

revelation and the complete uniqueness and infallibility of the Church's dogma are in no way imperilled. Whatever is to be said of the universality of the archetypes and corresponding experiences, the likeness of the Church's creeds and definitions is found nowhere else, and nobody does or could maintain otherwise. As Jung himself, writing to a theologian, has put it: 'What the theologian has to show is precisely that the dogma is the hitherto most perfect answer to, and formulation of, the most relevant items in the human psyche, and that God has worked all these things in man's soul.'



## THE SACRAMENTS: IV—MARRIAGE

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

IN considering this sacrament we have again to see how something natural has been transformed by the power of God acting through his Church. As in penance, where the matter of the sacrament is sorrow for sin, what is transformed is something non-human, such as oil or water, but the mutual consent of a man and a woman to give themselves to one another for the purpose of continuing the human race; something, that is to say, effectively significant even before it is given a new dignity by the action of Christ. For marriage is as old as the human race, and following the lead given by St Paul (Ephesians v, 31) we can learn its significance from the original institution in Paradise.

The account given in the book of Genesis (ii, 18-24) begins with God's action in creating a partner for Adam, because 'it is not good for man to be alone'. Eve is formed from Adam himself, they are in the closest possible relationship to one another, and yet they are distinct, opposed to each other by sexual difference. Each is incomplete without the other, and God therefore gives them the means to reunite without any loss of distinction. The words of Scripture perfectly express the meaning of marriage: 'they shall be two in one flesh' (ii, 24).

Although the fall introduced the certainty of suffering into that joyful first marriage, there is no indication in Scripture that it changed the basic meaning. Every human pair in every place

and time is obeying in their marriage the divine command to be two in one flesh. This is why the Church still regards every marriage, even without the sacrament (in marriage between those who have not been baptized), as normally speaking not to be dissolved. Our Lord explicitly draws this conclusion from the words in Genesis: 'now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder' (Matthew xix, 6). God is the author of all marriage, and therefore the Church has the highest regard for even non-sacramental marriage, a point which sometimes seems to surprise Catholics themselves.

'In one flesh.' The words are the best indication for understanding what the life-long relationship between the partners in marriage ought to mean. The constant need to break down the barrier of distinctness and become one implies a constant will to give to the other all that each possesses; implies, that is to say, mutual love. For love in its most proper sense means this total and mutual gift, means living no longer for self but for the other. St Thomas follows the tradition in sharply distinguishing this 'love of friendship' from a selfish love in which the lover only desires something for his own benefit. This distinction is very different from that between physical and spiritual love, such as we are perhaps more prone to make: such a division does not make sense unless we are wrongly thinking of soul as somehow independent of the flesh. For human beings the highest love must still be shown forth bodily, in words and above all in the physical marriage act which is the most direct way in which the two give themselves completely to one another. So far from disapproving of this physical union, or at best looking on it as a 'necessary evil', consequent on the fall, the Church regards it as essential to express the union between man and wife. A marriage in which the common will to give to and accept from the other has not been sealed and ratified by consummation is still incomplete, and may in fact be dissolved, true marriage though it is. The internal consent of the will must be manifested in more than words, it must be shown in the act that best expresses the union. Of course men can love in other ways than those of physical love, yet always in and through the physical, and there is no more immediate and direct way for the partners to be united in spirit than by this bodily action so directly rooted in the very being of each.

Yet at the same time, leading up to it and flowing from it, must come all those other acts of unselfish giving which gradually lead each to perfection in one another.

This idea of marriage, implied by the words of Genesis, could hardly be more than an unattainable ideal for unredeemed man: but before seeing how in Christ it has become a practical possibility for all, a common misunderstanding must be removed. To lay such emphasis as Genesis did on the union between the two, and to see in it a means to completion in one another, might seem to suggest that this was the main purpose of marriage. But that this is not the case appears when we consider the total setting in which those words occur. Adam and Eve were not merely two persons; they were the parents of the whole race which God was to produce through them to be his friends. His first command to them had been: 'Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it' (Genesis i, 28). They were persons, certainly, needing to find their personal perfection in one another, but being a person presupposes having a human nature. Hence the personal end of marriage presupposes a purpose which is primary, that of continuing human nature in other persons, in the children who will normally be born of any marriage. This biological purpose is indeed common to every other species of animal, but man differs in that he is able to appreciate it rationally, and relate it to the secondary purpose that flows from it, the mutual formation of man and wife. For the birth and education of the children normally complete the perfecting of the partners as father and mother; the family is a natural unit. There is no need to insist on the greatness of motherhood, with which the Scriptures are so filled as they prepare us for the birth of the Son of God himself. But it should perhaps be said that the primary purpose of marriage does not have to be the conscious intention of every act of physical union. It is enough that it should not be consciously excluded by artificial means. There need never be any opposition between the natural or specific end and the personal, for this latter always presupposes the other even when in fact it cannot find its realization through the actual generation of children. This is how we may understand the words of Pius XI in his encyclical on Christian Marriage: 'This mutual interior formation of husband and wife, this persevering endeavour to bring each other to the state of perfection, may in a true sense be called, as the Roman catechism

calls it, the primary cause and reason of matrimony, so long as marriage is considered not in its stricter sense, as the institution destined for the procreation and education of children, but in the wider sense as a complete and intimate life-partnership and association.' (C.T.S. translation, second edition, p. 14.)

