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The Biblical Perspective on the Helpmeet in Marriage

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Abstract

This article concentrates on the classical text of Genesis 2, 18-24 which describes the institution of marriage, from the Christian perspective¹. It is stated that this passage brings some arguments for supporting the so called, *traditional family*, which is under attack today. He seeks to demonstrate, based on the biblical text, that traditional marriage is described as part of the created order. Keeping in mind that in present there is an intense discussion concerning the equality between humans and animals, the author discusses the relationship between humans and animals, presented in the same narrative. The way it is organized the narrative of human's creation and animal creation, may help in explaining the similarities and differences between the two passages. It is discussed also the significance of the woman as “the helper” for man, underlying that the helpmeet comes from Adam's body. Then it is reminded the roles which the helper plays in marriage, and the so called *circle of marriage*: cleaving and fusion in marriage, demonstrated by the resulting children. All of this ideas were taken as arguments in support of the biblical concept of helpmeet in marriage.

Keywords

Genesis 2, 18-24, marriage, helpmeet, animal kingdom, woman, cleaving, fusion.

¹ Part of this paper was published in Romanian language, with the title “Căsătoria modelul biblic al unirii – Studiu asupra Genezei 2.18-24” in the volume: *Cercetări biblice - Anuarul Uniunii Bibliștilor din România*, Year 6 (2012).

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I. Introduction

In this paper, we will analyse the biblical passage from Genesis 2,18-24², which is part of the creation narrative. We will look at God's initiative in giving humans a helpmeet. Keeping in mind that in present there is an intense discussion concerning the equality between humans and animals, we consider useful so look at the relationship between man and animals, present in the same narrative. The way it is organized the narrative of human's creation and animal creation, we will be interested to see similarities and differences between the two passages.

In order to understand de subject of helpmeet, may be of help the clear delineation between different realities of creation: time – day, night, space - dry, water, heavens, and species of various kinds. There is also important to look for clear statements concerning the purpose marriage in relationship with the mandate given to men, to multiply and to control the earth. We will try to find some clues to the problem of polygamy and of the same-sex marriage. There will be taking into account the children resulted from the biblical model of marriage, in order to see some support in pleading for this kind of union.

II. The suitable helpmeet

Yahweh's statement regarding his intention to solve the problem of human loneliness in Hebrew is "I will do a suitable help for him" (Genesis 2, 18)³. We see that in the first phase, God has considered the option for the right help of man to come from the animal kingdom. But in the end it is found that no animals were found suitable for man.

II.1. Looking for the right help in the animal kingdom

We understand that suitable help for man, is not part of the animal kingdom. The author introduces the episode of the naming of animals by

² Richard SHENK, *The Genesis of Marriage: A Drama Displaying the Nature and Character of God*, Authentic Publishers, 2018.

³ Edward D. ANDREWS, *THE BIBLICAL MARRIAGE: Biblical Counsel that Will Strengthen a Strong Marriage*, Cambridge, Ohio: Christian Publishing House, 2020, p. 12.

man in the context of human need for best fitting help. Verses 19-20, which talk about Adam's naming of animals, are sandwiched, between verses 18 and 21. Verse 18 presents Yahweh's intention to create a help for man, and verse 21 presents the actual act of creating the woman.

“The LORD God made all the beasts of the field and all the fowls of the air from the earth; and he brought them to the man, that he might see what he would call them; and whatever name the man of every living being gave, that was his name. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to all the beasts of the field; but for man, no help was found to suit him” (Genesis 2,19).

The episode of naming the animals ends with an observation related to man's helper: “but for man no help was found to suit him” (v.20). The author speaks of a possible attempt by the Lord to offer man adequate help from the animal kingdom. After Yahweh passes the primates through the face of man, to whom he gives names, he finds that the right helper for man is not among them. There was no compatibility from this point of view, between man and animals. The author wishes to emphasize that there is a clear break between the animal kingdom and man.

Keil & Delitzsch says that naming animals is about the process of knowing the animals by man, so that man can see to what extent they can be the right help for him. But in the end it is stated that man is superior to animals⁴.

Regarding the naming of animals by man in the context of seeking the right helper, von Rad says that by using language, man orders the role and place of each animal, when he names it⁵.

⁴ “Calling or naming presupposes acquaintance. Adam is to become acquainted with the creatures, to learn their relation to him, and by giving them names to prove himself their lord. God does not order him to name them; but by bringing the beasts He gives him an opportunity of developing that intellectual capacity which constitutes his superiority to the animal world.”, KEIL & DELITZSCH, *Biblical Commentary on Genesis*, Hendrickson Publishers, 2nd ed., 2006., pp. 84-87.

⁵ Every “animal is incorporated by him into his circle of life, as the environment nearest to him”. Gerhard VON RAD, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Rev. ed., Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1973, p. 83.

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The mismatch between the animal kingdom and the man, regarding “the right helper” is demonstrated by the conjunctions ו (waw) with which the second part of verse 20 continues, as well as the one from the beginning of verse 21. In verse 20b, it has adversarial function, being translated - “but”. “but, for man, no help was found to suit him” (Genesis 2, 20b). Verse 21, which begins with the conjunction ו translated by both the Romanian Orthodox Bible and the translation of Cornilescu by “then” through a time adverb, with a conjunctive role, which highlights Yahweh’s initiation of an alternative plan. Yahweh must think of a new variant in solving the problem of male-appropriate help.

This observation highlights the clear difference between humans and animals, from the perspective of appropriate help. The incompatibility between man and animals is located in the Christian Bible, at the level of the soul. Man has become a living being, after Yahweh breathed His Spirit (Genesis 2, 7), into the material body of man - which, in fairness, resembles in many ways the body of animals. The animals were created by simple divine commandment. “Then God said, «Let the waters of living things move, be living in them, and let birds fly on the earth, in the expanse of the heavens!»” (*BOR* - Genesis 1, 20) And so it was in Genesis 1, 21. “God made the great animals of the waters and all living things, which move in the waters after their kind, and all the birds winged after their kind”.

