

THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF MAN AND WOMAN

Studies on what it means to be a man and woman
- within Creation, and the purposes of God.

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NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
Blackwood, South Australia.

Printed by Lutheran Publishing House,
205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, SA

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AN INTRODUCTION TO BE READ

People rarely read introductions, for they are generally an after-thought by the writer, or even an attempt to justify his book. In this case the introduction is intended to serve as an explanation and a guide.

The explanation is that the mass media has reduced the exercise of our thinking powers. Most programmes—radio, television and films, are aimed at the mental age of ten to twelve years. Children can understand most programmes. Likewise they can read most newspapers and pulp journals. Hence, when a book begins to be serious, and adds to this a series of propositions which require thinking, the book is put down.

In the world of Biblical teaching, some writers have done a service by turning out books in a simple and easy-to-follow way of expression. The use of simple phrases, words which draw out the emotion, and ideas which fascinate, have contributed to an easy understanding of Scripture. “After all,” it is argued, “did not Jesus teach very simply?” Well, yes, He did. But then, who really understood? Did the disciples —before Pentecost?

It may be that some of these simple writers have also done us a disservice. In some cases they may have over-simplified the truth of Scripture. God created us with a mind to use, and a disposition to meditate, so as to think through certain basic principles. Paul’s letters, no matter how simply some have translated them from the Greek, are still profound, and not easy to read. There are propositions in them. They do take time and thought. It is not unspiritual to use one’s mind. Indeed it can well be argued that it is Biblically unspiritual not to use one’s mind.

All this is said because many Christians, and interested persons, couched by the modern media to accept only easy-to-listen and easy-to-read communications, turn off their minds when suddenly confronted by a few propositions which are put together in a thoughtful thesis. They opt for the immediately understood, the easily absorbed mode of speaking or writing. Hence we have a faith which threatens to become quite superficial. Without doubt we may be in the days of a Christianity which is confined to the experiential. Such a faith cannot survive. It is little, if any better than a faith which is only, and then coldly, intellectual.

This book is really a plea to see that the role of man and woman in the world is extremely important – important enough to recover the Biblical view and teaching concerning it. The reader is asked not to give up when confronted with a proposition or two. Let him – or her – temporarily lay aside the material which is difficult, and seek to get to the heart of the proposition. It may be that some readers would need to skip the first two chapters. Some may even need to commence at Chapter Four, but at least commence there. It could be that having read through the remainder of the book the reader would be motivated to return to the first few chapters and read them.

The books on man and woman which are naturally enough most acceptable are those which immediately get down to the ‘nitty-gritty’ of relationships. People, naturally enough, want immediate practical advice on love, courtship, marriage and the family. This is fair enough, but it is not good enough. A good tradesman, or a person in a profession, seeks to learn principles, for from these comes practice. Hence this book is set in the wider scheme of principles – Biblical principles at that. Whilst the ‘nitty-gritty’ is also considered, the making of a wider approach to this subject is also attempted.

Who knows?—this may be the most urgent, and most immediate subject of all, today, that is the subject, “The Role and Purpose of Man and Woman.” How many of us really understand it? For that matter the author has to admit to years of abysmal ignorance of the theme, and even now is only a learner. It may be that there are other learners who will attempt to read and understand with him.

CHAPTER ONE

“What does it really mean to be a man?” We mean “What does it mean to be man, that is, part of mankind?” Then, “What does it mean to be a man – male – and a woman – female?” These questions **are** not merely idle. Sometimes we want to speculate, either in excitement or in depression. Whilst it never occurs to some to ask these questions, to others they are important questions which require answers.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN

Today we generally tackle the question from a psychological point of view, in which case we seek to analyse man. We want to know the elements which constitute him. We agree he has knowing, willing and feeling elements, because we observe them. Yet, even though this is so, we have not arrived at what a man is. physiologically, as the result of experiments, we can also arrive at certain conclusions as to what a man is. If we observe his behaviour this often relates the physical and psychological. In some sense we have come to know what man is. When we put him into his family, community and worldwide relationship we get a larger View of him. In fact we have come to know quite a bit about man.

The Biblical view does not except these investigations. However it puts man into the wider (and widest) full perspective of time and eternity. Also it sees him as the prime object of God’s planning. God’s planning can be seen in three time-and-action elements,

namely creation, redemption and restoration. We mean that man was created purposefully by God. After being tested as to his willingness to go along with God (or otherwise) he showed he wanted independence of God. This meant that he needed an action by God which brought him back into full fellowship with Him. Also the effects of sin and rebellion meant that the created universe – man included – needed to be renewed. We know man better when we see him in these actions of God.

Nevertheless these actions of God will seem strange, and even unintelligible to us unless we know what God created man to be and to do. Let us then look at these two things – Man’s being and doing.

[a] Man’s Being

Genesis 1:26 says, “Let us make man in our own image.” It is not difficult to know what God means. When we look in a mirror we see not ourselves, but our image or reflection. When God made man He made him to reflect Him. By this we mean that man reflects everything that God is, although he himself is nothing that God is. We speak of God as having such elements as holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness and love. In action, man is intended to reflect these.

Man also has actual authority delegated to him. Psalm 8:3–8 shows man as being God’s primary concern, for God “goes on visiting him, and goes on being mindful of him.” Also he crowns man with honour and glory. He puts all living things under him. Man then, is the lord of creation. This is also supported by passages such as Genesis 1:26–31, 9:1–7, I Corinthians 11:7, and Genesis 2: 19–20.

Since man reflected the Godhead of Father, Son and Spirit, he accordingly had affinity with God. Passages such as Luke 3:38, and Acts 17:24–28 suggest he has intended, by creation, to relate to God as Father–Creator. This relationship was virtually lost when man rebelled–against God, but its creational elements or structures must still remain with man. Other passages such as Ephesians 1: 3 – 7, 3: 14 – 15, 4: 6, suggest that God has planned a sonship even beyond that original sonship which man rejected. This sonship would come through Messiah (Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:4–6).

We are shown even more of man when we realise he was created to be useful. We know that he cared for the paradise in which he was living. He tended it, being an overseer and gardener. However the fact is that God is the God of action; so man must be. Since God creates, His image must reflect such action. Man then is a worker, and this is confirmed by the fact that God gave him a command or mandate – a project to fulfil. He said, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill up the earth. and subdue it, and rule over it.” (Genesis 1:28).

[b] Man’s Doing

Being and doing are related. Numerous passages tell us that God planned something very rich for His creation, and later we will look at these references. Primarily man was invested with great glory, as we have seen, but that glory is not simply some visual radiance, or even high honour. It is a glory which reflects the authority of God, and puts that authority to work. We mean that man, in procreating his children, planning their future and action, was occupied in a demanding but worthwhile life. Also he had to know the universe, and to control it. His control was to be in conformity with God’s plan. For example he was not to exploit his fellowman, or the resources or powers of the universe.

Understanding man’s “being” and “doing” can be quite exciting. Nothing in the universe is superior to man. He himself is invested with integrity and great gifts and powers. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says to God, “You have made everything beautiful (or, appropriate) in its own time, and you have put the universe (or, eternity) into man’s heart, so that, as by searching, he cannot find out the end from the beginning.” The writer means, “You have so made man that he has within him a microcosm of the macrocosm. You have so made him that he will not rest content until he understands all your universe, yet his searching will never be able to cover the totality of such knowledge.”

Much later Paul said that God “gives to all men, life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation for to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God in the hope that they might feel after him and find him.”

(Acts 17:25–27). He meant that man has a thrust to find God and relate to Him. This thrust is caused by the racial and geographic boundaries God has put to the families of mankind.

Perhaps the most exciting passage is that of psalm 8:3–5, where the writer looks at the vast universe – the heavens above with their millions of whirling planets? and the vast bowl of the sky – and asks with puzzled excitement, “What IS man, that You go on minding him, and what IS the son of man, that You go on visiting him?” Job repeats the thought (Job 7: 17–21) of God’s constant visitation, although he grumbles because it seems to give him no privacy. God is a very dynamic Visitor!

What Man Can Accomplish

In Genesis chapter 11 we are shown man working feverishly to escape the plan which God gave him at creation. Men do not wish to be scattered across the face of the earth, so they seek to settle in a guarded city. Cities do not seem to be the sort of thing visualised in the original command to man. God is shown as saying, “Behold they are one people, and they have all one language: and this is only the beginning of what they will do, and **nothing that they propose to do will be impossible for them.**”

This signifies that man has immense powers. History has shown us what man can do, and increasingly he has developed those natural powers. Such powers came to him in creation, and assure us that when he was made in God’s image he was no insignificant being. His current technological action shows his capacity to investigate the universe and to know much of it. He has certainly brought many of the powers of the universe under his control. ¹ When the writer of Ecclesiastes said, “You have made man upright” he meant man is noble and regal – capable of ruling. He added however, “Yet he has sought out many devices” meaning, he has created devices for mischief.

¹ Powers can be seen as personal — psychical — physical, and so on.

Man’s Limits

Man, at the most, is a creature. That is, he has been created, and can only know what a man may know in order to be a man. Or, he can only, being a man, know what a man knows. The Bible puts limits to man’s knowledge. We need not go into these except to say that man cannot know God’s thoughts and plans except God reveals them. Once revealed they are understandable simply because man is the image and glory of God. However if man does not wish to hear, he will not understand. Hence Jesus’ words, “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear.” We all know that we hear only what we want to hear. Sometimes what we hear is not what was said. ¹

We say man is limited because he is a creature contingent, that is; dependent upon God. He cannot truly be himself ‘without God. His elements of true being such as sonship, servanthood, as also lordship over the universe are only viable when he relates fully to God. Then they can be thrilling to man. Also, man as part of the universe must relate appropriately with every other element of the universe. He cannot, of course do this consciously, but Genesis chapter one shows how the universe is functional, and man an essential functioning element within it. (cf. Genesis 1:31).

However the greatest limitation of man is that he is not God. Hence he cannot plan anything with finality. This is why the ‘prophet Jeremiah said, “The way of man is not in himself. It is not in a man to direct his own footsteps.” He meant that God has planned what man should do. He knows His own purposes, and He knows the particular part each man should play in life. Also He has set man’s goals. Hence man must refer to God to know “the way of man.” By “the way of man” we mean all that a man is and does, why he does it, and what is his goal. This limitation is pointed out in other places, eg. Proverbs 20:24, 16:9 and 16:25.

We conclude our simple study of what it is to be a man by observing that to be truly man is to be as he was originally created by God – pure, obedient, fresh from God’s hand, and filled with powers, glories of

¹ For man's limited powers see Isaiah 55:8f, Deuteronomy 29:29, 1 Corinthians 2:9-14, Psalm 25:14.

being, and capacities to accomplish all God has planned for him. Of course, because of his sin, man is not like that. Nevertheless that is what it means to be truly man. Also we should remember that man's "fall" from his glory did not divest him of these powers. It is simply that he uses them for his own self, rather than for God. In doing this he feels both guilty and inferior. Paul analyses man's rebellion as causing hatred of God, and a continuous sense of inferiority. (See Colossians 1:21 and Romans 3:23).

CHAPTER TWO

BEING A MAN AND A WOMAN

We put that as the title of our chapter to encourage you to read on. It is a fact that men and women are often intrigued over their sex. They seek to explore its facts. Some develop a sort of "sex mystique," by which sex becomes mysterious, and alluring, whilst others tend to take it in their stride or even try to *obscure* it. Some see it as a positive hindrance to useful living, and others have a dread and fear of it, even hating it as a fleshly biological necessity.

Man and Woman – the Image of God

Since man and woman constitute the image of God (Genesis 1:26f.) they are best known by knowing God. Knowing God is not a simple matter. Some Scriptures point out that man does not want to know God.¹ However one very significant point is as follows:- It is not possible to know what is truly man, until we know his "way" in God. We mean that a psychological, physiological and cultural assessment of man will not yield to us what man really is. He can only truly be seen in the context of God's plan and way for him. Only then will a human anthropology have any great value for us.

In fact we go on to extend this thought:- **It cannot be known what a man is, or what a woman is, except as they relate to the plan of God for them.** When we see them in this plan, then we truly know what is masculinity and femininity.² Outside of God, masculinity and femininity appear to have another meaning (or meanings) from that found in Scripture.

¹ That man does not want to know God is stated in Romans 3:11, Psalms 14:1-2, 53:1-2, Romans 1:19f, II Thessalonians 1:8 and other passages. It is not that God does not reveal Himself, but that man will not see Him.

² Note two legitimate spellings—feminity and femininity. We chose the first.

Man, Woman, and the Plan of God

We put man, woman, and the plan of God together. God, in creating man and woman so made them that they are both essential for the carrying out of His plan. That is they are essential to one another, **and neither** can carry out the plan without the other. Thus we say that their masculinity and femininity, rightly understood, are indispensable to the task, and to one another.

People often look askance when the term “plan of God” is used. They often ask, “What plan of God?” or, “Oh, God has a plan?” or, “Whatever would be His plan?” This indicates the little thought that has been given to the nature of God. Man is always planning. In fact he seems to be at a loss without a plan. He appears to need a goal. Why then should it seem a strange thing to him that God should have a plan? Perhaps we think that God needs no plan. Nevertheless the Scriptures talk quite a lot about the plan which God has, and since our discussion of masculinity and femininity depend upon that plan we had better look at it.

[i] God’s Plan Before Time

The interested reader should take time, before proceeding with this section to read the following references from the Bible:- Ephesians 1:3-14, 3:1-11, I Corinthians 2:6-12, Acts:23, 4:27-28, John 17:5,24, I Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8, I Peter 1:2, Matthew 25:34, Romans 16:25-26, Revelation 10:1-7, and II Timothy 1:9. These passages talk about “the plan,” “the counsel of God,” “the mystery of His will,” “a plan,” “the counsel of His will,” “the mystery of God.” They talk of the ‘Book of Life’ in which names were written before the foundation of the world, a similar intention in eternity to slay the Lamb in time, and other factors lead us to conclude that God purposed His ‘plan before time, although it was to be for time.

[ii] God’s Plan in Time

A number of elements are revealed, which concern this plan. One is that the Creator-Father will have His family, ultimately. in its fulness. See Ephesians 1:5-7,17, Romans 8:28-30, .I John 3:1-3, Ephesians 2:14-22, cf. John 11:51, Galatians 3:26 and 4:4-6.

Another is that these elect-people of God will be holy ‘ and blameless before Him, i.e. without guilt, the stain of evil, and with holy natures, perfect before Him.

His plan is even wider. It involves the making of a new heavens and a new earth, i.e. the entire universe will be renovated or renewed, such as we see in Revelation 21:1-7, II Peter 3:10ff., Matthew 19:28. Man will also be reconstituted, or renewed. (See Philipians 3:21, Romans 8:11, I Corinthians 15:42ff)

What we have mentioned is really the goal of God’s plan in time. The mode of the plan involves a number of elements such as the initial creation, the universal covenant given to Abraham when man sinned and was unable to regain his former holiness and peace. The plan involved the selection of Israel to be the cradle-people of Messiah. This Messiah was Jesus, who, coming in history destroyed the powers of evil, setting men free from their guilt. Such forgiveness and freedom made a new people called the church or the people of God. Messiah was triumphant because He defeated sin, death, and hence Satan and his. fellow powers. History will end with the defeat of all evil sealed forever by some final action. At this point the elect people of God will come to a release from evil opposition and become dwellers in eternity.

When it is put so prosaically it might stir few who read the pattern, but rightly understood it is a glorious plan. Its fulfilment will spell the completion of humanity and whatever God has for it in its eternal state. Also God will have revealed Himself as the Creator, the Father, and the Redeemer, Who liberates His people, and makes them to fulfil their true humanity.

[iii] Man and God’s Plan in Time

We talk of man in general, rather than refer to the two sexes, male and female. Man in general has been issued with working orders, i.e. God’s command for him. We saw that he must be fruitful, multiply, fill up the earth, subdue it, and have lordship over all creation. This is a vast order to be fulfilled when it is rightly understood. A man may, at any moment, ask himself the. question, “Am I fulfilling God’s plan? Am I doing my part?” If he isn’t then this will help to explain some of the guilts he experiences as a non-committed existent

in a functional world. These are the guilts of non-participation.

Genesis 1:31 gives us God's conclusion as to the nature of His creation, "It is very good." By that we mean 'functionally good', i.e. every detail dovetails into the whole, and all is functional. Hence I Timothy 4:4 "everything created by God is good," and Proverbs 16:4, "The Lord has made everything for its purpose." Also Ecclesiastes 3:11, "You have made everything appropriate in its own time.." Since the world is functional, and man its head, then he has even more responsibility to obey, to work, and to control, since he alone has been given full rationality. He must naturally expect the 'kick-back' of guilt when he refuses his place and work in the world and its history.

[iv] The Plan – Man and Woman

When in Genesis 1:26 God desires to make man in His image, and when in Genesis 2:7 He breathes into man "the breath of life" man becomes a full being. Speaking loosely we can say woman is inherent in man, for God takes her from his side (See Genesis 2:18–25). However she is more than his side, for "male and female created He them," (Genesis 1:27). That is each is an entity, each has personal being, and yet both are indispensable, each to the other. Far from being opposites they are complementary to one another.

What do we mean by saying they are complementary one to the other? We mean that the mandate which God gave to man can be fulfilled only by the two of them, working together as one unit. When in Genesis 2:18 we read that God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make a helper fit for him", it is clear that the roles of the two are defined. He is leader to fulfil the task. Seeing he has not the capacity to do it alone, she assists him. She is helpmeet, that is the one whose help is necessary for him. If he does not get that help he cannot do the task. She is then, not a servant, nor a dispensable aide, but as necessary as he is, for the mandate to be fulfilled.

[v] The Nature of the Plan for Man and Woman

"Be fruitful and multiply" requires both male and female. "Replenish the earth" means that families are needed. Rearing a family is a full task for two. Rearing

them successfully requires all their resources as parents, and presupposes a full relationship as man-and-wife. An aggregate of families is not all they must produce, but families who live peacefully with one another, and who share the resources of the earth in a generous and fair manner. There must be no selfish kingdom-making, no exploitation of God's fair creation, but only a functional use of it.

Such operations require good parents, and wise persons. They represent a task which makes major demands upon personality. Relationships must flow from human maturity, and maturity presupposes trained development. Trained development, in its turn presupposes good family upbringing. What we mean is that all the resources of the man and the woman, as they relate, must be the cause of the continuing obedience and well-being of the human race, and especially as it seeks to do God's will.

