

## **ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 117:**

### **“MARRIAGE AND SEX”**

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The responses I receive from a newsletter, function as a gage of the interest for the subject. Your many messages of appreciation from different parts of the world, told me loud and clear that many of you found the last newsletter “WILL MARY UNITE ALL RELIGIONS?” informative and timely.

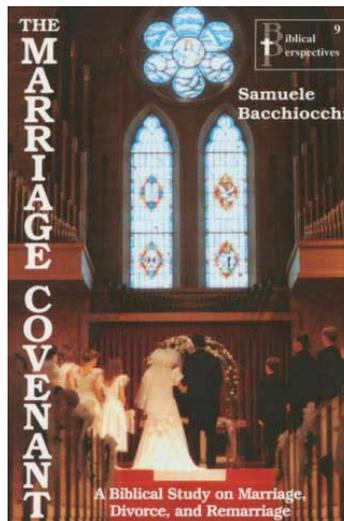
Several of you ordered the video MESSAGES FROM HEAVEN by Tim Tetlow and found it most enlightening. You told me that every Adventist should see this video. I will contact Jim Tetlow this week and I will explore the possibility of making it available to those of you who are interested in a DVD format at a substantially reduced price. I believe that it is important for us to understand the role of Marian apparitions and messages in bringing the major world religions together under the spiritual leadership of the Pope.

During the past three weeks I spent every waking moment working on chapter 2 of the manuscript on THE PASSION. I was almost ready to email you the 20 pages section of the chapter dealing with “The Portrayal and Impersonation of Christ.” It is a timely Bible study on the legitimacy of using Christ’s images and drama as aid to worship. While I was putting the finishing touches on this study, I received a couple of messages from fellow believers asking me to comments on next week Sabbath School Lesson (July 17-23, 2004) on “Marriage is Not out-of-Date.”

An Adventist brother who has been happily married for 50 years, asked me if God will allow him to continue to live with his sweat-heart for all eternity. He reassured me that his marriage vows were meant to be for eternity. The same question was posed to me recently by my neighbor, Raymond Mayer, M. D., who lost his beloved wife after 52 years of happy marriage. Incidentally, Dr. Mayer is one of the most gracious Christian gentleman you could ever meet. During the past ten years he devoted himself fully to alleviate the suffering of his sick wife.

Dr. Mayer spent sometimes seeking for an answer in the writings of Ellen White and found several statements indicating that in the world to come families will be reunited nevermore to be separated. This is a reassuring promise. In a comforting letter sent to a man who lost his wife, Ellen White wrote: “We will pray for you and your precious little ones, that you may, by patient continuance in well doing, keep your face and steps always directed heavenward. We will pray that you may have influence and success in guiding your little ones, that you, with them, may gain the crown of life, and in the home above, now being prepared for us, you and your wife and children may be a family joyously, happily reunited, nevermore to be separated. (2 SM 262.7).

I share the same view of Ellen White, because I believe that God, who is a fellowship of Three Beings, has created us for fellowship, both in this life and the world to come. He acknowledged at creation that “it is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:19), and remedied the problem by creating out of Adam “Miss Universe.” We are told that God expressed His satisfaction, saying: “It is very good” (Gen 1:31). Well, if it was very good at the beginning, there is no reason to think that it will be very bad at the end. God does not learn by mistakes.



This and other related questions are addressed in chapter 3 of *The Marriage Covenant*. I decided to post this chapter, because it provides valuable information for those studying and teaching the Sabbath school. If you do not own a copy of the book, feel free to call us at (269) 471-2915 or email us your request, and we will ship you the book immediately. This book

has been a blessing to many people. Some couples that were separated, wrote to me saying that after reading the book, they decided to be back together. Surprisingly, Dr. Laura Schlesinger, a popular radio-talk host, found the book so valuable that she decided to post a chapter in her website.

### **A THANK YOU NOTE**

Words fail to express my appreciation to all of you who take time to print or email my newsletters to your friends. As a result of your efforts over 30,000 Adventists and non-Adventists are benefiting from this newsletter. Just let your friend know that it is a **FREE SERVICE**. To subscribe all what they need to do is to reply saying: **SUBSCRIBE ME**.



### **A NEW HITACHI PROJECTOR AT A BARGAIN PRICE**

If your church or school is looking for a powerful LCD projector at a bargain price, you will be pleased to learn that few days ago **HITACHI** released their new **2700 LUMENS PROJECTOR CP-S420**. The projector is designed for churches that have to compete with large amount of light present in their sanctuaries.

Few days ago I tested the new **2700 LUMENS HITACHI** projector **CP-S420**, in my well-lighted office which has 8 florescent lights and a large sliding door opening on the outdoor. I placed the **2000 LUMENS HITACHI CP-X328** that I have used with great satisfaction until now, on the top of the new **2700 LUMENS HITACHI CP-S420**. I projected both images against the same wall, superimposing one over the other. The results were immediately

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evident. The image of the new HITACHI 2700 lumens was so bright that it wiped out the image of the HITACHI 2000. I could not believe that an extra 700 lumens could make such a world of difference.

Until now I have highly recommended the 2000 LUMENS HITACHI CP-328, which has won the 2004 award as best projector in its class. Over 300 Adventist churches have bought this outstanding projector. I will continue to recommend it especially to persons who need a light 6 pounds projector to carry in their briefcase. But for churches that need a permanent projector, able to compete with large amounts of outdoor and indoor light, the new 10 pounds, 2700 LUMENS HITACHI CP-S420 is the solution. There will be no longer a need to close the blinds and turn off some of the lights to improve the quality of the image. This projector performs brilliantly in a well-lighted environment. From now on I WILL CARRY THIS NEW 2700 LUMENS PROJECTOR WITH ME FOR MY WEEKEND SEMINARS.

What makes this new projector very attractive is the incredible low price of only \$2,195.00 granted to our Adventist churches and institutions. This represent over 65% discount over the factory suggested retail price given at the HITACHI.COM website as follows: "Priced at \$7,495.00, the CP-S420 series is currently available through Hitachi's network of nationwide resellers."

HITACHI has reassured me that they are giving me their lowest price for our churches, because I have become one of their best 10 producers in North America. Over 300 Adventist churches and schools in America and overseas have purchased HITACHI projectors during the past few months.