In this way, theistic evolutionary conception is also contradicted, which argues that man evolved directly from primates. Denis Alexander argues for continuity between humans and animals, in his book *Creationism or Evolution: Should We Choose?* He explains the word primate as follows:

“The word primate ... refers to a group of animals that began to spread about 50 million years ago, after the disappearance of the dinosaurs, which share certain common traits. The two hundred species of primates that are alive today represent what remains of an adaptive spread that probably gave rise to a total of about six thousand species. Primates are characterized by a particular anatomy of the hands and feet, complete locomotion style, visual abilities, intelligence, aspects of reproductive anatomy, life history and dental architecture ... They can be classified into four large groups: The prosimians ... lemurs and tarsians

from Madagascar, Monkeys in the New World ... Screaming Monkeys ... Central and South America ... Old World monkeys ... macaques and baboons ... Africa and East Asia Hominids, a group that includes monkeys and humans, monkeys in Africa and eastern Asia, and humans everywhere! Monkeys include animals such as chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and gibbons. Keep in mind that there is no species (p.224) called «monkey», but only different types of monkeys, such as chimpanzees, etc. So if you want to tell the child «stop acting like a monkey!» you better be a little more precise («Stop acting like a gibbon!»)⁶.

Alexander defines the term “hominid” as referring to

“the various species of the «human family», to all the approximately twenty new species described in fossil traces since 1940, which are no longer alive and which follow human evolution since our last common ancestor with monkeys so far. Thus *Homo sapiens*, anatomically modern humans, which began to appear 200,000 years ago, is the last species of hominid to remain alive”⁷.

We notice that from Alexander’s perspective, we are talking about an uninterrupted chain, without discontinuity, of the evolution of life, from animals to humans. Thus, the evolutionism presented by the author contradicts the statements made by Genesis, when he says that God created each living and plant according to its variety (Genesis 1, 11.12.21.25). Analysing the account of the creation of Genesis 1, we find that the author was careful to specify that each plant or living creature was created according to its variety. We are not told that the earth first gave greenery, then trees, then life became more complex, evolving in the form of fish, birds, animals, and finally man.

Alexander’s reply in this case is that we do not have to literally interpret the reports of creation, but only theologically. But what does it

⁶ Denis R. ALEXANDER, *Creație sau evoluție: trebuie să alegem?*, transl. Ramona Neacșa-Lupu and Viorel Zaicudin, coll. *Știință, Societate, Spiritualitate*, coordinated by Basarab Nicolescu and Magda Stravinschi, Curtea Veche, București, 2010 (in English 2008), p. 225.

⁷ Denis ALEXANDER, *Creație sau evoluție: trebuie să alegem?*, p. 225.

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mean to interpret theologically from his perspective? In his conception of theologically interpreting Scripture, it means taking seriously only aspects of human salvation. But the term “theological” for Alexander is subjective.

II.2. Biblical perspective on species

Because, even if we look at the expression as a literary construction - not a literal one, the author wants to pay particular attention to the keyword: “variety”, which means that every form of life was created by God on categories, on species. The expression “according to its (kind) variety ...” from the Romanian translations *BOR* and *Cornilescu*, is in Hebrew: *lemino*, and it refers to a thing or being that shares common characteristics, as in (Genesis 1, 11-12, Genesis 1, 21, Genesis 1, 24-25; Genesis 6, 20; Genesis 7, 14; Lev 11, 14-16, Lev 11, 19, Lev 11, 22, Lev 11, 29; Deu 14, 13-15, Deu 14, 18; Eze 47, 10). We could say that the Hebrew term *min*, suggests that God was concerned about defining and separating time, space and species. What God has created can be differentiated by clear boundaries, thus removing any confusion (Lev 19, 19 and Deu 22, 9-11)⁸.

God was concerned with making a clear delineation of: time – day, night, space - dry, water, heavens, and species of various kinds. *Min* refers to living beings who share common characteristics: plants, fish, birds, animals.

The author wanted to emphasize that the reader should not mix what God has separated. Day is day, night is night, dry is earth, and water is not earth, plants are not fish, and fish are neither birds nor animals, and animals are not humans. That is why man’s helper does not come from the animal kingdom, because we deal with different classes of beings: animals and humans.

Moreover, speaking of the difference between man and other created beings, Francis Schaeffer makes a scheme in which he shows that man resembles God - he enters this class of beings, because he possesses personality. Personality differentiates man from animals and plants. Comparing man with the ant, Schaeffer said that “man’s only connection with ants is in the sphere of Being - and man and ant are creatures. However, in the sphere of personality, man’s relationship is vertical - with God ... The rationality of the incarnation (Son of God) and the communication

⁸ *NET Bible Commentary, E-Sword.*

between God and man rests on this idea - that man, as man, was created in God's image"⁹.

III. The status of the helper

In the following section we will analyze the meaning of the word "help" ('ēzer), to understand the relationship between the partners in marriage. We will look also to the complementarity of the helper. Finally, we will concentrate on the idea that the helpmeet comes from Adam's body.

III.1. Meaning of the word 'ēzer

The word translated in *ROB* and *Cornilescu* by "help", in the original is 'ēzer. It is a masculine noun, which means "help, someone who helps". It refers to the assistance offered to someone, whether material or immaterial. In passages like those in Genesis 2, 18, and Genesis 2, 20, the noun is used in reference to a person offering help to another. It's about Eve as an helper for Adam.

