Close-Kin Marriage in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of Chrysostom

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B ECAUSE marriage is one of the fundamental institutions of society, changes in marital practice often reflect larger societal changes. Roman marriage and family structure have inspired prolific scholarship in the last ten years: some recent work on marriage in Late Antiquity rightly argues (against traditional views) for a large degree of continuity between Classical and Late Antique marriage practice, and maintains that Constantinian legislation on marriage was not simply the product of Christian influence.[1] One area of concern to this legislation was the apparent practice of close-kin marriage.[2] Although fourth-century Imperial legislation prohibited close-kin marriage, it is difficult on that evidence alone to determine how common the practice of close-kin marriage actually was.[3]

The pioneering work of Evelyn Patlagean, one of the first scholars to examine family structure in the Early Byzantine period, remains a point of departure for all later scholarship on

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[1] J. Evans-Grubbs, "'Pagan' and 'Christian' Marriage: The State of the Question," *JEChrSt* 2 (1994) 361–412, and *Law and Family in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1995).

[2] The debate over close-kin marriage in Classical and Early Christian society has traditionally revolved around the rôle of the Church. Jack Goody initiated this debate with his *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge 1983), in which he argues that Classical Mediterranean society had been generally endogamous until the early Christian Church banned these marriages. B. Shaw and R. Saller reached the opposite conclusion: Classical Roman society had not been generally endogamous but in fact was generally exogamous: "Close-Kin Marriage in Roman Society?" *Man* N.S. 19 (1984) 432–44; Egyptian society seems to have been a special case: see K. Hopkins, "Brother-Sister Marriage in Roman Egypt," *CompSt SocHist* 22 (1980) 303–54; D. Hobson, "House and Household in Roman Egypt," *YCS* 28 (1985) 211-29. See also M. Verdon, "Virgins and Widows: European Kinship and Early Christianity," *Man* N.S. 23 (1988) 488–505; G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1993) 41–46.

[3] Grubbs, *Law (supra* n.1) 77, 97–101.

Early Byzantine social structure.[4] In this paper I shall examine the issue of Late-Antique close-kin marriage and discuss Patlagean's thesis that "cross-cousin marriage was increasingly common in the East beginning in the fourth century. I shall also examine the perception that fourth-century urban social structure in the East was in decline, as Patlagean links these two issues. Using primarily the evidence of St John Chrysostom, I shall offer positive evidence that marriage in the late fourth century was exogamous and continued to reflect a stable urban social structure. The evidence for Late-Antique social structure is of course vast, but I shall make this study manageable by using only the evidence from Chrysostom as a case study.

Patlagean argued (118ff) that a significant change in marital patterns began to emerge in the fourth century, due in part to the deterioration of urban structure. She states that beginning in the fourth century the practice of cross-cousin marriage became increasingly common and was indicative of a closed and isolationist attitude among Late-Antique families.[5] The manifestation of cross-cousin marriage results from a marriage strategy to preserve familial property and is usually associated with more primitive, non-urban, social systems. Patlagean contends (125) that in the classical period of the Roman Empire, which was characterized by a vigorous urban structure, cross-cousin marriage was not necessary and therefore not practiced. Patlagean believes also that a special emphasis was placed on the relationship between uncles and nephews; she cites law codes from the fourth and sixth centuries that prohibit first cousin marriages, some patristic sources that discuss its occurrence, and some incidences of close uncle-nephew relationships found in Libanius' letters and orations. On the basis of this evidence Patlagean concludes that families increasingly resorted to close-kin marriage, in part because the traditional (Classical) civic network of relationships was no longer viable.

Shaw, in an attempt to refute Patlagean's thesis, points out that in the few instances where Patlagean cited evidence of cross-

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[4] E. PATLAGEAN, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale* (Paris 1977: hereafter 'Patlagean').