Marriage then is primarily for society, but in and through this is for personal perfection. It is important to bear this in mind when seeing how in Christ it has been made sacramental. To understand this we have first to consider the relationship between mankind and God himself. The first of the Old Testament writers to describe this relationship as a marriage, in terms that should surely astonish us, was the prophet Osee. His first chapters show Israel as the adulterous wife of her Lord, but the time is to come in which 'I will espouse thee to me for ever: and I will espouse thee to me in justice and judgment and in mercy and in compassions. And I will espouse thee to me in faith: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord' (Osee ii, 19-20). The words used are the normal ones that express the love, tenderness and fidelity of human marriage, but here they are describing the union between God and the people he had chosen and called out of Egypt. The later prophets develop the theme, more fully in the second part of Isaias and in Ezechiel, above all in the Cantic and the 44th Psalm, in which the marriage of Israel to her Messias-king is celebrated: 'Forget thy people and thy father's house. And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty; for he is the Lord thy God, and him they shall adore' (Psalm xliv, 11-12). So at the fulfilment of these prophecies, when the Word of God takes flesh and dwells among his people, it is natural to speak of him in terms taken from marriage: thus John the Baptist, when he denies that he is Christ, says: 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom' (John iii, 29), and our Lord himself makes frequent use of this image in the parables of the kingdom as seen in terms of a marriage feast.

Here then with the Incarnation, the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh, the marriage of God with Israel finds its completion. But the patristic tradition has found an even more profound parallel in the redemption of mankind on the cross. For there, as Christ slept in death, and the blood and water flowed from his side—not merely the blood of the Passion, but the water of regeneration in the Spirit (John xix, 34)—the Fathers

have seen the birth of the Church from the side of the new Adam, and the consummation of a marriage from which redeemed mankind is to be born. The Church, like our Lady who personifies her, is the new Eve, the fruitful mother of children, yet a virgin even in marriage. 'I have espoused you to one husband', says St Paul to the church at Corinth, 'that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ' (2 Corinthians xi, 2).

But it is when St Paul combines this image of the Church as the bride of Christ with his own image of the Church as Christ's body that the most remarkable theological development takes place. In the passage from the epistle to the Ephesians (v, 22-33) already mentioned, the two themes are brought close together, running like twisted threads through the whole. 'The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church: He is the saviour of his body' (v, 23). Here the bodily relationship between head and members, brought about sacramentally by baptism (referred to in v, 26 by analogy with the marriage custom of bathing the bride-to-be), renewed, as St Paul says elsewhere, by assimilation of the eucharistic body of Christ ('we being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread'—1 Corinthians x, 17) is compared with the bodily relationship between husband and wife, who are two in one flesh. 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies' (v, 28): Christ can love the Church in just that way because the Church truly is his body. He loves it, says St Paul, nourishes it and cherishes it just as a husband loves his other self, the wife who is one with him in body; loves us because 'we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones' (v, 30).

But though it is natural to follow out such an analysis, and come to understand the relationship between Christ and the Church in terms of human marriage, the purpose of St Paul's analogy is in fact just the reverse of this. The marriage between Christ and the Church is his starting point, and he makes use of it to see in just what way human marriage has become sacramental. As he explains, the full meaning of the statement in Genesis remained hidden until its significance was revealed in Christ: 'this is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church' (v, 32; cf. i, 9 in the same epistle). Marriage is sacramental in that the partners now represent, and show forth to the world, the marriage of Christ himself. His union with the Church both

sanctifies it and causes it to bring forth new sons of God. A human marriage between baptized persons is the effective sign of this.

We are now in a position to appreciate the way in which this sacrament gives grace. Christians begin to be conformed to Christ through baptism, by which they receive the gift of the Spirit, and thus share in the divine nature. But in marriage two Christians are put into a new relationship with Christ the marriage partner of his Church, and thus help one another to share even more deeply in the life of God. In their love for one another, and in their bodily union with one another, each grows closer to Christ and to his Church whom they represent. Together each once promised their gifts to the other before the official representative of the Church as witness, and now, in living out together the fulfilment of those promises, they are bringing each other to perfection, to being other Christs. Moreover it is precisely as members of the Church that they do this. For without the Church the sacrament would have no meaning. Hence the partners in a Christian marriage never live for themselves alone: their growth in perfection is brought about by, and in turn reacts upon, every other member of the Church sharing with them a common marriage relationship to Christ. The archetypal marriage is thus ever made new in each fresh realization of it, and each new realization gets its meaning from the total context in which it takes place. Children normally then complete the representation, born both of human parents and of the Church their mother: the growing family is but a reflection of the growing body of Christ. Seen in this way, as indicated by St Paul, the sacrament is the perfect sign of the new and eternal covenant between Christ and his Church. In this respect the Eucharist alone, which in itself realizes complete personal union with Christ, stands above it in dignity.