The term is used for this purpose in Isaiah 30, 5. In Isaiah the term refers to the help, Pharaoh and Egypt, can offer to Israel, which will not meet the expectations of the Jews. "But the protection of Pharaoh will put you to shame, and the shelter under the shadow of Egypt will give you reproach. But they shall all be ashamed, because of a people that shall not profit them, nor help them, nor use them, but their shame and their shame" (Isaiah 30, 3.5). It is also used in Daniel with reference to the help that the wise men will receive. "But those of the people who know their God will remain strong and make great endeavors. When they fall, they will be helped little by little" (Dan 11, 32.34).

It is also worth noting that the term 'ēzer is used very frequently with reference to Yahweh, which provides help for man, for Israel. The noun is commonly used in Psalms (Psalm 20, 2[3]; Psalm 121, 1-2; Psalm 124, 8). "May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble ... send you help from His holy place, and support you from Zion!" (Psalm 20, 1.2). Or Psalm 121, 1.2 "I lift up my eyes to the mountains ... Where will my help come from?"

⁹ See the diagram of the different orders of the creation of Francis A. SCHAEFFER, *Trilogia: Dumnezeu care există, Evadare din rațional, El există și nu tace*, Cartea Creștină, Oradea, 2002, pp. 126-127.

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My help comes from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth”. It is used in Psalm 33, 20: “Our soul waits in the Lord; He is our Help and Shield”. We have it also in Psalm 46, 1, where it is used as a feminine noun. “God is our shelter and support, a help *ezrah*, who is never lacking in needs”.

Yahweh is presented as the One who can truly help Israel. That is why the Lord regrets that Israel ignores this help. “Your burden, Israel, is that you were against Me, against Him who could help you” (Hos 13, 9). Yahweh is considered the chief help of Israel (Exodus 18, 4; Deu. 33, 7; Psalm 33, 20; Psalm 115, 9-11).

This truth is also underlined by the name of Eliezer, which was carried by people in Israel. It means “God is my help”. It is the name of Moses’ second son. He wanted that the name of his son remind him of the help he received from the Lord. “And he took the two sons of Zipporah; one was called Gershom, because Moses had said, «I live as a foreigner in a foreign land», and the other was called Eliezer (*God’s Help*), because he said, «The God of my father helped me, and escaped me from Pharaoh’s sword»” (Exodus 18, 3.4).

In fact, even in the passage we analyze (Genesis 2, 18-24), we understand that Yahweh is the one who takes the initiative to give man the right help. ... (cohortative - I will do it)¹⁰.

III. 2. The complementarity of the helper

Analyzing the meaning of the noun ‘*ēzer*’ help ‘, we notice that it refers to someone who can meet needs, which cannot be fulfilled by the one who asks for help. In our passage, it is about woman, as an indispensable company for men. By the nature of creation, woman was to fulfill areas where man was utterly lacking in resources. This must be understood also vice versa, that the man will fulfill the woman’s needs that she could not fulfill otherwise¹¹.

¹⁰ In the Catholic Catechism we read that “the woman, «flesh of his flesh», i.e., his counterpart, his equal, his nearest in all things, is given to him by God as a «helpmate»; she thus represents God from whom comes our help”. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition, Latin text copyright (c) Vatican Publishing House, Vatican City 1993, Article 7, entitled “The Sacrament of Matrimony”, paragraph 1602.

¹¹ See *NET Bible Commentary*.

We understand that the helper of the man does not imply inferiority, in the sense that the woman was created to help the man, when the tasks exceed him. The fact that Yahweh is described in Scripture as ‘ēzer for man proves that this help does not automatically mean inferiority. We must not consider that the woman is inferior to the man, in the sense that she intervenes only to supplement man’s lack of resources.

The noun ‘ēzer leads us to consider the complementarity between husband and wife, within the marriage. The passage on the creation of women supports this idea. The author tells us in Genesis 2, 21: “Then the Lord God sent a deep sleep upon man, and man fell asleep; The Lord God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh in its place”. The noun *ṣēlā* translated into Romanian by “rib”, has the usual meaning of “part, part of a room, part of a hill, part of a wall, etc.”. It can also be translated as part of the human body, as in Genesis 2, 22: “From the rib he had taken from man, the Lord God made a woman and brought her to the man”.

In other passages, the term refers to a major part of a thing, as in Exodus 25, 12, Exodus 25, 14; Exodus 26, 20. Speaking of building the ark, Yahweh commands: “And thou shalt set four golden rings for him, and thou shalt put them upon the four corners of it; two rings on the side and two rings on the other side (Exodus 25, 12)”. The noun also designates a part, a portion of a hill, as in 2Samuel 16, 13: “David and his men saw the way. Shimei was walking along the mountain, near David, and walking, cursing, throwing stones and casting dust at him”. It refers to a component part of a building, or side chambers, as in 1 Kings 6, 5; 1King 7, 3. Also in Ezekiel 41, 5. “And he built upon the wall of the house many rows of tabernacles, one upon another, round about, which compassed the walls of the house, and the temple and the sanctuary; and thus he made sides around”. It is also used with reference to component parts of the Temple built by Solomon. (1 Kings 6, 16) “He dressed in cedar planks the twenty sides of the bottom of the house, ...”, or at the component parts of a door as in 1 Kings 6, 34. The term is used figuratively, referring to something or someone sitting next to it, as in Job 18, 12: “Hunger eats his powers, misery is with him”.

It means that in the passage in Genesis 2, 21-22, the noun refers to “a part taken from man”. The word used here refers to both the flesh and the bones that were taken from the man to create the woman¹². This

¹² John SAILHAMER, “Genesis”, in: Frank E. GAEBELEIN (general ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, (Genesis- Numbers)*, vol.2, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1990, pp. 46-47.

