certain patterns within the nature of physical matter that seem to be shared throughout creation. We then postulated that this unitive-creative propensity, specified as *analogous to love*, is personified in the portion of the physical universe that is spiritual and personal – human beings – as 'being-in-relation'. We proposed that the pattern of being that seems embedded in all things is fulfilled in marriage and the family – as a sign is fulfilled in what it points to, or a type find its perfection in its archetype.²⁸⁷ Now, we ask the question: Is there another level in which we can find this paradigm that may transcend human marriage and family? Can we possibly trace this pattern into a higher realm, perhaps a third and final step from which the unitive-creative propensity in all things find their meaning and fulfillment? Or does it end at earthly marriage? To answer and elaborate on this

²⁸⁷ Type/anti-type (or archetype) terminology is used by Scripture scholars to explain traces or prefigurements found in the Old Testament being fulfilled in persons or events that are greater than themselves in the New Testament, all ultimately pointing to Christ (Sullivan 2015).

question is the purpose of the rest of this chapter.

Seeing that Aquinas' five proofs for the existence of God through reason alone are rational and robust (ST I-I, q. 2, a. 3), we begin with the premise that a first unmoved Mover, a first uncaused Cause, a non-contingent Being, an intelligent Designer of all, and a Standard of perfection does indeed exist. And since the Being that fulfills the conclusions of these five reasonable arguments is what Christians call God, we will presume the existence of God. To take this further and to postulate that this triune paradigm found in nature and marriage originates in the Creator of both, God, would be metaphysically satisfying; but one would have to project some kind of threeness into God that is found in His creation, of which He would be the Source and archetype. Fleshing this out in any intelligible way cannot be accomplished through reason alone.

We can hypothesize that a triadic paradigm similar to that of lover-beloved-love exists in the one God whose existence Aquinas rationally demonstrated; but reason alone cannot transcend the vagary of this unsubstantiated claim. Therefore, in order to take this significant third and final step into the unknown, to connect the non-conscious inclination of the physical world as well as the communion of persons in marriage and family to the transcendent Creator Himself, one must either be satisfied to posit that there may be some kind of threeness in God that we do not understand, or open ourselves to divine Revelation and Christian dogma on this particular matter, which was hammered out through the Magisterium in the first few Ecumenical councils.

Pope St John Paul II certainly took that leap of faith in recognizing that God is a personal communion of unitive and creative love that, as Trinity, is called a "*family*" (1979). Additionally, the notion that God loves creation into existence *and* that creation in turn loves Him back analogously is not lost on C.S. Lewis who referred to this phenomenon as the "*Great Dance*" (1944, p. 187). Creation comes forth from the "heart" of God and is extended outward as if by the hand of God in a dance, leading her away and twirling His beloved before she returns to Him. It is incumbent on her (creation) to allow the momentum of God's direction to bring her back into His arms,

the metaphorical arms of her Lover.²⁸⁸ All creation returning to God is represented in the spiritually self-conscious humanity who responds to God by accepting His covenantal offer. Michael Gaitley, speaks of this “dance” with faith as a joyous event in which the three Persons of the Trinity are involved as God shares His goodness with something other than Himself, which, at His prompting, goes forth from Him in order to return:

I wonder if God’s love as He creates is something like that of a young man and woman who are deeply in love... God the Father is like the young man at the dance who lovingly gazes on His beloved at mid-twirl, delighting in her goodness just before she comes twirling back to Him. In other words, God the Father beheld His material creation that twirled out from Him through His Word and in His Spirit (2012, pp. 63-64).

Therefore, henceforth in this chapter we will look at this great mystery by the light of human reason with an open mind to divine Revelation and what the early Church hashed out in its first 500 years about the nature of God as Trinity.

7.3.1 Christian monotheism: Trinitarian life-giving love that overflows into creation

In order to substantiate the fittingness of our next claim that marriage is *imago Trinitatis*, we now take a philosophical look at the central dogma of Christianity, that God is one Being and three Persons. One reason metaphysical personalism is a solid foundation for this inquiry is because it simply combines the mystery of *being* with the mystery of *personhood*, which, extrapolated from Exodus 3:14, is at the very heart of the central mystery of Christianity. Reality *is* being-in-relation as a Trinity of Persons. With the revelation of the divine Name YHWH (יהוה) (Ex 3:14) to the people of Israel, usually translated into English as some form of ‘*I Am*’, the world was introduced to the idea that there is only one God and that He is *Personal Being*. God said to Moses, “*Tell them יהוה sent you*” (Ibid.).

Ex 3:14 is the only place in the entire Bible wherein God names Himself. For the ancients, a name indicates an essential quality or descriptor of one’s being.

²⁸⁸ Allusions of this relationship between God and His people as Lover and beloved can be found in the Old Testament book the Song of Songs.

Translated into English, the second word of the self-revealed divine Name – “Am” – speaks of Being. God *Is*. There is no term after the divine Name because no further descriptor can define Him. God’s being is limitless. As Aquinas indicated, “*His essence is His existence*” (ST I-I, q. 3, a. 4) God is unlimited “*Is-ness*”.

Moreover, the first word of the divine Name signifies that God is personal (Ex 3:14). While the monotheistic God of the Israelites was understood to be personal and not just an impersonal force or entity as is portrayed in pantheistic and deistic religions, Christian monotheists via the New Testament were able to see that the God known to Israel as Personal Being, is also *Love* (1 Jn 4:8). And since *Love* is tri-Personal (Mt 3:16-17; Jn 14:16), it follows that *Love* is also relational.

God as Triadic unity can be explained as such: God eternally reflects upon Himself, and this reflection is His divine wisdom (1 Cor 2:7), His eternal Word (Jn 1:1), a second Person that is consubstantial with the first.²⁸⁹ The Son is God’s eternal *self*, the Father’s self-knowledge, which is divine truth and wisdom generated of His essential Being.²⁹⁰ These two divine Persons are eternally drawn to each other with a love that spirates into a third Person.²⁹¹ As the Father reflects upon the Son, and the Son upon the Father, the Love between them is the Holy Spirit. God as three Persons is Lover, Beloved, and Love; a personal relational communion of life-giving love that serves as the model for the family. One can surmise this is why St John the Evangelist speaks of God as Love rather than simply as *loving*: for there to be love there must be a beloved. The triadic mystery of *Lover, Beloved* and *Love* is the nature of God, and is etched in marriage and the family.

Scripture also speaks of the Son as God’s word (Jn 1:1) and the Spirit as His breath (Jn 20:22). His word signifies *truth* and His breath *life*. The Hebrew word רוח (“*ruach*”) can mean *spirit, wind, breath, or life*, depending on context. Some translations have “*ruach*” as “a mighty wind” while others have “the Spirit of God”. In

²⁸⁹ Formulated at the Council of Nicaea, 325 AD.

