

NO SEX IN HEAVEN: THE LOGIC OF PROCREATION, DEATH, AND ETERNAL

LIFE IN THE JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

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"Serrez-moi fort", souffle-t-elle. Leurs visages sont tout proches l'un de l'autre. Ils dansent encore un instant, et elle répète: "Serrez-moi plus fort ...". Brusquement, le visage de Pierre s'attriste. Il s'arrête de danser, s'éloigne un peu d'Eve et murmure: "C'est une comédie. Je n'ai même pas effleuré votre taille ...". Eve comprend à son tour: "C'est vrai", dit-elle lentement, "nous dansons chacun tout seul ...".

J.-P. Sartre, *Les jeux sont faits*

Traditional Western notions of heaven and afterlife emerged in Early Judaism and early Christianity in the three centuries between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. This study of the symbolism and social background of relevant biblical, apocryphal, and later sources argues that (i) originally, there were three different concepts of afterlife; (ii) all of them share the assumption that truly eternal, i.e. never-ending life involves an incorporeal and asexual existence; (iii) the specifically Christian version of the hereafter reflects the early church's enthusiastic and charismatic non-involvement with, and alienation from 'the world'.

I. *Three Sources, Three Heavens*

Being opposed to ancestor worship, necromancy, and any other cult of the dead, the first phase of Early Judaism (586-200 B.C.) did not develop a notion of life after death. In a time of persecution and martyrdom, Greek and Zoroastrian concepts of immortality helped Jewish intellectuals to construct their own eschatological beliefs. Early Jewish apocryphal literature and the New Testament are full of varied and heterogenous imagery of heaven and the hereafter. Their logic is far from evident. Can this imagery be reduced to a basic set of propositions which would add up to the one and representative Jewish or Judaeo-Christian doctrine about the hereafter? Or did each individual author produce his own theory which he claimed to be the 'true' one, so that there was not one doctrine,

but almost as many eschatological views as ancient writers?

The author has struggled with this issue, and has come to the conclusion that there were three basic answers to the question what 'the better life' of the future or hereafter would be like. These answers will be outlined and compared on the basis of three representative texts.

Heaven on Earth (Model A)

The text we first consider is the *Book of the Watchers*, originally a separate and self-contained writing now incorporated into the (Ethiopian) *Book of Enoch* forming chapters 6-36. The *Book of Watchers* is made up of a variety of stories, the most important ones being a midrash on 'sin and punishment of the evil angels' and a privileged man's, Enoch's, travel through the universe. It seems reasonable to date these texts to the 3rd or early 2nd century B.C.

The world view presented in this book is uncompromisingly dualistic: the divine and angelic world is opposed to the human one, and the two realms may not mix. The sin of the disobedient angels consists in deliberately crossing the boundary which separates the two domains. They have intercourse with human women and beget children. These children who, as carnivorous giants, are neither angelic nor human are an apt symbol of confusion and contamination on a cosmic scale. The angels who fathered these monsters are expelled from heaven. In his judgment God is quite explicit in distinguishing between the human and the angelic mode of being¹. Angels are 'spiritual', unmarried and "living the eternal life, immortal". Human beings, on the other hand, are "flesh", procreate children and "die and perish".

Once this discontinuity of heaven and earth is established, it is not surprising that man is not allowed to cross the boundary that separates the two domains. Even when God grants him all the blessings and privileges of the world to come, man will remain mortal and will stay on earth. These blessings are described in a prophecy announcing what will come after the Deluge (ch. 10), and in a description of an isolated place that will be the scene of future life (ch. 25). The Deluge is both a transparent metaphor describing God's action against a world which is corrupted by hellenistic culture, and the hoped-for divine restoration of the proper way of life and worship. God will, so it is

¹ Enoch 15:3-7 (Charles 1913, 198).

thought, not only restore justice and religion, but also grant 'eternal life'. In this context, eternal life has a limited meaning and may be paraphrased by "fivehundred years" (10:10). "And then shall all the righteous escape, and shall live till they beget thousands of children, and all the days of their youth and their old age shall they complete in peace" (10:17). From chapter 25 we can add: "And they shall live a long life on earth such as thy fathers lived; and in their days shall no sorrow or plague or torment or calamity touch them" (25:6).