To order a projector or to obtain more information on any of the 16 different projectors manufactured by HITACHI, feel free to call me at (269) 471-2915 or (269) 978-6878 or email me your request for a catalogue at: sbacchiocchi@qtm.net. You will also find information at my website: [www.biblicalperspectives.com](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com)

### **SPECIAL OFFER ON CD-ROMS AND VIDEO/DVD RECORDINGS**

I am extending my ONE TIME offer of the special price complete package of my recent recordings, because some subscribers could not open the last lengthy newsletter. The package consists of the following items:

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- God's Festivals: The Spring Festivals
- God's Festivals: The Fall Festivals

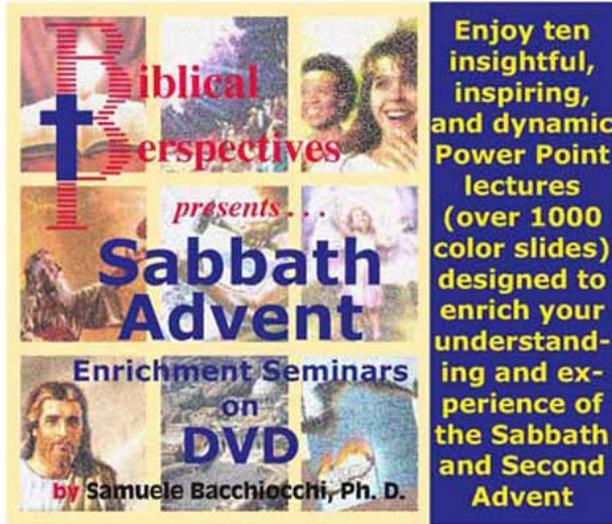
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**FIVE VIDEO TAPES ALBUM or FIVE DVD DISKS ALBUM** with 10 live, dynamic PowerPoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent. The recording was done last January 16-18, 2004, by a TV crew at the brand new Michiana-FilAm SDA Church at Andrews University. The quality of the taping is exceptionally good, especially since the editor, Lawrence Brown, a former student of mine who works for Channel 16 of Notre Dame University, spent a month to insert manually each of the 1000 PowerPoint slides used for the 10 lectures. You can preview few minutes of five lectures at my website: [www.biblicalpherspectives.com](http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com) The regular price of the VIDEO or DVD albums with the 10 lectures is \$150.00

### **SPECIAL PACKAGE OFFER**

Your **SPECIAL ONE-TIME OFFER** for the **TWO CD-ROMS** and the **FIVE VIDEO TAPES ALBUM or FIVE DVD DISKS ALBUM**, is **ONLY \$100.00**, postage paid, instead of the regular price of **\$350.00**. This represents a **70% saving of \$250.00**. To order your package, call us at **(269) 471-2915** or email us your credit card number and expiration date at: [sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net) We guarantee to process your order immediately.

### **UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

**By Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.**

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As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of July and August 2004. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars. Thank you for informing your friends about the time and place of the seminars.

**JULY 9-10: NEW YORK CITY****First Ghana SDA Church****45 Goble Place****Bronx, New York 10452****For information call Pastor Hermann Kuma at (718) 994-1332****JULY 30-31: TOTONTO, CANADA. TWO RALLIES****Apple Creek SDA Church****Friday Evening, July 30, at 7:30 p. m. and Sabbath Morning, July 31, at 11:30 a.m.****Kingsview Village SDA Church****Sabbath Morning, July 31, at 9:30 a. m. and Sabbath Evening, July 31, at 7:00 p. m.****For information call Pastor Mansfield Edwards at (905) 665-6466 or Pastor Allen Chichester at (416) 291-5711****AUGUST 7-8-9: LONDON, ENGLAND****Walthamstow SDA Church****78-80 Boundary Road****Walthamstow, London E17 8JU****For information call Pastor Leslie Ackie at 01279 427 558****AUGUST 13-14-15: BRISTOL DISTRICT, ENGLAND****Gloucester SDA Church on August 13-14****Cromwell Street, Gloucester, GL1 1RE****For information call Pastor Stephan Burton-Schnull at 01452 619 454****Bristol North SDA Church on August 15****c/o United Reformed Church****Muller Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9RB****For information call Pastor Richard Daly at 01452 423 089****AUGUST 20-21: CAMPBELL, CALIFORNIA****Campbell SDA Church**

**600 West Campbell Avenue**

**Campbell, CA 95008**

**For information call Pastor Gary Jensen at (408) 378-3878**

**AUGUST 27-28: NORFOLK, VIRGINIA**

**Norfolk SDA Church**

**1099 Kempsville Road**

**Norfolk, VA 23502-2743**

**For information call Pastor Glenn Holland at (757) 421-7584**

## **MARRIAGE AND SEX**

**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,**

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**Andrews University**

During much of Christian history, sex in marriage has been condoned as a necessary evil for producing children. Before the sexual revolution of our times, calling a lady “sexy” would have been insulting. Nowadays many ladies would accept that adjective as a prized compliment. “The Victorian person,” writes Rollo May, “sought to have love without falling into sex; the modern person seeks to have sex without falling into love.”<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of society toward sex has truly swung from one extreme to another. From the Puritan view of sex as a necessary evil for *procreation*, we have come to the popular *Playboy* view of sex as a necessary thing for *recreation*. From the age of warning “Beware of sex,” we have come to the age of shouting “Hurrah for sex.” *Homo sapiens* has become *homo sexualis*, packed with sexual drives and techniques.

Both extremes are wrong and fail to fulfill God’s intended function of sex. The past negative view of sex made married people feel guilty about their sexual relations; the present permissive view of sex turns people into robots, capable of engaging in much sex but with little meaning or even fun in it. In spite of the increasing number of books on the techniques of love-making, more and more people are telling marriage counselors: “We make much love, but it isn’t much good. We find little meaning or even fun in it!”

**Objectives.** This essay examines the Biblical view of sex. We shall consider various aspects of sex within and without marriage in the light of the

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Biblical teaching. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part surveys the past attitudes toward sex, from ancient Israel to modern times. The second part examines the Biblical view of the nature and function of sex. Attention will also be given to the morality or immorality of contraception. The third part addresses the question of whether or not there will be marital relationships in the world to come. The overall objective of the chapter is to counteract the secular and hedonistic view of sex by helping Christians understand and experience sex as God intended it to be.

## **PART I: PAST ATTITUDES TOWARD SEX**

**Ancient Israel.** The Hebrew people understood and interpreted human sexuality as a positive gift from God. They were not affected by the later Greek dualism between spirit and matter which considered sexual intercourse and evil “fleshy” activity to be shunned if possible. Such thinking was foreign to the Hebrews who saw sex within marriage as beautiful and enjoyable. A wedding was a time of great celebration, partly because it marked the beginning of the sexual life of the couple.

The bridal pair retired to a nuptial tent or chamber at the end of the wedding festivities to make love together while lying on a clean, white sheet. Blood on the sheet indicated that the bride had been a virgin and provided evidence of the consummation of marriage (Deut 22:13-19). A newly betrothed man was even excused from participating in war in order to be able to enjoy his bride (Deut 20:7)!

This indicates that the ancient Hebrews had a healthy attitude toward sex. They saw it as a divine gift which gave pleasure to the persons involved while providing the means for the propagation of the race. The classic example of the exaltation of human sexuality is found in the Song of Songs. This book has often been a source of embarrassment to Jews and Christians alike. Some interpreters, like Sebastian Castellio, have viewed the Song of Songs as an obscene description of human love which does not belong in the Biblical canon. Others, like Calvin, have defended the inclusion of the book in the canon by interpreting it as an allegory symbolizing the love of God for His people. The book, however, is not an allegory. It is a romantic celebration of human sexuality. According to some traditions, portions of the book were sung during wedding processions and wedding feasts.