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interpretation is in line with Adam's statement, after seeing Eve for the first time. "And the man said, Behold the bone of my bones, and the flesh of my flesh. It shall be called woman, because it was taken from man" (Genesis 2, 23). The emphasis should not fall on the literal interpretation of the expression, in the sense that the woman was taken from one of Adam's ribs, but rather that in order to create the woman, God took a part of Adam's body. To create the woman, Yahweh took bone and flesh from one side of man's body. Morris also notes that the word "rib" is misapplied, and for this reason the status of women in relation to men has been misunderstood over time. He observes that this term is used thirty-five times in the Old Testament, and it is not used with the sense of rib, except in the passage studied by us¹³.

The significance of this act is that the woman was taken neither from the soles nor from the head, but from a part of his body. Which suggests equality between partners. Francis Martin observed the complementary and unique character of the helper, represented by the woman for the man¹⁴.

Speaking about the purpose of women's creation, Keil & Delitzsch notes that the helper for male was made in order to fulfill the purpose for which he was created: to multiply, and to control the earth¹⁵.

The next word used in the analyzed expression is. The preposition *negeđ* is translated in *BOR* and *Cornilescu* by "suitable". The word, prefixed by the preposition *ke*, is used only in two places in the Old Testament, both being part of the passage we study (Genesis 2, 18, Genesis

¹³ "The Hebrew word *tsela* appears thirty-five times in the Old Testament and this is the only time it has been rendered «rib». For at least twenty times, the noun means simply «side», suggesting the equality between woman and man". Henry M. MORRIS, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*, Backer Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2009, p. 100. See also John SAILHAMER, "Genesis", pp. 46-47.

¹⁴ He asserts: "We can say... that man and woman bring an equal but asymmetrical contribution to the relationship, one that preserves both their identity as human beings and their irreducible difference as male and female. From the abundant teaching of Genesis 2 and 3, most likely from another tradition, we can glean the following principal points. First, woman is a «helper» (a term that most often refers to God - nineteen of the twenty-one occurrences) to *adam*, thus making her a divine gift of aid". Francis MARTIN, "Biblical Teaching on Marriage: A Brief Survey", in: *Word & World*, 23 (2003) 1, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵ "Of such help the man stood in need, in order that he might fulfill his calling, not only to perpetuate and multiply his race, but to cultivate and govern the earth". KEIL & DELITZSCH, *Genesis – A commentary*, pp. 74-78.

2, 20). He designates the role that Eve will have as a help to Adam. The literary translation of the preposition *neqed* would be: “in conformity with his opposite” The variants “appropriate, corresponding to ...,” take the idea from the original, namely, complementarity, which is suggested by the original expression¹⁶.

The different meanings that the word *נֶגֶד* *neqed* can have, are given by the context in which it is used. For example, the term translates into “presence”, as in Genesis 31, 32, where Jacob utters a curse on the one who hid Laban’s gods. “But let that one perish where you will find your gods! In front of our brothers ...”. The preposition translates “in front (with spatial meaning)”, as in 2 Kings 1, 13 “Ahaziah again sent a third captain over fifty, together with his fifty men. This third captain over fifty came up; and, on arrival, he bowed his knees before Elijah’s, and told hThe preposition has the meaning of “opposite to ...”, as in Exodus 19, 2, where the people of Israel sat face to face with Mount Sinai. “And they departed from Rephidim, and came to the wilderness of Sinai, and encamped in the wilderness. Israel camped there in front of the mountain”. The word also has the meaning of “before”, as in Joshua 6, 5: “When the sound of the trumpet is long, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout. Then the wall of the city will collapse, and the people will go up, every one straight ahead”. In certain situations, the word has the meaning of “against” as in Job 10, 17: “You set before me new witnesses against”.

When used with different prefixes, such as *’ad-neqed*, the term means “until ...” as in Nehemiah 3, 16; It also has the sense of being “in the presence of someone” as in Psalm 116, 14: “I will fulfill the promises given to the Lord in front of all His people”.

It is also used with the preposition attached when it is translated “in front” (Genesis 33, 12; Numbers 22, 32); or “in the presence” (Hab. 1, 3). When used with the preposition it also have the sense of being “opposite” to something, as in Genesis 21, 16, referring to Hagar in the wilderness: “And he went and sat before (*of the child - Ishmael*) at a little distance from him, like a bow-throwing; for she said, «Let me not see the death of the child!» But she sat down in front of him, raised his voice, and wept”.

¹⁶ *NET Bible Commentary* explains: “The man’s form and nature are matched by the woman’s as she reflects him and complements him. Together they correspond. In short, this prepositional phrase indicates that she has everything that God had invested in him”.

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We noticed that the term has several meanings, depending on the context. It is a preposition that can be translated: “in his presence, in front of him, he will oppose him, and will be appropriate to his needs ...”. From the meanings that the preposition has, we could say that the woman in her capacity as a suitable help, will be in his company, at other times before him, in certain situations he will be opposed, and at the same time, will be suited to his needs¹⁷. The woman in her capacity as an appropriate helper will oppose her husband in certain situations.

The right help of man is complementary in the sense that she fulfills needs that the man himself cannot fulfill. G.J. Wenham argues that “husband and wife complement each other. Suitable helper would be better be translated «helper matching him», i.e. supplying what he lacks. She is his missing rib ... ”¹⁸.

Regarding the additional information that the text analyzed by us provides, we understand that the biblical model of marriage combats both polygamous marriage and same-sex marriage. Wenham observes that “*God created only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves, or another Adam, thereby indicating divine disapproval of both polygamy (cf. Lv. 18, 18; Dt. 17, 17) and homosexual practice (Lv.18, 22; Rom. 1, 26-27)*”¹⁹. On the other hand, von Rad says that monogamy is not mentioned in Genesis 2. Polygamy was the norm in Israel at that time. Monogamy was established as the norm only after the Babylonian exile²⁰.