²⁹⁰ The Nicene Creed articulates this timeless generation as “*God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made.*”

²⁹¹ The Holy Spirit is at times referred to as God’s breath, as we elaborate below. The Nicene Creed’s articulation of this is that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Genesis 1:1, God — as the active principle — sends forth His breath/wind/spirit/life to His creation to form it and bring life from it – similarly to how He sent forth His רוח on Pentecost for the Spirit/Breath to form and animate the Church. In Acts 2:1-4, the רוח sounded like a *mighty wind* as God sent forth His breath–Spirit into the upper room where Jesus’ disciples were praying. In Genesis 2:7 God “*breathed*” (רוח) into what was to be Adam, who became a *living being*. Likewise, in John 20:19-22, Christ רוח on them saying, “*Receive the Holy Spirit, whosever sins you forgive will be forgiven them...*” Further, in Luke 1:35 the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and this union resulted in Jesus. One can say analogically that the רוח (*ruach*), the life-giving love of God, explodes into His beloved bride, the receptive principle, like a marital embrace.

7.3.2 Marriage and family as Trinitarian

As Genesis reminds us, human beings made in God’s image (Gn 1:27) unite as two persons in one flesh (Gn 2:24) to produce more people made in His image (Gn 4:1). In this manner, marital love, like God, is both unitive and trinitive.

The model for marriage and family is found not only in the Christ-Church relationship, of which earthly marriage is but a small reflection (Eph 5:21-35), but also in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. As the Son is light begotten of light²⁹², the Church is begotten of the side of the new Adam on the cross (Jn 19:34) and woman is the gift begotten of the man (Gn 2:22). Analogous to God the Father, a man contemplates and loves his “other self” in marriage, in order to unite and multiply – to become one (Gn 2:24) to become three (Gn 4:1).

To take this in a slightly different direction, life on earth is analogously reflected in the processions of the Trinity. For living beings, the Son begotten of the Father represents asexual reproduction, the way most simple organisms reproduce and come into the world. The Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son represents sexual reproduction, which is how most of the plant and animal species, including humans, reproduce. As the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love between the Father and

²⁹² From the *Nicene Creed*. Likewise, as Eve is begotten of Adam (Gn 2:22-23).

the Son, the child proceeds from the love between the husband and wife – as illustrated scripturally in the first two parents becoming one flesh (Gn 2:24) in order to become three persons (Gn 4:1).

Hence, God as Trinity can be seen as the heavenly archetype and exemplar for marriage, sexual reproduction, and the family. The Father and Son eternally become one to become three, as do the husband and the wife in the finite temporal level. “*God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God*”²⁹³ speaks of the eternal duality of God, which can be understood as masculine and feminine or active and receptive principles in relation. The Incarnate Word is the *beloved* Son of the Father, who is *Lover* (Mt 3:17). Lover is active and the beloved receptive, as the Head and Heart of God. This does not mean the Incarnate, or pre-incarnate, eternal Son is feminine or passive in Himself. These principles are not ontological or essential, but relational.²⁹⁴

The divine Persons are consubstantial and co-equal as God, but are distinct in their relations. This is analogically reflected in marriage and the family, as Pope Pius XI alluded to in *Casti Connubii* (1930), mentioned above. The Father as first Person of the Trinity can be seen as the eternal *source* of the divine essence. The Son is God’s expression, word, or wisdom. Although the Father and the Son are co-equal in their divinity, there is a distinction between them in procession and relation. This active-receptive relation is expressed in Scripture in Jesus as the incarnate Word of the Father made flesh (Jn 1:1, 14), coming into the world at *the command* of the Father; and who is completely *obedient* to the Father even unto death; death on a cross (Phil 2:8). Even though every knee shall bend and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – it will be for the glory of the Father (Phil 2:11).

Marriage and the family are a created living icon of the Trinity as a communion of persons with masculine and feminine, i.e., active and receptive principles, sharing life and love, which, at times, you may have to name nine months later.

7.4 Repercussions of Denigrating *Imago Trinitatis*

²⁹³ From the *Nicene Creed*

²⁹⁴ Each individual plays a different role in every relation he has. Jesus, for example, is the receptive principle via His relation to the Father, but is the active principle via His relation to His Church.

As we have seen throughout this thesis, it is not difficult for post-lapsarian humanity to debase the meaning and purpose of human sexuality and marriage. In post-Christian contemporary times, the defilement of marriage has become the norm, gaining society-wide acceptance and rendering its holiness and purity rather obscure.

7.4.1 The one flesh union, contraception and divorce

In 1968, Pope St Paul VI emphasized the inseparable connection of the unitive and procreative significance of the marital act and the potential problems that may arise by ignoring this principle (1968, §12). Pope Francis has recently underscored the importance of keeping this inseparable unitive-procreative connection, and the growing problem of the contraceptive mentality:

In a world dominated by a relativistic and trivialized view of human sexuality, serious education in this area appears increasingly necessary... there is a need always to keep in mind the inseparable connection between the unitive and procreative meanings of the conjugal act. The former expresses the desire of the spouses to be one, a single life; the latter expresses the shared desire to generate life, which endures even at times of infertility and in old age. When these two meanings are consciously affirmed, the generosity of love is born and strengthened in the hearts of the spouses, disposing them to welcome new life. Lacking this, the experience of sexuality is impoverished, reduced to sensations that soon become self-referential, and its dimensions of humanity and responsibility are lost (2023).

Comparatively, we can see a terrible analogy. As separating the electron and neutron of *atomic* union has led to human disaster, so too has separating the unitive and procreative significance of the *one-flesh* union. 'Explosions' from both have devastated humanity: By rupturing the most fundamental constituent of *matter* (in the atom bomb), WWII Japan incurred a death toll of around 200 thousand (Wellerstein 2020). Likewise, by rupturing the most fundamental constituent of *love* (with abortion), a 70 million death toll has occurred in the U.S. alone.²⁹⁵ During the Cold War between

²⁹⁵ On how contraception leads to abortion, see Clowes 2017. The number 70 million is the average

the Soviet Union and the United States from the 1950s to 1980s, there was great anxiety and fear over the potential of nuclear war between the world's super powers. Nevertheless, a *nuclear* bomb would not have created more devastating fallout than the '*contraception* bomb' has.²⁹⁶

The moral imperative of inseparability in the co-principles of love explained in *Casti Connubii* and *Humanae Vitae* is an extension of the truth of the created order, as has been elaborated in this chapter. The inseparability principle of the marital act also corresponds to divine Trinitarian relations, since, in God, life and love are one. This union of life-love can never be separated, "contracepted", or impeded between the divine Persons. The life-giving love that eternally flows between the Persons of the Trinity is the model for marital relations. Likewise, the life-giving love between the Father and the Son is the model that illustrates the love that God has for humanity. The crucified Christ would never hold back any of His life-giving love to His bride, the Church – even though many members of His bride use contraception in their marriages and metaphorical contraception in their covenant with Christ – by remaining closed to His teachings that may challenge their comfort zones and by not allowing His grace to penetrate their lives.