When the Hebrews came to the land of Canaan, they were exposed to the evil and excesses of the fertility cults associated with the worship of Baal, which included sacred prostitution. To correct these evils, several regulations were given. There were strict prohibitions, for example, against revealing in public one's "private parts" (Gen 9:21; 2 Sam 6:20), incest (Lev 18:6-18; 20:11-12,14, 20; Deut 27:20,22), bestiality (Lev 18:23; 20:15-16), homosexuality (Lev 18:22; 20:13), and various kinds of sexual "irregularities" (Ex 22:16; Lev 19:20,29; 15:24; 18:19; 20:18; Deut 25:11). Overall, however, the Jews had a healthy view of sex, although they saw it primarily in terms of its reproductive function.

**New Testament Times.** In New Testament times, we find the beginning of two extreme attitudes toward sex: licentiousness and celibacy. Some interpreted the freedom of the Gospel as freedom to engage freely in sexual relations outside marriage. Jude speaks of "ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness" (Jude 4). Peter warns against the enticement of false teachers who had "eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin" (2 Pet 2:14). The problem of sexual permissiveness and perversion had become so noticeable in the Corinthian church that Paul openly rebuked those who engaged in incestuous and adulterous sexual relations (1 Cor 5:1, 6:16-18).

Other Christians were influenced by Greek philosophical ideas which viewed anything related to the physical aspect of life as evil. Since the sexual act involves "fleshly" contact and pleasure, it was viewed as inherently evil. This thinking prevailed in the Greco-Roman world, and exercised considerable influence among some Christians. In Corinth, for example, there were some Christians who maintained that unmarried people should remain single and those who were married should refrain from sexual activity (1 Cor 7:1-5, 8-11, 25-28).

Paul responded to these "ascetic" believers by affirming that it was right and proper for married persons to engage in sexual activities: "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. . . . Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season . . . lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:3,5). Paul counsels unmarried and the widows to remain single (1 Cor 7:8, 25-26). His reason, however, is based not on theological but on practical considerations, namely, on the need to avoid the added burdens of a family during the end-time persecution which Paul believed would soon break out (1 Cor 7:26-31). Paul's counsel does not reflect a negative view of sexuality because his advice was predicated solely on practical considerations. This is indicated by his

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counsel, “It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion. . . . if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin” (1 Cor 7:9, 28).

**Christian Church.** The negative view of sexuality, already present in embryonic form during apostolic times among some Christians, developed fully during the early church, shaping the sexual attitudes of Christians up to modern times. This view can be traced back to Greek philosophy, especially to Platonic thought, which saw man as having two parts: the soul, which is good, and the body, which is bad. Such dualistic thinking influenced Christianity through a movement known as Gnosticism. This heretical movement taught that all matter, including the human body, was evil. Only the spark of the divine in man (soul) is good and through special knowledge (gnosis) such a spark could be released from the human body and returned to the divine realm. Thus, salvation was perceived as the liberation of the soul from the prison-house of the body.

This dualistic teaching greatly influenced Christian thought through the centuries to the point that many Christians gradually abandoned the Biblical view of the resurrection of the body, replacing it with the Greek concept of the immortality of the soul. The fundamental error of this view, which an increasing number of scholars are rejecting as unBiblical, is its assumption that matter is evil and must be destroyed. Such a view is clearly discredited by those Biblical texts which teach that matter, including the human body, is the product of God’s good creation (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). The Psalmist declares: “For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works” (Psalm 139:13-14).

The adoption of the unBiblical Greek notion of the human body as intrinsically evil has led many Christians through the centuries into a warped attitude toward sex. Its effect still lingers, as many today are still uneasy about their marital sexual relations, viewing them as something tainted with sin.

**Augustine’s Role.** The church father who has molded the negative Christian attitudes toward sex more than any other person is Augustine (354-430).<sup>2</sup> He regarded the sexual drives and excitement which cannot always be rationally controlled as the result of sin. He speculated that if sin had not come in, marital intercourse would be without the excitement of sexual desire. The male semen could be introduced into the womb of the wife without the heat

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of passion, in a natural way similar to the natural menstrual flow of blood emitted from the womb.

As a result of sin, the sexual act is now accompanied by powerful drives which Augustine called concupiscence, or lust. The satisfaction of lust through intercourse, was for him, a necessary evil to bring children into this world.

In effect, Augustine equated original sin with the sexual act and its lustful desires since the act is the channel through which he thought the guilt of Adam's first transgression is transmitted from parent to child. By making the sexual act the means whereby original sin is transmitted, Augustine made sex for pleasure a sinful activity. This view necessitated the administration of baptism immediately after birth to remove the stain of the original sin from the soul of the new born baby.

The major fallacy of this view is its reduction of original sin to a *biological factor* which can be transmitted like an infectious disease through sexual intercourse. In Scripture, however, sin is *volitional* and *not biological*. It is a willful transgression of a divine moral principle (1 John 3:4), and not a biological infection transmitted through sexual contact.

What can be transmitted is not the guilt of sin, as Augustine believed, but its punishment. Guilt is the personal transgression of a divine principle, which cannot be imputed upon a third party. The punishment of our wrong doings, however, can be passed on in terms of sickness and/or evil hereditary tendencies. Scripture tells us that God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 34:7). In the case of Adam's sin, what has been passed on to mankind are the consequences of its punishment, which include evil inclinations and death. These consequences cannot be mechanically removed through infant baptism.

**Original Sin.** The notion of original sin is derived primarily from Romans 5:12 where Paul says that "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned." In this statement the apostle simply affirms the fact that mankind shares in Adam's sin and death. He makes no attempt to explain how this happens. He makes no allusion to sexual procreation as the channel through which

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mankind has become partakers of Adam's sin and death. The context clearly indicates that Paul's concern is to affirm the fundamental truth that Adam's disobedience has made us sinners and Christ's obedience has made us righteous: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

The concept to which Paul alludes to establish the connection between the sin of Adam and that of mankind is not that of biological transmission of sin through sexual procreation, but that of corporate solidarity. As Achan's sin became the sin of his household because its members shared in a corporate solidarity with him (Josh 7:24), so Adam's sin has become the sin of mankind because its members share in a corporate solidarity with him. This Pauline argument provides no support to the Augustinian attempt to equate original sin with sexual excitement and intercourse.