[5] Patlagean 126: "L'évolution qui se dessine dès le 4e siècle en faveur du mariage des cousins croisés a une portée démographique: on sait que la fréquence des mariages consanguins définit la dimension de l'isolat, ensemble d'individus qui fournit à son propre renouvellement, et que l'isolat est d'autant plus petit que cette fréquence est plus élevée. Son augmentation est donc le signe d'une population cloisonnée, repliée sur elle-même."

cousin marriage, these were all drawn from isolated and distantly provincial communities (Armenian villages, Mesopotamian settlements). These communities are not typical of Late Antiquity and thus constitute a precarious foundation on which to generalize about society in the Late Roman Empire.[6] It is equally tenuous to argue, as Patlagean does, that laws drafted to prevent an action indicate that the action was generally practiced. Honorius' legislation of 396 that prevented marriage between cousins (among other types of unions) does not necessarily imply that society in general practiced first-cousin marriage. In regard to an apparent new trend in Late Antiquity towards closer uncle-nephew relationships, Patlagean acknowledges that in most cases of a close uncle-nephew realtionship, the uncle intervenes only after the death of the nephew's natural father. Although Shaw has cast doubt on Patlagean's thesis, evidence is needed for determining fourth-century societal attitudes toward marriage and whether these attitudes indicate a closed and socially withdrawn family life.

John Chrysostom

The abundant writings of St John Chrysostom provide evidence for marital arrangements in the Eastern Roman Empire during the latter half of the fourth century. Many of his sermons discuss contemporary social problems and some directly concern the family (*e.g. De inani gloria et de educandis liberis*). Chrysostom's sermons were enormously popular,[7] circulating not only throughout the East but also in the West, and their mass appeal makes them especially relevant to a study of Late-Antique society. Chrysostom's reputation as the greatest Christian orator of his time was gained, in part, by his unique ability to conjure up vivid images of daily life and connect them with his larger themes. Chrysostom's writings are therefore a unique source for examining the issues that affected a significant portion of Late Antique society and can be

[6] B. Shaw, "Latin Funerary Epigraphy and Family Life in the Later Roman Empire," *Historia* 33 (1984) 459. It has also been argued that the reason, in part, for the practice of close-kin marriage in Mesopotamia was the proximity of this area to the Persian Empire, in which close-kin marriage was indeed a custom: see A. D. Lee, "Close-Kin Marriage in Late Antique Mesopotamia," *GRBS* 29 (1988) 403–13.

[7] T. Gregory, *Vox Populi* (Columbus 1979) 47.

used to establish the nature of Late Antique marriage and to characterize the relationship between marriage and city in Antioch and beyond.

The congregation that Chrysostom regularly addressed was composed predominantly of the wealthier, educated classes.[8] Chrysostom, in fact, sometimes refers to his audience as the "rich" in comparison to the "poor," who were not present.[9] Therefore the evidence of Chrysostom is especially relevant to a class of urban, Greek-speaking Christians. This class probably would have comprised most of the fourth-century urban aristocracy in Antioch, and much of the scholarship on continuity/discontinuity and urban structure in Late Antiquity is relative to this same class. Although his sermons were written for the rich rather than the poor, this class is the one most at issue in any case.

The most important consideration in using Chrysostom will be to recognize and separate the theological and rhetorical elements in his writings from the elements that reflect the social realities of fourth-century Antioch. The following will focus on the reality of the events and issues that Chrysostom discussed rather than his perception of them. For instance, Chrysostom inveighs against women wearing cosmetics and jewelry in public; this could be used as evidence for a variety of issues, but essentially it is evidence that some Late Roman women wore jewelry and were seen in public.[10] It is important to establish these fundamental characteristics if the larger picture of marriage and society is to emerge; in establishing these fundamentals it does not matter why Chrysostom opposes women wearing jewelry, and so the problem of source bias is minimized.[11] By first focussing on the actual events and issues that Chrysostom addressed and not how or why he addressed them, a fundamental pool of evidence can be secured.

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[8] R. MacMullen, "The Preacher's Audience (AD 350–400)," *JThS* 40 (1989) 503–11.

[9] *Rom. hom.* 24, *PG* LX 626; *Eph. hom* 13, *PG* LXII 96; *Hom. 22 in Joh.,* *PG* LIX 138.

[10] Contrary to Greek women in classical Athens but similar to Roman women in the Republic and Early Empire.

[11] The context makes it clear that he referred to respectable, married women and not prostitutes. It is possible that Chrysostom exaggerated the problem but even so, it is clear that Late Roman women were seen in public both with and without ornamentation.

