

Saint John Chrysostom

Homily XX, On Ephesians (5:22-24)

«Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church: being Himself the Saviour of the body. But as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything».

A certain wise man, setting down a number of things in the rank of blessings, set down this also in the rank of a blessing, «A wife agreeing with her husband.» (Sirach 25:1) And elsewhere again he sets it down among blessings, that a woman should dwell in harmony with her husband. (Sirach 40:23) And indeed from the beginning, God appears to have made special provision for this union; and discoursing of the two as one, He said thus, «Male and female created He them» (Genesis 1:27); and again, «There is neither male nor female.» Galatians 3:28 For there is no relationship between man and man so close as that between man and wife, if they be joined together as they should be. And therefore a certain blessed man too, when he would express surpassing love, and was mourning for one that was dear to him, and of one soul with him, did not mention father, nor mother, nor child, nor brother, nor friend, but what? «Your love to me was wonderful,» says he, «passing the love of women.» (2 Samuel 1:26) For indeed, in very deed, this love is more despotic than any despotism: for others indeed may be strong, but this passion is not only strong, but unfading. For there is a certain love deeply seated in our nature, which imperceptibly to ourselves knits together these bodies of ours. Thus even from the very beginning woman sprang from man, and afterwards from man and woman sprang both man and woman. Perceivest thou the close bond and connection? And how that God suffered not a different kind of nature to enter in from without? And mark, how many providential arrangements He made. He permitted the man to marry his own sister; or rather not his sister, but his daughter; nay, nor yet his daughter, but something more than his daughter, even his own flesh. And thus the whole He framed from one beginning, gathering all together, like stones in a building, into one. For neither on the one hand did He form her from without, and this was that the man might not feel towards her as towards an alien; nor again did He confine marriage to her, that she might not, by contracting herself, and making all center in herself, be cut off from the rest. Thus as in the case of plants, they are of all others the best, which have but a single stem, and spread out into a number of branches; (since were all confined to the root alone, all would be to no purpose, whereas again had it a number of roots, the tree would be no longer worthy of admiration;) so, I say, is the case here also. From one, namely Adam, He made the whole race to spring, preventing them by the strongest necessity from being ever torn asunder, or separated; and afterwards, making it more restricted, He no longer allowed sisters and daughters to be wives, lest we should on the other hand contract our love to one point, and thus in another manner be cut off from one another. Hence Christ said, «He which made them from the beginning, made them male and female.» (Matthew 19:4)

For great evils are hence produced, and great benefits, both to families and to states. For there is nothing which so welds our life together as the love of man and wife. For this many will lay aside even their arms, for this they will give up life itself. And Paul would never without a reason and without an object have spent so much pains on this subject, as when he says here, «Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.» And why so? Because when they are in harmony, the children are well brought up, and the domestics are in good order, and neighbors, and friends, and relations enjoy the fragrance. But if it be otherwise, all is turned upside down, and thrown into confusion. And just as when the generals of an army are at peace one with another, all things are in due subordination, whereas on the other hand, if they are at

variance, everything is turned upside down; so, I say, is it also here. Wherefore, says he, «Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.»

Yet how strange! For how then is it, that it is said elsewhere, «If one bid not farewell both to wife and to husband, he cannot follow me»? (Luke 14:26) For if it is their duty to be in subjection «as unto the Lord,» how says He that they must depart from them for the Lord's sake? Yet their duty indeed it is, their bounden duty. But the word «as» is not necessarily and universally expressive of exact equality. He either means this, «'as' knowing that you are servants to the Lord»; (which, by the way, is what he says elsewhere, that, even though they do it not for the husband's sake, yet must they primarily for the Lord's sake;) or else he means, «when you obey your husband, do so as serving the Lord.» For if he who resists these external authorities, those of governments, I mean, «withstands the ordinance of God» (Romans 13:2), much more does she who submits not herself to her husband. Such was God's will from the beginning.

Let us take as our fundamental position then that the husband occupies the place of the «head,» and the wife the place of the «body.»

Ver. 23, 24. Then, he proceeds with arguments and says that «the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the body. But as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything.»

Then after saying, «The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is of the Church,» he further adds, «and He is the Saviour of the body.» For indeed the head is the saving health of the body. He had already laid down beforehand for man and wife, the ground and provision of their love, assigning to each their proper place, to the one that of authority and forethought, to the other that of submission. As then «the Church,» that is, both husbands and wives, «is subject unto Christ, so also ye wives submit yourselves to your husbands, as unto God.»

Ver. 25. «Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church.»

You have heard how great the submission; you have extolled and marvelled at Paul, how, like an admirable and spiritual man, he welds together our whole life. Thou did well. But now hear what he also requires at your hands; for again he employs the same example.