One could go so far as to say that God as Trinity is like one infinite and eternal, unimpeded "marital act". If an impediment to the flow of this infinite love were possible, which it is not, the Holy Spirit would cease to exist and the first two Persons of God would hypothetically drift apart. This is a contradiction to God's nature as it is to ours, although it is possible for us to contradict our nature. Since the tertiary principle between lover and beloved is its glue, blocking it has consequences. Contraception blocks the flow of life-giving love between the spouses and its regular use seems to be a catalyst for divorce. In 2001 the number of divorcing couples that practiced NFP was as low as 0.02% (Wilson 2004). A more recent study of over 2500 women saw

estimate of abortions performed in the U.S. since the Supreme Court legalized it in 1973. And this number does not include all abortions by oneself outside a hospital or clinic. For the number of abortions world-wide, which is estimated at 73 million annually, see Guttmacher 2022a. Note: the numbers considered here are only surgical abortions. It does not include chemical abortions and IUDs, which would increase the number exponentially.

²⁹⁶ Referring back to Chapter Five, the "Contraception Bomb" is a metaphor for the anti-life fallout and legacy that contraception has had on Western Civilization in the 20th and 21st centuries.

that those who ever practiced natural family planning in their marriages were almost 60% less likely to divorce than those who have used contraception (Fehring and Manhart 2021).²⁹⁷

Because the nature of love is Trinitarian, contraception attempts to make love dyadic. That is because personal love can never remain *two*. It either quickly ascends to *three* when left unimpeded or descends to zero when thwarted. When there is a blockage of blood flow between a head and heart, the body eventually dies. Likewise does the impeding of life-giving love kill a marital relationship.

More specifically, contraception hinders the one-flesh union while divorce kills it. Unfortunately, no human society has been free of contraception and divorce since concupiscence became part of fallen human nature via the fall. Even the ancient people of Israel in biblical times allowed for divorce because of “*the hardness of their hearts*” (Mt 19:8), while their scriptures clearly conveyed that God hates divorce (Mal 2:16).²⁹⁸

7.4.2 The one-flesh union, fornication and adultery

The word זָנָה in Hebrew and μοιχεία in Greek are the biblical words for adultery. The Latin “*adulterare*” literally means “*to alter*” or to adulterate. Becoming one-flesh outside marriage violates the natural order and adulterates, or defiles, *imago Trinitatis*.²⁹⁹ Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen knew that a dualistic understanding of the human person, so prevalent in a post-Cartesian Modern world, had to be quashed, as a decade before the sexual revolution was in full swing, he wrote:

There is no such thing as giving the body without giving the

²⁹⁷ “*This study showed that ever-use of natural family planning (NFP) among ever-married women was associated with 58 percent lower odds of divorce than among women who never-used NFP. Ever-use of contraceptive methods was associated with two times the odds of divorce and four times for cohabitation compared to those women who never-used those methods. Use of periodic abstinence with NFP is the practice of marital chastity and is thought to strengthen the marital relationship*” (Fehring and Manhart 2021).

²⁹⁸ Yet, even though Malachi recorded that God hates divorce, there is nothing in the minor prophet’s work that indicates a divorced man or woman who marries another commits adultery. In fact, divorce and remarriage were allowed for the people of Israel throughout all Old Testament times and beyond (Moss, n.d.).

²⁹⁹ See St. Paul in 1 Cor 6:16 on the state of being one-flesh with a non-spouse.

soul...The two are inseparable. Sex in isolation from personality does not exist. Those who think they can be faithful in soul to one another, but unfaithful in body, forget that the two are inseparable. Sex in isolation from personality does not exist!... Man has no organic functions isolated from his soul. There is involvement of the whole personality. Nothing is more psychosomatic than the two in one flesh... The separation of soul and body is death. Those who separate sex and spirit are rehearsing for death (1951, pp. 2-3).

St Paul was adamant about this in 1 Corinthians 6:16 when he scolded the men of Corinth for creating a permanent natural bond with a *πορνό* (*porne*)³⁰⁰; translated into English as “harlot” or “prostitute”: “*Do you not know that anyone who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For “the two,” it says, “will become one flesh”* (1 Cor 6:16). St Paul was referring back to the natural order of creation before its disturbance and imbalance due to sin (Gn 2:24). Jesus did the same thing while explaining why divorce was forbidden, as found here in the Gospel of St Matthew:

Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator “made them male and female” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh (Mt 19:4-6).

The mystery of being “one-flesh” cannot be explained by Cartesian anthropological dualism. Christian anthropology recognizes the human person to be a body-soul composite, with the spiritual soul informing the material body. Humans are not simply spirit-persons like angels, but are uniquely body-persons. This is why sexual intercourse consummates a marriage, making it unbreakable: sexual union essentially bonds two *persons* together, not just two *bodies*. With every act of sexual union, two body-persons intermingle as one, sharing physical life even if permanent commitment is missing. On some level a new, human, triadic relation is made when two become one-flesh, which cannot simply be repudiated and eradicated. To repeat

³⁰⁰ *πορνό* (*porne*) was the usual term used for a sex partner other than one’s wife, since the socio-cultural system in St Paul’s ancient world did not normally allow for sexual relationships or liaisons outside of marriage, other than with a cultic or monetary prostitute or concubine. In today’s post-Christian, Western world, the popularization of the birth control pill has allowed for the normalization of such relationships, creating new terminology in the attempt to justify a culture of lust such as “meaningful relationship”, “adult partner”, “live-in girlfriend”, “one-night stand”, and “friends with benefits”.

the analogy, when one male sperm cell mingles with one female egg cell – regardless of how this came to be – the two entities become a third. After becoming a human being, the cells can never return to their former existence as individual gametes. Further, when two atoms of hydrogen come together with one atom of oxygen, it becomes a third entity, a tertiary principle uniting the two and creating a third, a water molecule. It, too, cannot return to its former existence as two individual elements.³⁰¹ This is because both of these unions, as well as the one-flesh union, are distant images of their Source and archetype, the eternal Trinity. The experience of oneness can never be undone.

Recognizing the ontological import of two becoming one flesh, Lewis illustrates demons plotting to persuade humans to separate sexual intercourse from marriage³⁰²:

The Enemy described a married couple as “one flesh”. He did not say “a happily married couple” or “a couple who married because they were in love”, but you can make the humans ignore that. You can also make them forget that the man they call Paul did not confine it to married couples. Mere copulation, for him, makes “one flesh”. You can thus get the humans to accept as rhetorical eulogies of “being in love” what were in fact plain descriptions of the real significance of sexual intercourse. The truth is that **wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured** (1961, p. 83).³⁰³

Lewis underscores the permanent condition created between two people that have shared body-selves, regardless of whether or not they intended it. This must have *some* detrimental effect on one’s future marriage to another, as, to some degree, an impediment has been created to the giving of one’s total, complete self as a unique gift to one’s spouse. The objective language of the body in the marital act that says, “I love you and give my total and exclusive self to you alone among of all living people on earth” would be compromised, and hence, untrue.

³⁰¹ Electrolysis can transform water in hydrogen gas and oxygen gas; but this has to be done with an expenditure of energy under controlled conditions.

³⁰² “The enemy” the devil refers to in Lewis’ text, is God.