The function of man, to tame the powers within the universe, and harness them for God's purpose, obviously requires his whole attention. Does he have the capacity for this task? Obviously, or God would not have demanded it of him. Yet his powers as a man require the powers of his mate, as a woman. By this we are led on to the mystery of femininity and masculinity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MYSTERY OF MASCULINITY AND FEMINITY

When we use the term “mystery” we use it in the sense that it is used in the Bible, and often in ordinary conversation. We mean, “That which is known to the initiated, but unknown to the uninitiated.” So Paul speaks of the ‘mystery of the Gospel’ (I Corinthians 4:1) and also as we have quoted above ‘the mystery of the plan’. If anyone wishes to know genuinely he will know. What we do not mean is the “mystique” of masculinity and femininity. Writers such as D.H. Lawrence make out that there is a mystical element in sex which, in fact, constitutes all of life. Freud saw sex as explaining most of human behaviour, and whilst both writers have an element of the truth, they do not see it as it is indicated Biblically.

“Male and female made He them.” This makes nonsense of saying there is no differences in the sexes. The differences are there, without doubt. However these differences do not constitute opposites. They are personal, biological, functional and relational. However let us see one point clearly - there is neither equality nor inequality in this matter of male and female. Talk of equality and inequality arise out of a misunderstanding, or perhaps a rejection of the nature of creation.

[i] Authority Within the Creation

Often human authorities are what men make them. That is they fight their way to power, and insist upon exercising their attained power, so that others are subject to them. Jesus said that the Gentiles (the “non-God” people) like to lord it over others. He said that by contrast the greatest among men are those who serve. They are the meek, and they inherit the earth.

It is possible to trace a pattern of authorities in the Bible. In I Corinthians 11:3 Paul says, “I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the

head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” We are told that man is made a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:5; some versions have “than God” cf. Hebrews 2: 7) and we are told that angels were given places of high authority. Whilst Jude 6, II Peter 2:4, and Revelation 12:4 indicate a rebellion by some of the angels against God, yet Jude 8 and II Peter 2:10 forbid reviling of these higher powers, even if they are disobedient. We gather clues from Daniel 10:12-11:1 that angelic powers have rule over nations. They are often called “principalities and powers” meaning they each have a rulership entrusted to them.

Men must be subject to powers who are raised up by God to keep order in the affairs of men. This is seen in Romans 13:1-7. Also in I Peter 2:17 we are told to honour all men, to fear God and honour the emperor. Within communities there are elders who have authority, and within families the father is the head of the family, and the mother is honoured. From the oldest of the children down to the youngest there is a “pecking order” which relates to seniority. Yet, in all this the question of equality or inequality is not raised. It is the question of authority.

The centurion who asked Christ to heal his servant is a case in point. He said that he commanded his men and they obeyed him, “For like You”, he said to Christ, “I am a man under authority.” He meant that he spoke with authority because he was under authority. Similarly Christ claimed, time and again that He did only what the Father told Him. He could say without contradiction, “My Father is greater than I,” and “I and the Father are one.” However He was not discussing equality or inequality. He was discussing authority and function.

A woman is not inferior to a man, nor a wife to her husband. A father is not greater than a mother, any more than a brother is greater than a sister. Subordination does not mean inferiority. Persons find contentment when they accept their functional situations, and obey authority. It may mean that such obedience will result in persons themselves obtaining the position of authority which they have obeyed. Whether or not, men must exercise authority without lording it over others, as those under authority should submit without resentment.

[ii] Authority – Male and Female

Man and woman have authority when they are primarily related to God in the fulfilment of His plan. They relate to each other as partners, and not as man the master and woman the servant. In this relationship neither is vying for position, but both are using their functional situations to fulfil the will of God. That is why a marriage will succeed only with difficulty if both are not related to God. Yet let us be clear here: we do not mean that men and women outside of God cannot sustain a relationship, and in fact find enjoyment in their marriage. Many non-Christians seem to experience richer relationships and deeper satisfaction than some Christians. Nor is their marriage less valid, for example, because they are married in a registry office and not in a church.

Where marriage is true there will be no “battle of the sexes.” The picture given for us in Genesis and repeated by Christ Himself is that of two, leaving their own family units and becoming one, not only in bodily union, but as one unit, together. This is so much so that the man calls his wife, “Flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone.” It would be difficult to find a richer description for total union than that one.

Before we can further, satisfactorily discuss this matter of marital authority we need to cover other ground, and in particular the full meaning of marriage.

[iii] True Marriage – Christ and His Bride

In the Scriptures we find what we call archetypes. We mean the basic or original reality from which spring the resultant realities as we know them. For example Paul says that God is “the Father from whom all fatherhood (or familyhood) in heaven and on earth is derived” (Ephesians 3:14-15). He means that God is not like a Father – He is the Father. Other fathers derive their functional nature and patterns from Him. Thus He is not one amongst many fathers. He is **the** Father, from whom they derive their pattern and principle of Fatherhood. Hence Paul says, “For us there is one God, the Father,” and also “One God and Father who is above all things, and in all things and through all things.” That is He is uniquely Father.

Likewise His Son is uniquely Son – not like a son, or one son among many. So also He is the Brother. The

Family of God is not one family amongst many such families, but is the Family. Similarly Christ and His Bride – the church – are not like a marriage, nor have one marriage amongst many, but constitute **the** marriage. Hence, if we wish to really understand marriage, and the relationships within marriage we must look at Christ and His Church. Scriptures relating to this matter are found in Ephesians 5:25ff, Romans 7:4, and Revelation 19:6-9, 21:2,9.

When we look into this relationship we see that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. That is He loved her to death. He nourishes and cherishes her. He accounts her as His own Body – as we see in Ephesians 5:28-29, and so He gives her His fulness (Ephesians 1:22-23). In other places we learn that He gives her gifts (Ephesians 4:7ff., cf. I Corinthians 12:4ff.). Also He keeps her spotless, allowing no impurity to touch her.

In regard to relationship He is her Head. That is He is her Leader. She follows His bidding. Yet she does this gladly because of His innate authority, and His compulsion of love. She does not dream of resenting His authority, anymore than of denying His love. Nor does she want to “do her own thing.” In fact, rightly understood, she has so much to do, in conjunction with the Head, that she has little time to spare for idleness or creating a novel life of her own. She loves Him too deeply to be apart from Him. Whilst she complies with His will she has so many gifts and graces with which to delight Him, and by which she shares His vast task in doing the Father’s will.

[iv] Functional Fellowship

Marriage is primarily fellowship in function. It is not an end in itself. Some dream of marriage, trusting that they will find their satisfaction in that union, of itself. Yet if the marriage does not have a third person, in some way or another, it will turn in on itself and be deficient. Man and woman share before God, who is the Third. Normally they are expected to share with a third – the child, or the children. Of course there are cases where this cannot be so. Even then the couple must turn out to others, for personal being is never fulfilled with one other only.

Now we can look at the nature of marriage and relate it to the whole scope of masculinity and femininity.

[v] The Meaning and Scope of Masculinity and Femininity

‘ As we have said, masculinity and femininity can be seen in their true role only within the plan of God. We do not mean by this that the true possession of masculinity and femininity cannot be enjoyed but that they can. Yet let us see first the context in which they are expressed; – (i) Masculinity pertains to being a son, being a brother, being a husband – should that be the case – and so being a father when that circumstance arises. It will also entail being an uncle, a brother-in-law, son-in-law, a grandfather, and so on. (ii) Femininity pertains to the equivalents, on the feminine side of daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt, and so on.

At first sight this statement may seem somewhat ordinary, yet behind it is a wealth of significance. In a day when the nuclear family¹ is being questioned, and when in fact some countries have attempted to dissolve its pattern, the whole matter of the nuclear family should be examined closely. Only when it is realised that the way one develops as a son must deeply influence the operation of a person as a brother, and later as a husband, and then as a father will we begin to see that each functional operation affects other relationships deeply, and for good or ill. We will return to this point later.

Already we have seen that masculinity covers other elements, such as man’s vocation in life. Vocation could be classed as general when man is primarily seeking to obey God’s mandate, and particular when it relates to his working vocation such as a trade, a profession or some such occupation. It involves him in a wider set of relationships than those within his entire family, and in matters which are local, communal, national and even international.

¹ The term *nuclear family* is used currently to cover the father, mother and children within one unit. The term *extended family* is used to cover that situation where members are added so that the family does not, in fact, retain its original identity.

We may then draw a maxim from what we have seen. It is this:– **A man’s masculinity is not limited to his sexuality, as also a woman’s femininity is not limited to her sexuality.**¹ There are some men and women who never effect sexuality, and yet whose masculinity and femininity are never in doubt. In fact they exercise strong relationships as sons, brothers, uncles, and citizens, or as daughters, sisters, aunts and so on. Vocation embraces all elements of relationships, labour and social activities and service. A woman within her femininity can find limitless scope, as a man also within his masculinity. Let us remember continually that God created them “male and female” and gave them the mandate of fruitfulness and labour within His plan. The usefulness that males and females can exert and exercise outside of a marriage is limitless, both in the field of relationships and vocation.

¹ Of course for a man sexuality **is** limited to masculinity, and for a woman to her femininity. See Appendix I on "Perversion of True Relationships."

CHAPTER FOUR

MASCULINITY, FEMINITY AND SEXUALITY- I

The Limits of Sexuality

The Genesis account says that when God made them male and female He blessed them. That is He declared their sexuality a good and a clean thing. Eastern dualism, and also human sinfulness has for long enough made the act of sexual union to have indecent connotations. Possibly this arises because it is the most private thing in all the universe. Hence to mention it in humour or flippancy is to bring the guilt of betrayal. Union that is not private is almost a contradiction of its own true nature.¹

Whatever may be the perverse view of sex it certainly does not relate in any way to the fall of man in Paradise. When God saw that His creation was “very good” that conclusion included man and his creation. It also includes the body in its nature and functions. No function of man is unclean, not even eating, as Jesus pointed out in Mark 7:18-19. However the physical union of man and woman, in Scripture is reserved for marriage, and marriage only. The Bible does not take the soft view, current in our permissive society, that it is “only human” to give way on occasions to extra-marital relations or pre-marital relations. Its words are, “Flee fornication,” and “You shall not commit adultery.” It also warns against forms of sexual perversion.²

¹ For example the public portrayal of the genital organs or sexual union is offensive because it destroys the essentially private and intimate nature of the whole union of two persons. Such union loses much of its essential meaning and character when there is an audience

² See Appendix I on "Perversion of True Relationships."

Someone has coined a helpful statement, “There is no such thing as sex. There is only marriage.” Pondered and rightly understood this statement constitutes both the limits and scope of true sexual experience.

The Experience of Marriage

The goal of marriage is well defined in the ancient Christian marriage service – it is for the procreation of children that they may be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord; it is to prevent pre-marital failure and defilement; it is for “the mutual society help and comfort that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity “The order is very good. Chronologically children should be the first goal. The preventive nature of marriage against moral uncleanness is sensible, and the unceasing mutual love of the couple is the goal as well as the mode of true marriage. In all these elements there is nothing mystical, nothing of a nature so romantic that marriage need fail through not reaching a high romantic level. Within human sensibility marriage can be deeply satisfying.

The act of marriage, according to Genesis 2 is simply a man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his woman, who is thus his wife. It is best, in this case to see the man taking the initiative, and pressing through to fulfil the contract, rather than the woman doing so. However it is not to be thought that the woman does not leave her parents, in order to cleave to the man. She does.

Let us look at what it means “to leave”. It surely means that a man informs his parents that his time as a son living within the nuclear family has ended. He is now about to initiate his own nuclear family. This means that his parents may continue to see him as their son, but not exactly as formerly. He is a man who, having matured, is about to take up his place as one operating in God’s plan. He too will be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth. As an agent who is not under his parents he will seek to exercise a stewardship of the universe and its resources. He will seek to bring up children, not even primarily for his own family, but for the wider family of God. Hence he must make a definite act of ‘leaving’.

When a young person leaves home to fend for him- or her-self, that is not leaving in the Scriptural sense. It is simply locating one's life elsewhere, when in fact that one is still part of his own nuclear family. To leave, as we have said, is to launch out into one's own experience of commencing a new unit of family, a new nuclear family. In fact to leave is to be married.

Leaving and Cleaving – True, and False

There is a false leaving. It is cleaving before leaving. We mean it is the wrong anticipation of marriage in the act of pre-marital intercourse. Marriage is the union of two people coming together in a ceremony or ritual, however simple or complex it may be, which is publicly attested. Marriage is wholly public; consummation of it wholly private and personally intimate. The community witnesses the marriage, whether it be the clerk and two witnesses in a registry office, or the minister and congregation in a church ceremony. Reasonably speaking it is an event which the parents of both bride and bridegroom witness, and in which they participate.

“There is no such thing as sex; there is only marriage,” was our maxim. Examined it means this:—Physical intercourse is part of the act of **cleaving**. It should not precede **leaving**. Physical intercourse is only for marriage, and for no other situation. Outside of marriage this act is illicit, is unchastity and falls within the category of either fornication or adultery. It is best then not to use the term **sex**, if at all possible. Intercourse outside of marriage should be regarded as “illicit sex” or the perversion of marriage. To repeat: true cleaving is accomplished when it has been preceded by true leaving.

Dangers Within Pre-marital Physical Relationships

Another maxim is, “If you seek to get before marriage, what you can get only in marriage, then you get it neither before marriage, nor, then, in marriage.” A homely way of putting it has been that the honeymoon is the kindling which lights the fire. If the kindling has been used prior to the marriage then the fire never really gets lit. At the best it smoulders.

However the difficult point we have to understand is that chastity, or purity, is the dynamic which launches a marriage.

We are aware that God's actions stem from His holiness. Whilst it may sound foolish to put it this way, yet God's holiness would be totally lost – dissipated and ‘blown’ – were He to sin. As we say, the analogy is foolish but it illustrates powerfully that chastity is the one true dynamic a man and a woman can have which will cause their full union in marriage. Chastity is simply the building up of reserves of true love and purity for the hour of union. Chastity is not a priggish way of life. It is a balanced and mature way of life which recognises that the moral laws of the universe are functional.

We mean, by this, that when God created the universe, and saw it was “very good,” He meant that His principles of operation within the Creation are normative. That is, the moral law is not merely ‘moralistic’ but in fact the way that holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness and love really operate. In fact in this way of operation man knows true freedom and he does not know it elsewhere.¹ Hence the injunction to “flee fornication,” as also the command “Thou shalt not commit adultery” are not prohibitions against a pleasurable relationship, but protective commands against harmful and (so) illicit unions.

Nor does it mean that when a couple come together in marriage that they exhaust their chastity. Chastity, rightly understood and exercised is a lifetime state. We may say that virginity ceases at marriage, but not, of course, chastity. Each partner maintains a state of purity towards the other. Physical intercourse to be of itself, impure. To the contrary, for it is intended to be a pure expression of full love. That is what makes it a contradiction outside the state of matrimony.

The Harm Resulting from Pre-marital Intercourse

If the prohibition against pre-marital intercourse is simply purist and legalistic, then such intercourse would probably not be very harmful. Some have gone

¹ See Appendix I on “Perversion of True Relationships.”

so far as to say that there is no actual prohibition, as such, against pre-marital intercourse, but only against fornication and adultery. They suggest that the intention behind both adultery and fornication is that of breaking a functional law. However it is asked, when two young people love each other, and will come to marriage, what can be harmful? You cannot, they add, really call this fornication. The argument cannot be simply dismissed out of mind. At the same time it must be examined more closely.

We have already pressed the point of true leaving and true cleaving and have seen its functional order. Paul has a very deep truth in regard to relationships which are wrought by the physical act of sexual union with another person. He says that these two persons – even though one of them be a prostitute – become one body.¹ He infers the body is not made for this. When one is joined to Christ one becomes one spirit, and he suggests – at least partly – that mere bodily union is deficient, if there is not also a union of spirit.

When it comes to the actual events of two people sharing in a pre-marital physical union, it may well be that the intention is marriage. However even disgust at this failure may break up the relationship. Other events may break up the relationship, and even the engagement committal. Death may intervene. Anything may happen. These arguments of course are more of convenience than of principle. However there is a deeper argument.

We are led back to Christ's relationship with His – to-be- Bride, the Church. It is inconceivable that Christ would prematurely anticipate union with her. His aim is to keep her pure “by the washing of water and the Word,” for He wants her not to have “any blemish, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (See Ephesians 5:25–27). As we are to take our Christian view of marriage from Christ and the Bride, this argument is conclusive. We must do what Christ would do under the circumstance. That is why .Christian marriage counsellors have often discovered very deep and persistent guilt underlying marriage failure, that is guilt which stems back to pre-marital intercourse or heavy petting.

¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 6:15-19.

[a] The Harm of Guilt

Let us first say that guilt is roughly extant in two ways; guilt which is objective, and guilt which is subjective. Objective guilt simply means that guilt which is incurred – whether felt or not – by some wrong or sinful act. If we commit adultery we are objectively guilty of that. We may not, however, **feel** that guilt. We speak of “subjective” guilt, meaning it is the feeling of guilt we have. Often we can train or dull our consciences so that we do not **consciously** feel guilt. However we must not be deceived. What we do not **feel** in conscious areas of the mind, we certainly **experience** in the deeper levels of the mind.

We should also recognise that guilt suppressed is guilt which becomes even more dangerous. It is likely to cause a mental hernia within, or to result in some kind of internal explosion. A brief look at Psalms 31, 32, 40 and 51 – amongst others – will show us the harm which results from refusal to acknowledge guilt, come to repentance and be freed of our burden and pollution. What we are really saying is that God's prohibitions against defilement, and His injunctions for true chastity are intended to help us. Infringement of these brings its own ‘kick-back’ of guilt, and guilt feelings which have a devastating effect upon the person, and – most certainly – his relationships. Let us repeat that guilt has devastating effects upon relationships. This will be recognised when we see that we often resent most deeply those whom we have failed, and against whom we have erred. Man's primary hate of God and goodness springs from this principle.¹ We can almost create a maxim – “Where guilt is absent, relationships are good. Where guilt is present, love is in danger of being destroyed.”

[b] The Harm to Relationships

The functional order of the man and the woman is, as we have seen, that the man is leader, the woman the helpmeet. Both, joined together, constitute one working team. When it comes to the moral issue of physical union prior to marriage the man must be the

¹ For this principle of hatred see Adam's fear of God (Genesis 3:1-10), and compare Colossians 1:21, 1 John 3:10ff., John 15:18ff

leader. He must say “No.” and of course more than “No!”. He must give a positive lead in the love-relationship. She must assist him if there is any weakness. any giving over to passion. If not she is not a true helpmeet. She also must say more than “No!”. She must give a positive lead from her purity and love.