«Husbands,» says he, «love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church.»

You have seen the measure of obedience, hear also the measure of love. Would you have your wife obedient unto you, as the Church is to Christ? Take then yourself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for you to give your life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever—refuse it not. Though you should undergo all this, yet will you not, no, not even then, have done anything like Christ. For thou indeed art doing it for one to whom you are already knit; but He for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way then as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, and spurned, and disdained Him, not by menaces, nor by violence, nor by terror, nor by anything else of the kind, but by his unwearied affection; so also do thou behave yourself toward your wife. Yea, though thou see her looking down upon you, and disdain, and scorning you, yet by your great thoughtfulness for her, by affection, by kindness, you will be able to lay her at your feet. For there is nothing more powerful to sway than these bonds, and especially for husband and wife. A servant, indeed, one will be able, perhaps, to bind down by fear; nay not even him, for he will soon start away and be gone. But the partner of one's life, the mother of one's children, the foundation of one's every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper. For what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband? And what sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Yea, though you should suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this.

Ver. 26. «And gave Himself up,» he says, «for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it.»

So then she was unclean! So then she had blemishes, so then she was unsightly, so then she was worthless! Whatsoever kind of wife you shall take, yet shall you never take such a bride as the Church, when Christ took her, nor one so far removed from you as the Church was from Christ. And yet for all that, He did not abhor her, nor loathe her for her surpassing deformity. Would you hear her deformity described? Hear what Paul says, «For you were once darkness.» (Ephesians 5:8) Did you see the blackness of her hue? What blacker than darkness? But look again at her boldness, «living,» says he, «in malice and envy.» (Titus 3:3) Look again at her impurity; «disobedient, foolish.» But what am I saying? She was both foolish, and of an evil tongue; and yet notwithstanding, though so many were her blemishes, yet did He give Himself up for her in her deformity, as for one in the bloom of youth, as for one dearly beloved, as for one of wonderful beauty. And it was in admiration of this that Paul said, For scarcely for a righteous man will one die (Romans 5:7); and again, «in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.» (Romans 5:8) And though such as this, He took her, He arrayed her in beauty, and washed her, and refused not even this, to give Himself for her.

Ver. 26, 27. «That He might sanctify it having cleansed it,» he proceeds, «by the washing of water with the word; that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.»

«By the washing or laver» He washes her uncleanness. «By the word,» says he. What word? «In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.» (Matthew 28:19) And not simply has He adorned her, but has made her «glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.» Let us then also seek after this beauty ourselves, and we shall be able to create it. Seek not thou at your wife's hand, things which she is not able to possess. Do you see that the Church had all things at her Lord's hands? By Him was made glorious, by Him was made pure, by Him made without blemish? Turn not your back on your wife because of her deformity. Hear the Scripture that says, «The bee is little among such as fly, but her fruit is the chief of sweet things.» (Sirach 11:3) She is of God's fashioning. Thou reproachest not her, but Him that made her; what can the woman do? Praise her not for her beauty. Praise and hatred and love based on personal beauty belong to unchastened souls. Seek thou for beauty of soul. Imitate the Bridegroom of the Church. Outward beauty is full of conceit and great license, and throws men into jealousy, and the thing often makes you suspect monstrous things. But has it any pleasure? For the first or second month, perhaps, or at most for the year: but then no longer; the admiration by familiarity wastes away. Meanwhile the evils which arose from the beauty still abide, the pride, the folly, the contemptuousness. Whereas in one who is not such, there is nothing of this kind. But the love having begun on just grounds, still continues ardent, since its object is beauty of soul, and not of body. What better, tell me, than heaven? What better than the stars? Tell me of what body you will, yet is there none so fair. Tell me of what eyes you will, yet are there none so sparkling. When these were created, the very Angels gazed with wonder, and we gaze with wonder now; yet not in the same degree as at first. Such is familiarity; things do not strike us in the same degree. How much more in the case of a wife! And if moreover disease come too, all is at once fled. Let us seek in a wife affectionateness, modest-mindedness, gentleness; these are the characteristics of beauty. But loveliness of person let us not seek, nor upbraid her upon these points, over which she has no power, nay, rather, let us not upbraid at all, (it were rudeness,) nor let us be impatient, nor sullen. Do ye not see how many, after living with beautiful wives, have ended their lives pitiably, and how many, who have lived with those of no great beauty, have run on to extreme old age with great enjoyment. Let us wipe off the «spot» that is within, let us smooth the «wrinkles» that are within, let us do away the «blemishes» that are on the soul. Such is the beauty God requires. Let us make her fair in God's sight, not in our own. Let us not look for wealth, nor for that high-birth which is outward, but for that true nobility which is in the soul. Let no one endure to get rich by a wife; for such riches are base and disgraceful; no, by no means let any one seek to get rich from this source. «For they that desire to be rich, fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, and into destruction and perdition.» (1 Timothy 6:9) Seek not therefore in your wife abundance of wealth, and you shall find everything else go well. Who, tell me, would overlook the

most important things, to attend to those which are less so? And yet, alas! This is in every case our feeling. Yes, if we have a son, we concern ourselves not how he may be made virtuous, but how we may get him a rich wife; not how he may be well-mannered, but well-monied: if we follow a business, we enquire not how it may be clear of sin, but how it may bring us in most profit. And everything has become money; and thus is everything corrupted and ruined, because that passion possesses us.

