352 Bridegroom (*Sponsus*)

Christ is the faithful bridegroom because he does not desert, Osee 2[:20]: “I will espouse you to me in faith.” Note here that on account of adultery alone divorce can take place as for the bed. And it is in the power of the man if he wants to make a reconciliation, but, when our bridegroom Christ was more faithful to the faithful, so much the more will he be hard-hearted to the unfaithful.

¶ The example of the lion[[1]](#endnote-1) that by God loves his lioness ardently, but if she has intercourse with a male of another kind, he either kills her or abhors her improper bed as the sign of the matter. It is said in Deut. 22[:23-24]: “If a man has espoused a damsel that is a virgin, and someone lie with her, they shall be stoned: the damsel, because she cried not out, and the man, because he has humbled his neighbor’s wife.” The custom of our bridegroom is to espouse the improper [bed] as far as it lies in him without a divorce. Not like the kings of the Assyrians who espouse and dismiss at will, nor like the Jews who use a document of repudiation. For concerning Christ, it is said in Osee 2[:19]: “I will espouse you to me forever.”

¶ Again, note that adultery of the wife is considered more severe than the corruption of a daughter or sister. As a sign of this matter it is said in Deut. 22[:28-29]: “If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, who is not espoused, and taking her, lie with her, he shall give to the father of the maid fifty sicles of silver.” But the adulterer shall be stoned or according to the Romans he shall pay with his head.

¶ Again, the true bridegroom Christ loves ardently, interiorly in affection and decently, exteriorly he ornaments in effect, Can. 4[:9]: “You have wounded my heart, my spouse, with one of your eyes.” The two eyes of the bride are knowledge and affection, but the first does not wound because the bridegroom hopes to be loved more than that love be known. Therefore, the bridegroom has wounded and this double because he desires to love and be loved.

¶ Concerning the second, because the bridegroom ornaments the bride fittingly, not with the ornament of a prostitute, but with a beneficent life. It would be indecent for a queen to be ornamented with an indecent adornment. The example of the ruffian who seeing his wife dressed honestly as an unmarried woman said that she was not his wife, but either the wife of a soldier or the concubine of a rector.

1. Cf. Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 8.43 (LCL 353:32-33): odore pardi coitum sentit in adultera leo totaque vi consurgit in poenam; idcirco ea culpa flumine abluitur, aut longius comitatur.

A lion detects intercourse with a leopard in the case of an adulterous mate by scent, and concentrates his entire strength on her chastisement; consequently this guilty stain is washed away in a stream, or else she keeps her distance when accompanying him.

Cf. *Gesta Romanorum* 181 (Oesterly, p. 586): De adulterio.

Legitur, quod quidam rex habuit leonem, leenam et leopardum, quos multum dilexit. Leo vero cum absens esset, leena cum leopardo adulterium commisit. Ut vero leo fetorem adulterii in ea non sentiret, solebat semper balneare in fonte juxta castrum regis. Rex vero cum hoc sepius vidisset, quadam vice, cum leena adulterata fuisset, fontem jussit claudi. Leo vero veniens, et fetorem adulterii sentiens coram omnibus [159b] eam tanquam judex per sententiam latam occidit. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)