When he fails he jeopardises his leadership. She fails in her ministry of being helpmeet. Both are ashamed. Shame turns shortly to disappointment, and even bitterness. At the time of failure the two may rationalise their failure and support each other in regard to the event. However this almost surely will turn to a sense of being cheated when in fact the marriage does not yield the expected sweets of full love. It is also highly unlikely either will be aware of the cause of disappointment. for sin has its own deceit, and carefully covers up both the tracks it makes and the nature it has. Each will reproach the other, inwardly. for the lack of joyous fulfilment.

CHAPTER FIVE

MASCULINITY, FEMINITY AND SEXUALITY- II

INADEQUATE RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE MARRIAGE

The process of relationship failure in marriage can be traced, since a fairly regular pattern develops. When the man loses moral leadership by pre-marital failure, he may lose leadership generally. Later we will see why, often, young people have pre-marital intercourse. We will see that weaknesses and imbalances in the nuclear family lead to a blind desire to have ‘love’ from one’s anticipated partner. This is often to compensate for some former lack of love.

When the husband loses part of his leadership, he has somehow lost his major role in life. The wife tends to take over the role her mate does not fulfil. She, in fact, takes up a masculine task. He then tends to compensate by either applying his masculinity to areas outside the actual marriage relationship, say in his sport or vocation, or may socialise with males, feeling their company compensates his loss of male prestige in the marriage relationship. She, for her part, probably resents the leadership role she has taken, and desires him to qualify for it. She also feels that her expression of femininity is slipping from her. She is less woman than she wants to be. She can, of course, cope, but misses her role as simple helpmeet.

The matter becomes serious as time passes. In the early stages of marriage, when children come, and there is much for both to do, they work it out reasonably. However certain factors complicate the experience of their relationships. The total union which is idealised by popular fiction, drama, and music, is found to be absent. The idol of sex which has its vast audience of devotees is seen to be false. Yet the unfulfilled drive for total union – the true promise of marriage – knows a deep frustration. The husband, being told that physical .

union brings a man's deepest fulfilment, resents the fact that it does not. So he presses, physically, to assert such a union, to achieve the utmost. By nature of the case he cannot. True love gives, and does not ask to receive.

For her part she is pressured, and cannot – or will not – respond. Her trust in her partner turns to anger, or fear, or both. She closes her femininity against him, thus provoking a deeper assault. He is seen as excessively 'sexual' and she is 'frigid'. So the struggle continues with ever deepening resentments. Sometimes the pressure breaks out in forms of sexual experimentation and, often, perversion. Her femininity is affronted, his masculinity challenged to achieve success. So the miserable process continues, and the marriage is on the skids, accelerating towards divorce.

Nor is this the end. The major problem will be the children. They delineate, after a time, the inadequate relationship of their parents. It is fairly true that a deficient husband and a deficient wife make a deficient father and mother. The father, in his failure, relates more to his vocation and his friends than he does to his children. She is forced to over-relate to her children. This is often by way of over-protection, or over-compensation. Vendettas develop within the family relationship patterns.

The Children and Parental Relationships

Each examination of relationships causes us, more and more, to diverge from our original title-theme "Masculinity, Femininity and Sexuality." Yet we are forced to diverge by reason of our research. The effect of guilt from pre-marital intercourse is far wider than generally suspected. One Christian counsellor avers that in his experience some 95% of threatened marriage failures have a pre-marital intercourse history. Whilst he does not conclude that that in itself is the only problem he sees it is the major direct cause of break-up in marital relationships.

Our examination of parental relationships has to trace the parental upbringing of the couple before us, as well as their relationships mutually, and those they have with their children. Modern predeterministic psychology has made its impact. Parents become the

cause and scapegoat for their children's ills. In one sense this seems reasonable. We are now in the habit of saying, "My father did this to me – at a certain age – and now I am as I am." Any counsellor who encourages his counsellee to talk will hear him say, "Now when I was a child" "Or," "My parents were so – and so..." It seems it all begins with the parents. As we have said, this seems – at least to some degree – reasonable.

The facts are generally that parents who over-relate to their children, or under-relate, often cause damage of some kind. A dominant mother, a compliant mother, or the reverse, seems to affect the approach of the child to society, and, finally to its own marriage. It is fairly true that children tend to reproduce the behaviour patterns they observe in their 'own homes. Some consciously fight against such, especially in youth, but often succumb. even if it is later in life. It can be that a rejection of a parent brings an over-reaction, and a decision to be exactly opposite, in behaviour, to what a parent has been. The children of over-reacting parents are going to strike trouble because of this imbalance. When one thinks of the vast variety of relationships which are possible one sees that almost any number of combinations can obtain. Hence children will find their parents bewildering, and they in turn will bewilder their own children. Dr. Frank Lake in his large tome "Clinical Theology"¹ claims that research into the unconscious, especially through the agency of LSD has established the fact that childhood experiences are inevitably stored in the depths of a person. Feelings can even be traced back to the womb. It is certain that parents commence relationships with children at an early age. **What appears to determine the training of a child is, negatively, its reactions to parental actions, or positively, its responses to these.**

By this we mean that one child may have a series of negative reactions, which eventually form a syndrome, whilst another child will show emotional resilience. Its experiences draw 'out a response which is positive, rather than a reaction which is negative. It is

¹ "Clinical Theology" (Darton Longmann and Todd. 1966. pp 1059-63.)

interesting to note that some therapies today encourage the expression of inner stored hatreds, resentments, and unforgiveness, whilst other therapy demands that the person accept responsibility for every action, and reaction he has experienced in life. The former lay blame on the parents. The latter accepts the blame, positively.

Be these therapies and patterns, as they may, we can see that, in practical fact the relationships of parents, first with one another, and then their children, deeply affect the family. We will later return to see where the culpability for action and reaction lies, but for the moment let us look at the entail of parental relationships with children, i.e. how it affects the children for their marriage.

A simple case would be that of the man who has been denied a balanced mother-love. He may well look for a wife who will mother him. In one sense this is not a bad thing, except that a wife is not intended to be a mother. Anyone – in the vast and intricate net of human relationships – may have to stand in for anyone else, and at any time. We mean a man may suddenly have to father a strange young boy, or a girl mother her sister, or a mother act as father to her children. This ‘standing-in’ will be of necessity, and should be only temporary. For a man to desire a mother as a wife is quite dangerous. Some chance experience might rapidly mature him, and he may suddenly find himself not needing a mother. Then he finds beside him, in bed, a woman who is not so much a wife as a mother!

What is the origin of the term “Baby!” for one’s girl-friend? Is it that she likes a protective father-type? Did her own father neglect loving and protecting her? Was he an absentee father? What of the husband who starts off treating his woman as a baby and suddenly finds she is a hard-headed ruler of the home? Or, supposing she is a compliant sugar-sweet woman, and then, through some maturing experience ceases to be this? What then?

Supposing the relationship continues as the wife being the substitute-mother, or the husband the substitute-father, then what of that? Can this be a basis for marriage? Can that satisfaction of two being one flesh be realised? As we have suggested there are so

many combinations which arise out of faulty parental relationships that the mind boggles. What is more, these can be detected in even a minor session of counselling. The dissatisfaction with less than full husband-wife relationships is both understandable and reasonable.

Pre-marital Relationship Assessment

We have seen that pre-marital intercourse can be a cause of difficulties in marital relationships. Yet we ought-to see here that often this act is not so much a problem in itself, as it is the result of deficient children-parent relationships. We mean that when mother-love, father-love, or family-love has been deficient the children of such situations will seek love from their mates. The term ‘love’ has to cover a large area of expressed relationships, but the young couple do not see that having intercourse together does not really supply love at all. Certainly it cannot make up for a deficient love in the parents or the family. That kind of love belongs to an entirely different set of relationships. Like drugs or the occult or esoteric religions it is a foolish substitute, let alone an unsatisfying one.

However we have uncovered a dynamic principle. It is this: where children do not experience reasonable *love-relationships with* parents and families, they will tend to compensate within a relationship which is outside the parents and family. We will see later that when the nuclear family does not have a satisfying mode of life, there will also be an attempt at compensation by the community-pattern for living.¹

Those approaching marriage should, if possible, assess their own parental situations. It is not enough to condemn one’s parents. They also, it would seem, had parents who were deficient in some areas. We are all likely to have weaknesses and deficiencies in raising our own children. There never were perfect parents. A further helpful thing is to seek to discover why one’s parents are as they are. Seeking to understand raises

¹ See Appendix II — “The Principle of the Family.”

sympathy and builds genuine rapport. Rapport helps to dissolve resentment and bitterness, and brings recovery in relationship.

Even if there is no response from the parents the children can free themselves from former deficiencies in relationships, and so relate to each other in a better way. We will later look at this whole matter when we review the total issue of relationships within the scope of masculinity and femininity. For the moment let us see that every recovery in relationships will enable us to have richer relationships as man and wife.

Pre-marital Failure and Forgiveness

It is little dreamed, by the uninitiated, that forgiveness is a tremendous dynamic for the whole gamut of relationships. One needs forgiveness, as also one needs to forgive. Forgiveness must be effective across the entire personality, and across the whole community. In particular it relates to the erasure of all guilt.¹

We have said that guilt impedes relationships between man and God, and God and man. We recognise that Christ approaches his bride in full love and purity. His holiness constitutes the power for their relationship. Likewise with us, since we take the pattern for our courting and marriage from Him and His Bride. The most practical action two who have failed morally can do, is to seek total forgiveness from God, through Christ. Where there is repentance, forgiveness is offered and can be received by faith. Repentance is not merely remorse for failure but a frank recognition of the wrong done, and a change of mind towards God and one's failure.

There is no forgiveness apart from the Cross. There is total forgiveness through the Cross. Both facts must be recognised. Guilt can be so utterly expunged that a person returns to the norm of true human living. Of

¹ Forgiveness and the complete erasure of guilt can be traced in the following Scriptures:— Psalm 103:1-3, 130:3, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-26, Matthew 1:21, John 1:29, Matthew 9:2, 26:28, Luke 24:44f., John 20:21-23, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 15:9, 22:16, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Revelation 1:5.

course forgiveness will bring joy, will blot out shame, and will renew relationships, firstly with God, and then with others. In particular forgiveness for pre-marital failure will bring a new experience of love to both partners. Whilst it is best for this to take place before marriage, it is equally powerful after marriage. The experience of counsellors who know the dynamics of forgiveness is that they see shattered marriages restored in a thrilling and complete way. However it all depends upon the full experience of forgiveness. Guilt is banished totally by grace.

The persons seeking forgiveness should see that their confidence is based upon the promises of God, and the action of Christ. They should understand something of the cost of forgiveness, and not take it lightly. The cost of forgiveness is no less than the magnitude of their failure. Furthermore they must see how effective is forgiveness. It not only erases the objective guilt, easing the subjective guilt, but it restores the dynamic of chastity. As one young woman once observed, "Well, if it is true that the Cross totally erases guilt, then I'm a virgin again." That is, and must be so seen. Purity is restored. Moral power flows again in the human personality.

Before we leave this point we ought to see that in fact love is newly born and experienced where forgiveness is received. Jesus said, "He who has been forgiven little, loves little. He who has been forgiven much, loves much." The promise of the New Covenant was, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:34) God does not remember simply because He forgets. It is that there is nothing to remember, for that was all destroyed at the Cross! Hence to remember it is foolish as well as dangerous.

In the New Testament where thousands receive forgiveness,—as at Pentecost (Acts 2:38ff.), this simultaneous removal of the guilt of many causes an incredible love to flow through all. They become "of one soul and one mind." Forgiveness is the great stimulus to rich relationships. Yet let us repeat — we too must forgive, and we too must release others by our forgiveness and love. This forgiveness will not only be mutually between partners but will extend backwards to parents, abroad to others, and forward to our children.

CHAPTER SIX

COURTSHIP AND THE APPROACH TO MARRIAGE

Courtship and the Approach to Marriage

If we are to take Christ and His Bride as the true pattern for courtship and marriage, then it has taken milleniums for the approach to the engagement and the marriage! Most of us are too impatient for so long a period of probation! On the sane and serious. side we should recognise that friendship and courtship are most valuable for preparing for a relationship which is virtually for the remainder of life.

In order to relate, both before and after marriage we should dispose of images. That is, the ideals we have nurtured in our minds should be abandoned. Many a husband views his wife with distaste because she is not his ideal as a wife. Many a wife similarly views her husband. Both are wrong. Images are dangerous, to say the least. To say the most – they can finally destroy a relationship.

An image of what love is can also impede relationships, especially if it is after the Hollywood model! The wail of pop-tunes and songs in regard to the ultimate of life – love – can be most misleading. Whilst true married love is the richest experience most humans may know, yet it is not on the basis of the romantic alone. The romantic age, with its images of perfection, and its saccharine relationships is a far cry from human reality. God loves sinners equally with saints. He does not wait for perfection to be achieved before He loves such an object.

Likewise love between a man and woman is not dependent upon physical beauty as such. Hollywood imposes the image of the body beautiful or the body handsome, and the personality full of perfections and the cheque book replete! In true life, handsome men marry women who are not beautiful, often as not. They see the beauty which quickens their interest, the true

beauty of a vital personality. True enough, both wish to be physically attracted by their partners, but such attraction relates to a mixture of elements which they find, intuitively, each in the other.

Friendship and courtship are a time of discovering each other. The period is set aside for building up to the time when the relationship shall be sealed as permanent. For this reason it is necessary to really understand each other. This will relate to family backgrounds, likes and dislikes, elements of temperament and disposition, and above all the true modes of friendship. Books which are helpful along these lines are numerous and yield most helpful hints and guidelines.

Courtship and Petting

Young people often ask the question, and naturally enough, “What about petting, and that sort of thing? How far may one go?” This question may be innocent enough, but often it springs from a legalistic frame of reference. It is asking, “What are my rights?” or, “How far can one go before it is dangerous?” The answer is, “Don’t ask questions along that line. Ask them more positively, such as, ‘What is the best way about relating in affection?’ ‘What are the helpful things in enriching a .relationship?’ ‘How can I express love and affection without being embroiled in passion, as such?’“

Petting, on any level, is a preliminary to a more serious form of love-making on the physical level. Couples who are reasonably secure in the love of their parents and family will not be using the relationship to effect compensation. They will have matured in the matter of relating to others, and hence will not make unreasonable demands. A man or woman who is “mixed-up” or hungry for love, will have to learn the way in which to relate reasonably with the other partner. To lay oneself open to stimulation, and thus passion, is to experience constant frustration and tension which will bring annoyance and dissatisfaction into the relation.

There is much which couples can share – silence, conversation, study, vocation, culture, faith. The sharing can be endless, the range is so varied. They can

use the time of their courtship preparing themselves for an enduring relationship, planning their future, their home and the fact of a family. They can renew the relationships which they feel to be weak, wrong, or deficient with others of their family and friends. They can build up relationships with others with a view to the future. These things will not simply divert themselves from experimentation in petting, but will provide the only true alternative.

There will be many obvious things to share such as the nature of marriage, preparation for their actual wedding, and an understanding of the nature and purpose of the wedding itself. Courses of counselling for marriage preparation can be very helpful, and the sharing of the marriage with the minister who will marry them is most needful. Some couples like to make their wedding different, and even novel, but are advised against this. A wedding should not be “showy” or different just because it is our wedding. Traditional services have been hammered out on the anvil of time and experience, and conform with the positive teaching of Scripture. For the most part they can be trusted.

Truly Christian couples will want to share the joy of the Father and Christ with others, in their wedding, and provision can be made for this. If some wish it to be a stronger witness for evangelistic purposes then they should do it quietly, courteously, and never aggressively. Guests expect it to be a time of gladness and enjoyment, and they should not be subjected to an harangue. This is not, in fact, the witness of grace and love.

The Parents and the Marriage

Some young people feel they have thrown off the shackles of their family, and they are free – even autonomous.–Hence they will often go ahead and arrange the wedding without recourse to the parents. Perhaps there is some bitterness in relationships, and they feel they will use the wedding to show their independence. This would not constitute a truly Christian wedding. Parents, however poor we imagine them to be, or however difficult, should be consulted. They have brought up both children who are about to be married. Behind their seeming indifference, or

severity they surely love their children. They may be too shy, insecure or unable to express their affection, but they would be most unnatural if affection **were not** there.

On the other hand it is the young man who is leaving his parents, and neither partner will want to feel dominated by parents. They can be quietly firm about the marriage arrangements, so that they feel it to be their own wedding, and not one taken out of their hands. It is customary for the bride’s parents to undertake the dressing and catering arrangements. The bridegroom is expected to arrange the date and time of the ceremony at the church, and select his groomsmen and get them to organise the details for the day such as ushers and sidesmen for the church service, as well as payments for the church, where they are required.

The parents will appreciate a new set of relationships with the couple, as they progress towards the day of marriage. They can share in a more mature, and a more intimate way. The obligation to be children of one’s parents does not end with marriage, but in fact enriches as marriage approaches, and even more when it is consummated.

Good ‘Leaving’ and ‘Cleaving’.

Parents may be over-possessive of their children, or even jealous. The couple should be aware of these facts, without reacting to them. They should see that they have such mutuality in relationship as to remove any danger of interference. Some parents will seek to break up an engagement, and later a marriage if one of the partners is disliked. The attempt to do so may be clear and even blatant, or it may be subtle and persistent. Marriages have been destroyed through these means. This is why the couple should be frank, and discuss the matter and plan means to thwart the interference.

Parents have been known to spoil a marriage by coddling the young couple. They heap gifts and money upon them, not allowing them the joy of earning their home and its contents. They young people must be determined to “leave” their parents. They must be firm about developing their own new unit of life. There¹ will be a weakness in this if one child feels under obligation to respond to this possessiveness. They should

recognise that the parents will themselves be happier when the children develop their own dependence apart from the parents. A deeper relationship between them can then mature.

Often one parent has developed a neurotic relationship, and will use it as a means of keeping the child to itself. This, too, should be firmly resisted, even though the immediate outcome threatens to be a tragedy. The alternative tragedy to the husband-wife, and future parent-child relationship is too awful to conceive. The advice, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife" is so practical that it must always be kept in mind.

Relating to God's Plan

One of the primary requirements for full marriage is the matter of vocation. For the most part people, including Christians, simply marry. They know it is good, pleasant, and part of the continuing nature of the human race. They are glad to have partners. Children are obviously part of the intention of marriage. One needs to provide the means of life, and comfort is a reasonable necessity. For this reason, if no other, one must work. Perhaps both should work.

Often, unfortunately, vocation is only given a secondary place in consideration. It is a means for subsistence, and often little more. Yet we need to stress man's part in the original mandate of Genesis 1:28f. As an existent, a rational creature in God's functional universe he cannot have full contentment, joy and peace until he too is attuned to the purposes of God. Masculinity and femininity can then only find their full expression.