Ver. 28. «Even so ought husbands to love their own wives,» says he, «as their own bodies.»

What, again, means this? To how much greater a similitude, and stronger example has he come; and not only so, but also to one how much nearer and clearer, and to a fresh obligation. For that other one was of no very constraining force, for He was Christ, and was God, and gave Himself. He now manages his argument on a different ground, saying, «so ought men»; because the thing is not a favor, but a debt. Then, «as their own bodies.» And why?

Ver. 29. «For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.»

That is, tends it with exceeding care. And how is she his flesh? Hearken; «This now is bone of my bones,» says Adam, «and flesh of my flesh.» (Genesis 2:23) For she is made of matter taken from us. And not only so, but also, «they shall be,» says God, «one flesh.» (Genesis 2:24)

«Even as Christ also the Church.» Here he returns to the former example.

Ver. 30. «Because we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.»

Ver. 31. «For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.»

Behold again a third ground of obligation; for he shows that a man leaving them that begot him, and from whom he was born, is knit to his wife; and that then the one flesh is, father, and mother, and the child, from the substance of the two commingled. For indeed by the commingling of their seeds is the child produced, so that the three are one flesh. Thus then are we in relation to Christ; we become one flesh by participation, and we much more than the child. And why and how so? Because so it has been from the beginning.

Tell me not that such and such things are so. Do you see not that we have in our own flesh itself many defects? For one man, for instance, is lame, another has his feet distorted, another his hands withered, another some other member weak; and yet nevertheless he does not grieve at it, nor cut it off, but oftentimes prefers it even to the other. Naturally enough; for it is part of himself. As great love as each entertains towards himself, so great he would have us entertain towards a wife. Not because we partake of the same nature; no, this ground of duty towards a wife is far greater than that; it is that there are not two bodies but one; he the head, she the body. And how says he elsewhere «and the Head of Christ is God»? (1 Corinthians 11:3) This I too say, that as we are one body, so also are Christ and the Father One. And thus then is the Father also found to be our Head. He sets down two examples, that of the natural body and that of Christ's body. And hence he further adds,

Ver. 32. «This is great mystery: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the Church.»

Why does he call it a great mystery? That it was something great and wonderful, the blessed Moses, or rather God, intimated. For the present, however, says he, I speak regarding Christ, that having left the Father, He came down, and came to the Bride, and became one Spirit. «For he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.» (1 Corinthians 6:17) And well says he, «it is a great mystery.» And then as though he were saying, «But still nevertheless the allegory does not destroy affection,» he adds,

Ver. 33. «Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband.»

For indeed, in very deed, a mystery it is, yea, a great mystery, that a man should leave him that gave him being, him that begot him, and that brought him up, and her that travailed with him and had sorrow, those that have bestowed upon him so many and great benefits, those with whom he has been in familiar intercourse, and be joined to one who was never even seen by him and who has nothing in common with him, and should honor her before all others. A mystery it is indeed. And yet are parents not distressed when these events take place, but rather, when they do not take place; and are delighted when their wealth is spent and lavished upon it.— A great mystery indeed! And one that contains some hidden wisdom. Such Moses prophetically showed it to be from the very first; such now also Paul proclaims it, where he says, «concerning Christ and the Church.»

However not for the husband's sake alone it is thus said, but for the wife's sake also, that «he cherish her as his own flesh, as Christ also the Church,» and, «that the wife fear her husband.» He is no longer setting down the duties of love only, but what? «That she fear her husband.» The wife is a second authority; let not her then demand equality, for she is under the head; nor let him despise her as being in subjection, for she is the body; and if the head despise the body, it will itself also perish. But let him bring in love on his part as a counterpoise to obedience on her part. For example, let the hands and the feet, and all the rest of the members be given up for service to the head, but let the head provide for the body, seeing it contains every sense in itself. Nothing can be better than this union.