The best evidence for marriage can be found in Chrysostom's anecdotes and use of examples from everyday life. In accepting these anecdotes as an accurate reflection of reality, I have assumed that Chrysostom's skill and effectiveness as an orator—an effectiveness even such contemporaries as Libanius admitted—was due in part to his ability to communicate clearly. If Chrysostom was an effective communicator, then we can also assume that his audience could understand and identify with his anecdotes. It would not make sense for Chrysostom to have gained a reputation as a brilliant orator if he were forever peppering his sermons with anachronistic anecdotes that no one understood; therefore Chrysostom's anecdotes can be used as historical evidence for marriage in the fourth century.

It is not known how often Chrysostom preached, and only nine or ten of his works can be securely identified as written versions of sermons. The bulk of his works, including all the homilies on the New Testament as well as those on Genesis, were probably sermons later revised and edited for publication.[12] There is no reason to believe that either Chrysostom or his stenographers would have radically and intentionally altered the content of the oral sermons, and so the homilies as written can be expected to reflect accurately the oral version.

The Evidence of Chrysostom

Chrysostom never specifically discussed the practice of close-kin marriage. He in fact provides ample evidence that arranged marriage in the fourth century was practiced in much the same way as in the earlier Classical period. Chrysostom recognized the practice of marriage for joining separate families together in alliance:

> Ἐπενόησε δὲ καὶ ἑτέραν διαθέσεως ὑπόθεσιν. ἀπαγορεύσας γὰρ τοὺς τῶν συγγενῶν γάμους, ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίους ἡμᾶς ἐξήγαγε, κἀκείνους πάλιν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἵλκυσεν. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς φυσικῆς ταύτης συγγενείας οὐκ ἦν ἐκείνους ἡμῖν συναφθῆναι, ἀπὸ τοῦ γάμου πάλιν συνῆψεν, ὁλοκλήρους οἰκίας διὰ τῆς μιᾶς νύμφης συνάγων, καὶ γένη γένεσιν ὅλα ἀναμιγνύς.... ἔξωθεν γυναῖκα ἀγαγὼν, καὶ δι' ἐκείνης συγγενῶν ὁρμαθὸν, καὶ

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[12] J. Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time* I: *Antioch*, tr. M Gonzaga (Westminister [MD] 1959) 222, although, as Baur emphasizes, there is no absolutely certain evidence that proves spoken sermons formed the basis for these homiletic commentaries.

μητέρα, καὶ πατέρα, καὶ ἀδελφοὺς, καὶ τοὺς τούτων ἐπιτη-
δείους.[13]

The context of this passage is Chrysostom's explanation of why
marriages were arranged as they were—an indication that the
Classical tradition of arranged marriage and the resultant net-
work of alliances still existed; indeed from this it appears that
Late Antique attitudes toward marriage were strikingly similar
to earlier Classical attitudes.

Chrysostom provides further evidence for some attitudes
about marriage. He frequently condemns men who sought to
gain wealth through marriage, but never discusses the problem,
if it was a problem, of close-kin marriage. One of Chrysostom's
favorite topics was the evil of wealth and covetousness, and it is
strange that he would not equally condemn a marriage strategy
—if such a strategy was being practiced—that promoted en-
dogamy in order to protect wealth and property. The argument
from silence is generally to be avoided but in this case the
silence is especially significant. If Chrysostom had perceived
that families were increasingly turning to an endogamous
marriage strategy to preserve wealth, he surely would have
spoken out against it on the grounds that such a marriage was
unholy and avaricious. Chrysostom was in fact a vociferous
critic of those who used marriage to gain—as opposed to
maintain—wealth, and this again in comparison to his silence on
endogamous marriage increases the magnitude of that silence.
Why would he criticize one manifestation of avarice and not
another if both were widespread? The answer is that only one
of these strategies was commonly practiced; as in earlier
Classical society, Christians continued to try to acquire wealth
through marriage.

Τίς μέλλων γαμεῖν, τρόπον ἐξήτασε καὶ ἀνατροφὴν κόρης;

[13] *I Cor. hom.* 34, *PG* LXI 290f: "And He [God] devised also another pre-
text of arrangement. For having forbidden the marriage of natural kin, he led
us out among strangers and in that place drew them again to us. For since on
account of this natural order of kinship, it was not possible that they should
be united with us. He bound us newly by marriage, uniting together entire
households through the single person of the bride, and mingling entire
peoples.... by taking a wife from outside the family, and through her a chain of
kinsmen, both mother, and father, and brothers, and their connections."