Counsellors are aware that many marriages experience frustration because of lack of goal, purpose and direction. Instead of orientating to God's goal for humanity, many of us create short-term goals. Where there is idolatry this is understandable. Where there is a compulsive thrust for compensatory goals, this is also understandable. However short term goals are often not only puerile but dangerous. What, then do we mean by short term goals?

We naturally enough must have some goals which are short term, such as educational goals in childhood and youth, training goals in our early twenties, and

accomplishment goals of marriage, homes and community participating in the following decades. Such goals are reasonable but then only if they are part of the goals of God for persons and the whole of humanity, as also, of course, for His own glory (Cf. Isaiah 43:6-7, Ephesians 1:12-14). If a goal is lined up with the end goal of God for us, then it is orientated to God's plan, and such will be worthwhile. If however a goal of sport, culture, amusement, work is an unrelated goal, and is thus an end in itself it will be ultimately unsatisfying, and even dangerous. It will generally be idolatrous.

To speak in practical terms; any element of life, when it becomes a demanding short term goal will greatly endanger persons, relationships and the true use of life. For example when a man's trade, profession or occupation becomes his sole goal he is in danger. When it develops into obsessive proportions he will neglect his true goals. He will channel his resources of masculinity into it. The wife and family will be forced to relate to this goal, even if only by his neglect of his family. The reasons for doing this we need not here develop. Certain it is that his masculinity has been denied its full, varied operation. We have seen the businessman who virtually worships his business; the professional man who has a horror of anything coming between him and it, and an idolatrous preoccupation with a vocation which made the person little less than a fixated devotee of his task. Pastors neglect their homes in order to counsel other families, parents neglect their own children in order to help the waifs and strays of their society, whilst some are simply obsessed fanatics in the realms of art, culture, sport and politics.

To illustrate - "Some people's goals are bowls!" Retired or aged people often become totally gripped by the game of bowls. Their waking, rising, and operating hours are filled with this sport and of course the social life-style which goes with it. Perhaps they wish to avoid the tedium of life-in-retirement. Imagine, however, that one suddenly expires - say from a coronary "conclusion" - and is immediately brought before the Creator-Judge. He asks, "And what have you been doing to prepare for this mighty event of eternity?" The mild answer is, "I've been playing bowls."! Jesus represented a man who had made his short-term goal the growing of crops. With immense success he thought

at last to retire, but God tapped him on the shoulder, and shattered his idolatry. “Tonight your soul shall be required of you, and then, whose shall these things be?”

Whilst we have spent some time on this theme of vocation, it is nevertheless important because it relates to courtship and the approach to marriage. Intending couples should be conscious of God’s plan for their life, especially with regard to vocation. Vocation does not have to be that of the ordained ministry of the church, missionary or social service. Farming, trades, professions and other occupations can all be part of God’s great plan. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof” suggests that everything relates to the plan. However it must be dedicated as such on our part, and we must know the mind of God for us. This will prevent undue emphasis on short-term goals, and there will be resultant vocational satisfaction.

Before we leave this important subject let us consider the roles of wife and husband who are, both working in occupations. A reading of Proverbs 31:10 will show us how busy was a wife in the days of the writer of that book. There was nothing boring, nothing insipid about the life of a wife-mother. She had much to occupy her time, with opportunity to develop her own interests. Probably the best maxim is that where both partners work and this does not interfere with their wife-husband, child-parent relationships, then such work is acceptable on this principle. We have been given wisdom, and times and situations change rapidly, and we need to adapt. What matters above all things is relationships, and where these flow, then masculinity and femininity are obviously having their full and balanced operation. Where relationships are impeded it is necessary to discover the cause and remedy it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN MARRIAGE: TRUE LIBERTY

Women’s Lib., Men’s Lib., Both or None?

Does a woman really have to submit to a man? Is she not a true person in herself, and as such does she not have total freedom to develop her own goals, even if they are wrong sometimes? Is a man free to pursue his own goals and desires, and does woman have to merely follow after him? What is a person’s essential freedom?

This sort of question is difficult to answer since the very asking’ of it seems to indicate that some basic relationship has never been gained, or is already lost. That is why it is difficult to debate the “liberation” argument. This argument is being debated over quite a number of areas today, in the family, in power-structures of business and government, and indeed nationally and beyond. All authority structures are being called in question.

No doubt testing of authority structures, from time to time is a good thing. Authority structures, when destroyed, have a way .of being replaced by other authority structures. Again authoritarian use of these structures is obviously wrong. For a person in authority to use the situation for his own personal expression or gain is clearly incorrect. Yet where authority structures are used authentically, then genuine good should result.

In Chapter Three we discussed the authority within creation, seeing that there is in fact an hierarchical order (or, orders) of authority. It is not merely a pecking order, but is an order which is one also of **relationships**. It is both helpful and important to notice this. The Father and the Son relate. Christ relates to man, man to woman. Parents relate as husband-wife before they relate to their children. Children relate to their parents and then others within the family.

Families relate to families. The community relates to its elders, and they in turn, if normal, should lead and rule with discernment, firmness and benignity.

Where authoritarianism obtains it means that there must be an imbalance of operations, or, to quote our principle, an-unbalanced use of functional masculinity and femininity. This will cause displacement in the relational situation. Hurt, resentment, and fear will be stimulated. An immediate claim for “rights” will ensue. It is this “rights” claim which is so unhelpful, and often, dangerous. Where it is not a case of “rights” but relationships, and where relationships cannot be rectified by coercion, then there is endless trouble. The debate accelerates, and restoration of relationships is made impossible.

For this reason we need to be clear as to where our liberties lie. We are free to obey rightly constituted authorities. We are free to exercise truly operational authority. We are free to function within true categories of living. We are not free to uproot, destroy or change such for the mere sake of doing so, or when they do not suit us, and our emotional desires. What we are free to do is to use all structures for the sake of love, and peace and goodness.

This may sound very abstract, so let us take the concrete example of man and woman in marriage. Where a true personal relationship has been established, the question of “rights” will not arise, for they are “one flesh.” If they are not “one flesh” then, the debate will always be as to “What is your area?” and “What is my area?” This will prove fatal to marriage, or if not fateful will disturb its normal serenity.

The True Beauty of a Man and a Woman

Better than a sought and structured liberty is the natural liberty of the norm. Of course few who are not Christians will believe there is such a natural, created norm. The Bible indicates that man and woman are, by creation, part of one another. Together they form a functional whole. Their love does not stop to debate “rights.” The debate about “rights” is man’s habit when he is out of relationship. Perhaps he hopes to establish satisfying relationships by expression of himself (his rights), thinking he will be happier, and all

will relate better. In fact this is a deadly form of legalism.

We have observed that the Song of Solomon (“The Canticle”, or “Song of Songs”) is a most beautiful presentation of the adoration a man has for his woman, and she for him. Quite uninhibited it speaks of the natural creational joys which true love yields to the partners. This is the joy the Church knows when it truly worships its Head, Christ. This is the joy the Church knows in seeing Christ give Himself for her, before giving Himself to her. She knows the same joy as He “nourishes and cherishes” her, knowing the delight she is to Him, as He to her. In such a relationship there is no question of “rights.”

The Creational Reality of Man and Woman

That man and woman are different is obvious. This is not so to those whose minds are gripped by the desire for equality, or rather the desire to show that men and women are equal – whatever. We have observed that it is neither a question of equality or inequality, but of personal being. It is one thing to be male, and another to be female. It is one thing to relate totally as male and female, and another to be in competition as male and female. To be in competition is to strive for supremacy or even equality, when in fact this question does not properly arise.

When human beings are not ashamed of their bodies, of their minds, and of their full personalities; when they recognise that God’s keenest desire is for them, and that they are of His richest order of creation, then a joy of living will assuredly be born. When a woman glories in her femininity, and sees nothing unclean about her body, her bodily functions, seasonal periods, rhythm and climaxes, then she will really appreciate her femininity, and in fact actually glow with it. When she realises its power to contribute to the flow of life, not only by procreating life, but by the constant contribution of her femininity in relationships, she will be satisfied to be fully a woman.

When a man Sees what God has created him for and exercises his masculinity, not in domination, or in competition with other males and females then he will be glad of his masculinity. It will not prove for him the opportunity to assert himself over and against others,

but to use the gift of masculinity. By it he can be positive, and so establish good relationships. He will be rich in the knowledge that he is fulfilling his vocation.

When, even more, both man and woman come together, and realise their indispensability, each to the other, then the question of “rights” will be obviously irrelevant. It will be the question of “one flesh,” of one mind, and one concerted operation. This will cover their being as man-and-wife, as father-and-mother, as son-and-daughter, as aunt-and-uncle, and whatever. Together, without raising the question of equality and inequality they will work out their vocation. The satisfaction they receive, mutually, will show them that their true liberty lies in being a man and a woman, and the expression of it in being man and wife, and so on.

The Sharing of Fertility and Masculinity

We will devote a chapter to the roles of single man and woman, (See Chapter Ten) and a little of what we say here also relates to these. Often it is thought that a man encapsulates his wife, and she him, so that now neither may relate in masculine or feminine role to another. Of course this is not so. Apart from the normal relational roles of parents, relatives and so on, men and women have the opportunity to share with others, although not of course in a sexual way. We have seen that masculinity and femininity are by no means limited to sexuality.

The actual manner of sharing is difficult to define. In the early Church the norm was for all members to be “subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). They were said to be “of one soul and of one mind.” This meant a sort of mutuality of all members. It is possible, and often desirable for men and women to relate, without of course infringing on the physical areas of experience. Many preachers and workers have been encouraged by women of younger, older or equal age, when they have needed encouragement. Others have been helped in regard to relationships by those of the other sex.

Of course there are dangers in such relationships, especially where one person seeks compensation for the loss of true marital relationships. Such situations should not even be allowed to arise. Yet, these given in,

masculinity and’ femininity may well aid others in their’ needs. Whilst we must avoid a mystique of masculinity and femininity we must not underestimate the helpful, practical and even indispensable nature of both.

Exercising True Liberty Within Marriage

The gifts of masculinity and femininity should never be taken for granted, nor be presumed upon. Nor for that matter, the gift of personality. We mean that whilst the two are one flesh, yet they are also, each, a person. The years lived prior to marriage have shaped each, and so both persons are to some degree the product of heredity, environment, training and so on. They have varying gifts of personality and ability. To share these together requires both appreciation and adjustment.

There will, therefore have to be a working out of the personal relationship as it comes down to the very details of day-to-day living. She will want to have expression of her gifts and will feel that love will seek to assist her. In fact she will see the expression of her gifts as her own operation of love. Mutual love and care will be the climate in which these matters may be worked out.

This liberty is simply the sharing together of the vocation of marriage. It is true that young enthusiasts seek a new set of vows – as though anything that is old or traditional is necessary effete, worn-out and not for these times. The traditional vows have very rich content. They promise that each takes the other, “for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.” Very beautiful, and most practical. With this “for better for worse” comes the whole process of two people sharing their own development and maturation. The process of having babies, who become young children, teenagers, and then marry, calls for a supple form of living. As the couple meet the problems of child-growth and development they must recognise that a growth and development is taking place in them. With all its problems this life can be most interesting and satisfying. In fact the problems seem essential for our maturation. The sharing of them is that inter-relatedness which develops us as persons.

Liberty, then, is not simply a state of being, but also the mode of life which is matrimony. In this state and

mode of life the question of “women’s lib.” and “men’s lib.” is seen as irrelevant. Relationships are much too interesting, and far too satisfying to be disturbed by some imagined oppression or need for liberation.

Suppression Within Marriage

We cannot deny that often as not there is suppression in marriage. Men sometimes look upon woman as an inferior sort of creature. Husbands feel that woman is there to serve man, and she had better. Some males feel that the woman is lucky to have a husband, a home and children. Badly brought up men will expect their women to be little more than servants. They will leave the discipline of the children – for the most part – to the wife. Some will give a pittance to the wife for household expenses and spend freely upon their own needs and desires. Often such a husband will do little around the home. In this case the woman is not really free.

There are women who suppress their husbands. They run the finances, plan the home, possess the children, set up rules and conditions for family living. They are dominant, extroverted, often proud of their accomplishments, and lack natural tenderness. Deeply down they are, for the most part, disappointed and frustrated. They have needed the maleness of man, and have missed having a true rich experience of this factor.

Often such men and women are simply reproducing the patterns of the family life they knew as children. Some, of course, are reacting against the personalities of their own parents, and in many cases are over-reacting. Whilst we may call it a lack of maturation, giving it a name does not solve or heal it.

There are, also, more subtle forms of male or female domination. Christian men read out of Paul something which was never written in his view of woman. Passages such as I Timothy 2:9–15, I Corinthians 11:3–15, 14:34–35, Ephesians 5:22–24 are read as though women were inferior, easily gullible to have little or no ministry, and to take up a place of subjection in the home, caring, of course, for husband and children. This scarcely does justice to Paul, and in our Chapter on “Men and Women in the Church” we will examine Paul’s real view of women. We have suggested that male domination can be of a more subtle form than the

pattern described above, because it seems to have Scriptural authority. This, however, is not the case. Paul needs to be read very closely. He envisages a very rich relationship between man and wife, based on mutual love, and the acceptance of their functional roles. Domination, as such, is no part of Paul’s teaching.

We will need to retrace our steps, and look again at the whole matter of relationships, not only directly between husband and wife, but relationships which are in the context of the whole family.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE FAMILY

We have already discussed something of this subject in Chapter Five. There we saw that relationships within the marriage are often affected by the patterns the partners knew in their own homes. It will be profitable to open the subject a little more widely.

When Adam sinned he did so because he knowingly rebelled against God. Eve, it seems, did not knowingly do so. She was deceived (I Timothy 2:13.) Adam blamed Eve for what happened, although he was conscious of what he was doing. There was undoubtedly a break in their relationships. That break was disastrous for family life. One of their sons killed his brother. Cain hated Abel and destroyed him. Any break in relationship can prove disastrous.

In the case of the two brothers, Cain felt morally inferior to Abel (cf. I John 3:10-11). This sense of inferiority pesters and haunts man, universally. Perhaps its explanation lies in Paul's statement – "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Man deeply senses his loss of glory. He also is uneasy in his conscience. An uneasy conscience gives rise to deficient relationships. To put it another way, "Guilt prevents or destroys good relationships." This is why forgiven people generally relate well.

Unfortunately, with guilt come also images of what one should be, and—even worse—of what others should be. They are probably part of the mechanism of conscience. So much of what we do in life—if not all—is based on the principle of self-justification. This causes deep complications in relationships because we seek to conform to the images we have for what we, personally, should be. We also make demands on others according to the images we have for them. We require them to conform to those images.

Relationships We Should Exercise

We have dealt with the fact that where a husband has an image of what his wife should be he is doomed to

disappointment. No less is she if she too holds some image of what he should be. The result is disastrous. Each feels cheated. The only solution is to smash the images and accept each other as they are – warts and all! This is both realistic and satisfying. He says, "She doesn't know who I am!" and he is perfectly correct. She cannot see him for seeing the image which he is not! Likewise she says of him, "He just doesn't understand me!" She also is correct. If both could see the fascinating potential of gifts and graces with each other they would relate with excitement.

One counsellor listened to a woman spend two hours speaking against her husband. She had thought him hopeless, unambitious. Having a sense of inferiority because she had had little education, she wished him to compensate by attaining a higher level of study. He refused to do so. He wished to enjoy his wife and family, and life. In fact he was fulfilling a good vocational task. She had guilt not only of vocational but of moral failure. When it was cleared she suddenly found she had a gift for writing poetry. Two days previously he had called her "an empty Shell." Now he looked with wonder and mystification at this new creature within his home.

Another woman had had a high dream of the man **she** should marry. The fact was she had married another man. He seemed ordinary, when in fact he was a remarkably fine man. Nevertheless she lived in her dream. She had thought in terms of a "high" love. Her husband adored her. One night she was told she had wasted her years of marriage, because of an image. When the image was smashed she suddenly saw her husband, and fell deeply in love with him.

How is it that such images come? Why is it that men and women live with each other for years and never really know who the other is? Perhaps we cannot answer those questions fully, but part of the answer lies in the functions of masculinity and femininity. We saw before that no one relationship will be full, if all relationships are not full.

In saying this we are not setting ourselves an ideal or impossible task. Part of our problem lies in thinking that one relationship matters in life – that of husband and wife. This relationship matters, without doubt.

However it is not the only relationship which matters. The relationship between child and parent is never broken. It remains as long as they are in time. The death of one does not, in fact, break the relationship. If this relationship is neglected, then some harm must result. Why do we say this?

We say this because the primary relationship in the universe is that of man to God as Father. If a man does not relate to his father he will be relationally deficient. This will affect his outlook on life and the persons and the universe. If he is settled in relationship to God as Father he will relate well to his own father, however much that father may be lacking. A man must also relate to his mother as a true son. He must go on relating as such. Yet he is no less responsible to relate to his brothers and sisters as they are in his family. Marriage no more destroys this relationship than it does his relationship with his parents. These relationships are also lifelong.

Each relationship carries with it a function. To be a son to a father is a whole subject on its own. Not only does a son enjoy the emotional elements of such a relationship but he serves his father in his early years. He may even share his father's vocation. As a brother he has certain responsibilities to the family. Events of joy and tragedy require him to fulfil certain obligations. He cannot ignore that relationship. His tasks will be part of the fulfilment of his masculinity. A sister may require comfort, a brother may need encouragement. The manner in which he fulfils these needs will mature him in his masculinity. We cannot stress too heavily the fact that where relationships are deficient or tangled, they bring unhappy consequences.

Past and current relationships within one's family will surely affect relationships within marriage. A good son generally makes a good brother and so a good husband. A good husband generally makes a good father. He also makes a good uncle, and eventually a good grandfather. In fact he makes a good citizen, a good son-in-law and so on. It cannot of course be denied that there are many exceptions to this rule. Nevertheless whilst we may appear to be talking ideally, in fact any one relationship can deeply affect any other. When will we ever learn?

The Delicate Balance of Relationships

Suddenly we see the whole complicated array of human relationships. We recognise that one affects another. In some way the human race is a solidary whole. We are all part of one another. What a delicate balance is required! However could we effect such a balance? The answer is, "We don't!" Our relationships are often incredibly tangled. Yet there is no need to be despairing or fatalistic concerning them. We can make remarkable recovery – if we will. Love, even human love, can be greatly resilient. Love which flows to us from God may flow out from us with great effect. Such love "Bears all things; believes all things; hopes all things and endures all things."