And yet how can there ever be love, one may say, where there is fear? It will exist there, I say, preëminently. For she that fears and reverences, loves also; and she that loves, fears and reverences him as being the head, and loves him as being a member, since the head itself is a member of the body at large. Hence he places the one in subjection, and the other in authority, that there may be peace; for where there is equal authority there can never be peace; neither where a house is a democracy, nor where all are rulers; but the ruling power must of necessity be one. And this is universally the case with matters referring to the body, inasmuch as when men are spiritual, there will be peace. There were «five thousand souls,» and not one of them said, «that anything of the things which he possessed was his own» (Acts 4:32), but they were subject one to another; an indication this of wisdom, and of the fear of God. The principle of love, however, he explains; that of fear he does not. And mark, how on that of love he enlarges, stating the arguments relating to Christ and those relating to one's own flesh, the words, «For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother.» (Ephesians 5:31) Whereas upon those drawn from fear he forbears to enlarge. And why so? Because he would rather that this principle prevail, this, namely, of love; for where this exists, everything else follows of course, but where the other exists, not necessarily. For the man who loves his wife, even though she be not a very obedient one, still will bear with everything. So difficult and impracticable is unanimity, where persons are not bound together by that love which is founded in supreme authority; at all events, fear will not necessarily effect this. Accordingly, he dwells the more upon this, which is the strong tie. And the wife though seeming to be the loser in that she was charged to fear, is the gainer, because the principal duty, love, is charged upon the husband. «But what,» one may say, «if a wife reverence me not?» Never mind, you are to love, fulfill your own duty. For though that which is due from others may not follow, we ought of course to do our duty. This is an example of what I mean. He says, «submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ.» And what then if another submit not himself? Still obey thou the law of God. Just so, I say, is it also here. Let the wife at least, though she be not loved, still reverence notwithstanding, that nothing may lie at her door; and let the husband, though his wife reverence him not, still show her love notwithstanding, that he himself be not wanting in any point. For each has received his own.

This then is marriage when it takes place according to Christ, spiritual marriage, and spiritual birth, not of blood, nor of travail, nor of the will of the flesh. Such was the birth of Christ, not of blood, nor of travail. Such also was that of Isaac. Hear how the Scripture says, «And it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.» (Genesis 18:11) Yea, a marriage it is, not of passion, nor of the flesh, but wholly spiritual, the

soul being united to God by a union unspeakable, and which He alone knows. Therefore he says, «He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.» (1 Corinthians 6:17) Mark how earnestly he endeavors to unite both flesh with flesh, and spirit with spirit. And where are the heretics? Never surely, if marriage were a thing to be condemned, would he have called Christ and the Church a bride and bridegroom; never would he have brought forward by way of exhortation the words, «A man shall leave his father and his mother»; and again have added, that it was «spoken in regard of Christ and of the Church.» For of her it is that the Psalmist also says, «Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house. So shall the king desire your beauty.» (Psalm 45:10-11) Therefore also Christ says, «I came out from the Father, and have come.» (John 16:28) But when I say, that He left the Father, imagine not such a thing as happens among men, a change of place; for just in the same way as the word «go forth» is used, not because He literally came forth, but because of His incarnation, so also is the expression, «He left the Father.»

Now why did he not say of the wife also, She shall be joined unto her husband? Why, I say, is this? Because he was discoursing concerning love, and was discoursing to the husband. For to her indeed he discourses concerning reverence, and says, «the husband is the head of the wife» (Ephesians 5:23), and again, «Christ is the Head of the Church.» Whereas to him he discourses concerning love, and commits to him this province of love, and declares to him that which pertains to love, thus binding him and cementing him to her. For the man that leaves his father for the sake of his wife, and then again, leaves this very wife herself and abandons her, what forbearance can he deserve?

Do you see not how great a share of honor God would have her enjoy, in that he has taken you away from your father, and has linked you to her? What then, a man may say, if our duty is done, and yet she does not follow the example? «Yet if the unbelieving departs, let him depart; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases.» (1 Corinthians 7:15)

However, when you hear of «fear,» demand that fear which becomes a free woman, not as though thou were exacting it of a slave. For she is your own body; and if you do this, you reproach yourself in dishonoring your own body. And of what nature is this «fear»? It is the not contradicting, the not rebelling, the not being fond of the preëminence. It is enough that fear be kept within these bounds. But if you love, as you are commanded, you will make it yet greater. Or rather it will not be any longer by fear that you will be doing this, but love itself will have its effect. The sex is somehow weaker, and needs much support, much condescension.

But what will they say, who are knit together in second marriages? I speak not at all in condemnation of them, God forbid; for the Apostle himself permits them, though indeed by way of condescension.

Supply her with everything. Do everything and endure trouble for her sake. Necessity is laid upon you.