Augustine's association of original sin with sex has been widely accepted throughout Christian history, conditioning the sexual attitudes not only of Roman Catholics but also of Christians in general. As Derrick Baily notes, "Augustine must bear no small measure of responsibility for the insinuation into our culture of the idea, still widely current, that Christianity regards sexuality as something peculiarly tainted with evil."<sup>3</sup>

Partly as a reaction to this negative view of sex as a necessary evil for the propagation of the human race, a completely different and pleasure oriented (hedonistic) view of sex has emerged. The sexual revolution of our time has glamorized sexual profligacy and prowess, ridiculing sexual chastity as a prudish superstition. The catastrophic consequences of the sexual revolution can be seen in the ever-increasing number of divorces, abortions, incidents of incest, sexual abuse of children, and the loss of the true meaning and function of sex. In the light of this painful reality, it is imperative for Christians to understand and experience the Biblical meaning and function of sex.

## PART II: THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SEX

**Image of God.** The book of Genesis is the logical starting point for our quest into the Biblical view of sex. The first statement relating to human sexuality is found in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." It is noteworthy that while after every previous act of creation, Scripture says that

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God saw that “it was good” (Gen 1:12,18,21,25), after the creation of mankind as male and female, it says that God saw that “it was *very* good” (Gen 1:31). This initial divine appraisal of human sexuality as “*very* good” shows that Scripture sees the male/female sexual distinction as part of the goodness and perfection of God’s original creation.

It is important to note also that human sexual duality as male and female is related explicitly to God’s own image. Theologians have long debated the possible nature of this relation. Since Scripture distinguishes human beings from other creatures, theologians have usually thought that the image of God in humanity refers to the rational, moral and spiritual faculties God has given to men and women. This is a valid interpretation since these faculties distinguish human maleness and femaleness from that of lower creatures.

There is, however, another possible way in which human maleness and femaleness reflects the image of God, namely in the capacity of a man and a woman to experience a oneness of fellowship similar to the one existing in the Trinity. The God of Biblical revelation is not a *solitary* single Being who lives in eternal *aloofness* but is a *fellowship* of Three Beings so intimately and mysteriously united that we worship them as one God. This mysterious oneness-in-relationship of the Trinity is reflected as a divine image in man, not as a single individual but as a sexual duality of maleness and femaleness, mysteriously united in marriage as “one flesh.” The love uniting husband and wife points to the love that eternally unites the Three Beings of the Trinity. In this sense, it constitutes a reflection of the image of God in humanity.

**A “Unisex” God?** Some theologians interpret the image of God, not in terms of a similarity of oneness-in-fellowship, but in terms of a correspondence in sexual distinctions within each person of the Godhead. Paul Jewett articulates this view saying: “If we are to think of God as sexual, we have to think of the divine as both feminine and masculine *if this symbolization of God is to convey a personal wholeness*. God becomes he/she. Otherwise the attribution of personality to God would be skewed or out of balance. A purely masculine God would be as intolerable as a purely masculine human, and the same could be said for the purely feminine.”<sup>4</sup>

The attempt to make God into a unisex Being consisting of both feminine and masculine characteristics, if not properly qualified, can lead to a disastrous misrepresentation of the God of Biblical revelation. While it is

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true that God possesses not only masculine but also feminine qualities, since He compares His love, for example, to that of a woman's for her sucking child (Is 49:15), the fact remains that the possession of feminine qualities does not make God into a "he/she" androgynous Being. We recognize varying degrees of masculinity and femininity in every person, yet we do not regard a man who possesses unusual feminine gentleness as a he/she person.

The fact that the Bible sometimes presents God as our Father (Jer 31:9; Matt 23:9), while at other times compares God to a crying or compassionate mother (Is 42:14; 49:15), does not mean that God is an androgynous he/she Being. It is important to see the distinction between those statements which describe the *person of God* (God *is* our Father) and those which describe the *qualities of God* (God *is like* a crying or compassionate mother). The former identifies the person of God, the latter compares the compassion of God to that of a mother.

Today, both liberal and evangelical feminists are clamoring for a re-symbolization of the Godhead based on impersonal or unisex categories. This is seen as the first indispensable step to clearing the way for the elimination of sexual and functional role distinctions in the home and in the church. To achieve this, they advocate dropping the masculine names of God, adopting, instead, non-personal names such as "parent, Benefactor, Almighty" or androgynous names such as "Father-Mother" for God and "Son-Daughter" for Christ. The ultimate result of such efforts is not merely switching labels on the same product, but rather introducing new labels for an entirely different product. Biblical faith knows nothing of an androgynous Godhead, partly masculine and partly feminine. Any attempt to introduce a female counterpart in the person of God means to reject the God of Biblical revelation, accepting, instead, the one fabricated by feminist speculations.

In light of the foregoing considerations, we reject as unBiblical the attempts to interpret the image of God in human maleness and femaleness as indicative of sexual distinctions within the persons of the Godhead. God transcends human sexual distinctions, yet He has chosen to reveal Himself predominantly through male terms and imageries because the male role within the family and church best represents the role that He sustains toward the human family. The image of God in humanity must rather be seen, as discussed earlier, in the rational, moral and spiritual faculties God has given to men and women, as well as in the capacity of a man and a woman to

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experience a oneness of fellowship similar to the one existing within the Trinity.

**Becoming “One Flesh”.** The oneness of intimate fellowship between a man and a woman is expressed in Genesis 2:24 by the phrase “*one flesh*.” “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and *they become one flesh*.” The phrase “*one flesh*,” as already shown in chapter 1, refers to the total union of body, soul, and spirit between marital partners. This total union can be experienced especially through sexual intercourse when the act is the expression of genuine love, respect, and commitment. The physical or sexual meaning of the phrase “one flesh” is clearly found in 1 Corinthians 6:16 where Paul applies it to the sexual intercourse between a man and a harlot.

The phrase *becoming one flesh* sheds considerable light on God’s estimate of sex within a marital relationship. It tells us that God sees sex as a means through which a husband and a wife can achieve a new unity. It is noteworthy that the “one flesh” imagery is never used to describe a child’s relationship to his father and mother. A man must “leave” his father and mother to become “one flesh” with his wife. His relationship to his wife transcends the one to his parents because it consists of a new oneness consummated by the sexual union.

*Becoming one flesh* also implies that the purpose of the sexual act is not only *procreational*, that is, to produce children, but also *psychological*, that is, the emotional need to consummate a new oneness-relationship. Oneness implies the willingness to reveal one’s most intimate physical, emotional and intellectual self to the other. As they come to know each other in the most intimate way, the couple experiences the meaning of becoming one flesh. Sexual intercourse does not automatically ensure this oneness intimacy. Rather it consummates the intimacy of perfect sharing which has already developed.