It must be stressed that all this will not nappen in the transcendent realm of heaven, but on earth, in this world. People will have many children and will live to a great age - in order to eventually die. Just as the angel cannot become man, man cannot become angel-like and immortal².

According to model A, then, there is no eternity waiting for man. Some people will, in some future, live peacefully, attain a patriarchal age, and have much offspring. True eternity is for God and his angels, not for man who always will remain mortal. Man's 'heaven' is on earth.

Heaven in Heaven (Model B)

What the Synoptic Gospels and St. Paul think about the other life is contained in a myth that can be reconstructed from various passages.

In the beginning man was not mortal, and death was introduced as a consequence of human sin. By sending his son, the Christ, God destroyed not death itself, but the power of death, and thus opened up the possibility of eternal life. 1 Cor 15 explains the concept of eternal life in terms of 'indestructability' (*aphtharsia*, v. 42.50.54) and 'immortality' (*athanasia*, v. 53-54). Immortality can be attained only by those who belong to the community of Christian believers. Just as the present world, reigned by Sin and Death, will pass away (1 Cor 7:31), so the human body belonging to this world, cannot become immortal: "Flesh and blood can never possess the kingdom of God, and the perishable cannot possess

² It is not clear whether people who will have died before the advent of the new order of things will participate in its blessings. On his travels through the universe, Enoch is shown certain caves or closets built for the 'shadows' of the departed. There are separate rooms for righteous and sinners. An enigmatic passage in chap. 22 seems to imply, at least for some of the departed, a restoration of the feeble shadow to full human life (Wacker 1982, 286).

immortality" (1 Cor 15:50). There are two ways of receiving eternal life, depending on whether one is alive or dead at the final judgement. The living will experience the transformation of their bodies "in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet call" (v. 52). The dead will rise bodily and be transformed. As with Jesus himself, man "once raised from the dead, is never to die again: he is no longer under the dominion of death" (Rom 6:9).

In 1 Cor 15, Paul clearly shows the difference between the old, mortal body, and the new and immortal one. For the latter, he coins the expression 'spiritual body' (*sōma pneumatikon*, v. 44ff.), but its qualities, unfortunately, are not described. However, a synoptic passage conveys some ideas about that body.

When being asked what will happen to a woman who had been married to seven brothers in succession, Jesus answers that there will be no sex in heaven:

The men and women of this world marry, but those who have been judged worthy of a place in the other world and of the resurrection of the dead, do not marry, for they are not subject to death any longer. They are like angels; they are sons of God, because they share in the resurrection.

Lk 20:35-36

Accordingly, man will be transformed into an angel-like spiritual being over whom death will have no power. In eternal life, sexuality and procreation will no longer be necessary or possible.

In model B, then, eternity and immortality are waiting for those who have qualified themselves as good Christians. Transformed into spirit, man is now able to enter heaven. His mortal, material and sexual body has to be left behind. Sexuality belongs the frame of this world that is to pass away.

Heaven on Earth and in Heaven (Model C)

The *Apocalypse of Baruch* which survives only in Syriac translation dates from ca. 100 A.D. Baruch, an intimate friend of the prophet Jeremiah, receives revelations concerning the end of the Babylonian exile and the restoration of his people. The messages he gets from the other world include a bird's eye view of human history from creation to eternal life.

In the beginning there was no major difference between men and angels. The sin of Adam results in the loss of original immortality of man, but is compensated for by sexuality. "Sheol [the nether world] kept demanding that it should be renewed in blood, and the begetting of children was brought about, and the passion of parents produced" (56:6). Death, sexuality, and procreation are the result. However, Adam's sin not only initiates human history, but also that of the angels. Some of the angels get involved with women, procreate children, and consequently lose their heavenly mode of being.

The present world, so the story continues, moves toward a time of great transformation which will reverse the unfortunate fate of the Jewish people. The Jews' messianic kingdom established by divine intervention will be universal. In the days of the messiah there will be neither illness, nor war, or fighting, and human work will produce good results without effort (74:1). Among the glories of the messianic age two features may be singled out: nobody will die prematurely, and women will bear their children free of birth pangs. The author thus presents a picture of men living in peace and prosperity to an old age and having numerous offspring. An eternal life not limited by death is not mentioned³.