Here he does not think it right to introduce his counsel, as he in many cases does, with examples from them that are without. That of Christ, so great and forcible, were alone enough; and more especially as regards the argument of subjection. «A man shall leave,» he says, «his father and mother.» Behold, this then is from without. But he does not say, and «shall dwell with,» but «shall cleave unto,» thus showing the closeness of the union, and the fervent love. Nay, he is not content with this, but further by what he adds, he explains the subjection in such a way as that the two appear no longer two. He does not say, «one spirit,» he does not say, «one soul» (for that is manifest, and is possible to any one), but so as to be «one flesh.» She is a second authority, possessing indeed an authority, and a considerable equality of dignity; but at the same time the husband has somewhat of superiority. In this consists most chiefly the well-being of the house. For he took that former argument, the example of Christ, to show that we ought not only to love, but also to govern; «that she may be,» says he, «holy and without blemish.» But the word «flesh» has reference to love— and the word «shall cleave» has in like manner reference to love. For if you shall make her «holy and without blemish,» everything else will follow. Seek the things which are of God, and those which are of man will follow readily enough. Govern your wife, and thus will the whole house be in

harmony. Hear what Paul says. «And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home.» (1 Corinthians 14:35) If we thus regulate our own houses, we shall be also fit for the management of the Church. For indeed a house is a little Church. Thus it is possible for us by becoming good husbands and wives, to surpass all others.

Consider Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and the three hundred and eighteen born in his house. Genesis 14:14 How the whole house was harmoniously knit together, how the whole was full of piety and fulfilled the Apostolic injunction. She also «reverenced her husband»; for hear her own words, «It has not yet happened unto me even until now, and my lord is old also.» (Genesis 18:12) And he again so loved her, that in all things he obeyed her commands. And the young child was virtuous, and the servants born in the house, they too were so excellent that they refused not even to hazard their lives with their master; they delayed not, nor asked the reason. Nay, one of them, the chief, was so admirable, that he was even entrusted with the marriage of the only-begotten child, and with a journey into a foreign country. (Genesis 24:1-67) For just as with a general, when his soldiery also is well organized, the enemy has no quarter to attack; so, I say, is it also here: when husband and wife and children and servants are all interested in the same things, great is the harmony of the house. Since where this is not the case, the whole is oftentimes overthrown and broken up by one bad servant; and that single one will often mar and utterly destroy the whole.

Moral. Let us then be very thoughtful both for our wives, and children, and servants; knowing that we shall thus be establishing for ourselves an easy government, and shall have our accounts with them gentle and lenient, and say, «Behold I, and the children which God has given me.» (Isaiah 8:18) If the husband command respect, and the head be honorable, then will the rest of the body sustain no violence. Now what is the wife's fitting behavior, and what the husband's, he states accurately, charging her to reverence him as the head, and him to love her as a wife; but how, it may be said, can these things be? That they ought indeed so to be, he has proved. But how they can be so, I will tell you. They will be so, if we will despise money, if we will look but to one thing only, excellence of soul, if we will keep the fear of God before our eyes. For what he says in his discourse to servants, «whatsoever any man does, whether it be good or evil, the same shall he receive of the Lord» Ephesians 6:8; this is also the case here. Love her therefore not for her sake so much as for Christ's sake. This, at least, he as much as intimates, in saying, «as unto the Lord.» So then do everything, as in obedience to the Lord, and as doing everything for His sake. This were enough to induce and to persuade us, and not to suffer that there should be any teasing and dissension. Let none be believed when slandering the husband to his wife; no, nor let the husband believe anything at random against the wife, nor let the wife be without reason inquisitive about his goings out and his comings in. No, nor on any account let the husband ever render himself worthy of any suspicion whatever. For what, tell me, what if you shall devote yourself all the day to your friends, and give the evening to your wife, and not even thus be able to content her, and place her out of reach of suspicion? Though your wife complain, yet be not annoyed— it is her love, not her folly— they are the complaints of fervent attachment, and burning affection, and fear. Yes, she is afraid lest any one have stolen her marriage bed, lest any one have injured her in that which is the summit of her blessings, lest any one have taken away from her him who is her head, lest any one have broken through her marriage chamber.