**Sex as “Knowing”.** Sexual relations within marriage enable a couple to come to know each other in a way which cannot be experienced in any other way. To participate in sexual intercourse means not only to uncover one’s body but also one’s inner being to another. This is why Scripture often describes sexual intercourse as “knowing,” the same verb used in Hebrews to refer to knowing God. Genesis 4:1 says: “And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived.”<sup>5</sup>

Obviously Adam had come to know Eve before their sexual intercourse, but through the latter he came to know her more intimately than ever before. Dwight H. Small aptly remarks: “Self-disclosure through sexual intercourse invites self-disclosure at all levels of personal existence. This is an exclusive revelation unique to the couple. They know each other as they know no other person. This unique knowledge is tantamount to laying claim to another in genuine belonging . . . the nakedness and physical coupling is symbolic of the fact that nothing is hidden or withheld between them.”<sup>6</sup>

The process which leads to sexual intercourse is one of growing knowledge. From the initial casual acquaintance to dating, courtship, marriage, and sexual intercourse, the couple grows in the knowledge of each other and this makes greater intimacy possible. Sexual intercourse represents the culmination of this growth in reciprocal knowledge and intimacy. As Elizabeth Achtemeier puts it: “We feel as if the most hidden inner depths of our beings are brought to the surface and revealed and offered to each other as the most intimate expression of our love.”<sup>7</sup>

**Sex as Pleasure.** A revolution has taken place in Christian thinking about sex within the last hundred years. Until the beginning of our century, Christians generally believed that the primary function of sex was procreative, that is, to produce children. Other considerations, such as the unitive, relational and pleasurable aspects of sex were seen as secondary and usually tainted with sin. In the twentieth century the order has been reversed. Christians place the relational and pleasurable aspects of sex first and the conception of children last.

From a Biblical perspective, sexual activity is both unitive and procreative, or we might say, recreative and reproductive. God’s command, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28), is a command to be sexual. When we obey it, we fulfill God’s purpose by becoming one flesh and producing children. So sex in marriage is both unitive and procreative. “During the Middle Ages,” writes David Phipers, “Christians stressed the procreative aspect of sex while neglecting and sometimes despising its unitive purpose. Today, we stress its unitive role, and may ignore the command to be fruitful and increase in number.”<sup>8</sup>

As Christians we need to recover and maintain the Biblical balance between the relational and procreational functions of sex. Sexual intercourse

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is a relational act of perfect sharing that engenders a sense of oneness while offering the possibility of bringing a new life into this world. We need to recognize that sex is a divine gift that can be legitimately enjoyed within marriage. Like all other divine gifts, sex is to be partaken of with thankfulness and moderation.

**Sex as a Divine Gift.** It is noteworthy that the wise man Solomon mentions together bread, wine, clothing and marital love as the good gifts that God has approved for our enjoyment: “Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white; let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your life which He has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun” (Eccl 9:7-9).

Sexual activity is generally more important to humans than it is to animals. It is significant that among the mammals, only the human female is capable of enjoying sexual orgasm as well as the male. It is recognized that this experience binds a woman to her partner emotionally as well as physically. The fact that both the human male and female can share together in the pleasure of sexual intercourse indicates that God intended marital sex to be enjoyed by both partners.

In the Song of Songs, the celebration of sexual love between the bride and bridegroom is expressed in suggestive romantic words: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards . . . There I will give you my love” (Song of Songs 7:10-12).

The same positive view of marital sex is found in the New Testament. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul urges husbands and wives to fulfill their marital duties together, because their bodies do not belong to themselves alone but to each other. Therefore they should not deprive each other of sex, except by mutual agreement for a time to devote themselves to prayer. Then they should come together again lest Satan tempt them through lack of self-control (1 Cor 7:2-5).

In Ephesians Paul speaks of the physical union of a man and a woman as a profound “mystery” reflecting Christ’s love for His church. Therefore,

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we should not be uneasy about marital sex, because when we come together we are experiencing something of the mysterious redemptive love of Christ for the world.

The author of Hebrews admonishes that “Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure” (Heb 13:4 NIV). Here, marital sex is extolled as honorable, something not to be embarrassed about. But the same writer adds, “God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb 13:4 NIV).

Bible writers are unanimous in commending sex within marriage and in condemning all forms of sexual activity outside marriage. Paul warns the Corinthians, “Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral . . . nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9,10 NIV). The book of Revelation places the “fornicators” among those whose “lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur” (Rev 21:8).

**Sex as Procreation.** In the Bible the function of sex, as noted earlier, is not only unitive but also procreative. It not only serves to engender a mysterious oneness of spirit, but it also offers the possibility of bringing children into this world. God’s command “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) expresses God’s original intent for the purpose of sex. Through marital sex and the birth of children, God enables men and women to reflect His image by sharing in His creative activity. This means that sex in marriage without the intention of having children fails to fulfill a fundamental divine purpose for sex. The lengths to which some married couples will go in order to have children reveals the deep creative urge God has placed within us.

Of course, not all couples are able to have or are justified in having children. Old age, infertility, and genetic diseases are but some of the factors that make childbearing impossible or inadvisable. For the vast majority of couples, however, sex in marriage should include the desire to have children. As sex consummates the act of marriage, so children consummate the sexual act. This does not mean that every act of sexual union should result in conception, but rather that the desire for having children should be part of the overall intent of sexual relations.

Various contraceptive techniques make it possible today to separate sexual activity from childbearing. A growing number of couples choose to

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enjoy a lifetime of sexual activity without desiring or planning for children. They are not simply concerned about delaying their arrival but in avoiding them altogether. Children are seen as a threat to their high standards of living associated with two incomes and two careers.

“We are not meant to separate sex from childbearing” writes David Phipers, “and those who do, totally and finally, purely for personal reasons, are surely falling short of God’s purpose for their lives. They run the risk that their marriage and sexual activity may become self-indulgent. They will only look inwards to their own self-satisfaction, rather than outwards to the creative experiences of bringing new life into the world and nurturing it to maturity.”<sup>9</sup>

The life-begetting function of sex enables a married couple to further God’s creative work by becoming procreators with Him. It is altogether consistent with God’s creative work that the sexual life-begetting experience should be joyous. Did not God’s angels shout for joy at His first creation (Job 38:7)? Bringing into life a new person in God’s image is a joyful and solemn privilege delegated by God to married couples. In this sense, they become workers together with God in furthering His creation.

**Importance of Children.** Children are a fundamental part of our marriage and sexual relationships. They represent God’s blessings upon the marital union. The Psalmist expresses this truth, saying: “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him. Like the arrows in the hands of a warrior are the sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them” (Ps 127:3-5 NIV).

The population explosion has not rescinded God’s command to be fruitful and multiply. World famine is not so much the result of too many people as much as the result of greed, exploitation, irresponsible governments, misuse of natural resources, and unwillingness to adopt more effective methods of agriculture and to teach people responsible family planning. While a number of developing countries are facing population explosions, most Western countries are experiencing population stagnation or decline. Western societies are aging, and unless the current trend is reversed, it will soon become increasingly difficult for them to support their ever-growing numbers of elderly people.

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We no longer need large families, but we still need families. The church needs Christian families that can share with the world the love of God experienced in the home. Society needs the service and moral influence of Christian families. Most Western societies live today in what social analysts call the “Post-Christian era.” This is the era in which social values and practices are influenced no longer by Christian principles but rather by humanistic ideologies. The latter promote a secular view of marriage and a hedonistic view of sex. Marriage has become a dissolvable social contract rather than a permanent sacred covenant, and sex is regarded primarily as a recreational activity rather than as a procreational responsibility.