What we mean is that recovery can be made in the renewal of relationships. Part of the cause of wrong relationships is – as we have seen – our own guilt, our sense of inferiority, and the drive to justify ourselves in the sight of others. They for their part must also justify themselves, and so the competition becomes warm, if not hot! Suddenly to see that God has justified us in Christ, and that we may now accept ourselves as we really are is a beautifully liberating concept and experience. Also we have the key to all relationships – God's love to us, and – then – our love to others. God's acceptance of us means we can accept ourselves, and so accept others – just as they are.

This of course requires repentance for our failure in relationships. Sometimes we may have to ask forgiveness of others. Often we will have to forgive actual or imagined hurts. We will have to dispense with bitterness; and resentment. We will have to love positively. In doing so we can help to release others. We can now be a better son, or daughter; a better brother or sister, wife or husband, son- or daughter-in-law, and so on.

The effect of this may be far-reaching as one relates to one's wife and children, and they to one another.

The Positive Use of Relationships

Made in the image of God – who is love – we are created to love. We really must have a sort of innate 'love-structure.' Just as we have a skeletal bone structure to stand upright, so we must have a love

structure to love. We are happiest when we are loving. We are unhappy when we hate. Love will help to dissolve the hard things of hate. It will help to straighten out the twists. It will give wonderful impetus to our gifts of masculinity and femininity.

We can see that mere demands for ‘justice’ or ‘my rights’ is wide of the mark of love. For this reason we can now dispense with the ‘bedroom court.’ The bedroom court is where, at retiring time, husband and wife ‘have it out.’ One faces the other accusingly. Perhaps one has erred socially. Maybe the wife has been neglected or she has failed with the cooking. Someone has been hurt. Accusation follows and counter-action follows further. Both begin to rake up matters from the past. She is in the judge’s place and he in the defendant’s. Then their positions change. He accuses her. Self-justification, emotion and loss of temper bring irrational and hurtful statements. These are stored for some future ‘court’ occasion. Justice of this sort never achieves anything, but love dissolves every hurt and brings total renewal.

The joy of renewed relationships can prove dynamic to daily living. After all relationships are really life itself. See John 17:3, I John 3:14. To know God, one’s self and others is a beautiful thing. Life then becomes simply the experience of these relationships. Also it is what God is about since He plans to reconcile and unite all things.¹ We feel vocationally fulfilled when we are on the same line of operations as is God. However, let us stress again that the practical operation of renewing relationships will make all the difference.

The result will be that children who see their parents as one will feel secure. Security and love is what they have been seeking, and now they have it. Wife and husband’ are hurt by struggle, but healed by oneness. The ease of living together compels us to forgive past scores to others. We begin to understand what it means to be true human beings, children of the Father.

What is not simple to grasp, although in itself it is a simple thing, is that what matters in history is the Family. Primarily this is the family of God, but it is expressed and experienced within the family of man.

¹ see Ephesians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:19-21, John 17:20-26, Revelation 21:1-5.

Ultimately when every prodigal is gathered in, and every child is a true child we will fully experience what is the true family. Until then we have partial experiences of it. Yet they are enough to draw us on to fuller experience. In fact, **rightly understood, the Family is indispensable to our full maturation.** In it we experience authentic relational being, warmth, comfort and encouragement, as well of course as rebuke, teaching, training, and even chastisement. It is then we can see the damage of wrong relationships. We realise that “patching-up” relationships accomplishes nothing of permanent nature. This completeness of relationships, love, must be across the entire gamut of our masculinity and femininity.

CHAPTER NINE

GROWING INTO GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

The Power of Origins

“As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” This statement of Proverbs 23:7 (AV) is an axiom. A man thinks as he wills, and then becomes what he thinks. We are told that the mind is capable of storing millions of memories and experiences. We are also told it is incapable of not storing them. It not only can, but must store them. Nor are these memories static. They do not lie inert within the mind and memory. In the unconscious areas of our being, they are dynamic. We cannot trace their actions, but from time to time feel them very powerfully, and often disastrously. On the other hand a man’s thoughts, when positive and healthy can produce excellent effects.

Because man is a moral creature, it means he can make choices, and these choices are real. One man chooses to react negatively to life. Another chooses to respond positively. Two may react differently from a common experience. That is one may react negatively, and so derive no benefit from his experience, but rather may be harmed. Another may respond positively, even though the experience was unpalatable. When we consider the fact that from birth we experience situations, and react or respond to them, then within us is a storage of these various impressions, thoughts, reactions’ and responses. As we have said they greatly condition what we are, and what we do.

Birth–Expectation

What happens in the womb must be of great importance to our life-situation. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:46, cf. 1:15), and both Jeremiah and St. Paul talk of God’s action upon them “from the womb” (Jeremiah 1:5, and Galatians 1:15). Some research has claimed that very deep impressions are received in the womb,

by the foetus. These impressions greatly affect the child. If the impressions are of things hurtful, then expectation of a happy and serene life would be lessened.

Some psychiatrists insist that the mode of birth also affects the child. An instrument birth may not only cause physical damage but an effect upon the personality also. When we recognise that man is created to be in the image of God, then the expectations of the babe should be those of a world filled with care and love, affection and concern. Had man not sinned and destroyed the patterns, generally, of good and loving relationships, then the child’s expectation would have been fulfilled. As it is there are few families, if any, in which, from time to time, relationships are not impaired. Often such relationships are greatly deficient, and sometimes cruel and unhelpful. Hence the shock or trauma that a child may feel even in the womb, and from the time of birth onwards.

Reaction or Response – a Mystery

What we cannot explain is why one child reacts against experience and another child does not. The second child may respond positively, refusing to be hurt by what has happened. One is crushed, the other uses the incident as a stepping stone to character development. As we say, this is a mystery. We must keep in mind that it is the choice of the child which is exercised through the will. Nothing is imposed upon it. If this claim is true then we cannot say that child is the mere object of its experiences, but rather it is the **subject** of them. It is not then merely the product of hereditary and environment, as such. They do not shape the child, so much as the child’s will itself chooses how it will react or respond to these influences. We cannot deny, of course that both hereditary and environment are very strong influences. The mystery of course is why there should be from time to time and person to person either negative reactions or positive responses.

Love is Resilient

True love has great powers of resiliency. Paul’s statement that love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things: love

never fails” is a staggering claim for love’s powers. Our tendency, as sinful humans, is to feel we are cheated when others do not love us. We demand love, and hence do not really experience it. We have seen in Matthew 5:43–48 that love takes the initiative, and loves one’s enemies. Love does not demand love, so much as it gives it. Hence the child can choose in love to respond in a good way, rather than in a way which will hurt it. If love could only live and thrive in the environment of other’s love, then it would not be love in the manner which Paul claims.

Destroying the Negative Syndrome

If, as much predeterministic psychology would have us think, a person is the victim of his experiences, then the human situation is a very sad one. The facts are that some seem to develop negative approaches to life. Many keep making demands for love which are virtually parasitic. That is they insist upon being loved, and then living in that love. Such demands do nothing for the one who demands love. In fact the character and personality of that one is greatly weakened. He must escape from his syndrome, and become positive in loving. The question is, “How?”

The answer is simple:– “By a choice of will.” Dr. Viktor Frankl in his system of logotherapy has pointed out that the human will can set its mind to achieve almost anything – if it will!¹ For many people the matter is not so much one of “will–power” as that of “wont–power!” Whilst it is easy to say “By choice of will,” yet something must grip the will, and curiously enough it is only love which can grip that will. Hence our following explanation of how the person may escape his reactionary approach to life.

It is this way:– Let all negative reactions be seen as the breaking of the law of love, and be named as actual guilts. Let the person repent of these negative reactions, and so be cleared of the guilts. Let that

¹ Viktor Frankl "Man's 'Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy" (New York. Washington Square Press. 1963.) "The Doctor and the Soul; From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy." (New York. Bantam Books 1967.)

person see that Christ bore the outworked punishment of these guilts in His body on the Cross. Then he will know he is free from them. The nexus is broken, the guilt cancelled, and the person is now free to love. He will love out of responsive love and gratitude. He is now released into the processes of true loving.

Human Development and Learning

Behavioural psychology tabulates the facts, that is the phenomena of behaviour as is seen at the various stages of human development. These categories of behaviour can be helpful to those who have need to observe them. At the same time they are not necessarily a true explanation of the human personality. Each human is a person, with his own personal traits, gifts and characteristics. He makes his own choices. What concerns us is that we trace something of his moral and spiritual development with a view to the right expression of masculinity and feminity in relationships of love.

Whilst it is true that love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things, it is also true that human development and learning is better off for a loving family and environment. Even then a child can choose to reject love – but that is another matter. Love, given, generally engenders love. What concerns us is that we trace some of the modes of development and learning, and see where it is possible to correct failure and to encourage true relationships.

Youth, Turbulence, and Pattern–Setting

No one denies that youth is a fascinating period of one’s life. It is both exciting and demanding. For some it is a terrifying period. One is no longer a child, nor yet an adult. Mysterious emotions suddenly seem to surge up, and a curious insecurity results. The teenager is intrigued by his new, emotional life, but also wary lest it betray him. He is also aware of the adult audience which is watching his actions as he is developing towards adulthood.

There are moral demands. He feels the growth of masculinity, as she the new surge of feminity. Both sense that maturation of their powers as something to be achieved by choice rather than by the mere process of development. So teen–age is a time of choices. These

choices must be personal, and they must be real. Whilst guidance from older persons may be helpful, it must not be an imposition. The adolescent must be allowed to develop by choices, rather than be conformed to the patterns of life about him. Whilst these patterns may be good, they are the results of previous choices made by others and he must be allowed to accept or reject them, in order to be real within himself.

The training of the pre-teen years will now show in its effects. The advice in Proverbs 22:6 “Train a child up in his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it” begins to evidence itself. That is why Lamentations 3:27 says, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” meaning that early discipline and training are necessary for later growth and true development. Yet whilst the development of masculinity and femininity are dependent upon such training the sad fact is that youth can easily reject such restraints and make its own choices. This is not surprising, as we have said, because there is a whole new world around it, as well as within it. It is a time of joyful power as also a time of deepest peril.

David once cried to God, “Remember not the sins of my youth, or .my transgressions: according to thy steadfast love remember me, for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord!” (Psalm 25:7). Job, too, knew the powerful memory and effects of youth, when he too cried, “How many are my iniquities and my sins? Make me know my transgression and my sin.. For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me inherit the **iniquities of my youth.**” (Job. 13:23–26). Yet the greatest indictment upon youth and its propensity for evil is in Genesis 8:21, “.. the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” All that Jeremiah says about the heart being deceitful above all things and totally corrupt, applies to the youthful heart. It is this youthful pattern-setting which can be equally powerful for good or evil – whichever the youthful heart will have it.

In Ecclesiastes 12:1 the writer says that if a man remembers his Creator in the days of his youth, then when he is old his days will be serene and not terrifying. He draws a picture of old people who are fearful, querulous and complaining. They are – to use Job’s phrase – “visited with the iniquities of their youth.”

They lie awake, disturbed by guilty memories. Their lives which were sensually orientated, are now wholly unsatisfying because sensual powers are lost and nothing remains for them but present terrifying thoughts, and approaching dreadful death. As for “destroying the negative syndrome” well, the time of possibility of such change is past. Repentance is a gift which has decayed. through non-use. Old age is pathetic. Life ends ‘ “not with a bang, but a whimper.”

Restoring Relationships

We have said that true life is knowing God, knowing oneself, and knowing others, or to put it more powerfully, it is loving God, loving oneself and loving others. We have also said that the gifts of masculinity and femininity are for this loving. They are there to ring the changes, constantly, on such relationships. This kind of action makes life not only for oneself, but for others. This is what life generally is all about.

Youth—to use the modern term—may “blow” these relationships in great part. Moral pollution is heavy enough in society to affect the oncoming teenagers. It finds its response in the sinful hearts of many young people. Whilst some are serious, others are not. There are plenty of us, who when young, fully understood the prodigal son, at least in his wild sensuality. Not all do it that way, but most do it in the mind, if not in outward action.

If one wishes to restore relationships, then one is really saying that one wishes to get the resources and powers of masculinity and femininity to flow fully. If these have been affected by wrong attitudes and acts, then they must be renewed by repentance, restoration and forgiveness. To put it simply – if one has not been a good son/daughter, brother/sister, and even fiance/fiancee– then these relationships should be renewed by love and forgiveness. Of course it is not always that others will respond. Often they will not budge from their attitudes. Yet the refusal cannot affect the one seeking reconciliation. He or she is free.

Where chastity has been “blown” by illicit sex, or affected by impurity of mind, repentance and cleansing is also needed. Here a full restoration is effected by the Cross and the Spirit. In many cases restitution has to

accompany this work of the Word, although such restitution should be handled carefully so that it is not a further cause for hurt.

Let us go back also to the hurtful affects of our origins. We have seen that from birth we may be hurt by many things, and so develop wrong and negative attitudes and acts. We must see these as dealt with by God in the Cross of His Son, and forgive where that is necessary, as also seek forgiveness where it is needed

Cleansing from Habits

Most habits develop as a result of deficient relationships. Where one is forgiven these habits should lose their power. The axiom that “The power of sin lies in guilt” is a practical one. Paul said, “Sin shall not have power over you, for you are not under law (guilt) but under grace (forgiveness)”. Presumably, then, habits should lose their power where one lives in this grace. Forgiveness not only takes away guilt, but it restores us to a personal relationship with God Himself. This is very powerful for life, in its effects.

The habit or practice of masturbation is one which is hotly debated, as to its rightness or wrongness. Whilst it cannot be called a sin in the moral sense as are other sexual deviations, yet the practical fact is that it is usually attended by a sense of guilt.

Masturbation, when looked at impartially, can be seen to be a form of self-love. The full sexual operation is a circuit completed by the union of two people in love. To seek to effect the circuit within oneself is a fruitless act. Whilst masturbation, initially, may be a discovery, either by accident or intent of one’s sexual powers, yet, when pursued as a thing in itself, cannot really achieve anything of value.

To be morbidly preoccupied with it as a sin will not be very helpful. Sin gains its power where it deepens guilt. It assumes proportions which cause fear. Hence it is able to fix the person in his habit. The more positive way to deal with the habit is to see it as fruitless. One should turn outwardly by true and positive loving to full healthful relationships. Negatively one should avoid the stimulation of pornographic elements. It is fairly clear that when our relationships give full expression to the gifts of masculinity and feminity—even though they be non-sexual—the release of love

and friendship will lessen pressures to express oneself through masturbation. It is good also to remember William James’ dictum, “Sow a thought and you reap an action. Sow an action and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

Growing Into Good Relationships

What we have really been saying is that we do not have to see life as fatalistic. If we will we can take responsibility for every action of our lives. Whilst others have affected us, yet our wills have allowed this. We can cut the Gordian knot: we can be free – through the Cross. We can – by God’s power – be restored in every area, and live out full relationships in masculinity and feminity.

Perfection? That is not our claim. There will be many failures, many misses, many imperfections, but the general thrust will be good. As for the rest, grace and love cover the multitude of failures, for long ago they were covered on the Cross. Will this encourage us to presume on grace? Not a bit of it! Every forgiveness obligates us more deeply to obedience. Besides, to live in full relationships is at once both its own reward, and its own motivation to obedience.

CHAPTER TEN

MASCULINITY AND FEMINITY THE SINGLE PERSON

Is Marriage the Norm?

In most of our discussion we have assumed that marriage is normal to human experience, and of course it is. Is it, then, indispensable? The answer is, “No.” It is obvious, simply from observation that not all persons have married, and they have survived. Some, of course would have wished to be married. Yet they did not cease to be real people, for all that. Others did not wish to be married, for good or bad reasons. Some never felt the desire or the need, not because they were sexually inept, but for other very good reasons.

What needs to be made clear is that not every person responds to the various stimuli about him or her. We observe people who eat to live rather than the reverse. Many are consciously caught up in their vocation and seem to have no need for the relationship of marriage. There are many who make a sizeable contribution to life without having children. Of course the command to marry, in Genesis chapter one, must be obeyed by all and in particular those for whom there is no gift of continency, who are not called into special tasks of life which take one outside the realm of marriage as such.

The Gift of Being Single

Paul nominates marriage as a gift (Greek “charisma” I Corinthians 7: 7) as he also says that being single is a gift. On the broadest scale of thinking there is nothing we have that is not a gift. Natural (created) life is a gift and as such we are contingent (dependent) upon God for life, including its very breath. That is why Paul asks – in another context – “What do you have that you have not received, and if you have received it, why do you boast as though it were not a gift?” When we understand the principle of God’s giving, we understand that what we have is giftwise from God.

Hence Paul sees marriage as a gift to those who have it, and singleness as a gift to those whom God has given it.

We conclude then that the state of singleness, where God gives a gift for the same, is as important as any other ministry, for which God had given a special gift. By this gift a single person would not have the problems of any kind of sexual pressure. He would find himself (or herself) content in this state, and able to proceed with the vocation to which God had called him. Paul saw a number of advantages in being single, especially when the church was under deep persecution. Having a family would put them in danger. He also saw that a single person could devote full time and attention to the work of the Gospel, instead of being absorbed in a family situation. In any case he felt all believers should “hang loose” to any involvement they had in the world, so that they would not be prevented from proclaiming Christ. (See I Corinthians 7:29–35.) At the same time Paul in no way disparages the fact of marriage but rather commends it (I Corinthians 7:10–16). We may conclude then that the single state is honourable and useful; in fact no less useful than the married state. Just as marriage has its particular advantages for usefulness so does the single state for its purposes.

The Power of Chastity

One of the cynical myths which has been doing the rounds for milleniums is that a person who is chaste, and who does not marry, will end up, if a woman, as a vinegary spinster, a veritable virago with a hatchet face, or if a bachelor as a precise and fussy male. Whilst this may happen on occasions the truth is that chastity, both outside and within marriage is a very powerful thing. Masculinity and femininity have their dynamic outlet and expression across the total range of relationships.

Chastity does not impair the power to relate to persons or to express the gifts of natural masculinity and femininity. Hence single people can often aid in the roles of father and mother. Many a single woman has proved to be more motherly than her married counterpart. Being “a mother in Israel” is not always confined to married women. If our thesis about full chastity holds true, then many a woman impairs her

full maternity by unchastity, as a man his paternity. If a son will not relate to his father, he will impair a future relationship with his own son, at least if he is not careful.