³⁰³ Emphasis added

Today's norm of having numerous sexual partners before marriage and this norm's precursor, the "Contraception Revolution" that has enabled this to happen, diminishes marriage as the unique and sacred union of one-flesh that it is meant to be between one man and one woman.³⁰⁴

7.4.3 Revisiting the exception clause

To confirm this moral crisis, let us briefly revisit the exceptive clause in the gospel of Matthew, already mentioned in Chapter Three of this thesis. Since the Church has no definitive statement on the exact meaning of the exceptive clause, apprehending it warrants a re-examination of Christ's re-establishment of marriage to as it was "*from the beginning*" (Mt 19:5-6) in 5:32 and 19:9 of St Matthew's gospel, Jesus condemns divorce "*except for porneia.*"

In short, it is reasonable to consider that St Matthew, a Jew writing specifically to a Jewish audience, was noting Jesus referring to the Pentateuch/Torah when speaking of the re-establishment of marriage in its fullness. In the Torah, the word "*porneia*" is found in Mosaic Law as indicating various illicit sexual unions.³⁰⁵ Understanding how "*porneia*" was used in Mosaic Law could be a key to understanding Jesus' exception in Matthew.

In the Pentateuch, the Greek word *porneia*, and its Hebrew counterpart "*servah*" (עֲרִוּהָ) and "*zanah*" (זָנָה), are used to specifically condemn two illicit kinds of sexual activity – incest and fornication (sex outside marriage) (Lev 18:6-23; Dt 21:14, 22:13-29; Ex 22:16.). Since at the time concern for the latter was directed to females, the

³⁰⁴ It is common among chastity speakers to use the "paper and tape" analogy, that the more a piece of tape is stuck to various pieces of paper, the less it is able to stick each time it is removed. Analogously, human love acts in a similar way. As the paper is diminished each time a new piece of tape is stuck onto it and then removed, the analogy points to human nature, which is not made to form temporary attachments of the heart and body in the form of serial bigamy. Common sense realizes that multiple attachments and detachments to others diminish a person's ability to give his or her entire self unreservedly to another – which is what marriage is meant to include.

³⁰⁵ Lev 18:6-23 delineates the holiness code that sets the people of Israel apart from their pagan neighbors – condemning incest (consanguinity and affinity), adultery, child-sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality. It is repeated in chapter 20. Dt 22:13-21, illustrates the severe Mosaic law regarding a new wife's discovered non-virginity. Dt 22:28-29 spells out the norm and consequence of a man being forced to marry a young woman with whom he had fornicating, without being given the possibility of ever divorcing her. This norm is repeated in Ex 22:16. Dt 22:22-24 tells of the severe punishment (death) for fornication of, and with, a betrothed virgin.

word has been translated “prostitution” and “harlotry”. Deuteronomy 24:1 states that if a man finds something “sexually indecent” (*porneia*) in his wife when coming together with her for the first time, he may put her away.³⁰⁶ In Deuteronomy 22:13-29, marriage legislation under Mosaic Law speaks of the seriousness of female virginity before marriage:

If a man comes upon a young woman, a virgin who is not betrothed, seizes her and lies with her, and they are discovered, the man who lay with her shall give the young woman’s father fifty silver shekels and she will be his wife, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her as long as he lives.

Notice that, even if the act was consensual, and the man was in the wrong, it is the female that was seen as violated.³⁰⁷ Jesus in St Matthew’s Gospel may be referencing not only Mosaic Law against incest, but also Mosaic Law on premarital virginity. Both violations in the Torah used the term “*porneia*”, which is what Jesus used in St Matthew’s exceptive clause; and referring to both would be consistent with Jesus being the ‘new Moses’ in St Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, which is the new Sinai, explaining God’s law to His people.

The prohibition against *porneia* reappears in Acts 15:20 at the Council in Jerusalem as a directive on what is to be required of gentiles converting to Christianity. While the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) translates “*porneia*” as “*unlawful marriage*”, the Revised Standard Catholic Edition (RSVCE) keeps the more general term “*unchastity*”.

Regardless of whether or not Jesus in Matthew 19:9 was reaching back to the Torah to refer to incest and female non-virginity as impediments to marriage, it is important to note that while certain lines of consanguinity and affinity are drawn in canon law (*Code of Canon Law*, canons 108-109), the Church recognizes no canonical impediment specifically related to an individual’s sexual past in general. This

³⁰⁶ This is an ancient Hebrew colloquialism for divorce.

³⁰⁷ There is a difference between this belief and today’s understanding of sexual intercourse based on a Cartesian dualism and false egalitarianism that has permeated Modern Western civilization. Back then, even though both may have sinned, the unmarried female is seen as violated. Today, as long as there is adult consent no one is seen as violated.

may be a sign that with *porneia* as the exception clause, Jesus was referring to only incestuous marriage. Nevertheless, the considerable mentions made to fornication in Scripture and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks to the gravity of the sin and the importance of avoiding it.³⁰⁸

7.4.4 Aquinas, affinity and irregularity

To conclude this section on the effects of debasing *imago Trinitatis*, we return to the angelic doctor. In his *Summa Theologiae*, St Thomas Aquinas speaks of impediments related to affinity and bigamy (III, q. 66, a.3.), as well as “irregular marriages”, in a way that may surprise people today.

In the *Supplementum Tertiæ Partis*, Aquinas claims that due to the natural lines of affinity created by the one-flesh union, a man cannot marry a close relative of any woman with whom he has had sexual intercourse in the past. This is because coitus creates a natural relation that cannot be ignored. In a case scenario, a man who has had non-marital sexual relations with his fiancé’s sister years ago has already made his fiancé equivalent to his sister-in-law. This is due to having become “one-flesh” with his fiancé’s sister.

This notion that non-marital sexual union causes a condition of affinity to one's former lover's relatives was reflected in canon law at the time (ST III-II, q. 55, a.3 and a. 6). Such “marriages”, Aquinas states, must be annulled (III-II, q. 55, a. 9), because of this impediment. A person is unable to lawfully marry someone who is the equivalent of his sister-in-law, a relation that is acquired through the power of being one-flesh with the fiancé’s sister through sexual union.³⁰⁹ In pointing to St Paul’s reprimand of certain Corinthians having unlawful sexual intercourse, Aquinas states, “*He who is joined to a harlot is made one body. Now this is the reason why marriage caused affinity.*

³⁰⁸ There is no sin in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* condemned more times than that of premarital sex. Mentioned as ‘fornication’ and repeated as ‘free union’, it is condemned seven times: §§1755, 1852, 2353, 2390, 2391 2396, and 2400. Adultery and murder are second in number of condemnations with four mentions each.

³⁰⁹ This law expresses an insight that seems to be completely lost to our contemporary age, i.e., that sexual intercourse is not simply an act that people do, but creates a condition that people become. It is reminiscent of the condition acquired by becoming “one-flesh” with a prostitute, which elicited St Paul’s strong critical admonishment in 1 Corinthians 6:16.

Therefore, unlawful intercourse does so for the same reason” (1 Cor 6:16; ST III-II, q. 55, a. 3).

St Thomas further states that marrying a non-virgin, irrespective of whether someone is aware of it, makes the person *“irregular”* (ST III-II, q. 66, a. 3). It is not clear what the ramifications are of this irregularity, but it seems to at least cause a defect in the sacrament, rendering a man unfit for Holy Orders even after the death of his spouse. Since human beings as persons-in-relation are monogamous by nature, albeit greatly challenged by sin, becoming one-flesh with more than one still living person is viewed as a form of serial monogamy, which is in effect is a kind of bigamy, especially with regard to the woman.³¹⁰

7.5 Conclusion

Pope St John Paul II once mentioned that the family reflects the nature of God. In a homily directed to the Church in Latin America early in his pontificate, he stated: *“God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love”* (1979).