As Christians, we are called not to conform to the world (Rom 12:2) but to transform the world through God’s given principles and power. In the area of marriage and sex, we must show to the world that we obey God’s command to “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:22) and not to “put asunder what God has united” (Matt 19:6).

**The Use of Contraception.** It is a fact that today most couples in the Western world use contraceptives to delay the start of their families, to space the arrival of subsequent children, and to limit their numbers. This practice is followed by most Christians, often unthinkingly. Is this right? Does Scripture allow us to limit and time our children’s births? Or does the command to be fruitful and multiply mean that we should leave the issue of family planning to the mercies of God? No explicit answer can be found in the Bible because the subject of contraception was not an issue in Bible times. In those days, larger families were needed and welcomed to meet the demand for helping hands in that agricultural society.

In seeking for Biblical guidance on the subject of contraception, we need to ask two fundamental questions: (1) What is the purpose of sexual intercourse? and (2) Do we have the right to interfere with the reproductive cycle established by God?

We have discussed earlier, at great length, the first question. We have seen that the function of sexual intercourse is both relational and procreational. It is a relational act of perfect sharing that engenders a mysterious sense of oneness and offers the possibility of bringing children into this world. The fact that the function of sex in marriage is not only to produce children but also to express and experience mutual love and commitment, implies the need for

certain limitations on the reproductive function of sex. If a couple were to risk a new conception each time they made love, they would soon forfeit sexual intercourse as a means of giving themselves totally to each other. This means that the relational function of sex can only remain a viable dynamic experience if its reproductive function is controlled.

**Natural or “Unnatural” Contraception?** This leads us to consider the manner of controlling the reproductive cycle. This issue is addressed by the second question, namely, do we have the right to interfere with the reproductive cycle established by God? The historic answer of the Roman Catholic Church has been a resounding “NO!” In December 1930, Pius XI reaffirmed the traditional Catholic position against contraceptives in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*: “Since therefore the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it [contraception] deliberately frustrate its natural effect and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”<sup>10</sup>

The unyielding historical Catholic position has been tempered by Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (July 29, 1968) which acknowledges the morality of the sexual union between husband and wife, even if not directed to the procreation of children.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the encyclical, while condemning artificial contraceptives, allows for a natural method of birth control, known as the “rhythm method.” This method consists of confining intercourse to the infertile periods in the wife’s menstrual cycle.<sup>12</sup>

The attempt of *Humanae Vitae* to distinguish between “artificial” and “natural” contraceptives, making the former immoral and the latter moral, smacks of artificiality. Why is it “artificial” to block the flow of the sperm in the uterus and yet not “artificial” to time the placement of the sperm so that it does not fertilize an egg? In either case, the fertilization of the egg is prevented by human intelligence. Moreover, to reject as immoral the use of artificial contraceptives can lead to rejecting as immoral the use of any artificial vaccine, hormone or medication which is not produced naturally by the human body.

The morality or immorality of contraception is determined not by the *kinds* of contraceptives we use, but by the *reasons* for their use. “Like most other human inventions,” writes David Phipers, “contraception is morally neutral; it is what we do with it that counts. If we use it to practice sex outside

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marriage or selfishly within marriage, or if through it we invade the privacy of others' marriages, we may indeed be guilty of disobeying the will of God and of distorting the marriage relationship. But if we use it with a proper regard for the health and well-being of our partners and our families, then it can enhance and strengthen our marriages. Through contraception we can protect our marriage from the physical, emotional, economic, and psychological strains they might suffer through further pregnancies, while at the same time we can use the act of marriage, reverently and lovingly, as it was intended, to bind us together in lasting union."<sup>13</sup>

**Contraception and Sin.** To ban contraception, as the Catholic Church has done historically, means to ignore the effects of sin on marriage, sex and childbirth. If sin had not entered into this world, there would have been no need for contraception. The menstrual cycle and the fertility rate would have been regular in all women. Childbirth would have been easy and painless. The abundant provisions of the earth would have amply satisfied the need for food and shelter. The socio-political structures of a perfect society would have provided to any child unlimited educational and professional opportunities.

But sin has spoiled our world. Both the human and sub-human creation has been marred by sin. Some women are very fertile while others totally infertile. Childbirth is a great source of pain to most women. Thorns, thistles, pests, and droughts destroy our crops. The socio-political systems of many developing countries are unable to provide adequate housing, education, employment, and medial services to most members of their societies. Christians are not spared the results of sin. Christian mothers may not be able to give birth without caesarean delivery, or many suffer from various health problems. These and many other reasons may cause couples to delay, to space, or to limit the size of their families. In situations such as the ones mentioned above, contraception becomes a responsible way to respect human life and resources.

It is significant to note that the command, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28), is immediately followed by the command to subdue and have domination "over every living thing." This implies that God is calling us to be responsible stewards of His creation, controlling any destabilizing factor such as the threat of population explosion.

To be responsible stewards of God's creation means that as Christians we have no right to avoid children altogether by using natural or "unnatural"

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means of contraception. We have a duty before God to become responsible parents, by bringing up children in the love, “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4). The way we fulfill this duty will vary from couple to couple as we prayerfully seek divine guidance regarding the timing of our children’s births and the methods we use to this end.

**Sex Outside Marriage.** Nowhere has Christian morality come under greater attack than in the whole area of sex outside marriage. The Biblical teaching that sex is *only* for marriage does not even enter the thinking of most people today. The Biblical condemnation of illicit sexual acts has become for many a license for sexual experimentation.

The popular acceptance of sexual permissiveness is evidenced by the introduction and use of “softer terms.” Fornication, for example, is referred to as “pre-marital sex” with the accent on the “pre” rather than on the “marital.” Adultery is now called “extra-marital sex,” implying an additional experience like some extra-professional activities. Homosexuality has gradually been softened from serious perversion through “deviation” to “gay variation.” Pornographic literature and films are now available to “mature audiences” or “adults.”

More and more, Christians are giving in to the specious argument that “Love makes it right.” If a man and a woman are deeply and genuinely in love, they have the right to express their love through sexual union without marriage. Some contend that pre-marital sex releases people from their inhibitions and moral hangups, giving them a sense of emotional freedom. The truth of the matter is that pre-marital sex adds emotional pressure because it reduces sexual love to a purely physical level without the total commitment of two married people.

**Biblical Condemnation.** The Biblical condemnation of sexual relations before or outside marriage is abundantly clear. Adultery, or sexual intercourse between married women or married men and someone other than their marital partners, is condemned as a serious sin. Not only is adultery forbidden in both versions of the Decalogue (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18), but it was also punishable by death in ancient Israel: “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death” (Lev 20:10; cf. 18:20; Deut 22:22-24). The same punishment was meted out to a man or a woman who engaged in pre-marital sex (Deut 22:13-

21, 23-27).