There is also another ground of petty jealousy. Let neither claim too much service of the servants, neither the husband from the maid-servant, nor the wife from the man-servant. For these things also are enough to beget suspicion. For consider, I say, that righteous household I spoke of. Sarah herself bade the patriarch take Hagar. She herself directed it, no one compelled her, nor did the husband attempt it; no, although he had dragged on so long a period childless, yet he chose never to become a father, rather than to grieve his wife. And yet even after all this, what said Sarah? «The Lord judge between me and you.» Genesis 16:5 Now, I say, had he been any one else would he not have been moved to anger? Would he not also have stretched forth his hand, saying as it were, «What do you mean? I had no desire to have anything to do with the woman; it was all your own doing; and do you turn again and accuse me?»— But no, he says nothing of the sort—but what? «Behold, your maid is in your hand; do to her that which is good in your eyes.» (Genesis 16:6) He delivered up the partner of his bed, that he might not grieve Sarah. And yet surely

is there nothing greater than this for producing affection. For if partaking of the same table produces unanimity even in robbers towards their foes, (and the Psalmist says, «Who ate sweet food at the same table with me»); much more will the becoming one flesh— for such is the being the partner of the bed— be effectual to draw us together. Yet did none of these things avail to overcome him; but he delivered Hagar up to his wife, to show that nothing had been done by his own fault. Nay, and what is more, he sent her forth when with child. Who would not have pitied one that had conceived a child by himself? Yet was the just man unmoved, for he set before everything else the love he owed his wife.

Let us then imitate him ourselves. Let no one reproach his neighbor with his poverty; let no one be in love with money; and then all difficulties will be at an end.

Neither let a wife say to her husband, «Unmanly coward that you are, full of sluggishness and dullness, and fast asleep! Here is such a one, a low man, and of low parentage, who runs his risks, and makes his voyages, and has made a good fortune; and his wife wears her jewels, and goes out with her pair of milk-white mules; she rides about everywhere, she has troops of slaves, and a swarm of eunuchs, but you have cowered down and lived to no purpose.» Let not a wife say these things, nor anything like them. For she is the body, not to dictate to the head, but to submit herself and obey. «But how,» some one will say, «is she to endure poverty? Where is she to look for consolation?» Let her select and put beside her those who are poorer still. Let her again consider how many noble and high-born maidens have not only received nothing of their husbands, but have even given dowries to them, and have spent their all upon them. Let her reflect on the perils which arise from such riches, and she will cling to this quiet life. In short, if she is affectionately disposed towards her husband, she will utter nothing of the sort. No, she will rather choose to have him near her, though gaining nothing, than gaining ten thousand talents of gold, accompanied with that care and anxiety which always arise to wives from those distant voyages.

Neither, however, let the husband, when he hears these things, on the score of his having the supreme authority, betake himself to revilings and to blows; but let him exhort, let him admonish her, as being less perfect, let him persuade her with arguments. Let him never once lift his hand—far be this from a noble spirit,— no, nor give expression to insults, or taunts, or revilings; but let him regulate and direct her as being wanting in wisdom. Yet how shall this be done? If she be instructed in the true riches, in the heavenly philosophy, she will make no complaints like these. Let him teach her then, that poverty is no evil. Let him teach her, not by what he says only, but also by what he does. Let him teach her to despise glory; and then his wife will speak of nothing, and will desire nothing of the kind. Let him, as if he had an image given into his hands to mould, let him, from that very evening on which he first receives her into the bridal chamber, teach her temperance, gentleness, and how to live, casting down the love of money at once from the outset, and from the very threshold. Let him discipline her in wisdom, and advise her never to have bits of gold hanging at her ears, and down her cheeks, and laid round about her neck, nor laid up about the chamber, nor golden and costly garments stored up. But let her chamber be handsome, still let not what is handsome degenerate into finery. No, leave these things to the people of the stage. Adorn your house yourself with all possible neatness, so as rather to breathe an air of soberness than much perfume. For hence will arise two or three good results. First then, the bride will not be grieved, when the apartments are opened, and the tissues, and the golden ornaments, and silver vessels, are sent back to their several owners. Next, the bridegroom will have no anxiety about the loss, nor for the security of the accumulated treasures. Thirdly again, in addition to this, which is the crown of all these benefits, by these very points he will be showing his own judgment, that indeed he has no pleasure in any of these things, and that he will moreover put an end to everything else in keeping with them, and will never so much as allow the existence either of dances, or of immodest songs. I am aware that I shall appear perhaps ridiculous to many persons, in giving such admonitions. Still nevertheless, if you will but listen to me, as time goes on, and the benefit of the practice accrues to you, then you will understand the advantage of it. And the laughter will pass off, and you will laugh at the present fashion, and will see that the present practice is really that of silly children and of drunken men. Whereas what I recommend is the part of soberness, and wisdom, and of the sublimest way of life. What then do I say is our duty? Take away from marriage all those shameful, those Satanic, those immodest songs, those companies of profligate young people, and this will avail to chasten