Piggy-backing on the philosophy and theology of John Paul II, this chapter sought to present, from the ground-up, a reasonable hypothesis that all creation has a mode of being embedded in its nature that is triadic; and that this natural paradigm is lived out personally and freely on the human level in marriage and the family. From there, after considering the claim of Catholic theology that God is a Trinity of persons, we proposed that the triadic nature of created being is a Trinitarian stamp embedded by the Creator as a trace of Himself in His creatures; and that marriage and family, which is the personification and fulfillment of this stamp, is an earthly icon and *imago Trinitatis* – the transcendent divine essence of God who is a “family”.

To the non-Christian, the appeal to intuitive reason that grasps the fittingness of this unique proposal is an invitation to follow reason to its transcending point, and

³¹⁰ Pre-Modern Christian thinking on sex and marriage untainted by the “Sexual Revolution” saw no double standard of the sexes with regard to the morality of sexual sin, but did recognize a difference in how each sex is naturally affected by it.

then make a decision on whether or not to take a leap of faith. To the Christian, this proposal may inspire one to dig deeper in order to formulate a better way of presenting this claim that marriage and family is an earthly image of the Blessed Trinity. And for the Catholic Christian, it may additionally lead to a greater appreciation of the unique and special character of marriage despite the world's relentless attacks; the exclusivity, inseparability, and indissolubility of marriage that are essential properties of covenantal love; and the divine wisdom and authority of the Church's Magisterium, established by Christ and guided by the Spirit.

In the next chapter we will summarize the thesis and defend the hypothesis presented here against potential challenges to the reasonability of its claim. We will further expound on the value of this theory of one-flesh union imaging the Trinity, which will reinforce how some forms of marriage today — popular in our post-Christian era — are a deformation of that image.

Chapter 8: Summary and defense

The purpose of this thesis is to recover the meaning of sexual intercourse and the importance of marriage for humanity. In addition, it is to clearly identify the unique attack sexual intercourse, marriage, and the family have been undergoing in contemporary, what we call 'post-Christian', times, and to offer a way of overcoming the onslaught by proposing a pathway for renewing marriage and the family. These tasks have been undertaken by developing a Christian philosophy of one-flesh union, in line with the Catholic intellectual tradition, which can be amenable to all Christians who adhere to a traditional natural law theory.

We offer this proposal in the foregoing chapter (seven) by first observing a common phenomenon of the created order – particularly that all things have a tendency toward uniting, and transforming, into new entities – from the smallest atom to the largest heavenly bodies of the observable universe. We saw a paradigm within the created order of polarity seeking unity to become trinity, i.e., of two becoming one in a transformative triadic entity. Inspired by the observation, we had the audacity to ask an obvious question that nobody seems to be asking: why is this the case? Why is the nature of the cosmos unitive in its propensity to attract and unite, and creative in its trajectory to be transformed and multiply?

With that question in mind, we made a second, related, observation: that human beings, as the spiritualized, personal pinnacle of visible creation in the ontological order, seem to reflect this paradigm embedded in creation most acutely in the institution of marriage and the family – which forms a communion of persons that exemplifies the triadic union of lover, beloved, and love analogously reflected in non-personal, beings.

Inspired but not satisfied with this analogous comparative summation, we looked toward a metaphysical solution to the question of source; one that would make

sense of why creation, most profoundly projected in human marriage, would include such a constituent pattern of being universally. In pondering this question of “why”, we looked to St Thomas Aquinas and his five rational proofs for the existence of God (ST I, q. 2, a. 3)³¹¹, and to Christian Revelation on the transcendent Source being a divine Trinitarian Unity.³¹² Combining this with the being-in-relation paradigm of metaphysical personalism exemplified in Pope St John Paul II, and the conjecture tabulated in this philosophical reflection on creation that marriage and family is not simply an incidental or random human construct but rather an expression of human nature, we hypothesize that marriage is a personalized summation of the created order that most perfectly images the transcendent Creator as life-giving love. In other words, marriage images God as Trinity, and human sexuality is such that its fulfillment is to be creation’s representative *imago Trinitatis*. Just as the individual person finds their dignity as being an image of God with self-consciousness, understanding and freewill, likewise, marriage and family as a unit find its dignity in imaging God as a communion of persons of lover, beloved, and love.

8.1 Why is this important?

This reflection on the nature of marriage is important because the family is vital for the health of individuals and society. It is the primary school of love that forms everyone intellectually and morally. A healthy intact family enables the optimal opportunity for flourishing. Furthermore, the family is the bedrock of human civilization and the buffer between the individual and a potentially tyrannical state. We know the postlapsarian tendency of fallen humanity to dominate others (Gn 3:16)³¹³ in their

³¹¹ The second of these proofs demonstrates that God is first efficient Cause of all. This would include the causality of the pattern of creation in question. To complement this, the fourth proof, which demonstrates that gradations of qualities in beings points to One who is the perfection and Source of those qualities (Ibid.). Regarding the quality of beings as intrinsically possessing unitive attraction and transformative contraction, the perfection of this love-giving-lifegiving (oneness and threeness) paradigm is God.

³¹² “*The Trinity is a mystery of faith in the strict sense, one of the ‘mysteries that are hidden in God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God.’ To be sure, God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament. But his inmost Being as Holy Trinity is a mystery that is inaccessible to reason alone or even to Israel’s faith before the Incarnation of God’s Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit*” (CCC §237).

³¹³ Note how this tendency of sin to dominate others is counteracted by the freedom won by Christ in Jn 3:16, the Gospel is written as the ‘new Genesis’ of the new Covenant beginning with the same three words “*In the beginning*”: “*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*”

quest for power, money, and sexual satisfaction.³¹⁴ The stronger the marriage and family unit is, the less opportunity there is for the state to create dependence in people and fill its void with its own power (Arrowood 2019).³¹⁵

Marriage is also important because it is the way an essential part of human nature is expressed. Common sense can see that as hunger is the natural desire to keep the individual alive, sexual union with a member of the opposite sex expresses the natural drive to propagate the species. Marriage and the family raise the double significance of union and procreation found elsewhere to the personal level and in accord with reason. Sexual expression outside of marriage and/or closed to the possibility of life, therefore, is an abuse of this faculty. And when sex is abused, it can cause confusion and deep scarring on the most profound levels.

Western nations have been mired in such a culture of confusion to the point that people on the highest echelons of society are no longer willing to admit what a woman is.³¹⁶ The ongoing revolution against human nature and the sixth precept of the natural law has moved the human race backward, not forward.

8.2 Rebuilding a civilization of life from a culture of death: a reasonable pathway for further discourse

To rebuild a civilization of life, people must respect the sacredness of marriage and sexual intercourse. To see this it may be important to first admit that Western civilization is dying. We demonstrated this decline in Chapters Four and Five with the dismantling of morality being preceded by the disintegration of truth. And, as is attested

³¹⁴ This tendency goes back a long time. Aristotle wrote about it when comparing the three common forms of government – monarchy, aristocracy, and polity – to what they can easily devolve into when there are selfish motives, in tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy respectively (Aristotle BC 350, 1279a22-1279b10).