The passage analyzed by us states that monogamy has been established as a norm since the creation of man. Wayne Jackson noted that polygamy subsequently emerged as a revolt against the divine law, beginning with Cain’s seed, which chose to rebel against the commandments of the Lord. “But the earth’s first murderer, Cain, went out from the presence of Jehovah

¹⁷ See *Ancient Hebrew Research Center, Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine*, April, 2011, Issue #059, which says that “this base word is the noun נגד (negad) meaning «face to face», but can be used in a wide sense including, to be in front or to be opposite. The prefix כ (ke) means «like» and the suffix ו (o) means «his» – like his opposite”.

¹⁸ D.A. CARSON, R.T. FRANCE, J.A. MOTYER, G.J. WENHAM, *New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicestershire, England (and Downers Grove, Illinois, USA, 1994), reprinted 2000., p. 62.

¹⁹ *New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*, p. 63.

²⁰ Charles M. SELL, *Family Ministry*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2nd Edition, 1995, p.76. He refers to the work of Gerhard VON RAD, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Rev. ed., Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1973.

(Genesis 4, 16) and many of his offspring followed his rebellious ways. Moses records that «Lamech took unto him two wives» (4, 19). Up till this age the original purpose of God in creating one man and one wife and uniting them in marriage had apparently been understood as sanctioning only monogamous marriage. In the seventh generation from Adam comes a man in the line of the Cainites who dares to fly in the face of this divine institution”.

In support of monogamous marriage also comes the New Testament, through the statements made by Christ, when discussing the issue of marriage from the perspective of the Law of Moses, as well as Paul, who compares marriage between a husband and wife, with the relationship between Christ and the Church, which is His unique bride. “Christ also endorsed monogamy in his comments on Moses’ law (Matthew 19, 5), as did Paul in his analogy between a husband and wife and that of Christ and his one body (one bride – Romans 7, 4), the church (Ephesians 5, 22-33; cf. 1, 22-23; 4, 4)”²¹.

Regarding unisex marriage, Griffin says homosexuals cannot fulfill the divine mandate “grow multiply and fill the earth”²².

III.3. The marriage circle: the helpmeet comes from Adam’s body

The author further informs us that the right help for man came from the human body itself. In the second part of verse 21, etc., we read that “the Lord God took one of his ribs and closed the meat in its place. From the rib he had taken from man the Lord God made a woman and brought her to man” (Genesis 2, 21b,22).

Another argument that proves that man’s help comes from himself is the exclamation Adam speaks of, in Genesis 2, 23 “Behold, he who is...”, which shows that the creature that has taken from his body is the “right

²¹ Wayne JACKSON, “Foundational Truths Regarding Marriage”, Foundational Truths Regarding Marriage”, in: *The Teaching of Jesus Christ on Divorce and Remarriage – A Study of Matthew 19:9*, p. 2, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/843-marriage-as-designed-by-god>. Accessed on 25.02. 2020.

Jackson mentions, H.C. LEUPOLD, *Exposition of Genesis*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1942, p. 219. See other passages which support monogamy: Matthew 19, 1-2, 1Tim 3,2; 5,9, Titus 1,6

²² Winn GRIFFIN, *God’s Epic Adventure: Changing our Culture by the Story we Live and Tell*, Woodinville, Harmon Press, 2007, p. 87.

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help” for him. Immediately after expressing his gratitude, with reference to the proper help he received, Adam explains the reason for his fulfillment, namely, the fact that she was taken from his own body: “... that which is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! She shall be called, woman אִשָּׁה , because she was taken from man” (Genesis 2, 23).

The expression in Genesis 2, 23 that the woman is his “bone of the bones”, suggests the idea that she was taken from man’s body, both from the bone system and from the tissues of his body. The singular feminine noun *‘ešem*, means “bone, substance, self”.

The word can be translated with its literal meaning, referring to the bones of animals, as in Exodus 12, 46; Numbers 9, 12; Job 40, 18. In Job 40, 18 the Leviathan is described: “Its bones are tubes of bronze, its limbs like bars of iron” (NRSV).

This expression is used figuratively, as an idiom, to describe a close relationship between people, as in Judges 9, 2. Abimelech uses this expression in Judges 9, 2, addressing the people of Shechem. He tries to appeal to the feelings of these people to persuade them to choose him king. “Say, in the hearing of all the inhabitants of Shechem: Is it better for you that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, should rule over you, or one man should rule over you? And remember that I am bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh”.

David addresses Amasa with the same expression, to persuade him to accept the position of leader of his army, reminding him that he is blood relative to him. “And say unto Amasa: Art thou not bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh? May God severely punish me, if you will not be before me forever the captain of the army in place of Joab (2Samuel 19, 13)!”

The noun is used with a metaphorical sense, in the expression “like a fire shut in the bones”, to describe the deepest, most mysterious places of the human being. The Prophet recognizes the burning passion for God, which causes him to speak. “If I say, I will no more speak of him, neither will I speak in his name; behold, my heart is as a consuming fire, shut up in my bones. I try to stop him, but I can’t” (Jeremiah 20, 9). The resemblance of the woman to the man to the most secret places of her being, qualifies her for the position of the appropriate help for the man.

The fact that it denotes “identity” is also demonstrated by its use in the expression *be’ešem hayyôm hazzeh*, which translates “the same day”, as in Exodus 12, 17: “Keep the feast of unleavened bread, for *in that very*

day you take away your armies from the land of Egypt; keep that day as an eternal law for your descendants”. The expression emphasizes that the Exodus will take place exactly that day. A similar construction is found in Exodus 24, 10, which describes what lay beneath God’s feet. The Jews “saw the God of Israel; under His feet was a kind of ancient sapphire work, *just like heaven in the purity*”.