At the end of the messiah's reign he will return to heaven, and all who have fallen asleep shall rise, not to earthly bliss, but to share in everlasting and transcendent glory (30:1; 40:3). At the resurrection and divine judgement people will have the body they had in life: "The earth shall make no change in their form, but as it has received, so shall it restore them" (50:2). This body will be changed according to divine sentence: the wicked would be seen in disfigured, stinking corpses and go to hell, the just in glittering radiance and take their residence in heaven. "Moreover, there shall then be excellency in the righteous surpassing that in the angels" (51:12). This statement certainly implies the immortal quality of resurrected and angelic man, so that the original human condition before the sin of Adam is eventually restored. Man is again immortal, and the cycle of history is closed.

Model C, then, presents an eschatology in two stages. First, there will be a messianic kingdom the citizens of which will have much offspring and attain old age. The second and final stage will restore man's original immortality. Man's return to the angelic mode of being implies his loss of sexuality. There will be no sex in heaven.

³ SyrBar 73:1-3.7 (Charles 1913, 518).

II. *Sex on Earth and No Sex in Heaven: An Analysis of Symbolism*

We are now in the position to compare our three answers to the question what 'the better life' of the future, or hereafter, would be like. We will also add some historical notes.

The relevant check points are body, sex, and death. In model A the new life is indeed defined in terms of body, procreation and mortality. These three dimensions are qualified in a particular way: the body is free from illness and has lost its former fragility. Sexuality now includes an increased female fertility, and death ends an extremely prolonged life. All the natural qualities of the human body are enhanced. Nature is rendered perfect. Model B, on the other hand, reverses the three categories altogether: the body will be transformed into the incorporeality of an angel-like spiritual being, sexuality will be stripped off, and the new man will be truly immortal. Finally, model C combines paradigms A and B so that the three features will be enhanced or qualified to fit a this-worldly millennium. The first act of the world's final drama will be followed by a second one which results in man's ultimate transformation into a genuinely immortal being. Schematically, the models may be represented thus:

C	
A	B
body	spirit
sex	no sex
death	immortal life
earth	heaven

In model A the realms of being, 'heaven' and 'earth', are two strictly separate spheres that should not and, indeed, cannot be merged. Man is unable to cross the earthly bounds which delimit his proper realm. "God is in heaven, you are on earth" (Ecc1 5:1). As a creature man is immutable and must remain what he is and where he is. Models B and C, in contrast, are built on the assumption that it is possible to pass from one realm into the other. Man's passage from earth to heaven implies a transformation into an angel-like being. God is willing to radically change the human condition, so that man is not re-

quired to remain what he is and where he is. Perhaps one can say that God is willing to share some of his qualities with man.

It may be conjectured that *model A* is the oldest one to appear in Jewish history. We found it in the oldest section of the *Book of Enoch*. As a further example we may refer to the *Book of Jubilees*⁴ and, possibly, to the *Book of Daniel*⁵ as well. These writings date from the 2nd century B.C.

Model B seems to have originated in a pre-Christian, Jewish milieu as some of its basic elements appear in the *Wisdom of Solomon* (ca. 100 B.C.). The model shows traces of Greek influence, and some of its ideas may have been inspired by Zoroastrian eschatology and Egyptian beliefs. An extra-Jewish source showing model B's three basic components - an asexual, non-bodily, eternal existence - is spell no. 175 of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*⁶. Model B is the one accepted by most Christians and forms the basis of their eschatological doctrine. It is modified in millennialist circles, but only Mormons reject it altogether as they take corporeality to be a quality which applies to the transcendent realm, to man in the hereafter, and to God as well. Accordingly, the Mormon world view includes the continuation of marriage and procreation in the other world. Islamic eschatology resembles model B but is modified to include some sensual pleasures, though no procreation, in heavenly paradise.

Finally, *model C* appears in those apocalyptic circles of Jews and Christians to whom we owe the (Syriac) *Apocalypse of Baruch*, *4 Ezra* and the canonical *Revelation*. Christian texts which present the eschatological drama in two acts include Rev 20:1-6, writers of the early church such as Lactantius⁷, and of course the modern millennialists. An interesting variety of the pattern can be found in the apocryphal *History of the Rechabites* which dates from the 5th century A.D.⁸.