³¹⁵ *“The principle of subsidiarity would state that the primary responsibility for meeting the needs of children belongs to the family. But when the individual family falls short, it should reach out to other families in the neighborhood. When the neighborhood lacks the resources to meet certain needs, it should reach out to the greater (and more formally organized) community of the city”* (Arrowood 2019).

³¹⁶ Emblematic of this problem today is U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who, during her confirmation hearings last year by the Senate Judiciary Committee, was unable to provide a straight answer to Senator Marsha Blackburn to the question: *“What is a woman?”* (Brown 2022).

by the paradigm on which this thesis concentrates, life is found in the integration of being, truth and morality, not in its decomposition or deconstruction. The death of a body – whether it be human, societal, or any other kind of body – is resultant of such disunion and disintegration.

For a weary world that is looking for meaning and purpose, seeing marriage and family as *imago Trinitatis* can give a little hope to those thinking of marriage as a vocation, or those who are having trouble in their marriage. To the more scientifically minded, marriage as the elevation and fulfillment of nature is a very attractive prospect. And for the more religious, living the image of the Blessed Trinity well, as an earthly icon can be a source of joy and an act of worship.

More research on this Christian philosophical reflection of marriage and the family is needed on both sides of the spectrum to further solidify its claims. On the one hand, more work in the field of physics on the nature of matter can be inculcated and more work in theoretical physics or philosophy is in order so that we may understand more clearly why matter acts the way it does, with its unitive and creative propensities. From the viewpoint of Christian theology, more fruitful contemplation and dialogue on the inner life and relations of the Persons of the one God who is pure act³¹⁷ is needed, and on how human beings, revealed as God's image on earth (Gn 1:27), reflect He Who Is ultimate Reality as a triadic communion of persons sharing life and love.

If we are ever going to save our civilization and return to sanity and justice, the ongoing revolution against God and human nature waged from the 1960s must be reversed.³¹⁸ If sexual intercourse and the sixth precept of natural law is understood and respected as a sacred godly exchange of permanent lifegiving love, more people may be willing to sacrifice selfish desires in order to uphold its pristine nature and purpose, and the rest of society, including the family, will be able to heal.

8.3 Defending the ideas against ancient and contemporary challenges

³¹⁷ This refers to the doctrine that God is immutable with no potentiality in His essence as the fulness of actualization.

³¹⁸ This refers to the "Sexual Revolution".

In respecting the “*democracy of the dead*”³¹⁹, we take seriously the critiques and arguments against these ideas that might have been prevalent in centuries gone by, as well as those that may be articulated today.

One critique may look like this: yes, Aquinas laid out the reasoning as to why truth, goodness and beauty found in creation point to a transcendent Source in whose essence includes all perfections (ST I, q. 4, a. 1 and 2; q. 6, a. 1 and 2; and ST q, 16, a. 5; q. 26, a. 1). However, nothing in the work of Aquinas or any of the Scholastics indicate that we can know God through the interaction of created beings.

Such a critique is true but does not address the reasonableness of the claim itself. And, in as much as it is an argument from authority, it limits its scope to Medieval Scholasticism, which, as Chapter Six examined above, focused primarily on being. The phenomenon of personhood was examined more closely and completely in the twentieth century, first through phenomenological Scholasticism and then with personalist values. The thesis considers the phenomena, and considers the relation and interaction between beings, pointing to the threeness of God. Further, just because this Trinitarian stamp on creation – keenly manifest in marriage – has not been fully articulated as a trace of the transcendent Creator, it does not mean that it will not be so in the future. The thesis we propose lays the groundwork for this idea to be more fully explored and developed.

Another challenge to this thesis’ proposal may be that it presents an idea that may not be concrete enough or fully accessible to the average person. Its idiosyncratic nature might be lost on those who, because of busy lives or having a lack of philosophical and theological training, may not have the wherewithal or interest to think through such ideas. Access to ideas should be easily available to everyone.

We respond to this critique by pointing to the Common Doctor. In his great work – the *Summa Theologiae* – St Thomas Aquinas wrote the following introduction:

³¹⁹ “*Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about*” (Chesterton, 2020, p. 28).

Because the doctor of Catholic truth ought not only to teach the proficient, but also to instruct beginners (according to the Apostle: As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat—1 Corinthians 3:1-2), we purpose in this book to treat of whatever belongs to the Christian religion, in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners (ST, Introduction).

Many people today may take issue with this statement, finding it difficult to keep up with the intricacy of Aquinas' philosophical terminology and distinctions. It does reveal, however, that technology has generally made things easier for us in the contemporary world, and dependence on it has left a legacy of what might be considered intellectual laziness. Nonetheless, this, coupled with the common pragmatic utilitarianism of our time, presents an argument that it is improbable that this thesis will have any considerable impact.

We refute this argument with two distinct responses. First, while it may be true that students, and people in general, are much more pragmatic in their approach to life than they used to be – chasing after material goods and a comfortable lifestyle as a prime objective rather than seeking meaning and truth for its own sake – it does not have to be that way. Separating oneself from one's cell phone and other “noise” of the current world that diverts one's attention from deeper thought and spiritual values may be challenging, but it is certainly not impossible. Abstract thought leading to the apprehension of deeper truths is available to anyone of sound mind with intellectual discipline.

Secondly, we do not agree that this thesis' proposal is complex or out of reach of the uneducated. On the contrary, this thesis is uncomplicated in as much as it simply invites the reader to make certain analogies and consider their logic and reasonableness. Further, the simplicity of truth and its profundity can often be detected more easily in the minds of those who are open to possibilities than in those whose minds are cluttered with inconsequential facts and intellectual biases.³²⁰

³²⁰ Regarding the simplicity of truth, Jesus praised the Father in prayer, saying that “[a]lthough you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike” (Mt 11:25).

A third challenge to our proposal – which is the most consequential – is that while some may find its ideas attractive and reasonable, people with non-theist presuppositions, who hold common subjectivist presumptions that include rational skepticism and moral relativism, will find it unintelligible. And these people are the establishment who hold positions of power in academia and society. The anti-theistic approach common to this ideology creates a value system that rejects certain values for which it does not tolerate. One example is the possibility of a transcendent truth. Offering a proposed reflection that includes objective truth transcending empirical evidence would be greeted with cynicism at best, and ridicule at worst.³²¹

Relatedly, as we mentioned in Chapter Four, key words have been sifted through the Modern philosophical project and have come out on the other side as being stripped of all objectivity. Terms like “happiness”, “liberty”, “freedom”, and “love”, are prime examples. The subjective redefinitions of these foundational terms have been inculcated within the predominant worldview shared by those who run Philosophy departments and other established institutions in contemporary society.