The New Testament goes beyond the Old Testament by internalizing the whole sexuality of a person and placing it within the context of motivation. Jesus emphasized that to entertain lustful desires toward a person of the opposite sex outside marriage means to be guilty of adultery (Matt 5:27-28). The reason for this is that defilement comes not only from outward acts but also from inward thoughts, which in Biblical symbology derive from the heart: “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man” (Matt 15:19-20).

Sexual laxness was pervasive in the Greco-Roman world of New Testament times. Hence, one of the conditions the Jerusalem council made for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Christian Church was that they should abstain from all forms of “unchastity” (Acts 15:20,29).

Paul’s letters reveal the difficulties the apostle had in leading Gentile converts away from sexual immorality. To the Thessalonians, he wrote: “For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God” (1 Thess 4:2-5). Here Paul admonishes those who had sexual urges to satisfy them by entering not into temporary relationships “in the passion of lust like the heathen who do not know God,” but into permanent marital relationships. Such relationships are to be characterized by “holiness and honor.”

Paul is most explicit in his condemnation of prostitution. He asks the Corinthians who lived in the celebrated sex center of the Mediterranean world: “Do you now know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two shall become one flesh.’ But he who is unified to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:16-20).

**Reasons for Condemnation.** In this passage, Paul helps us to see why the Bible strongly condemns sex outside marriage. Sex represents the most intimate of all interpersonal relationships, expressing a “one-flesh”

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unity of total commitment. Such a unity of commitment cannot be expressed or experienced in a casual sexual union with a prostitute where the concern is purely commercial and recreational. The only oneness experienced in such sexual unions is the oneness of sexual immorality.

Sexual immorality is serious because it affects the individual more deeply and permanently than any other sin. Paul describes it as a sin committed inside the body: “Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18). It might be objected that all sins of sensuality such as gluttony or drunkenness affect a person inside the body. Yet they do not have the same permanent effect on the personality as the sin of fornication. Indulgence in eating or drinking can be overcome, stolen goods can be returned, lies can be retracted and replaced by the truth. But the sexual act, once committed with another person, cannot be undone. A radical change has taken place in the interpersonal relationship of the couple involved that can never be undone. Something indelible has stamped on them both forever. Even with a prostitute, sexual union leaves its permanent mark. It is a spot in the consciousness that cannot be removed.

“The immoral man sins against his own body.” This truth is openly rejected by those who regard pre-marital sex not as sinful, but as helpful to a satisfactory sexual adjustment in marriage. Some even believe that sexual relations with the person one intends to marry are necessary to guarantee sexual compatibility. Such attitudes fail to recognize that sexual intercourse before marriage is the worst possible preparation for marriage. The reasons for this are not difficult to discover.

**Sex without Commitment.** To begin with, sex before marriage is sex without commitment. If we do not like our partners, we can change and find somebody else. Such casual relationships destroy the integrity of the person by reducing it to an object to be used for personal gratification. Some, who feel hurt and used after sexual encounters, may withdraw altogether from sexual activity for fear of being used again or may decide to use their bodies selfishly, without regard to the feeling of others. Either way, our sexuality is distorted because it destroys the possibility of using it to relate genuinely and intimately toward the one we love. Sex cannot be used as a means for fun with one partner at one time and as a way to express genuine love and commitment with another partner at another time. Those who become accustomed to a

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variety of sexual partners will find it difficult, if not impossible, to express through sex their total commitment and final intimacy to their marital partners.

Engaged couples will probably deny that when they sleep together they are not expressing genuine commitment to one another. But if they were fully and finally committed to each other, they would be married. Engagement is the preparation for marriage, but it is not marriage. Until the wedding vows are taken, the possibility of breaking up a relationship exists. If a couple has had intercourse together, they have compromised their relationship. Any subsequent break up will leave permanent emotional scars. It is only when we are willing to become one, not only verbally but also legally by assuming responsibility for our partners, that we can seal our relationships through sexual intercourse. In this setting, sex fittingly expresses the ultimate commitment and the final intimacy.

Marriage licenses and wedding ceremonies are not mere formalities but serve to formalize the marriage commitment. As Elizabeth Achtemeier explains: “Just the fact that such young people [living together] are hesitant legally to seal their union is evidence that their commitment to one another is not total. Marriage licenses and ceremonies are not only legal formalities; they are also symbols of responsibility. They say publicly, what is affirmed privately, without reservation, that I am responsible for my mate—responsible not only in all those lovely emotional and spiritual areas of married life, but responsible also in the down-to-earth areas that have to do with grubby things like money, health insurance, and property. For example, two people just living together have no obligation for each other when the tax form comes up for an audit, or the other is involved in a car accident and legal suit; but persons holding a marriage license do have such responsibility, and commitment to a marriage involves accepting that public responsibility too. It is a matter of accepting the full obligations that society imposes on its adult members in order to ensure the common good.”<sup>14</sup>

### **PART III: MARRIAGE IN THE WORLD TO COME**

Will there be marital relations in the world to come? The answer of many sincere Christians is “NO!” They believe that at the resurrection the redeemed will receive some kind of “unisex” spiritual bodies which will replace our present physical and heterosexual bodies. Their belief is derived primarily from a misunderstanding of the words of Jesus found in Matthew

22:30: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven.” Does this text imply that at the resurrection all sexual distinctions will be abolished and that our bodies will no longer be physical? If this interpretation were correct, it would mean that, contrary to what the Scripture says, the original creation of humanity as physical, heterosexual beings was not really “very good”(Gen 1:31). To remove the “bugs” from His original creation, God would find it necessary in the new world to create a new type of human being, presumably made up of “non-physical, unisex” bodies.

**Change Implies Imperfection.** To say the least, this reasoning is absurd for anyone who believes in God’s omniscience and immutability. It is normal for human beings to introduce new models and structures to eliminate existing deficiencies. For God, however, this would be abnormal and incoherent since He knows the end from the beginning.

If at the resurrection God were to change our present physical, heterosexual bodies into “non-physical, unisex” bodies, then as Anthony A. Hoekema rightly observes: “The devil would have won a great victory since God would then have been compelled to change human beings with physical bodies such as he had created into creatures of a different sort, without physical bodies (like the angels). Then it would indeed seem that matter had become intrinsically evil so that it had to be banished. And then, in a sense, the Greek philosophers would have been proved right. But matter is not evil; it is part of God’s good creation.”<sup>15</sup>

**Like Angels.** A study of Jesus’ statement in its own context provides no support to the view that at the resurrection the redeemed will receive non-physical, unisex, angelic bodies. The context is a hypothetical situation created by the Sadducees in which six brothers married in succession the widow of their brother. The purpose of such successive, levirate marriages was not relational but procreational, namely to “raise up children for his [their] brother” (Matt 22:24). The testing question posed by the Sadducees was, “In the resurrection to which of the seven will she be wife?” (Matt 22:28).