Chastity, as we have observed is as real in marriage as outside of it. To keep the marriage bed undefiled, and not take one's partner in lust is to sustain chastity. Chastity is abstinence from illicit or sensualised sexual relationships. See Hebrews.13:4, I Thessalonians 4:4-5, cf. Ephesians 5:28-29. Again chastity, in another sense, can refer to the list of relationships which do not relate, directly, to sexuality. To hate one's brother, or to have no love for him is likened to darkness, death and impurity, in the first Epistle of John (cf. 1:5-7,3:10). Let us repeat then, that masculinity and femininity spread themselves across the full gamut of relationships. When relationships are full and creative, then the community is enriched immeasurably.

In speaking like this we are, again, thinking in terms of the thrust of relationships, rather than. the perfection of them. It is true that Matthew 5:43-48 demands that we be total in our relationships, and even with our enemies, so that we will be perfect as the children of the perfect Father, for so He loves His enemies. Yet the meticulous perfectionist success of relationships is not what is in mind. Relationships break down in an imperfect and sinful world. It is the general thrust which really matters.

Non-Marriage is not Poverty

People who participate in certain experiences of sense – such as the drinking of alcohol, and the use of tobacco and drugs, as also sexual intercourse for its own sake, tend to think that others who do not are simply abstainers. To them abstinence is dull and negative. Yet is it, in fact? Some sects handle snakes for the fear and fun of it, and other people collect rare specimens of flora and fauna. Doubtless both derive some satisfaction from these activities. Yet people who abstain from such acts are not necessarily deprived of joy. They may simply express themselves in other ways.

Likewise single people are not necessarily impoverished by not marrying. On one occasion Jesus when discussing the matter of divorce said, "There are

some who are born eunuchs, some who are made thus, and others who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." What He said may be explained as follows:- "There are some who can never be married, because they have no choice, seeing they cannot fulfil marriage in its original intention. Yet there are those who do not marry because, within the operations of the Kingdom this is how it will best be for the Kingdom's sake." Paul could be pointed to as such an example.

We must be careful not to interpret this along ascetic lines. We do not mean that marriage is sensual, and it is better to avoid that. Nor do we mean anyone is more spiritual either for being married or not being married. It relates to none of these things. No, Jesus was trying to get to a deeper level of thinking.¹ He was saying, in effect, "Most start at a certain level when considering life. They think it is good to be married, for then one is not denied the form of joy that comes with marriage. They think that to be denied this is to miss out on the thing in life which is the most important. Not at all: there are always different levels from which we may regard anything. If you seek first the Kingdom of God, then your view on everything will alter. From that point of seeing you get a true perspective of what God is about: otherwise not." An example of this would be the fact of suffering. Paul says we work and suffer for the Kingdom's sake (II Thessalonians 1:5, Colossians 4:11). Yet most people would avoid suffering. However if they were to suffer they would find themselves in another dimension of life altogether.

This allows us then to make a very important conclusion. When one refuses to make a goal, or an idolatry of marriage, and one does not demand it as a right, then the single state is seen for its own sake, and not regarded as servitude, deprivation, or any such thing. Positively it is regarded as one's vocation, and life is accordingly quite rich. It is no less rich than the married state. Hence, married or unmarried, the fulness of life depends primarily on one's approach and attitude

¹ See Chapter Thirteen on "Marriage, Divorce, and Re-marriage."

to it; and not simply on the joys or sorrows it may bring. Unfortunately all too few approach life in this way.

We may also note that abstinence from one thing is often quite unconscious, and even incidental. One abstains because one's goal is another goal altogether, and in pressing to that goal, one is satisfied and fulfilled.

The Powers of Single Persons

History abounds with stories of single men and women who accomplished – great goals in their singleness. History also tells us – in the extreme – of nations which decayed and toppled because of the dissipation of life forces in excessive sensuality and affluence. It often points to the rise of a nation which has been poor, has wrested its life from a barren country, and so has grown strong. In its strength it has become a people of conquerors, and toppled other nations. However when it obtains affluence – “bread and circuses” – then it too goes into decline. Often it is that as with a nation, so also with an individual. We are not, of course, saying that single persons necessarily have greater power and creativity than married persons who are temperate, but simply that their conditions are better for uninterrupted creativity and relational operations. This is certainly what Paul was saying when he observed that “the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord: how to be holy in body and spirit: but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided attention to the Lord.” (I Corinthians 7:32–35).

For the single person who is called to be single, the gift of being single opens up a whole avenue of rich and creative life. The powers of masculinity and femininity can have their true and functional expression in being a son or daughter, brother or sister, uncle or aunt, and so on. They can relate within the community as single people may relate, and as married folk often cannot relate. Within this sphere of operation they will not only be content, but completely occupied.

Attitudes to Being Single

The person of whom we have spoken as being a full person, although single is not the person of whom we will now speak. This person is one to whom the single state is unacceptable, and an imposition. He or she sees it is fate, or failure, or some such thing. Such people fret in the single state, and quite often – in their resentment and fear – they come to states of nervous exhaustion and even breakdown. Yet again, they may become bitter, twisted, and sour about life. They may opt for some other goal in life, but they will have little joy from it either.

Some Christian preaching is not helpful on this subject. The earnest holiness preacher who asks young people whether they are prepared to stay single for Christ's sake. This is not an option to which God calls persons. He gives the gift of continency as a gift. He does not ask people to surrender their natural gifts of life, anymore than He would ask them to surrender a limb. So the challenge – so-called – is a thoughtless, and even dangerous one. It is raising a question God does not raise. At least He never raises it that way.

One has seen young women who long desperately for marriage being asked to forgo it. If they agree – on the spur of the moment, or under the power of the preacher – they soon revert to their feminine desires. When they wish, again, to be married they then come under a false guilt. They imagine themselves faithless to God. Some have – naturally enough – resented God. They see Him as cruel and as one who deprives them of natural joy. And well they might, if they see Him in this light.

Paul's view was different. He said, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” He meant that when you love someone deeply you do not count anything you have as dear. This, of course is true. Even so Paul was not called to a life of grim denial, asceticism, and barrenness. He gloried in the life which he lived – pain, suffering and all. Nor did he regret his unmarried state. We never see him as jealous of others. It would be best for us to preach along these positive lines.

In fact, who knows how long he or she will be single, anyway? How many have married early in life, become divorced and disillusioned and have come to hate marriage? Others have passed the first half of life

without marriage, and then one day have had a proposal, been married and have deeply enjoyed the union which has come late in life. The very fact that one **must** get married – come wind, come weather! – has often prevented marriage. Paul’s advice, “Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God,” is a good adage. It brings calmness and serenity, and nothing is so attractive as “the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Community of God

It is impossible to understand the family, unless we first understand God as Father. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is the primary doctrine of the Scriptures. The topic of the “people of God” figures largely but is unintelligible except we first see the nature of God as Father. The Son came to show us the Father, and the ultimate of His ministry is “to the glory of the Father.” Hence we deduce the following:-

- (i) God is essentially Father. He, as Father is Creator and King of all the universe. He is the seat of all authority. He must be obeyed as also He must be loved. All true Fatherhood is rooted in Him and derives from Him.
- (ii) The Son is essentially Son. He has been this eternally, and will eternally continue to be so. All true sonship is rooted in Him, and derives from Him.
- (iii) The Son is also the true Brother to men (Cf. Hebrews 2:10-17, Romans 8:28-30, Philippians 3:21). Hence He is both the source and fact of true brotherliness.
- (iv) The Family of God derives from the Father and the Son, and is God’s living creation. It is essentially the Family, and has always been in the mind and intention of God. Its being is procured through redemption rather than creation, since it comes about through the redemptive acts of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. ¹

Thus when we come to the family, or the community of God we have our guidelines for family living. Ultimately the whole family of God will be before Him,

¹ See the Author's book. "I LOVE THE FATHER" where the subject is worked out in finer detail.

but for the moment, whilst we are in that family, we have a deep responsibility to our own families, or as we currently say, to the ‘nuclear family.’

The Family to Come

We have seen that true marriage will be like that of the Bridegroom and the Bride, Christ and His Bride. It will be pure and honourable, and a union which will produce good fruit. Hence the way in which we approach marriage will ensure the level at which the family will come into being, and grow. We have already seen this in Chapters Five and Seven. Our conclusion from what was there discussed is that generally speaking a marriage will be a successful as the maturation of the married couple. Expanded this means that according to the prior family backgrounds of the husband and wife, so will much of the family to come derive its life.

If then the perils of guilt are avoided in wrong relationships with parents, others of the family, and pre-marital intercourse, the marriage should have some solid foundation. Of course it is not enough simply to avoid the guilts of failure. It is much more positive to pursue the goals of actual love, purity, and obedience in vocation: Hence, where the marriage is seen as two who are “heirs together of the grace of life,” and where the couple knows its vocation is to be fruitful, to multiply, and to have stewardship of the universe, then the family will grow in an objectivity and subjectivity of life which will be healthy. Much, then, of what we have written to this point is to discern failure before marriage, to right that which has been wrong, and to lay positive foundation for a purposeful marriage. When ‘understanding and attitudes are healthy, reasonably speaking the family –to–come should also be healthy.

Basic Authorities in Marriage

In Chapter Three we discussed authority in general, within the universe. We saw that this authority is graduated from God the Father through the Son, to man, and through man to his wife, and she to her children. Other lines of authority relate to angels, civil powers, and the leadership structure within the church.

Within a family there are ordered authorities. As we have said, the husband is head of the wife. Even so it is probably better not to say he is the head of the family, in that Christ, being his head, is the true head of the family. Behind Christ is the Father Who again, is **the** supreme head of the family. In this sense it is good for husband and wife – seeing they are one flesh – to seek the will of Christ for their lives, including their family. When it comes to the intimate matter of husband–wife it is there the husband must make his leadership decisions.

When children are born, and the couple learn to include a third and, eventually, more, the true family is shaping. As the heavenly Father is to His family, so **the** earthly father must be to his. When we pray for **the** Father’s will to be done on earth as in heaven we recognise the universal principle of a father’s authority. The father’s word in the home must be law. Even this is presupposing the earthly father to be reflecting the love and discipline of the heavenly Father.

Honouring Parents

Some parents are dismayed that their children do not honour them. They discover eventually that they, in front of their children, had not honoured their own parents. How often they had joked about their own parents. Hence the children joke about them. This is part of the entail of rebellion against parental authority. When the Ten Commandments demanded that children honour their parents it also implied a reward – long life. Paul mentions this fact that it was the commandment which had a promise attached. It is true to say that many elements of ill–health, especially mental ill–health come from reaction to parents. They hurt the one who reacts. Resentments, if carried, may cause severe ill–health. Such a fact should teach us how significant are true familial relationships.

Just how basic true relationships really are is shown in Malachi 4:5–6 where the prophet was God’s voice, saying, “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.” This is a very strong statement, meaning that God will be angry

where true parental and familial relationships are perverse. It is also significant that this prophecy was applied to John the Baptist, in Luke 1:17. The day of Messiah was to be a day of full family harmony.

It is interesting that both parents are to be honoured. It is difficult to conceive how children can honour the mother if the father does not give her respect. Far from being as one of his chattels in the Old Testament we see in Leviticus 19:3 “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father”, placing the mother first. We see (Deuteronomy 21:18f) that a son who did not obey his mother was to be severely punished. A woman was honoured before marriage, being under her father, and he did not in fact possess her. At marriage she was simply transferred to the authority of another man – her husband. Hence the father and mother represented authority to the children, though primarily the authority of the father.

Deuteronomy 21:18–21 is worth reading:– “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and though they chasten him, will not give heed to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders of the city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of the city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice. He is a drunkard and a glutton.’ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones: so shall you purge the evil from your midst: and all Israel shall hear, and fear.”

It is necessary that to be honoured the parents should be honourable themselves. If they have carried down a spirit of disobedience against their own parents they are scarcely likely to induce obedience in their own children. Indeed their form of discipline will by nature of the case be somewhat awry. Whilst this does not absolve the children from the obligation to be obedient, yet it makes it harder for them to be so.

Primary Disobedience

It does not naturally follow that good parents will always effectively command obedience. Someone has said that a family is a place where a group of sinners live. This is true even of Christian families and should

be recognised. Moralistic demands of children often bring strong reaction whereas example is more powerful than precept. Yet even then it is still true that one or more children in a family may rebel against discipline. The outstanding example is Adam. Luke 3:38 pronounces “Adam was the son of God.” What a Father! Yet Adam rebelled and refused the divine Fatherhood. What, then, can we expect of our own children? We should not be surprised, if having done all we can, our children still rebel. At the same time we ought to be aware of our failures if they have contributed to this rebellion.

The Basis of Discipline

Within a family the Father will primarily lead and discipline the family. He will have most success where he is wise, authoritative, loving and firm. If he is insecure, impetuous, without impulse-control and arbitrary in his decisions and discipline then he will often fail to command obedience. Where the family is led and encouraged by the father discipline will be almost unspoken. If there is a soft ‘love’ towards the children, then chastisement which the writer of Hebrews says is the hallmark of love will be absent. (See Hebrews 12:5–11). Likewise if there is a power struggle going on between the parents neither will have true authority. Children often learn to play one parent against another.

To be most positive, the family will be truly a family where husband and wife relate together in love and trust. The children will respond because they are the children. It is natural and normal for families to relate, even neglected families. Discipline must not be oppressive, for Paul warns that fathers can provoke their children to anger, when they do not handle them properly. See Ephesians 6:4, and Colossians 3:21. In this latter reference Paul says that fathers can discourage their children.

Motivation for Family Living

In order to understand this we need to return to the matter of vocation. Where parents see their family being raised for the ultimate family of God, there is high motivation. Far from commanding their children to do what they themselves are not doing, they will lead

them by example. Where the parents understand their vocation, not only within the family, but also in the world, they will induce similar purpose in their own children. Where the father is secretive about his work, or refuses to share it, there will be distaste for that vocation, and possibly for vocation generally. Where parental vocation is shared the children will begin to understand the whole principle of man's creational life, hence they can be led to see their own functional participation in the world, and God's total plan.

Patterns of Life and Worship

The doctrine of original sin being given in, raising a family will have to take it into account, as we indicated above. Some Christian parents seek to pattern their children, forcing them to conform to what they – the parents – see to be really Christian. This is often a mode of life, worship, and morals. Loyal children, especially when they are young, will submit. They will accept direction. When, however they begin to think about things, they may reject such patterns. They may feel they have been conditioned, and come to resent the fact.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that parents have accepted certain standards and patterns of life to be Christian. Where these patterns are legalistic and moralistic they will generally be rejected. Where life and worship are vital and living, they will attract acceptance. Some Christian educationists have pointed out that for the most part Sunday School treatments of Bible, doctrine and ethics are meaningless to children. How often teaching resolves itself into telling stories, either Biblical or extra-Biblical, with a moral tacked on to the end. Children tire of this. So do adults, for that matter.

Rightly understood the Bible is “salvation–history.” It could even be called “family–history.” It could be called “The Story of God and His Creation.” It could be told according to its own perspective and be most interesting, even exciting. How few of us see it that way. How often our presentation of Jesus as the pious moralist sets children against Him. How little we know of the great themes of the Kingdom, and how little we demonstrate the dynamic love of God in our church structures.

Equally devastating is the attempt to make our children into window-dressing for our family success. Feeling they should be “Christian” we watch anxiously every element of their behaviour. We feel we are let down if they do not do the right thing. We become even their conscience for them, in every little detail, even when they are launched into their adolescent years. Is this part of provoking our children to wrath? (See Ephesians 6: 1–3). How well they know it when we try to prettify our families before visitors. How unnatural and even hypocritical it seems to them. What marvellous opportunities we neglect to have fun together as a family, to talk honestly, and to allow the matters of faith to be opened up for discussion, testing, and—we trust—for acceptance. In this context worship can be honest, and the great truth of the faith be livingly real.

Growing With The Family

It rarely seems to strike us that we learn as we grow, in family life. Most parents have their children when they themselves are young. As parents they gather maturity whilst they grow. They learn about family raising as they mature. They engender confidence as they learn. At the same time they should be alert to the changes in their children. They should know what is typical of any age, and, indeed, of every phase of child growth. It is for lack of this knowledge that many families have been fragmented.

Children accept direction until the age of twelve, or thereabouts. Coming into adolescence they seek to mature. This is why they object to being treated as small children. Parents should assist them in growing. Foolish confrontation should be avoided. Parents who once had every whim obeyed may now find many a whim questioned. Confrontation in argument, for dignity's sake, will produce only distress in the child and humiliation in the parent.

This mistaken approach rarely happens where parents continually relate to the children. Again the true family of God is the correct pattern. Ephesians 5:1–2 says that dear children of God walk in love, imitating their Father. This Father inspires love, and so it is natural for them to imitate him. Where love is present in the home then hopefully a normal maturation takes place in the children. This is why an open display

of affection by parents, each for the other, is so helpful to the atmosphere of the home. A bit of ‘huggin’ and kissin’ in front of the children can do a world of good!

Again, as we have said, the matter of vocation is important. If the vocation of the parents is shared with the children, then the children will share their own aspirations with the parents. In this case they can be helped through encouragement, and the planning together of their lines of training and education. All of this takes time. Where even one parent neglects the family, there will be some loss in relationships. A sense of deprivation and insecurity often results through such neglect of personal interest.

Not Being God to the Family

Some parents are over-serious in their vocation as guides and aides to their children. Far from lacking a sense of responsibility they take on the problems of the children in a way which it is doubtful that even God does. Because we are moral creatures we have to make choices. Some such parents wish to make these choices for their children. They live in agony when their children do not make correct choices.

Given in the perennial problem of balance in relationships, there will be, even in good family situations, happenings and circumstances which parents cannot control. A happy obedient child will suddenly change to one whose conduct is incomprehensible. Sometimes moral tragedy will take place without warning. A whole family may suddenly be convulsed by some strange happening. We ought to recognise that the moral battle which goes on in the universe is a deep and harsh struggle to catch and hold the minds and wills of mankind.¹ Any Christian home may have its fatalities. The very first family – Adam’s – knew such a disaster – Abel’s murder.

At this point parents may be utterly shattered. They trusted God that this would never happen. They prayed, and sought to bring their children to Christ.

¹ Satan and his powers of evil, in their hatred of God and jealousy of His creation seek continually to destroy mankind. Family life is one favourite target of these evil powers, cf. 1 John 3:10-14.

They endeavoured to train them in. godly manner. Look, then, at what has happened! Hence they by their efforts seek to recover some lost ground. They give themselves over to agony for their children. In all this they are acting naturally as normal parents who have experienced tragedy.

Nevertheless the question is, “How far can we be God to our children?” Did not God allow Adam to sin? Did not the father of the prodigal sense what his son would do with the inheritance? Are Christian families—by nature of the case—exempt from moral struggle and moral tragedy? Many of these questions reveal our small knowledge of God. The image we have had of a perfect family as such has been shattered, and perhaps this is a good thing. Whilst God will ultimately have His family, it will be only through immense struggle and suffering. Without such He is not truly the Redeemer Father, and without parallel struggle we as parents will not truly know the mind of and nature of God.