This critique is both accurate and very challenging. There is little doubt that there is not a lot of philosophizing in university lecture halls that transcends the limits of what the senses and empirical evidence can detect. The post-Christian worldview prevalent today in academia and the Western culture at large begins with premises and presuppositions that exclude the possibility of such transcendence. Theirs is a closed system that finds immaterial or spiritual possibilities improbable and hence metaphysical thinking untenable. For example, a common claim put forward is that one should never consider possibilities that cannot be demonstrated through the scientific method. If you ask them if this claim of theirs has been demonstrated through the scientific method, you will be shunned. Many will claim there is no objective truth. But if you ask them if this claim of theirs is objectively true, they will attack you. Many believe it is the right moral standard to claim there is no right moral standard; and most preach tolerance while being extremely intolerant of those who question their

³²¹ Although this has resulted from 500 years of steady unraveling, from Descartes onward, continental philosophers of the 19th century began to solidify non-theist presuppositions, such as Hegel, Marx, Freud, Comte, and Sartre.

contradictions. It is not a philosophy congruent with reason or logic, but rather an ideology based on power and desire, which is more interested in *creating* truth and reality than in *discovering* it.

One of the more blatantly outspoken anti-theist philosophers of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche, called himself the anti-Christ ([1888]2010). Kreeft sums up Nietzsche's argument against God: "*I will now disprove the existence of all gods. If there were gods, how could I bear not to be a god? Consequently, there are no gods*" (1998). Consequently, many who occupy philosophy and theology departments today concentrate not so much on the great perennial questions of being, but rather on topics such as feminism, gender and race. Sally Haslinger, who was rated Number One in "The Top 10 Most Influential Philosophers Today" by Academic Influence (Barham and Carlson 2023) – rather than inquiring about questions relating to the essence and end of the human condition – wrote in her book *Resisting Reality*:

I embrace the feminist slogan that *gender is the social meaning of sex* and extend this by arguing that *race is the social meaning of "color"*.³²² To avoid confusion, I use the terms "woman" and "man" to refer to genders and "male" and "female" to sexes. "Black" and "White" (upper case) to refer to races and "black" and "white" (lower case) to refer to colors (Haslinger 2012, p. 7).

With much of the focus today on reconstructing reality, coupled with underlying presumptions that the world is a closed system of matter, space and time, a theistic perspective of the world would be seen by a majority of the Western philosophical establishment today as untenable; and any jump between the visible world and the transcendent that cannot be measured empirically would be considered absurd.

There are many reasons for this, some of which have been examined in Chapters Four and Five. The intelligentsia have adopted the view of post-Christian materialism that is riddled with ideological premises and presuppositions disabling

³²² Having stated this, it would be interesting to know her take on the phenomenon of Rachel Dolezal, a white American woman and former leader of a local unit of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), who in 2015 was "outed" as a white woman identifying as a black woman (Payne 2017). After this was revealed, she insisted that she was "trans-black", labeling herself as such (ibid.). While the Leftist establishment was openly promoting, and even pushing, the idea of 'transgender' persons, it was not at all impressed with people claiming to be "trans-racial."

them from being open to life-giving possibilities. So, too, is this framework shared by mass media and academia at large – the culture molding establishments of our age. Sadly, for the past half century, the Church on the local levels has done little to combat this progressive intellectual post-Christian takeover of society.

We should acknowledge the veracity of the critique and the scope of this progressive movement that has ubiquitously permeated the Western world through its influential power centers. A thesis like this one promulgated amid a mainstream post-Christian academic world whose intellectual foundation is born of Modern Philosophy may seem like a David vs Goliath situation. Nevertheless, we can glean some hope by looking at who was victorious in that Old Testament encounter.

Christian philosophers certainly have their challenges today to overcome, as Alvin Plantinga explains:

[Christianity] is marching through largely alien territory. For the intellectual culture of our day is for the most part profoundly nontheistic and hence non-Christian-more than that, it is anti-theistic. Most of the so-called human sciences, much of the non-human sciences, most of non-scientific intellectual endeavor and even a good bit of allegedly Christian theology is animated by a spirit wholly foreign to that of Christian theism (1984).

It is true that tracing created beings to their Creator by virtue of a pattern of unitive and transformative threeness is a metaphysical leap that employs the assistance of divine Revelation. We may be able to see a pattern of threeness in creation, but the existence of a Trinitarian transcendent God as its Source cannot be deduced by reason alone. Nevertheless, it is not an unreasonable conjecture. Nor is it inconsistent with logic that the creation may reflect its Creator in such a way as any artist is seen reflected in their work. However, an openness to a tripersonal, transcendent God is requisite to connect these dots, which a person prescribing to an anti-theist model of reality will not have.

This thesis, therefore, is written primarily for a Christian audience that is open to a new way of thinking about how sexual intercourse, marriage and family are godly.

Openness to God as Trinity is a necessary prerequisite. Secondly, it is written for people with an open mind malleable to reason and a will to consider unconventional possibilities. Furthermore, the Church is not meant to be a hoarder of the divine gifts of truth and grace, but, instead, is to be a sacrament to the world.³²³ The more sexuality and human life are revered and communicated as sacred and godly by Christian believers, the more this attitude will spill over into other factions of society. Through His baptized believers, God can conquer the world. This, however, is a longer-term goal. This thesis – which can be categorized as Christian philosophy -- is primarily aimed at those who have no religious or ideological barriers that would negate its claims that God is Trinitarian transcendence, traces of Whose essence may be analogously found throughout His creation. In other words, this thesis is aimed at those open to Christian presuppositions, willing to explore these ideas through its monotheistic lens.

8.4 Further questions and potential research

This thesis has applied minimal scientific prowess to make philosophical and theological points of comparison. More research by physicists and biologists can benefit this work by making more precise and crisp the comparisons made therein, and more scientific studies relating to chemical, hormonal configurations that occur between persons who engage in sexual intercourse would also be profitable, in addition to further studies on male microchimerism focusing on its true cause(s), and studies using mammals to shed light on the possibility of telegony in humans.³²⁴ Although Chapter Seven includes several such studies, more are needed to clarify and confirm certain findings. Sadly, however, knowing the ideological climate that rules academia and mass media today, which has as one of its ends the defense of sexual

³²³ *“Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us”* (CCC §1131). In one of the Second Vatican Council’s documents, *Lumen Gentium*, the Magisterium explains this aspect of her being:

All those, who in faith look toward Jesus, the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the church, that it may be for each and everyone the visible sacrament of saving unity. In order to extend to all regions of the earth, it enters into human history, though it transcends at once all time and all boundaries between peoples (1964, §9).

³²⁴ For such studies, funding of objective, rigorous research would particularly require an absence of ideological bias.

promiscuity and its accompanying “culture of death”, hope is at a minimum that more universities and endowments will invest in such vital research. Nevertheless, we continue to find that science inadvertently upholds Christian doctrine and that we have only begun to mine the riches of what the biblical term the two “become one-flesh” may actually entail. The Church has provided a hint of its profundity by authoritatively proclaiming that a marriage is unbreakable (until death) once sexual intercourse has been completed.

There is a theological proposition that can also be more deeply explored that directly relates to this thesis – *that life is love-giving and love is life-giving*; and that in God life and love are one, being convertible terms, similar to how matter and energy on the physical level are convertible.³²⁵ There is more to explore on the faith-claim that as an overflow of divine goodness we are made from life-giving Love, and that, as His image, it is our nature to give and receive life-giving love, particularly in marriage.