⁴ Jub 23:26-31. The meaning of v. 31 is controversial. According to Nickelsburg 1972, 32 the passage refers to life after death (so that Jub would conform to model C), according to Berger 1981, 446 it does not.

⁵ This reading of Dan 12:1-3 takes the 'eternal life' of v. 2 to refer to the unlimited eschatological era in which the resurrected individual participates by living a very long though in no way 'eternal' life. Cf. Messel 1915, 130-142.

⁶ *Book of the Dead*, spell no. 175 (Allen 1974, 184).

⁷ Lactantius, *Divine institutes* 7:14-26 (Lactantius 1964, 508-537).

⁸ Charlesworth 1982.

An ascetic sect, the Rechabites, lives in a secluded, far-off place where its members attain the patriarchal age of 788 years before they are transformed into angelic existence and received into heaven. While this model is not entirely successful among Christians with whom it remains a minority opinion, it has a splendid career in Judaism where it becomes the most generally accepted version of the eschatological doctrine⁹.

To look for eschatological models, how they work, differ and relate, is certainly an important step towards understanding them. Yet, the symbolic world considered thus far is not reality as such. Our study would be incomplete without an attempt at analyzing the social behaviour and values of the believers. Let us, then, move from the symbolic level to that of social reality.

III. *Christian Heaven and Charismatic Non-Involvement with the World: A Social Analysis*

Historians of early Jewish and Christian religion infrequently explain the emergence of belief in the hereafter or the particular symbolism in which such belief is couched. In general, we are left with the information that man, in adverse times, starts speculating about some future bliss which may possibly be beyond death. This is certainly true for Judaism in which ideas about resurrection, the hereafter, and heaven did not take roots before the 2nd century B.C., a time in which Palestinian Jews were not only politically dependent but also suffering from persecution. As full Jewish identity within the limits of this miserable life seemed impossible, belief in the hereafter had to supplement the monotheistic creed. However, this 'deprivation-compensation' theory, as it may be called, can no more than account for the introduction of eschatology into Judaism.

It falls short of explaining how eschatology - the belief in afterlife and the end of history - developed in the Christian movement. For this, we propose another theory which is based on Weber's sociology of charisma and Douglas' anthropology of body-symbolism.

Early Christianity, viewed from this theoretical perspective, is a charismatic movement for which non-involvement in economic life, and disinterest in

⁹ Strack/Billerbeck 1928, 816-844; Weber 1897, 371ff. 401ff; Macdonald 1964, 355-415; Maimonides, *On Resurrection* 24-25 (Maimonides 1982, 33). Maimonides belongs to those Jewish authors who speak of post-messianic eternal life in spiritual terms, whereas other writers prefer more materialistic notions.

such worldly matters as having children, is characteristic. The religious charismatic, preoccupied with creating a following that worships God "in the spirit and in truth", has to be free from worldly attachments and duties of occupational and family life. Since his mission itself is otherworldly, the charismatic inevitably turns away from this life. Religion is the center of his and his group's life, and everything that is unrelated to religion is either corrupt, inauthentic, or irrelevant.

At this point, Weber's notion of the charismatic can be supplemented by Douglas' interpretation of the dichotomy of body and spirit. It is through the body that we are related to 'the world', that is to family, procreation, economic life, and politics. The spirit, on the other hand, relates us to religion, the community of believers, and ultimately to God who himself is spirit. Emphasis or overemphasis of the spirit necessarily alienates one from the present order of things. Conversely, whoever is disinterested in ordinary social life is likely to lack concern for 'the body'. Who deprecates society in its established form, devalues 'the flesh'.

Our structural analysis of beliefs in life after death has underscored the importance of sexuality and marital fertility. From an anthropological point of view it can be said that the eschatological models say something about the people who were believing in them. Models that imply the wish for increased fertility clearly express concern about the body and hence about creating or re-creating a Jewish nation. Though one may consider such creation feasible only in a world to come, one would certainly not reject the idea of having as many children as possible even now. The next world compensates for what adverse time and circumstance do not allow for now.