When we experience tragedy and do not grow bitter and resentful, we are on the way to knowing the deeper dimensions of parenthood. We are on the way to knowing true redeeming love.. Since God is Redeemer-Father (Isaiah 63: 16) then no father has fully realised his fatherhood potential until he has shared, in some measure, in the redemptive process. This always calls for suffering. For the most part of course we do not welcome suffering.

Living With Family Tragedy

Some parents shelve the problem by laying the blame on their children. They have done all they can; the child is wrong. That is all there is to be said. Regret it as they may, they are not going to be crushed by the event. Other parents are crushed; they insist on this. They take the whole event personally. They even accept the blame for the event, bowing beneath the guilt. Yet others live in a mixture of guilt and non-guilt. They try to see why it has happened. Sometimes they fear they have failed. Other times they protest that it isn’t all their fault.

Unfortunately the matter is not solved by laying the blame, even at the right door. This changes nothing. It is at best legalistic, and at worst judgemental. The mere question of justice never really solves the problems of human relationships. Pure and honest love can go far to help and to heal. The father must wait for his prodigal, whatever agonies he may experience. The heavenly Father must sacrifice His Son to demonstrate His love for the lost.

To suffer under guilt, real or imaginary will help no one. To be clear of guilt and reproach – our own or another’s – is to be free to approach the problem objectively. Being emotionally involved to the hilt does not help. Being calm does help. To know something of the knowledge which God has of man, and to know that man – even one’s own flesh – is like that, is to have gone a long way towards helping another. The intimate question is, “Should we not seek to bear the guilt of another believing that in some way our suffering will help to redeem that one?” The answer is, “That kind of suffering will not help. This is the way in which Christ suffered, and this is why He suffered. Only He may bear such guilt.” His guilt-bearing was of course, conclusive. Nothing is left for us to do, at least in this respect.

Helping Without Being God

We miss the whole point, even the purpose of the experience, if we do not see it as the occasion given to us in which to grow and mature. He who has not suffered knows little of the deep maturity which God gives as a gift to His people (Cf. Philippians 1:29, Romans 8:17, II Corinthians 4:16). When we stop feeling hurt, guilty, neglected, and turn to share with God in His immediate purposes we will know a genuine peace. Our family problem may not yet be solved but we have begun to share in the fellowship of His sufferings. Something new and deep has happened to us.

Nor do we need to dramatise this. God has been seemingly silent, for the most part, during the milleniums of man’s rejection of Him. He has worked steadily and purposefully to redeem him, and the final day of man’s history will reveal an immense family standing before God – a multitude that no man can

number ‘–every one of them redeemed out of sin and failure, now knowing and loving the Father. If that can happen there, with God, it can also happen here; and it does.

For this reason husband and wife should draw even closer together, both in “prosperity and adversity”. As they share their suffering so they will grow. As they mature they will be more fitted to help their children in the crises which they also will face.

Growing in Vocation

Not all moral or circumstantial problems arise before the children ‘leave’ and ‘cleave’. Some of the deepest follow afterwards. This is why we need to continue in the process of maturation. It is still, our vocation to help, but now in another role, as parents of married children, and as grand-parents. For single people the opportunities of helping families are endless. Some parents opt out; some are incapable of giving help. Others themselves need help. It is in these situations that we need “all hands to the deck.” Social problems call for the collective gifts of the community. Provided we understand that our increased experience and wisdom are intended for such a time, we will move in with humility and confidence, to bring help.

Growing in Age

Paul Tournier’s Book, “Learning to Grow Old” warns us that our preoccupation with our own “thing” in life may catch us unawares when suddenly that “thing” is completed, or collapses. Over-occupation with the family, or vocation or both, may suddenly find us in old age and not equipped to meet it. The sudden transition may unnerve us. Some superannuation companies estimate that a man lives, on the average, three years after his retirement, and a woman only a few years more.

We need not necessarily be alarmed. One who has quietly worked at the vocational mandate will not fear death. Also he will have set up conditions which will

help in his old age. Since the essence of true life is relationships he will have these with serenity. The positive side of old age is that it is filled with the riches of experience and maturity, and many younger persons will seek to derive help, advice and comfort from these treasure-stores. They will be appreciative of a sun which sets in glory, and in it they will see the glory of the Father Himself.

CHAPTER 12

MAN AND WOMAN- THEIR ROLES IN THE CHURCH

Women & Their Roles in The Old and New Testaments

It is, admittedly, difficult to discuss the role of woman objectively because in the arguments for and against women's equality with man, almost any material will be seen, in its use, as having a bias towards one side or the other. It is best then, to trace the Biblical presentation through from beginning to end. If any conclusion is reached it must be from this presentation.

[i] Woman and Creation

Genesis 1:26ff. presents woman and man, together, as the unit which alone can fulfil the command God has given. Woman is man's indispensable partner. This is reinforced by Genesis 2:18ff. where woman ends man's loneliness, and becomes his essential helpmeet. He is structured to be the leader, she to be the helpmeet. In his eyes she is so important that a man will forsake everyone else, even father and mother, in order to be joined to her. This is how highly she is regarded. His relationship with her, then, is unbreakable. See I Corinthians 11: 7-9, Matthew 19: 5-6.

[ii] Women and the Patriarchs

In the temptation of man, Eve is portrayed as gullible, but not deliberately sinful. Adam is shown as not being gullible, but quite deliberate in his rebellion (I Timothy 2:12-14, cf. II Corinthians 11:3). The woman is not ignored in her failure - as though she were simply foolish - but she is punished (Genesis 3:16, cf. I Timothy 2:i3-14), thereby showing that she is accounted as a responsible, moral person. Had Adam led her truly she would have desisted from the decision of gullibility.

Following the experience of the temptation, woman is portrayed as a strong-minded and active person. The story of Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rachel and Rebekah are the stories of strong-minded women. Likewise the midwives of Israel in Egypt, Moses' wife, Miriam his sister, and many others can be shown to be firm helpmeets of the men of God who were chosen to release Israel. Miriam, the sister of Moses was designated as a prophetess, and likewise Deborah (Judges Chapters 4-5) not only judged Israel but spoke the Word of the Lord to that people, and this in a time of particular crisis. Later another great woman - Huldah - was the prophetess of God, as we read in II Chronicles 34:22f. From her ministry came a significant revival. Many Other women could be shown to figure largely in the history of Israel such as Rahab, Ruth, Esther and Hannah.

[iii] Women and the Law

Without doubt a woman always belonged to a man. By "belonged" we do not mean she was his chattel, but that she related, as a person, to one who was her leader and protector. Before marriage this man would be her father, and by marriage her husband. Should her husband die she came under the tutelage of the eldest son, or, if she had had no child by her husband she would be married to the next in line of her husband's brothers. The story of Ruth is that of a woman seeking to fulfil her femininity in the protectorship of a kinsman. Jesus, at the Cross, committed His mother into the keeping of John the disciple, on this very same principle.

It is claimed that the comparative freedom of woman became restricted through Rabbinic interpretation of the law. It must be admitted that the rabbis, lawyers and scribes brought much legalistic restriction to the life of Israel, in the period we call "between the Testaments". If we search the Old Testament we see that women had a wide participation in the public life of Israel. They were present at popular religious festivals - Deuteronomy 12:12, II Samuel 6:19, at sacred dances such as Judges 21:21, and at a sacrificial meal, I Samuel 1:4. They had part in the ministry of the sanctuary (Exodus 38: 8). The priest's daughters shared in the eating of the sacrifices equally with their

brothers. Respect was to be given equally to mother, as to father (Leviticus 19:3 and Exodus 20:12), and if a son disobeyed his mother and father he could be killed by the congregation. To a great degree much of the early training of the children rested with her.

The woman - as the man - was exempt from Sabbath labour. If she were sold as a slave, then like the man, she had to be freed in the seventh year. If there were no male heirs in her family she could inherit and become a landowner in her own right. Her being as a woman was protected by the Levitical laws. However the general picture gained, especially by passages such as Proverbs 5: 15-20, 31:10ff, and the Song of Solomon, as well as the passages which deal with men and their wives, is that woman holds a high place, even though she is to be submissive to her man, be he father or husband. Whilst occasionally women rise up to lead, they do not generally take leadership in the community. In this case they are rather aides to their menfolk.

[iv] Women in the Gospels

Women are treated in a mature way, in the Gospels. Mary is visited by an angel, and discusses her strange situation in an intelligent and simple manner. Elizabeth experiences the leap of the babe John within her womb. Mary's song was of such nature that it has been sung in Christian worship for almost two milleniums. It transcends Hannah's song which it also echoes. Anna, a prophetess, is a witness to the unique nature of the babe Jesus.

In Luke 8:1-3 we see that a great company of women aided Jesus in His travels and ministry, helping Him and His disciples. They are quite significant since they not only accompany Him to Jerusalem for the last events of the Cross and the resurrection, but they go on into the initial acts of the church which was born at Pentecost. Whilst Jesus never called a woman into the band of the apostles, nor commissioned any of them to preach He deliberately related to them.

He rebukes Martha for her tensions and anxieties. He calls out the faith of the Syrophonecian woman who wishes her daughter to be healed. He calls out of the crowd the woman who, having an issue of blood, has taken secret healing. He speaks dearly to His mother at the temple in Jerusalem, when only a child, and calls

her “woman” when she would seek to pressure His ministry at the first miracle in Cana, the miracle of the wedding feast. In every case He gives honour to women as intelligent and capable of understanding Him. He is firm but loving in His treatment of the woman taken in adultery, the woman at the well, and the woman who was a sinner. He rehabilitates them into full womanly life. Mary of Bethany seems to be the only one who believes in Christ’s death-to-come. Accordingly she anoints Him.

Following His resurrection He purposely appears to Mary Magdalene, out of whom once He had cast seven demons. Now He switches her from an old relationship to a newer one. By the event of Pentecost He gives these leading women a place and ministry in the church. We will later discuss the significance of Pentecost for women, but we see, in any case that the women continued to help the new church. Meetings were held in their homes, both in Palestine and abroad. The book of Acts and the Epistles mention a number of women who participated in the life and action of the church. Paul in particular writes of the roles of both men and women in the Christian community.

[v] Women and Pentecost

Without doubt Pentecost was a significant event for women, as for men. The one hundred and twenty persons assembled together on that day, waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit included a sizeable number of women. “Together with the women” is the phrase used, and surely includes the group who followed Him from Galilee, ministering to Him and His teaching group. The writer of Acts also includes “Mary the mother of Jesus”. When the Spirit fell on the group, He fell on all the women present.

Peter explains this event, unprecedented for women, although not totally for a group of men.¹ He uses the prophecy of Joel 2:28f., “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, upon your sons and your daughters, and they

¹ cf. Numbers 11:16-29 where the Spirit fell on the seventy elders of Israel. Note that Moses understands them to have the ministry of prophecy as in fact did the 120 on the Day of Pentecost.

shall prophesy . . . upon my men servants and my maidservants, and they shall prophesy.” What has happened, then, is not untoward or objectionable, because the prophet has prophesied that it would happen – “in the last days.” The last days have now arrived, with the ascension of Jesus, and the pouring out of the Spirit.’

Women then, as men, are all in the ministry of prophecy. This explains the acceptance of prophetic ministry as noted in I Corinthians 11:5, “... any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head.. “The ministry of prophecy in this mode is not limited to those who are appointed as prophets, for “they shall all prophesy.” Nevertheless women are in this ministry, and do not differ from men.

This accords with Galatians 3:26–29 where Paul states the principles:– (i) All who believe in Christ are sons. (ii) Being a Jew, Greek or female makes no difference. (iii) All are one in Christ: all are Abraham’s children. All are the children of faith. This no doubt is what Paul means in Romans 3:21–31 where Jew and Gentile both receive justification through Christ’s death. Also, on the same principle, Paul would point to Jew, Greek, male and female being baptised in .one Spirit into one body and being made to drink of the one Spirit (I Corinthians 12: 12). Thus women – so far as salvation is concerned – are accepted as are men. Likewise in the gift of the Spirit, and ‘the resultant prophesying, men and women both receive and exercise their gifts.

A question needs to be asked, “Were men and women vastly different before Pentecost? Did a woman **not** receive salvation?” The answer must be that God received women as He did men. With Him there has never been respect of persons. What change, then, took place at Pentecost? The answer must be, “There was no change of function, but a change of *opportunity*.” Israel, as such, had not been committed to preach salvation to the world. Now those of the Israel of God must proclaim the Gospel, universally. Women, no less than men, must be in the operation of this proclamation.

[iv] Men, Women and Church Roles

In the Old Testament system men, without doubt, took the lead in the administration of the state, and of the worship and sacrificial system. Women were not priests. They were cast in the role of helpmeet, never in leadership. So far as we can see in the New Testament the same pattern exists. Men have the *offices of* presbyter (elder or overseer) and deacons. It seems also, with one possible exception, that the gifts to the church of an apostle, a prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, are all men.¹

The question is, "If there is no difference between male and female, then why do not men and women figure equally in the offices, and in the gifts to the church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers?" The answer must be that since they did not figure in this way, then Paul's meaning must be that being in Christ does not dissolve femininity, for one is still a female – God made her. It must mean that there has been no change in function, only in the receiving of salvation, and the opportunity for serving God.

Paul, the very one who has said there is no difference, is the one who emphasises the functional relationships and authority in which male-female operations are exercised. In I Corinthians 11:1–16 he has the following authority-pattern. God is the head of Christ; Christ the head of man; man (the husband) is the head of woman (the wife). He sees no incongruity in the wife being subject to the husband, anymore than he sees any problem in the church being subject to its head – Christ. For Paul the authority-pattern is as old as creation, and being part of the total authority-pattern, will never change.

¹ Two points seem open to debate. Acts 21:9 in some *versions states* that Philip's daughters were prophetesses. The Greek simply says "They prophesied," which would accord with I Corinthians 11:5. However their not being prophets cannot be proved beyond doubt. The second point is seen in I Timothy 3:11 where some women seem included under "*deacons*," *i.e.* they are deaconesses with the same office as the deacons. Cf. Romans 16:1. 'Some commentators, however, do not allow that this is the general sense of the text.

In accordance with this Paul wants a wife not to ask questions in the assembly, but to ask her husband when she goes home (I Corinthians 14:35). He does not permit a woman to usurp a man's authority, nor to teach. See I Timothy 2:11–15. His reason for not letting a woman teach is that she is gullible, and so open to deception. It has been stated that there never was a woman theologian. Perhaps this can be proved; perhaps not. It is almost certain that Paul sees a woman, because of her female elements and attributes, as one whose gift does not lend itself to teaching a mixed group. That a woman may teach other women is clear from Titus 2:3–5. Note that what they teach is very practical: in fact it is all about being truly a woman. Acts 18:24–26 shows that man and wife, teamed together can teach another man.

[vii] Male and Female Equality

The confusion on the subject of the roles of men and women seems to arise where the question of equality is nominated. We have already seen that the question of equality is not raised. It is the question of authority and function. No one is equal with another, anymore than he is unequal. All members of the body of Christ must submit to one another (Ephesians 5: 21, Colossians 3: 16), but it is wives who must submit to husbands, as also children to parents and servants to masters to their Lord. When it is seen that as Christ loves the church, so husbands must love their wives, parents their children, and masters must care for their servants, then submission is not a mark of inferiority.

It has often been argued that time has changed this order and culture also. On this basis, then, women are emancipated. There is no need for women to defer to men. All offices are open to women. In this case it would mean that Christ and His church are a mere analogy, and not an homology. By this we mean that if the marriage of Christ and His church are like a human marriage, then the human marriage can change and adapt as it will. There is no basic structure. If however the marriage of man and wife are not simply like that of Christ, but in fact are of the same order, then the functional and authority patterns will never change. They are as basic to the operation as is the skeletal structure to the body. Time will, therefore, change

nothing. If a woman is structured to be a helpmeet–person, and the man to be a leader–person, then both will find their reasonable fulfilment in these roles. To move out of them will cause strain and tension to both.

[viii] Men and Women in Adaptation

When we speak of “the divine order” for anything, we run the danger of severe legalism. There must be a divine order, otherwise the universe would be chaotic. However when we press the divine order in a sinful and imperfect world, we need to be aware of the dangers of legalism. Nothing short of the ultimate glory is perfect in execution. Legalists seek to shape up the divine order with a view to expressing the divine power. This effort is attended with many perils.

As we have said; there is little that a man can do which a woman cannot do if pressed by necessity. Likewise a man can do most of what is a woman’s normal work. Situations being what they are, or what they are becoming we will, from time to time have women officers, and women performing the ministries of an evangelist, prophet, pastor and teacher. Such things have happened in history, and are happening. Some Asian churches have more women pastors than men pastors. These women are doing a fine work. The truth is that when man abdicates his authority, or fails to rise up to it, women have the capacity to substitute. We know that in family situations many male–female adaptations take place, some not always commendable. Yet we must be flexible in a world of imperfection.

Unfortunately we meet those who crusade for “equality of the sexes,” or who condemn women who have filled ministries normally reserved for men. A hopeless debate is raised to which there can be no answer because one side is defending its status quo, whilst the other is seeking to establish a new status. The debate, sadly enough, does little to improve an already imperfect situation.. Often too the debate has more of, the secular in its origins, than that which is native to the ‘Scriptures. An example of this is the use of the word “rights.” This sort of an idea is neither explicit or implicit in Scripture. Submission to authority, and the full use of one’s functional powers is

the line Scripture takes. When men and women exercise such, with humility, then love, joy and peace seem to have a good measure of expression.

[ix] Women and the Work

It seems, from Scripture¹ that the sexual elements of masculinity and feminity will ultimately pass away. Their need certainly will be transcended for there will be no further children procreated when history comes to its climax. Sexuality, having fulfilled its functions, will cease to be, as such. All, in the ultimate family will be called “sons.” The use of the so-called masculine “he” will lose its connotation with sex as such. Hence the arguments for equality in male and female being are pointless. One need not hesitate to speak of God as “Him” because masculinity here is not opposed to feminity, but part of the whole order, without which male and female operations would be pointless. Each is indispensable to the other. Each has its joy and fulfilment in the context of the other – whatever the authority – or function–patterns may happen to be.

So far as the practical work of women is concerned, they are all in “the testimony of Jesus”². There is no end of their scope of ministry. Within the helper–role is a ministry of wide dimensions. Without woman the man’s role cannot be satisfactorily fulfilled. Men and women need to study together the functions of the presbyter–bishop, and the deacon. They also need to understand that no man may qualify for such if his family is at odds with itself. The joyous and balanced life of the family depends upon the integration of husband and wife, and so, father and mother.