The first use of the expression in the Bible, is in this verse, from Genesis 2, 23. The noun emphasizes the resemblance unto the identity between man and woman. A Romanian expression, adapted to our context, which is similar to that in Genesis 2, 23, would sound like this: “The woman is a piece torn from the man”.

We see here a paradox, in that although man needs external help, that help has its origin in his inner being, fulfilling the condition of being of the same nature with him.

And in the case of union by marriage, as in other areas, Scripture supports the circular pattern of life, of existence. The author of Genesis affirms that the common origin of the body of the two, triggers the attraction that subsequently leads to the union between man and woman. The marriage circle closes, then, when the union between the two partners, finally results in a single body; we refer to the children borne by their union in marriage²³.

From the above analysis we observe that although man is fulfilled by someone from outside himself, yet the one who satisfy him for his fulfillment, has its origin within him. Help is part of itself - from within. Thus the Romanian saying is applied: “he that looks alike gather together”. The evolution of the marriage does not end up with the birth of children,

²³ Qohelet presents the circular model respected by the world we live in, in the first chapter. The sun, the wind, the water, all make the circle. “One nation passes and another comes, but the earth remains forever! Ecclesiastes 1:5 The sun is rising, the sun is setting, and it is dawning for its place to rise again. The wind is blowing toward the south, the wind turns to the north, and as it rolls around, it passes through its circles continually. All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea is not filled, for they return again to the place whence they departed. All things are more troubled than man can say: the eye is not filled with the sight, and the ear is not filled with the hearing. What has been, is, will be, and what has happened will be, because there is nothing new under the sun. that he goes through in his life” (Ecclesiastes 1,4-9). Job says in 1, 2: “Naked have I come out of my mother’s womb, and empty will I return unto the earth! The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away: be the name of the Lord blessed!”

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but the same process goes on with the children, enforcing thus the circle of marriage²⁴.

Going beyond human union, Christian Scripture says that man will need outside help to be saved. But this help also comes from within himself - from the “seed of the woman”. After all, salvation follows also the paradigm of marriage. God promises Eve, after the Fall, that the Savior will come from a son born from woman (Genesis 3, 15; Isaiah 7, 14). In Christian Scripture, the circular process of salvation overlaps with the marriage circle. Paul writes that the woman “be saved by the birth of sons ...” (1Ti 2, 14,15). Speaking of the Church, Paul says that she will be saved by uniting with her Bridegroom in the institution of marriage (cf. Ephesians 5, 28-33). “For no man ever hated his body, but nourished him, and cared for him lovingly, as did the church; because we are members of His body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great - I speak of Christ and of the Church” (Ephesians 5, 29-32).

IV. Cleaving in marriage: fusion

In the next section we will analyze the sense of the verb “to cling”, in order to look for arguments in support for the model of Christian traditional marriage. The text explains that after the man leaves his parents – the old family, he will join to his wife. The verb *dābaq* from Genesis 2, 24 is translated by *Cornilescu* by “it will stick”. *ḏābaq* means “to cling to, to be united with, to stay with”. It is used with reference to something that sticks to, or clings to, as in Ezekiel 29, 4 with reference to how the scales are attached to the body of the fish. “But I will put a hook in your jaws, and I will bind the fish of your rivers on your scales, and I will bring you out of the midst of your rivers, with all the fish that are in them, and which will cleave to your scales”. The term describes the close relationship between the owner and his inheritance, as in Numbers 36, 7. “No inheritance of the children of Israel shall pass from tribe to tribe, but every one of the children of Israel shall be bound by the inheritance of the tribe of his parents”. The word is used to refer to the tongue of the heaven of the mouth, as in Eze

²⁴ See the last section of this article, regarding the perpetuation of marriage.

3, 26. “I will stick your tongue to the heaven of your mouth, that you may remain silent, and not be able to reproach them, for you are a house of rebellious”. The verb is used to refer to Ruth’s firm decision to remain with her mother-in-law. “And they lifted up their voices, and wept again. Orpa kissed her mother-in-law and left, but Ruth clung to her” (Ruth 1, 14)²⁵. The verb has the idea of fixating on something, holding on to something. This verb highlights the indestructibility of the relationship between a man and a woman in the marriage.

It is also used in a metaphorical sense, when talking about the indissoluble relationship between a person and his actions, as in Psalm 101, 3. “I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me *NRSV*”. We observe how *this process of union applies also on the spiritual level*. Referring to the relationship of evil works with the person who commits it, this union goes until the identification of the evil deeds with the person who does them. In this case also, *it is respected the circular type process: exteriority-interiority*. Evil comes from outside the person who commits it. It is completely independent of man. But when man is accepting it, evil becomes an integral part of it. Evil is identified with the person who commits it. In the process of becoming, man identifies himself the evil he has accepted in his life. The specific marriage dual paradigm: *exteriority - interiority*, works both in the physical and in the spiritual domain. As the evil deeds of a man become an integral part of himself, so is the union between a man and a woman through marriage. The two partners can only be analyzed by this type of unity. As the evil deeds cannot be judged in isolation of the person who commits them, so the husband and wife are ontologically linked to one another. The term describes Yahweh’s plan to unite with Israel, using the girdle metaphor. “For as the girdle of a man’s thigh fall, so shall all the house of Israel cleave unto me: that He may be My people, My name, My praise, and My glory; but they didn’t listen to me” (Jeremiah 13, 11).

Wenham states that marriage is unbreakable, divorce being condemned²⁶. John Stott observes that marriage is complete when it is done at all levels. “God wants the sexual relationship to be not only a union of

²⁵ When the verb in the perfect is preceded by *waw* consecutive, it has the same meaning with the preceded imperfect from the sentence.