Early Christianity, on the other hand, did not share this ideal of having many offspring. Jesus and St. Paul remained unmarried and had no children, and both of them were utterly alien to an ideal of Christian family and domesticity. The celibate Paul wished that others could live like him, and the book of Revelation celebrates the 144,000 who have not defiled themselves with women¹⁰. Jesus, himself known for the disregard of his relatives¹¹, called his disciples and followers out of their families and united them in a charismatic community in which marriage is no structural element. Far from being a stabilizing factor

¹⁰ 1 Cor 7:7; Rev 14:4.

¹¹ Lk 2:41-51; 8:19-21.

in society, charisma tends to disrupt marriages and families. Jesus claims to "have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother" (Mt 10:35). Paul allows half-Christian marriages to be divorced for the sake of peace (1 Cor 7:15-16). Jesus' followers must have consisted of people who have "given up home, or wife, brothers, parents, or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Lk 18:29). Travelling missionaries are carefully instructed not to visit their relatives living *en route*¹². In itself, travelling is a good way of keeping withdrawn. It belongs to the art of remaining an outsider.

Almost by definition, outsiders are individuals. According to Mary Douglas, the body or the flesh represents society, while mind and spirit stand for the individual. More specifically, she argues that "to insist on the superiority of spiritual over material elements is to insist on the liberties of the individual". In religion, such an attitude involves "preaching the possibility of the private individual attaining salvation by modes of direct communion with godhead which bypass institutional forms"¹³. All this is true of the early Christian movement which separated individuals from their social bonds, stressed 'conversion' and 'faith', or 'rejection', as the individuals's free responses to apostolic preaching, dramatized and celebrated membership decision in individual baptism, and bypassed such established institutions as Synagogue and Temple. Modern individualism, often traced back to the Protestant Reformation, is clearly prefigured in the New Testament. The early Christian believer is an individual.

Only after the eclipse of religious effervescence, and the inevitable return to the routine (Weber's routinization of charisma) does Christianity begin to adopt the more mundane ideal of domestic peace under a patriarchal 'householder'. Eventually, marriage is solemnized in elaborate rituals, and regarded a 'sacrament'. In the present context, this development is irrelevant, for it was precisely the initial charismatic disruption of the normal, and individualistic withdrawal from the world that shaped the Christian vision of the hereafter. We will look at two major aspects of that vision: the idea of sexless heaven, and the belief that asexual existence can or, in the opinion of some, should, be anticipated in celibate life. Let us begin with the latter doctrine and practice.

¹² Lk 10:4 as elucidated by Lang 1982.

¹³ Douglas 1979, 69.77.

Heaven Anticipated

When Jesus asserts that "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven", he encourages celibate life in the charismatic movement. At the ideological level, the saying of Jesus reflects "the wish to conform to the deity not only spiritually, but also physically"¹⁴. As a consequence of the disdain for and distance from established society, the spiritual character of God and the non-sexual, purely spiritual nature of life in the hereafter are emphasized.

Despite the routinization of charisma and the emergence of ecclesiastical institutions, there were always Christians who continued, and even developed, what is implicit in the original teaching of Jesus: contempt for the world and, along with it, contempt for the body. In the apocryphal *Obsequies of the Holy Virgin*¹⁵, the apostles John, Andrew and Peter vehemently proclaim total renunciation: of food, of sex, of family and possessions, i.e. of everything that binds us into the web of normal human society. Accordingly, Christian ascetics and monks neglect both bodily health and sexual life for some time, or for all their life, to participate in an eternal mode of being. Celibate monks conceive of their life as the life of angels (*angelikos bios*), a theme that runs through much of patristic and early monastic literature¹⁶. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394) explains the underlying ideology as follows:

Our Lord has announced that the life after our resurrection shall be that of the angels. Now the peculiarity of the angelic nature is that they are strangers to marriage. The blessing of this promise has been already received by the ascetic who has not only mingled his own glory with the halo of the saints, but also by the stainlessness of his life has imitated the purity of these incorporeal beings.