Οὐδεις, ἀλλὰ χρήματα εὐθέως καὶ κτήματα, καὶ μέτρα οὐσίας
ποικίλης καὶ διαφόρου, καθάπερ τι πρίασθαι μέλλων, ἢ
συνάλλαγμά τι κοινὸν ἐπιτελεῖν.[14]

In the context of marriage Chrysostom devoted considerable
space to chastising those who concerned themselves more with
a potential wife's property and wealth than her character and
disposition (*Hom. 73 in Matth., PG* LVIII 677f). Earlier Roman
aristocrats considered birth, rank, and wealth legitimate and
important considerations in arranging marriages.[15] Certain
Roman moralists, however, like Chrysostom, condemned
marriage for money (Cic. *Off.* 2.71). That both Chrysostom and
Cicero similarly condemned certain aspects of marital arran-
gement indicates that the societal context in which a marriage
was arranged must have been similar.

Marriage brokers were available, as they had been in earlier
periods, to help those seeking a partner.[16] A marriage broker
was hired for the purpose of finding a suitable partner—a task
that would seemingly not be necessary when arranging an
endogamous marriage. Marriage brokers were matchmakers
and the continuing demand and availablility of marriage brokers
indicates that enough people were seeking partners outside
their known family that this service remained viable. The need
for marriage brokers in the fourth century, as in the earlier
Classical period, suggests that marriages were being arranged in
similar fashion.

Most marriages were confined to relative equals in wealth and
rank but it was not unheard of for disparate partners to be
matched; this might lead to problems such as a rich wife
dominating a poor husband.[17] That this possibility existed at all
indicates that wealth and rank could be more influential in

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[14] *Hom. 73 in Matth., PG* LVIII 677f: "Who, when about to marry,
examines closely the disposition and characer of the woman? No one; but
straightaway about money, and possessions and measures of various and
different property; as if about to purchase something, or to settle some
common contract." See also *De virg., PG* XLVIII 576f; *Ad Theodorum
lapsum, PG* XLVII 314; *Hom. 90 in Matth., PG* LVIII 789-92; *I Cor. hom.* 29,
PG LXI 248; *In act. apost. hom.* 49, *PG* LX 344.

[15] S. TREGGIARI, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford 1991: hereafter 'Treggiari') 83ff.

[16] *I Thess. hom.* 5, *PG* LXII 426; *II Cor. hom.* 9, *PG* LXI 463; *Quales ducen-
dae sint uxores, PG* LI 233.

[17] *Quales ... uxores, PG* LI 231; *De virg., PG* XLVIII 576; *In Acta apost.
hom.* 49, *PG* LX 344. The rich wife dominating her husband is a topos of
Roman comedy.

determining marital rôles than gender. A woman, normally the lesser partner in marriage, could use her wealth to dominate the marriage, usurping the authority normally invested in the husband. In Roman comedy the rich and domineering wife was a common character, and Roman writers frequently discussed the potential problems of marriage between disparate partners (Treggiari 87ff). It is possible that Chrysostom's use of this theme is merely a rhetorical device. It is still significant, however, even if Chrysostom were being rhetorical, that by continuing this earlier tradition he demonstrates that the people of Late Antique Antioch could still identify with some of the earlier Roman anxieties about arranging a harmonious marriage.

In the following passage Chrysostom criticizes men who attempted to get rich through marriage:

Οὐχ ἵνα χρήματα εἰσφέρῃ γυνή, διὰ τοῦτο αὐτὴν ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεός, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα ᾖ βοηθός. Ἡ δὲ χρήματα εἰσφέρουσα, καὶ ἐπίβουλος [καὶ δέσποινα ἀντὶ γυναικὸς γίνεται· ἢ τάχα θηρίον ἀντὶ γυναικός], ἀξιοῦσα μεγάλα διὰ τὸν πλοῦτον φρονεῖν. Οὐδὲν αἰσχρότερρον ἀνδρὸς οὕτω βουλευομένου πλουτεῖν. Εἰ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ πλουτεῖν πειρασμῶν γέμει, τὸ οὕτω πλουτεῖν ποῦ θήσομεν; Μὴ γὰρ, εἴ τις σπανιάκις καὶ παρὰ τὸ συμβαῖνον καὶ παρὰ λόγον ἐπέτυχε, τοῦτο ἴδῃς· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις πράγμασιν οἷς ἀπολαύουσί τινες, καὶ ἐκ παραδόξου ἐπιτυγχάνουσι, προσέχειν δεῖ· ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ κατὰ λόγον ἴδωμεν, εἰ μὴ μυρίας ἀηδίας γέμει τὸ πρᾶμα. Οὐκ αὐτὸς μόνος ἐν ἀδοξίᾳ γίνῃ, ἀλλὰ καὶ παῖδας καταισχύνεις, πένητας ἀφεὶς, εἰ συμβαίη προαπελθεῖν, καὶ αὐτῇ πολλὰς δίδως ἀφορμὰς τοῦ δευτέρῳ πάλιν προσομιλῆσαι νυμφίῳ. Ἢ οὐχ ὁρᾷς, ὅτι πολλαῖς αὕτη γέγονεν ἡ πρόφασις δευτέρου γάμου, τὸ μὴ καταφρονεῖσθαι, τὸ ζητεῖν τοὺς ἐφισταμένους τοῖς ὑπάρχουσι;[18]

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[18] *In act. apost. hom.* 49, *PG* LX 344: "Not so that a wife should bring money did God give woman, but in order that she might be a helpmate. While she that brings money brings also treachery [she might be a mistress instead of a wife, even perhaps a savage beast instead of a wife], thinking herself highly worthy on account of the wealth. Nothing is more shameful than a man planning to get rich in this way. For if wealth itself is full of trials, what about wealth held in this way? If something rare and contrary to chance and reason occurs, you should not look to this; nor in those other matters which have benefited some, though occuring by chance and contrary to expectation, as being necessary to devote oneself to. But let us look to reason itself, to see if the matter is not full of countless unpleasantries. You disgrace not only yourself, but also your children, handing over misery, if it chance that you die before your wife, and you give to her any reason for attaching again to a second bridegroom. Or do you not see that many women make this the pretext for a second marriage; not to be one disdained, seeking those to attain to her property."

This passage offers more evidence that marriages were not perceived as normally being contracted within the family, for evidently some suitors gained wealth through marrying into wealthy families. Furthermore, it would seem to provide an appropriate context for Chrysostom to discuss how some families might intermarry in order to protect family fortunes from treasure-seeking bachelors. Chrysostom, however, is mute on this theoretical issue; this and the earlier passages can only attest a marital strategy to gain—not protect—wealth. This strategy could only be practiced in a society that fostered free marriage and in which endogamy was not generally practiced: a society that is the complete opposite of the closed society conjectured by Patlagean. Finally, this passage demonstrates the motif of the rich and tyrannical wife who rules her husband by virtue of her wealth. Chrysostom, in keeping with a long tradition of Roman moralists, advised those arranging a marriage to consider closely the character and disposition, rather than the wealth, of a potential partner. Chrysostom offers evidence for a marital practice that had much in common with earlier classical custom.

Before marriage there was a period of 'courting', and Chrysostom writes that this was an anxious time for the young woman who worriedly pondered what sort of husband would be chosen for her (*De virg.*, *PG* XLVIII 578). It was entirely possible that bride and groom might never meet before their wedding.

Πῶς μέγα ἐστίν; εἰπέ μοι. "Ότι τὸν ἄπαντα θαλαμευομένη ἡ κόρη χρόνον, μηδέποτε τὸν νυμφίον ἑωρακυῖα, ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας οὕτω ποθεῖ καὶ στέργει ὡς σῶμα οἰκεῖον· πάλιν ὁ ἀνήρ, ἥν οὐδέποτε εἶδεν, ἧς οὐδέποτε τῆς ἐν λόγῳ ἐκοινώνησε συνουσίας. Ταύτην κἀκεῖνος ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἁπάντων προτίθησι, καὶ τῶν φίλων, καὶ τῶν οἰκείων, καὶ τῶν γεννησαμένων αὐτῶν. Οἱ γονεῖς πάλιν, ἄν μὲν ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποθέσεως ἀφαιρεθῶσι χρήματα. Δάκνονται, ἀλγοῦσιν, εἰς δικαστήριον τοὺς ἀφελομένους ἕλκουσιν· ἀνθρώπῳ δὲ πολλάκις μηδέποτε ὀφθέντι, μηδὲ γνωρισθέντι, καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα τὴν ἑαυτῶν καὶ προῖκα χρημάτων πολλῶν ἐγχειρίζουσι. Καὶ χαίρουσι τοῦτο ποιοῦντες, καὶ οὐχ ἡγοῦνται ζημίαν εἶναι τὸ γινόμενον· ἀλλ' ὁρῶντες τὴν θυγατέρα ἀπαγομένην, οὐ συνηθείας μέμνηνται, οὐχ ἀλγοῦσιν, οὐ δάκνονται, ἀλλὰ καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσι, καὶ εὐχῆς ἔργον εἶναι νομίζουσι τὸ καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα

ἰδεῖν τῆς οἰκίας ἐξαγομένην, καὶ πολλὰ μετ' ἐκείνης χρήματα.[19]

This provides further evidence for the nature of arranged marriage in this period. It was possible for a bride and groom to be complete strangers, never having met or even spoken with each other until the wedding. More significantly, it was even possible that the bride's parents might arrange the engagement never having met the prospective groom—a situation that is thoroughly incongruous with the arrangement of an endogamous marriage. The thrust of the entire passage describes a coupling between strangers: the bride and groom as well as their families. It is also significant that the passage clearly refers to the dowry as something that is being given away. Chrysostom states quite plainly that people who would normally be greatly distressed at the loss of this money are instead pleased to be giving it away for the purpose of marriage; that it is one of the "mysteries" of marriage. This is, most likely, an idealistic portrayal of the parental attitude regarding the disposition of the dowry, for Chrysostom remarks elsewhere how fathers are reluctant to hand over the dowry (*De virg.*, *PG* XLVIII 578). In either case there is no indication that endogamous marriages were commonly arranged to insulate familial wealth. Therefore this evidence in no way suggests that families were turning inward in the arrangement of marriages, but rather it is clear that in the fourth century at least, marriages continued to be arranged in the Classical tradition.

The experience of Libanius, a pagan contemporary of Chrysostom's, also provides evidence concerning the arranged nature of marriage. In his autobiography, Libanius states that

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[19] *Quales ... uxores, PG* LI 230: "How great is it (a mystery), tell me. Because the girl, being kept at home all the time, and has never seen the bridegroom, from the first day she desires and loves him as her own body. The husband again, who has never seen her, and never shared conversation with her, from the first day prefers her before everyone, before even loved ones and relations, even before his parents. The parents again, if for some other cause they are separated from their money, they are vexed and distressed, dragging to court those doing the taking. They entrust their daughter and a dowry of much money, to a man, often whom they have never seen or are even acquainted with. And they rejoice doing this, and do not consider it to have been a loss. But seeing their daughter led away, they do not consider the intimacy, nor are they grieved or vexed, but they are even grateful. They consider it to be an work of prayer, to see their daughter being led out from home, and with her a large sum of money." The reference to marriage as a "mystery" seems not meant to be caustic but rather as an allusion to the awe-inspiring nature of marriage.

after he had made a favorable reputation for himself, fathers with nubile daughters approached him bidding high dowries in an effort to contract a marriage.[20] The passage implies that Libanius on account of his rhetorical brilliance and virtue was widely seen as a 'prize catch' and therefore fathers were filling to offer their daughters and expensive dowries to seal a marriage alliance. The economic and political prospects of a potential marriage partner seem to have been a commonly accepted factor in arranging a marriage.[21]

Obviously not all marriages were necessarily arranged without contact between bride and groom, or even between the groom and the bride's parents, his future father- and mother-in-law. Nevertheless, Chrysostom discussed the anxiety felt by women especially, but also men, concerning the arangement of a marriage. It could be a difficult period for the suitor, but as a man he could freely get about town and make inquiries, though he might never see his potential bride.[22] The bride's family might receive a number of suitors, and the betrothal process could resemble a contest (*De virg.*, *PG* XLVIII 578f). Once the contest had been won, the victorious suitor was later summoned to the house of the bride's father and he delivered her over (*I Cor. hom.* 26, *PG* LXI 222f). In many cases a contract would be drawn up that stipulated what should happen if certain circumstances arose. These pre-nuptial contracts were particularly concerned with the disposition of the dowry and the various conditions that might affect inheritance.[23] One issue was inheritance rights, and this indicates that the division of wealth among children and spouse could be settled even before marriage (*Quales ... uxores*, *PG* LI 225). The disposition of the dowry was an important concern for men about to marry:

Σὺ δὲ ὅταν μέλλῃς ἄγεσθαι γυναῖκα, πρὸς μὲν τοὺς μὲν τοὺς ἔξω νομικοὺς μετὰ πολλῆς τρέχεις τῆς σπουδῆς, καὶ παρακαθήμενος αὐτοῖς, μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας ἐξετάζεις τί μὲν ἔσται, ἐὰν ἄπαις τελευτήσῃ ἡ γυνή, τὶ δὲ ἐὰν ἔχουσα παῖδα τί δὲ ἐὰν δύο καὶ τρεῖς, καὶ πῶς μὲν ἔχουσα πατέρα, πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἔχουσα τοῖς ἑαυτῆς χρήσεται, καὶ τί μὲν εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἥξει

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[20] Βίος ἢ Περὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τυχῆς in Libanius, *Opera*, ed. R. Foerster, I (Leipzig 1903) 87.

[21] A. Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1996) 29.

[22] *Der virg.*, *PG* XLVIII 578; *Eph. hom.* 20, *PG* LXII 140.

[23] See *infra* also; *Hom.* 48 in Gen, *PG* LIV 442; *Hom.* 56 in Gen., *PG* LIV, 489f.

τοῦ κλήρου, τί δὲ εἰς τὸν συνοικοῦντα, καὶ πότε κύριος ἔσται
τοῦ παντός, μηδένα μηδὲν ἀφεῖναι τῶν ἐκείνης παρασπάσ-
ασθαι μέρος, καὶ πότε τοῦ παντὸς ἐκπεσεῖται.[24]

There is certainly some rhetorical exaggeration in this passage, for it is difficult to believe that every man who was about to marry sought a lawyer first. Nonetheless, this is evidence that at least some people consulted lawyers concerning the disposition of dowries, and Chrysostom clearly expected his audience to be familiar with this sort of attitude. Once again, if most marriages were endogamous and designed to keep wealth within the larger family one would not expect the legalistic considerations that the above passage describes.

Patlagean concluded that in the early Byzantine period (ca fourth century) a trend toward endogamous marriage began, which was characteristic of a more isolationist attitude on the part of families. The cause of this trend, according to Patlagean, was a declining urban structure that forced families to discontinue the earlier Classical (exogamous) form of contracting marriage. In the writings of Chrysostom, however, marriage in this period was not generally endogamous, but rather continued to be contracted in the Classical fashion. Chrysostom stated that men were only interested in acquiring the wealth of a potential bride; that some marriages were arranged without the bride and groom ever having met each other, and in some cases families might give a large dowry to a total stranger. He discussed the use of marriage brokers, matchmakers hired to find a suitable partner for a son or daughter, and he chastised the common practice of hiring lawyers before marriage in order to negotiate the disposition of the dowry. Both these practices imply that families were looking beyond their close relatives in seeking to contract a marriage. Presumably it is not necessary to hire a marriage broker to find an eligible close relative. The purpose of endogamous marriage is to protect familial wealth— to keep it in the family; and it would therefore seem strange that in arranging an endogamous marriage it was necessary to call in

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[24] *Quales ... uxores, PG* LI 226f: "And when you are about to take a wife, you run out with much haste to the lawyers, and sitting beside them, you draw out with great accuracy what will be if your wife dies childless; or if she has a child, or two or three. And while her father is living or not living, how can her money be used. And what part of the estate goes to her brothers, and what to her husband, and when will he control all, no one being able to detach from him his portion. And when can he be deprived of all."

the lawyers to negotiate formally matters concerning the dowry.

Chrysostom discussed many different aspects of marriage and was quick to condemn those seeking to get rich from marriage, yet he never discussed close-kin marriages—very strange if it had been a real problem. Obviously the writings of a single Christian rhetor cannot be taken as conclusive evidence against close-kin marriage, but the evidence of Chrysostom strongly suggests that marriages in the fourth century continued to be arranged in the same manner as earlier Classical marriages. This supports the recent scholarship of Evans-Grubbs, who has argued that Christian ideology did not immediately have as significant an impact on marriage and family as has been previous argued.[25]

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[25] As by Patlagean and also, to a certain extent, P. Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York 1988), who points out that Chrysostom, despite his eloquence, was unable to transform Antioch into s "Christian city."