In answering this hypothetical situation, Jesus affirmed, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scripture nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30). In the context of the hypothetical situation of seven brothers marrying the same woman to give her an offspring, Christ’s

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reference to not marrying or giving in marriage but being like angels, most likely means that marriage as a means of procreation will no longer exist in the world to come. It is evident that if no new children are born, there will be no possibility of marrying a son or of giving a daughter in marriage. The cessation of the procreational function of marriage will make the redeemed “like angels” who do not reproduce after their own likeness.

In His answer, Jesus did not deal with the immediate question of the marital status of a woman married seven times, but with the larger question of the procreational function of marriage, which, after all, was the reason the seven brothers married the same woman. This indirect method of answering questions is not unusual in the teachings of Jesus. For example, when asked by the Pharisees, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” (Mark 10:2), Jesus chose to ignore the immediate question, emphasizing instead the original creational design for marriage to be a lifelong commitment, without divorce (Mark 10:5-9).

**Single in Heaven?** Does the cessation of the procreational function of marriage imply the termination also of its relational function? Not necessarily so. If God created human beings at the beginning as male and female, with the capacity to experience a oneness of intimate fellowship, there is no reason to suppose that He will recreate them at the end as unisex beings, who will live as single persons without the capacity to experience the oneness of fellowship existing in a man/woman relationship.

The doctrine of the First Things, known as etiology, should illuminate the doctrine of the Last Things, known as eschatology. If God found His creation of human beings as male and female *very good* (Gen 1:31) at the *beginning*, would He discover it to be *not so good* at the end? We have reason to believe that what was “very good” for God at the beginning will also be “very good” for Him at the end.

Christians, who believe that human life originated not perfectly by divine *choice* but imperfectly by *chance* through spontaneous generation, may find it rational to believe in a radical restructuring of human beings from physical and heterosexual to non-physical and unisexual. They could explain this transformation as part of the evolutionary process used by God. But for Christians like myself who believe in an original perfect creation and who celebrate through the Sabbath the perfection of God’s original creation, it is impossible to imagine that at the end God will radically change the structure

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and nature of the human body.

**Cessation of Procreation.** The cessation of the human reproductive capacity in the world to come, as implied by the statement of Jesus in Matthew 22:30, could be seen as a change in God’s original design of the function of human sexuality. But this is not necessarily true. Scripture suggests that God had already contemplated such a change in His original plan, when He said: “Be fruitful and multiply, and *fill the earth*” (Gen 1:28).

The command to “*fill the earth*” presupposes that God had intended to terminate the reproductive cycle once the earth had been filled by an ideal number of persons. In a perfect world, without the presence of death, the ecological balance between land and people would have been reached in a relatively short time. At that time God would have interrupted the reproductive cycle of human and sub-human creatures, to protect the eco-system of this planet.

It is reasonable to presume that the resurrection and translation of the saints constitute the fulfillment of God’s original plan for the “filling” of the earth. In a sense, the redeemed represent the ideal number of inhabitants which this renewed earth will be able to support adequately. This is suggested by the reference to *names* “written before the foundation of the world in the book of life” (Rev 13:8; see 17:8; 21:27; Dan 13:1; Phil 4:3). The mention of names suggests the existence of an original divine plan for an ideal number of righteous to inhabit this earth. Had sin not arisen, God in His providence would have interrupted the reproductive cycle once the ideal number of people had been reached. But the cessation of the procreative function of marriage before or after the Fall does not necessitate the cessation of its relational function.

**Continuity of Relationships.** Jesus’ reference to our being “like angels” (Matt 22:30) at the resurrection does not necessarily imply the termination of the relational function of marriage. Nowhere does Scripture suggest that the angels are “unisexual” beings, unable to engage in intimate relationships similar to that of human marriage. The fact that angels are often mentioned in the Bible in pairs (Gen 19:1; Ex 25:18; 1 King 6:23) suggests that they may enjoy intimate relationships as couples.

We noted earlier that God has revealed Himself, not as a *solitary*

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Being who lives in eternal aloofness, but as a *fellowship* of three Beings so intimately united that we worship Them as one God. If God Himself lives in a most intimate relationship with the other members of the Trinity, there is no reason to believe that He would abolish at the end the unitive function of marriage that He, Himself, established at creation.

Support for this conclusion is provided also by the fact, already noted, that the sexual distinctions of maleness and femaleness are presented in Scripture as reflecting the “image of God” (Gen 1:27). One aspect of the “image of God” in humanity is the capacity given by God to a man and a woman to experience through marriage a oneness of fellowship similar to the one existing in the Trinity. If human maleness and femaleness reflected the image of God at creation, we have reason to believe that they will continue to reflect God’s image at the final restoration of all things. The purpose of redemption was not the destruction of God’s original creation but its restoration to its original perfection. This is why Scripture speaks of the resurrection of the body and not of the creation of new beings.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sex is seen in the Bible as part of God’s good creation. Its function is both unitive and procreative. It serves to engender a mysterious oneness of body, mind, and spirit between husband and wife while offering them the possibility of bringing children into this world.

Scripture strongly condemns sex outside marriage because it is a sin affecting a person more deeply and permanently than other sins (1 Cor 6:18). It leaves a permanent mark in the consciousness that cannot be removed. Sex outside of marriage is sin because it is sex without commitment. It reduces a person to an object to be used for personal gratification. Such a selfish use of sex impairs, if not totally destroys, the possibility of using it to express and experience genuine love and commitment toward one’s marital partner. At a time when sexual permissiveness and promiscuity prevails, it is imperative for Christians to reaffirm their commitment to the Biblical view of sex as a divine gift to be enjoyed only within marriage.

### **ENDNOTES**

1. Rollo May, “Reflecting on the New Puritanism,” in *Sex Thoughts*

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*for Contemporary Christians*, ed. Michael J. Taylor, S.J. (New York, 1972), p.171.

2. For a discussion of the attitude toward sex of the early church, including Augustine, see Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Common Sense About Sexual Ethics: A Christian View* (New York, 1962); Donald F. Winslow, "Sex and Anti-sex in the Early Church Fathers," in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches Sexuality*, eds. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York, 1956).

3. As quoted by William E. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* (New York, 1970), p.175.

4. Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, 1975), p.261.

5. See also Genesis 4:17, 25.

6. Dwight H. Small, *Christian: Celebrate Your Sexuality* (Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1974), p. 186.

7. Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Committed Marriage* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 162.

8. David Phipers, *Christian Marriage in Crisis* (Kent, England, 1986), p. 38.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 39

10. Cited in Norman St. John-Stevas, *The Agonizing Choice: Birth Control, Religion and Law* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1971), p.84.

11. *Humanae Vitae*, paragraph 11.

12. *Humanae Vitae*, paragraph 10.

13. David Phipers (n. 8), p. 44.

14. Elizabeth Achtemeier (n. 7), p. 40.

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15. A. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, 1979),  
p. 250.