Elsewhere in the same *Treatise on Virginity* he says that Death starts with every new-born child and accompanies it to the end. But Death finds in virginity a barrier to pass which is an impossible feat. Just as, in the age of Mary the mother of God, Death who had reigned from Adam to her time found, when he came to her and

¹⁴ Dietrich 1939, 328 n. 170 on Mt 19:12.

¹⁵ Wright 1865, 44-45.

¹⁶ Frank 1964; van Eijk 1972.

¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* (Schaff/Wace 1979, 360, translation slightly modified).

dashed his forces against the fruit of her virginity as against a rock, that he was shattered to pieces upon her. So in every soul which passes through this life in the flesh under the protection of virginity, the strength of Death is in a manner broken and annulled¹⁸.

For the female ascetic, menstruation as a permanent reminder of the reproductive process, and hence of transient society and death, is a particular problem. Only beyond menopause can virginity be complete. However, menstruation can be controlled by fasting, and some women are able to produce a specially valued symptom of nervous anorexia: the premature cessation of the menstrual cycle¹⁹. Menstrual blood epitomizes the female body and relates it to 'this world', while amenorrhea, the absence of menstruation, anticipates heaven.

Heaven Itself

What, then, happens after death? As long as man lives in the flesh, he is constrained by his body and has to compromise with 'the world' and established society. After death, man is released from physical restraints and able to meet all the requirements of charismatic asexuality.

Christian doctrine asserts that after death, man's original nature is restored, that is the nature he had in Paradise before the Fall. This dogma is taught in two forms, in a 'weak' and in a more consistent and therefore 'strong' variety. According to the 'strong' version, man had no sexuality in paradise and was designed to procreate in some non-carnal way:

God did not create for them parts of shame, as their bodies should be pure and they should wear the garment of angels (i.e. be asexual). They should get their children by holy love - which penetrates without breaking, like the sunbeam playfully penetrates water. But after they ate the forbidden fruit, their bodies were distorted in a way we can see in ourselves²⁰.

This primordial distortion reverses in the hereafter, so that man's original beauty is restored. A particularly graphic representation of this process is to

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* (Schaff/Wace 1979, 359-360).

¹⁹ Warner 1976, 74-75.

²⁰ Mechthild of Magdeburg (1212-1280) 1955, 141-142.

be found in the *History of the Rechabites*: It depicts how the soul which leaves the dead body replicates its shape apart from any sexual - male or female - features²¹.

Alternatively, it could be argued, as in an anonymous writing of 1744²², that women would never enter heaven as they had no immortal soul. Women, created to support men and to bear children, would have no function in a heaven that lacks procreation and where men, restored to asexual perfection, need no one to respond to their desires. As women exist only in relationship to men, they cease to exist as soon as this relationship is terminated. A masterpiece of male chauvinism!

Mainstream Christian theology, however, did not adopt such 'strong' and radical views. According to Augustine, leading proponent of the 'weak' version of the myth, Adam and Eve had a sexual life in paradise²³. This original sexuality was though lacking in lust (*libido*). If the first couple had not disobeyed the divine commandment, they would have had as much offspring as God had appointed - without involving male lust and female pain. God planned not to let them die, but to transform their material bodies into asexual spiritual ones beyond corruption. Man's heavenly existence corresponds to this²⁴. The blessed ones will get a glorified body which will be, for aesthetic reasons only, male or female. Men and women will be able to see each other, communicate through speech, form a fraternal community, and will be able to touch - though certainly not in a sexual way.

However, one should not misconstrue the meaning of the community of saints. To invent a picture of happily reunited families in the hereafter, and furnish heaven with houses, towns and flourishing community life is a gross departure from the traditional theocentric notion of heaven. Before the 18th and 19th centuries such 'islamicized' heaven was unknown in Christian orthodoxy. According to the classical view, heavenly society is hierarchical. The blessed ones will fill those positions in the pre-existing heavenly hierarchy that became open

²¹ Charlesworth 1982, 82-83.

²² *La controverse sur l'âme de la femme*, quoted by de Beauvoir 1949, 181.

²³ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 9:3 (Augustine 1894, 272).