²⁶ “The union between man and wife should be permanent: a man is united (lit. ‘sticks’) to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Jesus (Matt 19,3) and Paul (Eph. 5,31) quote this in decrying divorce”. See *New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*, p. 62.

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bodies, but to symbolize and express a union of personalities ... Only when the husband and wife become one in such a profound way²⁷.

Christian Scripture condemns the physical union between a man and a woman outside the institution of marriage. This act is called fornication (see Exodus 20, 13). R. R. Reno noted that prostitution or adultery is condemned by Scripture because in this way Yahweh's purpose in marriage is no longer fulfilled. The adulterous concentrates on the pleasure of the moment, but does not want the children that result from this union. The one who practices adultery wants sexual union but does not want the result of this union²⁸.

In support of permanent monogamous marriage, come also the researches in the field of ethnology and anthropology. "Ethnologists and anthropologists find evidence that monogamous, permanent marriage has everywhere and in all ages been considered as the ideal and preferred form of family life"²⁹. The Catholic Church has maintained over time the inseparability in marriage, based on the teaching of Scripture.

"The Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists"³⁰.

From the New Testament perspective, the remarriage of the divorced, to whom the previous marriage partners live, is one of the most difficult topics to be supported with biblical arguments³¹.

This marriage pattern also applies in the case of the union between man and God. In the Old Testament, a whole book (Hosea) makes an analogy between the physical marriage of a prophet, and the relationship between God and Israel. In this book, Yahweh commands the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute (Gomera), to highlight Israel's infidelity in

²⁷ John STOTT, *Noua societate a lui Dumnezeu: mesajul Epistolei către Efeseni*, Societatea Misionară Română, Oradea, 1987, p. 176.

²⁸ R.R. RENO, *Genesis*, coll. *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Brazos Press, Grand Rapids, 2010, p. 57.

²⁹ Henry M. MORRIS, *The Genesis Record...*, p.102.

³⁰ *Catholic Catechism*, Article 7 - 1650.

³¹ See what Jesus Christ says about this subject in Matthew 19, 3-9; Mark 10, 2-12.

his relationship with Yahweh, evidenced by Gomer's infidelity toward her husband (Hosea).

Johann Christoph Arnold notes that the marriage relationship as a model of union between man and God is used in both Testaments. He says:

“In the Old Testament, God's relationship with his people is pictured as a marriage... (Hos. 2, 19). In the same way, the New Testament uses marriage as a symbol of the unity between Christ and his church. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is compared to a bridegroom. In Revelation we read that «the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready» (Rev. 19, 7–9)”³².

V. The fusion in marriage is demonstrated by the resulting children

We will go further to see how the birth of the children is a strong argument in support for biblical helpmeet in marriage. The author of Genesis tells us that the purpose of marriage is the fusion of the two partners. The last part of the verse in Genesis 2, 24 tells us that through union, man and woman will become one body. “Therefore the man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh”. In this expression the numeral ‘eḥād is used - which can be translated by the figure “one”, “first, once, the same”. It can be said that through marriage the husband and wife become the same body. The numeral is used in Genesis 1, 9 with reference to the delimitation of a single geographical place. “God said: «Let the waters be gathered together from under heaven, and let the dry land be seen!» And so it was”. It also can designate the same commandment that applies to several categories of persons. “Only one law and one commandment shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns among you” (Numbers 15, 16). It refers also to the unique language of the people before the event in Babel. “All the earth had one language and the same words” (Genesis 11, 1). The numeral describes also the uniqueness of Yahweh, as in Deuteronomy 6, 4, “Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord”. He also refers to unity in thought, as in Zephaniah 3, 9:

³² Johann Christoph ARNOLD, *Sex, God and Marriage*, Plough Publishing House, New York, 2015, p.16.

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“Then I will give the nations clean lips, that all may call on the name of the Lord, to minister in one thought”.

In connection with the partners entering into the marriage covenant, the Scripture clearly specifies that the person whom the man *iyš* sticks to, is ‘iššāh - the woman. It is a feminine noun meaning “woman, wife, female part”. The origin of this word is found even in the passage we studied in Genesis 2, 23, where Adam states: “she shall be called woman (‘iššāh), because she was taken from man (‘iyš)”. *ROB* translates the expression “from her man”. Cornilescu translates simply “man”: “She will be called woman, because she was taken from man”. The creation of the woman shows that human being is both woman and man. Roland A. Simkins says that “by creating the woman, God introduces differentiation into the human species. Human can be distinguished as man (*iš*) and woman (*išah*)”³³. This verse contradicts unisex marriages. The proper help of a man is the woman, and vice versa. *iššāh* refers to a female being. He also refers to the one who can give birth to children, as in (Genesis 18, 11): “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women - (plural from ‘iššāh)”. The term is used to refer to Ruth as Mahlon’s wife. “Boaz said: In the day when you shall buy the land from Naomi’s hand, you will buy it at the same time from Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead in his inheritance” (Ruth 4, 5). Or with reference to David’s wives, as in 1 Samuel 27, 3, “David and his men remained in Gath to Achish, each with his family, and David had two wives; Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal’s wife”.