the spirit of your bride. For she will at once thus reason with herself; «Wonderful! What a philosopher this man is! He regards the present life as nothing, he has brought me here into his house, to be a mother, to bring up his children, to manage his household affairs.» «Yes, but these things are distasteful to a bride?» Just for the first or second day—but not afterwards; nay, she will even reap from them the greatest delight, and relieve herself of all suspicion. For a man who can endure neither flute-players, nor dancers, nor broken songs, and that too at the very time of his wedding, that man will scarcely endure ever to do or say anything shameful. And then after this, when you have stripped the marriage of all these things, then take her, and form and mould her carefully, encouraging her bashfulness to a considerable length of time, and not destroying it suddenly. For even if the damsel be very bold, yet for a time she will keep silence out of reverence for her husband, and feeling herself a novice in the circumstances. Thou then break not off this reserve too hastily, as unchaste husbands do, but encourage it for a long time. For this will be a great advantage to you. Meanwhile she will not complain, she will not find fault with any laws you may frame for her. During that time therefore, during which shame, like a sort of bridle laid upon the soul, suffers her not to make any murmur, nor to complain of what is done, lay down all your laws. For as soon as ever she acquires boldness, she will overturn and confound everything without any sense of fear. When is there then another time so advantageous for moulding a wife, as that during which she reverences her husband, and is still timid, and still shy? Then lay down all your laws for her, and willing or unwilling, she will certainly obey them. But how shall you help spoiling her modesty? By showing her that you yourself art no less modest than she is, addressing to her but few words, and those too with great gravity and collectedness. Then entrust her with the discourses of wisdom, for her soul will receive them. And establish her in that loveliest habit, I mean modesty. If you wish me, I will also tell you by way of specimen, what sort of language should be addressed to her. For if Paul shrank not from saying, «Defraud ye not one the other» (2 Corinthians 7:5), and spoke the language of a bridesmaid, or rather not of a bridesmaid, but of a spiritual soul, much more will not we shrink from speaking. What then is the language we ought to address to her? With great delicacy then we may say to her, «I have taken you, my child, to be partner of my life, and have brought you in to share with me in the closest and most honorable ties, in my children, and the superintendence of my house. And what advice then shall I now recommend you?» But rather, first talk with her of your love for her; for there is nothing that so contributes to persuade a hearer to admit sincerely the things that are said, as to be assured that they are said with hearty affection. How then are you to show that affection? By saying, «when it was in my power to take many to wife, both with better fortunes, and of noble family, I did not so choose, but I was enamoured of you, and your beautiful life, your modesty, your gentleness, and soberness of mind.» Then immediately from these beginnings open the way to your discourse on true wisdom, and with some circumlocution make a protest against riches. For if you direct your argument at once against riches, you will bear too heavily upon her; but if you do it by taking an occasion, you will succeed entirely. For you will appear to be doing it in the way of an apology, not as a morose sort of person, and ungracious, and over-nice about trifles. But when you take occasion from what relates to herself, she will be even pleased. You will say then, (for I must now take up the discourse again,) that «whereas I might have married a rich woman, and with good fortune, I could not endure it. And why so? Not capriciously, and without reason; but I was taught well and truly, that money is no real possession, but a most despicable thing, a thing which moreover belongs as well to thieves, and to harlots, and to grave-robbers. So I gave up these things, and went on till I fell in with the excellence of your soul, which I value above all gold. For a young damsel who is discreet and ingenuous, and whose heart is set on piety, is worth the whole world. For these reasons then, I courted you, and I love you, and prefer you to my own soul. For the present life is nothing. And I pray, and beseech, and do all I can, that we may be counted worthy so to live this present life, as that we may be able also there in the world to come to be united to one another in perfect security. For our time here is brief and fleeting. But if we shall be counted worthy by having pleased God to so exchange this life for that one, then shall we ever be both with Christ and with each other, with more abundant pleasure. I value your affection above all things, and nothing is so bitter or so painful to me, as ever to be at variance with you. Yes, though it should be my lot to lose my all, and to become poorer than Iru, and undergo the extremest hazards, and suffer any pain whatsoever, all will be tolerable and endurable, so long as your feelings are true towards me. And then will my children be most dear to me, while you are affectionately disposed towards me. But you must do these duties too.» Then mingle also with your discourse the Apostle's words, that «thus God would have our affections blended

together; for listen to the Scripture, which says, 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.' Let us have no pretext for narrow-minded jealousy. Perish riches, and retinue of slaves, and all your outward pomps. To me this is more valuable than all.» What weight of gold, what amount of treasures, are so dear to a wife as these words? Never fear that because she is beloved she will ever rave against you, but confess that you love her. For courtezans indeed, who now attach themselves to one and now to another, would naturally enough feel contempt towards their lovers, should they hear such expressions as these; but a free-born wife or a noble damsel would never be so affected with such words; no, she will be so much the more subdued. Show her too, that you set a high value on her company, and that you are more desirous to be at home for her sake, than in the market-place. And esteem her before all your friends, and above the children that are born of her, and let these very children be beloved by you for her sake. If she does any good act, praise and admire it; if any foolish one, and such as girls may chance to do, advise her and remind her. Condemn out and out all riches and extravagance, and gently point out the ornament that there is in neatness and in modesty; and be continually teaching her the things that are profitable.