²⁴ Stoevesandt 1969, 145-154; Weber 1973, 257-263.

when the evil angels were expelled²⁵. There are higher and lower ranks, and, as required by the principle of retribution, each human individual will be allotted his or her position according to merit. Mediocre Christians are in the lower ranks, while saints and martyrs occupy privileged positions near the Blessed Virgin and the Trinity. Hence members of the same family will not necessarily find themselves in the same hierarchy. In other words: the family has lost its function and the institution is simply abolished. Families are dissolved, and each individual is treated separately²⁶. Indeed, in 1700 Pierre Nicole speaks of man as "created to live in an eternal solitude with God alone" (*L'homme est créé pour vivre dans une solitude éternelle avec Dieu seul*), and comes to the verge of describing human relationships as expendable raw material with which we can work out our salvation²⁷.

At the death bed of Julie, heroine of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, a Protestant minister explains his views *sur l'autre vie*:

Il dit que l'immensité, la gloire et les attributs de Dieu seroient le seul objet dont l'âme des bienheureux seroit occupée, que cette contemplation sublime effaceroit tout autre souvenir, qu'on ne se verroit point, qu'on ne se reconnoitroit point, même dans le Ciel, et qu'à cet aspect ravissant on ne songeroit plus à rien de terrestre²⁸.

Julie and, under her disguise, Rousseau himself, protests that not to see the people who were dear to her would cause pain and thus render heaven unpleasant. Yet elsewhere the philosopher acknowledges eternal solitariness to be essential - and joyful: "I shall be *myself* without contradiction, without division, and will have no need of anyone but myself to be happy"²⁹. At last, he will be an individual!

There is not very much, and certainly no important communication within the various heavenly hierarchies. The blessed ones know everything; so what should they communicate? As their source of perfect happiness is God, having

²⁵ Augustine, *The City of God* 22:1-2.

²⁶ Perhaps only an unmarried person, being free from many social bonds, can be an 'individual' even in this world.

²⁷ Favre 1978, 124; McManners 1981, 131.

²⁸ Rousseau, *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) = Rousseau 1964, 729.

²⁹ Rousseau, *Emile* (1762) = Rousseau 1969, 605. Cf. McManners 1981, 174.

friends cannot essentially contribute to their joy, Thomas Aquinas asserts³⁰. The blessed ones do not unite in order to promote communication among themselves. Nor do they unite in work. Food and shelter producing activities not only presuppose exercise of the human body, but also division of labour, economic exchange, the existence of households as units of consumption if not production and, ultimately, sexual reciprocity and reproduction. Therefore, work must be alien to heaven. Heaven means rest: "Anyone who enters God's rest, rests from his own work as God did from his" (on sabbath after creation, Hebr 4:10). The saints unite in a leisure-time activity, i.e. in praise and worship of God. God, not the fellow-saint, is the exclusive focus of attention. The traditional description of what may be called everyday-life in heaven can be taken from the biblical book of *Revelation*³¹ which says that "his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face", and describes the blessed as "each holding a harp". Life in heaven is never-ending worship: "To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!"

To sum up: the whole range of traditional Christian ideas about life after death can be understood from its axiom, that there is no sex in heaven. This idea reflects the early Christian rejection of established society - related to through a sexually active and child-bearing body.

Let us conclude by saying that the dogma of sexless heaven was so firmly established that it was able to survive the social formation in which it was born. It was accepted by a Christianity which was much better adapted to everyday life than its enthusiastic precursor. Such astonishing persistence may tentatively be explained by the inertia characteristic of dogmatic systems, and by a conclusive logic that contrasts mortal life to immortality that requires no reproduction.

Jean-Paul Sartre's film-script *Les jeux sont faits* shows that the pattern of the Christian hereafter is still taken for granted in a post-Christian society and can be employed in the staging of an existentialist novel. As persons who have died, Pierre and Eve meet in the other world for the first time and fall in love. While dancing they try to touch one another, and have to realize that this

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I II 4:8. Cf. Bautz 1881, 168: "In heaven, the blessed ones need no creatures as friends, for the intimate and eternal friendship with God renders any other friendship essentially irrelevant."

³¹ Rev 22:3-4; 5:8.13.

is impossible. They find themselves without the youthful bodies they had enjoyed. "Nous dansons chacun tout seul", as Eve hesitantly perceives. Only a return to 'real' life would restore their bodies, their sexuality, and would give them back to society.

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