The term describes a female being who practices adultery: “For a whore woman, the man reaches for nothing but a piece of bread, and the married woman stretches for a dear soul” (Proverbs 6, 26). It can describe children of feminine gender: “But leave alive for you all the infants, and for all the girls who have not known the union with a man (Numbers 31, 18)”. It also refers to the female birds. “Seven pairs also, from the birds of the sky, one male and one *female*, to keep their seed alive on the face of the earth (Genesis 1, 20)”. From Scripture we understand that God did not create another man as a suitable help for the man, but a woman. This contradicts

³³ See Roland A. SIMKINS, “Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth”, in: Athalya BRENNER (ed.), *Genesis: A feminist Companion to the Bible*, vol 4, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, p. 44.

the practice of unisex marriage. The fusion of the two partners, man - woman, in one body - following their intimate union, is demonstrated on a physical level, through the giving birth of children. Turner notes that “in their procreation they will replicate their own creation, becoming once again one flesh (Genesis 2, 24)”³⁴. Dickerson notes that

“each child, so individual, is nevertheless an interesting blending of the parents’ physical characteristics. «He has his mother’s eyes», we say, or «She has her father’s complexion» Modern DNA identification techniques verify this blending into one flesh beyond eyes and complexion, all the way down to the genetic blueprint. The child becomes a living testament to the oneness of the union”³⁵.

This union between a man and a woman, in marriage, comes to offer full fulfillment to the human being. The translation of the noun, *bāšār* - “flesh” into different versions of Scripture, often leads to misinterpretations. The Hebrew word refers more to the act of sexual union. When the two partners are united by marriage, they form a new entity - a new family. The expression (*hayah* + *lamed* [ל + היה]) translates to “become”. The expression “a flesh” is found here only, and must be interpreted in light of the previous verse in Genesis 2, 23, where the man claims that the woman is bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh. The expression “bone and flesh” refers to the close blood relationship between people.

In the first marriage in human history, the woman was literally created from the bones and flesh of man. Even if later marriages do not involve such divine surgery, we observe that from the perspective of Christian Scripture, the first marriage sets the divine decree – rule, based on which the union is possible.

If we analyze the further context in which the pattern of the union between man and woman is applied, we will find that the reality of a single body is also valid for the union between man and God. When applied to

³⁴ Laurence A. TURNER, “Genesis”, in: John JARICK (general ed.), *Readings: A New Biblical Commentary*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009, p. 21.

³⁵ Ed DICKERSON, “Is Marriage Still Relevant?” p.1-2. (<https://signsofthetimes.org.au/2010/10/is-marriage-still-relevant/> , Accessed on 02. 25. 2020). The final conclusion is: “Marriage hasn’t changed. We have” (p. 3).

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the relationship between Christ and His Church, that “one body” is proven by the birth of the “new man”, which results from the union of the believer with Christ. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to all who have received Him, that is, those who believe in His name, He has given them the right to become children of God; born not of blood, nor of the will of their flesh, nor of the will of any man, but of God (John 1, 11)”. Or in Ephesians Paul writes: “Regarding your way of life in the past, strip yourself of the old man who is corrupted by deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, made in the image of God, by righteousness and holiness that the truth gives” (Ephesians 4, 22-24). And in 2 Corinthians 5, 17, it is stated: “For if anyone is in Christ, it is a new creature (building). The old ones are gone: behold, all things have become new”. To the Colossians he writes, “I mean, the secret kept hidden from the ages and all ages, but now revealed to His saints, to whom God has made known to them the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, namely: Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1, 26-27). Paul is disappointed that the appearance of this new creature delayed in the case of the Galatians. “My little children, for those who again feel the pain of birth, until Christ will take hold of you!” Human-divine union is made according to the paradigm of marriage. “Because we are members of His body, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great - I speak of Christ and of the Church” (Ephesians 5, 30-32).

Charles M. Sell notes that “Marriage is part of God’s created order, still in effect today, and that the «new creation» Christ has begun in his believers”³⁶.

VI. Conclusion

From Genesis 2, 18, we observed that Yahweh’s decided to solve the problem of human loneliness. In this sense, God has considered the option for the right help of man to come from the animal kingdom. But in the end it is found that no animals were found suitable for this need. The episode of naming the animals ends with an observation related to man’s helper: “but for man no help was found to suit him” (v.20). The author wants to

³⁶ Charles M. SELL, *Family Ministry*, p. 74.

emphasizes that there is a clear break between the animal kingdom and humans. There is stressed a clear difference between humans and animals, from the perspective of helpmeet.

The incompatibility between man and animals is located in the Christian Bible, at the level of the soul. Man has become a living being, after Yahweh breathed His Spirit into the material body of man (Genesis 2, 7).

In the creation narrative from Genesis, we observe a clear delineation of certain realities: time – day, night, space - dry, water, heavens, and species of various kinds. The author wanted to emphasize that the reader should not mix what God has separated. Day is day, night is night, dry is earth, and water is not earth, plants are not fish, and fish are neither birds nor animals, and animals are not humans. That is why we have to consider that man's helper does not come from the animal kingdom, because we deal with different classes of beings: animals and humans.

Speaking about the purpose of creating man and woman, the helper cooperate in multiplying and controlling the earth. We understand that the biblical model of marriage combats both polygamous marriage and same-sex marriage. Regarding unisex marriage, Griffin explains that through this kind of union, man cannot fulfill the divine mandate to grow and multiply³⁷.

The biblical text further informs us that the right help for man came from the human body itself. In the second part of verse 21, , we read that “the Lord God took one of his ribs and closed the meat in its place” (Genesis 2, 21b,22). The expression used in Genesis 2, 23 that the woman is “bone of the bones” of man, suggests the idea that she was taken from man's body, both from the bone system and from the tissues of his body.

Furthermore, by this kind of union, Scripture supports the circular pattern of life's perpetuation. The common origin of the body of the both partners, triggers the attraction that subsequently leads to the union between man and woman. The marriage circle closes, by the union of the two partners, which finally leads to a single body. This results also in the children birth, as a consequence of their union in marriage. The evolution of the marriage process, goes on with the children, who will repeat the circle of marriage.

³⁷ Winn GRIFFIN, *God's Epic Adventure...*, p. 87.