Let your prayers be common. Let each go to Church; and let the husband ask his wife at home, and she again ask her husband, the account of the things which were said and read there. If any poverty should overtake you, cite the case of those holy men, Paul and Peter, who were more honored than any kings or rich men; and yet how they spent their lives, in hunger and in thirst. Teach her that there is nothing in life that is to be feared, save only offending against God. If any marry thus, with these views, he will be but little inferior to monks; the married but little below the unmarried.

If you have a mind to give dinners, and to make entertainments, let there be nothing immodest, nothing disorderly. If you should find any poor saint able to bless your house, able only just by setting his foot in it to bring in the whole blessing of God, invite him. And shall I say moreover another thing? Let no one of you make it his endeavor to marry a rich woman, but much rather a poor one. When she comes in, she will not bring so great a source of pleasure from her riches, as she will annoyance from her taunts, from her demanding more than she brought, from her insolence, her extravagance, her vexatious language. For she will say perhaps, «I have not yet spent anything of yours, I am still wearing my own apparel, bought with what my parents settled upon me.» What do you say, O woman? Still wearing your own! And what can be more miserable than this language? Why, you have no longer a body of your own, and have you money of your own? After marriage you are no longer two, but have become one flesh, and are then your possessions two, and not one? Oh! This love of money! You both have become one man, one living creature; and do you still say «my own»? Cursed and abominable word that it is, it was brought in by the devil. Things far nearer and dearer to us than these has God made all common to us, and are these then not common? We cannot say, «my own light, my own sun, my own water»: all our greater blessings are common, and are riches not common? Perish the riches ten thousand times over! Or rather not the riches, but those tempers of mind which know not how to make use of riches, but esteem them above all things.

Teach her these lessons also with the rest, but with much graciousness. For since the recommendation of virtue has in itself much that is stern, and especially to a young and tender damsel, whenever discourses on true wisdom are to be made, contrive that your manner be full of grace and kindness. And above all banish this notion from her soul, of «mine and yours.» If she say the word «mine,» say unto her, «What things do you call yours? For in truth I know not; I for my part have nothing of my own. How then do you speak of 'mine,' when all things are yours?» Freely grant her the word. Do you not perceive that such is our practice with children? When, while we are holding anything, a child snatches it, and wishes again to get hold of some other thing, we allow it, and say, «Yes, and this is yours, and that is yours.» The same also let us do with a wife; for her temper is more or less like a child's; and if she says «mine,» say, «why, everything is yours, and I am yours.» Nor is the expression one of flattery, but of exceeding wisdom. Thus will you be able to abate her wrath, and put an end to her disappointment. For it is flattery when a man does an unworthy act with an evil object: whereas this is the highest philosophy. Say then, «Even I am yours, my child; this advice Paul gives me where he says, 'The husband has not power over his own body, but the wife.' (1 Corinthians 7:4) If I have no power over my body, but you have, much more have you over my

possessions.» By saying these things you will have quieted her, you will have quenched the fire, you will have shamed the devil, you will have made her more your slave than one bought with money, with this language you will have bound her fast. Thus then, by your own language, teach her never to speak of «mine and yours.» And again, never call her simply by her name, but with terms of endearment, with honor, with much love. Honor her, and she will not need honor from others; she will not want the glory that comes from others, if she enjoys that which comes from you. Prefer her before all, on every account, both for her beauty and her discernment, and praise her. You will thus persuade her to give heed to none that are without, but to scorn all the world except yourself. Teach her the fear of God, and all good things will flow from this as from a fountain, and the house will be full of ten thousand blessings. If we seek the things that are incorruptible, these corruptible things will follow. «For,» says He, «seek first His kingdom, and all these things shall be added unto you.» (Matthew 6:33) What sort of persons, think you, must the children of such parents be? What the servants of such masters? What all others who come near them? Will not they too eventually be loaded with blessings out of number? For generally the servants also have their characters formed after their master's, and are fashioned after their humors, love the same objects, which they have been taught to love, speak the same language, and engage with them in the same pursuits. If thus we regulate ourselves, and attentively study the Scriptures, in most things we shall derive instruction from them. And thus shall be able to please God, and to pass through the whole of the present life virtuously, and to attain those blessings which are promised to those that love Him, of which God grant that we may all be counted worthy, through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom, together with the Holy Ghost, be unto the Father, glory, power, and honor, now, and ever, through all ages. Amen.