In addition to the question of why beings attract and expand in relation to each other, examined in Chapter Seven, other questions to explore could include the “why” of sexuality. Why do most creatures reproduce sexually instead of asexually? And more provocatively, why are there only two sexes in most animal species on earth, including humans? We accept that there are two sexes³²⁶, but as a rule we fail to ask *why* this is the case. Sexual reproduction propagates the species, but a species could conceivably continue to survive in a variety of other ways, whether it was made with one sex, twenty-five sexes, or no sexes at all. But we humans have two. Why is this? This thesis puts forth the conjecture that a two-sexed species images the Trinitarian Creator: a child proceeds from their father and mother as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This triadic paradigm is etched into creation. But if there are other theories as to why the form of the two-sexed species came to be the dominant one on earth for millions of years, and the image of God is a two-sexed species of persons, they should be brought forward for contemplation and examination .

³²⁵ Albert Einstein’s famous $E=MC^2$ symbolizes the convertible nature of matter and energy.

³²⁶ This generality is presently being questioned with the ambiguity of “gender ideology.” By attempting to separate sex from gender, claiming they can be opposite, and insisting on using pronouns to identify a person as one’s preferred gender rather than one’s true sex, a new layer of confusion has been introduced to young people as they attempt to navigate through the already confusing messages of the lingering sexual revolution.

Finally, questions about love and happiness ought to be explored. Everyone wants to be loved and everyone seeks happiness. In fact, Blaise Pascal claimed that one can never *not* seek happiness.³²⁷ We must more thoroughly explore the question: are we objectively happy in the sense of being fulfilled by maintaining a sexual revolution and divorce culture that, in turn, uphold a premarital sex and abortion culture? Is this the way for individuals, families, and nations to flourish? More honest objective sociological and psychological studies conducted to measure these kinds of questions in a rigorous objective manner would be helpful. Careful consideration should be given to the tendency of people to fool themselves into thinking they are happy when instead they are experiencing temporary excitement or content stagnation.

8.5 Summary and conclusion

This philosophical reflection of Catholic theology on marriage and the family offers an alternative way of thinking about the nature and meaning of sexual intercourse. In the world's seventh decade of the Sexual Revolution against human nature and God, this is an important proposition. New social norms that have sexual relationships disposable, marriage dissoluble, gender malleable, and human life expendable are all deadly fruits of this revolution. We hope this comprehensive look at sexuality and marriage in the context of their being the fulfillment of creation and the image of the Trinity offers an alternative essential and moral philosophy that assists in enlightening the darkness, filling the emptiness, and giving life to a "culture of death" that has prevailed in the West for over a half century. The hope is that with the aid of grace, a proposal like the one expressed in this thesis will catch fire and help bring people to heal, act more wisely, and in the process deepen their faith. This is the reason for this work.

* * *

³²⁷ "All men [sic] seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ... The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves" (Pascal 1670, *Pensées* §VII, 425).

From the beginning of this thesis, after laying out some of the serious problems that beset marriage and the family, we set out to articulate a way to offer light and mitigate the damage. We worked our way up to communicating a fresh vision of what Scripture may mean by “*becoming* ‘one-flesh’” (Gn 2:24).

Our approach, therein, relies on analogy to uncover the mystery that creation, reflecting its Creator, is love; and that love is trinitarian. We proposed that by its propensity to unite and create, all matter in the universe participates analogously in God’s essence as Trinity. Whereas Aquinas taught that all things participate in being as such³²⁸, we add to this that all things participate in *trinitarian* being.

Moreover, to fulfill our primary goal, we advanced the notion that the pinnacle of creation – human persons made in God’s image – naturally reflects God as Trinity most perfectly as a communion of persons sharing permanent lifegiving love in marriage.³²⁹ This vision of sexual intercourse and marriage on the one hand, elevates marriage to the summary and fulfilment of all creation. On the other hand, it also proposes the wondrous prospect of being the living icon of the Tri-personal God.

We predicted that Modern and Post-Modern thought – which have highly influenced the Western world (including Christians) within the past half century – will be the greatest challenge to this thesis. This predominant ideology of the Western intellectual class is closed to anything immaterial or transcendent serving as a solution to such problems. Interpreting as unintelligible the notions of objective meaning and purpose, this non-theistic intellectual framework is hostile to both human reason and revealed religion.

Nevertheless, in our introduction, we asked the question: “Is there objective meaning to love, sex, and marriage; and can traces of it be found in the form and structure of the physical universe?” And we followed it up with, “Is there a

³²⁸ “*All beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation*” (ST I, q. 44, a. 1).

³²⁹ We hold that this is the pinnacle of creation that *naturally* reflects God. However, we purposely remain silent about what may reflect God even more acutely on the *supernatural* level. Hence, we save the notion that celibacy may be a higher calling than marriage for other research more directly covering that topic.

philosophically sound approach that ties together the life-giving love of marriage to the eternal essence of the Tri-Personal God?” In this thesis, we illustrated the way to answer both these questions in the affirmative, knowing that many people of our day, for ideological reasons, will be unable to recognize it. However, realizing how important this topic is amid Modernity’s great battle against human nature, marriage, and the family (and ultimately, God), we believe this thesis is well worth the risk.

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ⁱ It is a Christian moral imperative that both sexes save coitus for marriage. Fornication and adultery are forbidden equally for both sexes in the New Covenant. Nonetheless, experience indicates that the woman, who is the receptive principle of sexual union, tends to be the metaphorical glue of the family. The importance of virginity, particularly in women – which is dismissed as inconsequential in societies with strong anthropological dualism like our own in the global North, speaks not only to the need for clarity of whose offspring has been fathered, but also of the unitive dimension of marriage. Studies show the more times a woman has become one-flesh with a different man other than her husband the more she is vulnerable to divorce. A new comprehensive study on the correlation of premarital sex and divorce concludes "those with premarital sexual partners have more than twice the odds of divorce as do those without" (Smith and Wolfinger 2023). It is safe to surmise that the ability to bond and keep a union alive through thick and thin is easier if exclusivity of one-flesh union is shared between the spouses and it remains intact.

In another study (Kahn and London 1993, p. 845), the researchers observed a significant relationship between non-virginity at marriage and divorce:

Simple cross-tabulations from the 1988 *National Survey of Family Growth*, indicate that women who were sexually active prior to marriage faced a considerably higher risk of marital disruption than women who were virgin brides. A bivariate probit model is employed to examine three possible explanations for this positive relationship: (a) a direct causal effect, (b) an indirect effect through intervening "high risk" behaviors (such as having a premarital birth or marrying at a young age), and (c) a selectivity effect representing prior differences between virgins and non-virgins (such as family background or attitudes and values). After a variety of observable characteristics are controlled, non-virgins still face a much higher risk of divorce than virgins.

In a comprehensive survey of Americans in the new millennium (Wolfinger 2016), those entering marriage with the bride being a virgin had a 6% divorce rate. It more than triples when the bride has had one premarital sex partner and is multiplied six-fold when she has had two premarital sex partners. And this is in a society where almost everyone believes fornication is morally acceptable and only 5% of women marry as virgins (Ibid.).