¹ sexual elements. Jesus said that in heaven there will be **no** marrying or marriage. We shall be as the angels. See Mark 12:25. To call the angels "sexless" is to make a statement which suggests angels are deprived. This is not so. presumably we will appreciate this state, when the time for it arrives. Meanwhile we enjoy the gift God has given us, and use it for its purpose.

² The testimony of Jesus is the prophetic ministry in which all believers are involved. Acts 2:14f. should be compared with Acts 1:8, Revelation 19:10, and the uses of the word *testimony and witness* in the New Testament. In brief "the testimony of Jesus" is the actual action of Christ, in what He has done, and is now doing. Believers who are involved in this not only testify to Christ (i.e. witness about Him), but they witness to Him in that they are now involved in what He is currently doing.

Likewise husband and wife must recognise their calling and function within the whole body, and seek to assist each other to fulfil this.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

What Is The True Marriage?

We have seen that the true marriage, in history, and in principle is that of Christ and His church – the Bride and the Lamb. It is this functional principle which constitutes true human marriage. Whilst it sounds very high-flown, and ‘out of this world’ yet in practical fact Christ so loves the church that He gave Himself for her, and gives Himself to her, and she loves Him in response. He sets about keeping her pure and fresh and free. He nourishes and cherishes her. In response she loves and obeys Him, quite glad to submit to His leading, so helping Him in His plan. In this she finds her own fulness and satisfaction.

If this marriage is truly understood, then it will be seen that a divorce of Christ and His Bride is totally inconceivable. In the same sense divorce should be inconceivable. It is as though the Father says to Christ, His Son, concerning the church:-

“Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife,
to live together after my ordinance
in the holy estate of matrimony?

Wilt thou love her, comfort her,
honour her, and keep her,
in sickness and in health:

And, forsaking all other,
keep thee only unto her,
so long as ye both shall live?”

It is as though the Son affirms solemnly, and gladly, “I will.”

For this reason true marriage is the forsaking of all others – father, mother, family, friends, and any other who seems desirable, for this one relationship. This established, one then may relate wholesomely to all others. Such a marriage constitutes a total union of two

people, and this union is a deep inter-penetration of both, each identifying with the other; each giving himself and herself to the other. Each has the deepest human need met and fulfilled—namely true love.

As we have said, it is inconceivable that marriage could ever break up. Yet, as we know, it does. In this age of special pressures, accelerated rates of living, and the breaking down of moral values, 50% of marriages in the State of California end in divorce. The other 50% of marriages cannot always be said to be successful. For this reason we need to get down to some of the causes for divorce.

Causes For Divorce

It may sound simplistic to say this, but it has to be said; most breakdowns in marriage come because people do not really understand what constitutes marriage. Marriage is the total union of two people in order to work out together their vocation for life. That vocation normally includes the procreation of children, and the fulfilling of God's plan which has been given to mankind as a whole. The marriage succeeds when the husband is the leader-protector-provider, and when the woman is the helpmeet of the man. Both love their children, and care for, and cherish them, training them for their fulfilment of vocation, likewise.

The marriage service as it has been used for many centuries names the three causes for marriage:- (i) The procreation of children. (ii) To alleviate the desire for physical consummation, and so a prophylactic against sin. (iii) The “mutual society, comfort and help that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.” These three are very practical. If however children are not desired, or their coming is made secondary, and the couple reserve their love-resources for themselves the marriage can fail. If they refuse to each other—for various reasons—“the mutual society, comfort and help that the one ought to have of another,” then they have missed the very heart experience of marriage.

We have seen that relationships prior to marriage may have a disastrous effect upon marriage, if the love of the couple does not heal the traumas caused by such former inadequate relationships. If one or other partner seeks to ‘use’ the other spouse, then damage will result.

Most of the so-called causes of divorce, are often only the symptoms of a deeper condition which has not been rectified. For example it is often assumed that there is sexual incompatibility between a couple. We have seen that pre-marital intercourse often sets up guilt **and** reaction patterns and does damage to a relationship which might otherwise have been very worthwhile. So called frigidity and so-called over-sexuality is often **one** partner pressing for true union and deep satisfaction, and the other clamming up out of fear and even disgust.

It is a fact, of course that some partners seem incompatible, yet this is a state of mind and attitude rather than an inherent way of being. Marriage counsellors speak of couples being unable to communicate, even before marriage. They have shyness, fear, a sense of inferiority and other problems. They carry into marriage their personal residual problems. They need help and guidance. In most cases a full love-experience could heal, and even liberate the personality. Through failure to be understood problems worsen, perhaps because the person had great hopes for the healing which would come with marriage. In many cases partners within the marriage were even unaware of their deeply seated problems.

In a large number of cases the failure of parents to make a good marriage has set up a sense of failure in the child. A large percentage of children of divorced parents themselves come to divorce. Even where the parents do not divorce the tension of an unhappy marriage deeply affects the children. The success hope of children is not very high. Add to this their covert hope that marriage will heal their own hurts and the probability of a successful marriage is lessened.

To this must be added not an actual cause for divorce, but the climate in which divorce is regarded as an ‘escape hatch’. Young people often have the thought in their mind that marriage – at the worst – need only be temporary. The Hollywood myth is, that if you do not succeed in the first union you may eventually strike your real partner – hit the jackpot as it were! So divorce weakens the marriage relationship. One is not urged to seek rehabilitation of the failure in relationships. This would be bad enough, but the prevailing philosophy – that man has been put here to

enjoy himself, and find as much pleasure as possible, weakens the will to succeed, particularly where there be anguish and problems.

The Positive Argument for Marriage

When relationship failure arrives often the hurt partner, or both, see divorce as the only solution. A second marriage may succeed, if only because the shame of a third acts as a brake on another attempt. Yet the failure of the first must bring a degree of shame and hurt, which time cannot totally eradicate. It is better, then, to take a positive view of marriage. It is to be seen as a relationship to be worked at. We are told that true marriage is an ascending experience, properly understood and shared. It is not a level which is maintained, but that which goes up in steps and stairs. If this view could be communicated, and the elements which go to make a real marriage be taught, then many seeming failures could be rescued. In many many cases they have been.

For this reason a negative view concerning marriage problems should not be entertained. Victor Frankl, in his studies on logotherapy¹ has shown that where a goal can be set, or a reason for success induced, that there is little that the human spirit cannot do. A deficient relationship can become a good one. A distressed family can become a happy one. Deep love can be discovered and shared. Not only can the couple save their marriage – but set up good patterns for their children also. Yet this is so only if the meaning and purpose of marriage is rightly understood and pursued.

The Scriptural View of Divorce

In many Western countries the obtaining of a divorce is being made easy. This is in fact the pattern which existed at the time of Christ. Jews could simply write out a bill of divorcement, the man against his wife, and he was free from her. She unfortunately did not have the same privilege. Sadly enough there are Christians

¹ Logotherapy. See footnote p.49.

–let alone others– who ask the question, “Is divorce legitimate?” If the answer were directly, “Yes,” then they would divorce without question. Their approach is the legalistic one. Nevertheless since the question is asked, it requires an answer.

Any answer must lie in the New Testament understanding of marriage. The following passages should be read carefully and studied closely:– Matthew 19:3–11, 5:31–32, Mark 10:11–12, Luke 16:18 and I Corinthians 7: 10–16, cf. Romans 7: 1–3. Unfortunately it is rare that a person who is asking this question can be objective enough to read it without personal bias. Yet if it is read without bias the following elements are clear enough:– (i) Marriage is the total union of two people, joined by God. (ii) It is indissoluble on any grounds other than unchastity. (iii) To divorce a wife for any reason other than unchastity is to commit adultery by a marriage with another. That is, God still sees the union of the first two as permanent. Notice that this presupposes the true conditions for marriage – a total leaving of the parents, and a total cleaving to the wife. There is no escape clause in any case – even if that ‘leaving’ and ‘cleaving’ were deficient.

Jesus agreed that Moses had made divorce easy. He says in effect, “Well Moses was realistic. You would have it, so he let you have it – for the hardness of your hearts.” He meant that if their hearts had not been hard, they would have loved their wives, made their way through the problems and healed the situations by love. He has given us the powerful key to the solution of the problem – hardness of heart shuts every door; love opens them.

Many have sought to find in Paul’s passage .– I Corinthians 7:10–16 an escape clause. In verse 15 Paul says, “If the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so: in such a case the brother or the sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace.” However this cannot be against what Christ had already said, and it is said in the highest possible spirit – the saving of. the unbelieving spouse, as verse sixteen indicates. In fact the whole passage presses for right relationships, even though one spouse is not a believer.

This leads us back to the meaning of unchastity. The word “porneia unchastity,” has been variously translated fornication and adultery. It is doubtful

whether this debate can be concluded successfully. Fornication generally refers to unmarried sexual intercourse, and adultery to one partner within a marriage practising sexual infidelity. Unchastity has three possible meanings:- (i) Pre-marital sexual intercourse by one partner with another person who is not the marriage partner (ii) Incestuous, homosexual or bestial relationships, with another person or beast, other than with one's partner, either before or in marriage. Cf. Leviticus 18:6-18 and 20:10-21. (iii) The adulterous relationship with another whilst one is married.

If Jesus is referring to "(i)" then it certainly makes much sense. Since chastity is the fire and fuel for marriage, and since its powers are needed to launch a total relationship, then its absence is dangerous to the success of a marriage. One partner will feel cheated, and rightly so. In this case it would not so much be a divorce, as the declaration of an invalid ceremony. The marriage would be null and void. It is most unlikely that Jesus referred to "(ii)" although this would be a good cause for divorce, since it is most certainly 'unchastity'. If Jesus were referring to the third situation - adultery - then it would be on the grounds that two become 'one flesh' and that infidelity is against this bond. Some would claim that it actually breaks the initial bond. However the term "adulterate" means that something is introduced which is not of the true essence - hence we adulterate butter or flour or sugar. Whilst the true butter, flour and sugar are not eliminated, nevertheless they are now impure.

It is here that "hardness of the heart" becomes clear. A partner may be disappointed in the order, because of unchastity prior to marriage, or infidelity within the marriage. This disappointment is natural and even essential, for it is the proof of moral sensitivity. However it does not mean the situation cannot be rehabilitated. Love can forgive, and in fact it does, and should forgive. Guilt is destroyed by love, which covers the multitude of sins, and a relationship will not only be rehabilitated but even enhanced. The emotional and personality damage of wrong relationships can be healed in the balm of forgiveness. This is how God operates with sinful men. It is how we too should operate.

A Secular Understanding of Divorce

A person who does not accept Christianity may often evince a higher view of marriage than some who are Christians. However the secular view is often that marriage should be tested out, prior to marriage - a "try-before-you-buy" experiment. When marriage does not primarily succeed the thought is that it is best to release one another from an unpleasant relationship. A partner may be discovered to be a sexual deviate, an alcoholic, an unfaithful partner, or even mentally and physically impaired. In these cases the normal reasoning tends towards release by divorce.

Nor can one blame such persons, on the basis of their approach to life. Suffering, rightly understood, takes one out of the merely secular approach to life, and reveals deeper reasons for both love and character, in bearing with another. Love bears all things; believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things, This, however, human love does not do. Continuance in marriage cannot be, as such, legislated. Love cannot be made obligatory.

Christians have a duty to persist in love, even to suffering. They can easily be moulded by the world-patterns around them. The present permissive society seems to have finally settled to certain values. Pre-marital sex is acceptable. Homosexual relationships, though not generally desirable ought to be permitted. Abortion should be allowed where one wills it, and appreciation of life does not demand that the foetus be allowed to become a total person. The society of Christ's time saw baby exposure as the accepted thing, and we may well be moving towards even that level of acceptance. However, the principles outlined by Christ should determine our own attitude to divorce. Persistence in continuing an unsatisfying, and even painful relationship may not be pleasant, but may well have a deep purpose within the will and action of God.

The Innocent and Offending Parties

When couples are angry they are irrational. Each sees the other in the fault. An Eastern proverb says, "It takes two hands to make a clap." It is rarely that one is wholly at fault, and the other innocent. It is also impossible to make headway where there is accusation and defence. In this climate nothing succeeds. Justice

–so called–accomplishes nothing. Only love will cut across the offence of the other – real or imagined.

Can, in fact, one be totally innocent? The husband is required to be the leader. If he fails here, and she takes over leadership, is he not culpable, as well as she? If she fails to rise up to his image, is that totally her fault? Is he not supposed to encourage and help, and build her up?

Sometimes a wife is bitter about her husband’s infidelity. Ought she not to see whether, in some way, she has set up some of the conditions for this? Has she been unloving; has she denied him his conjugal rights? Likewise when his wife grows cold is it because he has not loved gently and sensitively? Has she felt inferior and he has not helped her? There are so many facets of relationships which need to be seen, and the right action taken to rectify them.

Doubtless, in these cases, a third must be called in to help. Pride must be put aside whilst a competent counsellor helps the two to see their problems, and gives them a positive direction to take, for the healing of the marriage. This has been done, countless times. Often a marriage has improved miraculously, and shouldn’t it when love begins to work? The resources of love – even human love – are enormous.

The Act and Fact of Divorce

Often, sadly enough, divorce becomes a fact. Two people separate. They say they are incompatible. Perhaps the hurt of infidelity, or the fear one of the other has made the situation intolerable. What, then, of this?

Firstly a covenant has been broken; vows have been destroyed. Two have experimented in relationships, and failed. A deep hurt has resulted. Sometimes heavy bitterness remains. Burning resentments can result. For some it is just a period of incredible relief to be away from the pain and tension of dreadful relationships. Whatever divorce is – it is divorce! When Jesus said, “Those whom God hath joined; let no man put asunder,” He meant of course, that they could be put asunder!

What view should a Christian take? Churches might discipline, but then what form of discipline would they

exercise? This also presupposes that the couple, or one of the pair has been Christian. It also pre-supposes the power of a church to discipline. For centuries some churches have practised excommunication against divorced persons. This has, at least, stressed the enormity of a broken relationship, as churches see it.

Yet, is this enough? In other areas of life, do not people break vows – in business, family relationships, and other situations? The facts are that they do. Is not fornication, adultery and even deviant sexuality practised and yet the churches do not discipline? At the least they do not excommunicate. The problem is not a simple one. Again, where is the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness? Where is its practice? We can see then the matter is not one which admits a simple solution.

The fact that Moses allowed divorce, right within the economy of God’s people may not be an argument for divorce, but it certainly faces the practical facts which confront us in an imperfect and sinful world. The most Christian thing to do is to help rehabilitate the lives of those who have failed in marriage. They should be received with love, and not with hurtful condemnation. The offer of God’s gift of repentance, and the transforming gift of forgiveness of sins should be pressed with love and concern. In some cases this may even rehabilitate a marriage which has known divorce. In other cases it helps people to face life and society and to live in the grace and love of God.

Divorce and Remarriage

He who divorces and marries again is an adulterer. This is the principle Jesus enunciated. A Christian will seek not to be involved in this form of experience. Yet even Christians have succumbed; in fact many have failed in this very matter. What then? Is it condoning sin to accept the couple, or is there a higher consideration than legal morality? The answer is not an easy one.

The two who have married in this way will have to live with their conscience. What they have done, for the most part, is irretrievable. The forgiveness of God will surely cover this failure, especially where nothing can be done about it. Some feel that this so-called marriage must be dissolved, and an attempt made to rehabilitate

the former relationship. Often circumstances make such a move impossible. To attempt such may cause even deeper hurt and harm.

The practical Christian approach is surely one of genuine love. Sentimental softness is not called for, yet neither is legalistic hardness desirable. The grace and forgiveness of the Gospel must be experienced and – as far as is possible – old hurts, resentments, bitternesses and hatred dissolved. Imperfections may not be excused, but they must be recognised, where saints are also simultaneously sinners – to use Luther’s phrase.

Re-marriage may not be encouraged or condoned, but it must be faced. Pastoral care and concern must be exercised. Few are “eunuchs for the Kingdom of heaven’s sake,” which is more the pity. So few rise to the levels and principles to which the Gospel calls us, in Christian vibrancy and power. Were they to rise, then marriages would be more reasonable, powerful and blessed. Since such is not always the case, let us not be censorious. Jesus could say, marvellously enough of His disciples in His last high-priestly prayer, “They have kept thy word.” That is not what we would have said of them. It is not what we say of others.

Let us then be realistic, and loving in our realism. Let us take up situation after situation, with people – just where they are. Without sacrificing essential righteousness, let us not dispense with true mercy and love. Let us never, also, act out of self-righteous condescension. God’s divine order for the universe, for marriage, families, and for continuance in obedience must not be moulded into legalistic demands. Somewhere, in the midst of this love and concern, God will reveal His love and accomplish His will. Somewhere, and somehow, men will know Him as the God of righteousness and the God of mercy and love.

Since the positive title of our Purpose of Man and Woman” it is not fitting simply close it on the theme of “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage,” helpful as this is intended to be. It should recapitulate the whole dynamic thrust of masculinity and femininity as God intended it to operate.

We have to say, then, that the original creation mandate contained the command to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth, subdue it and have dominion over it. Much of this mandate we cannot understand whilst we contemplate it, or work it over in theory. We understand it more when we are in the living substance of it. The command to be fruitful applies primarily to’ human procreation, but not exclusively. The command to fill up the earth is related to the procreational, but not limited to it. The command to subdue the earth and have dominion over it might appear to be restricted to its creational powers and operations, yet this is not only the case. ¹

In the action and commands of Christ we find the fullest mandate for man and woman. Christ came, not as a universal expedient to meet a universal need, but as the Redeemer planned from before the foundation of the world. Since God is “our Father, our Redeemer from eternity” (Isaiah 63:16) then He has planned to show the riches of His grace by making us sons through His Son (Ephesians 1:3-7). His Son will have, in fact, subdued all things upon this earth (I Corinthians 15:24-28), and so will reign over the universe. As sons we must likewise do so. This calls upon the potent forces of masculinity and femininity, combined in one mutual action of obedience to the *most* high God, the Father of eternity.

Hence we will be fruitful in the matter of the new birth of the new humanity (Cf. I John 3:1-14, II Corinthians 5: 17, Ephesians 2:14-19). In fact we will be

¹ We mean that man's overlordship of the earth is not limited to the best use and control of its resources. Man is constituted a spiritual person.' He must also use his spiritual gift to control and use spiritual forces and resources.

fruitful with permanent- fruit (John 15:16, Galatians 5:22-23). We will command even evil powers (I John 2:12, Ephesians 5:10ff.) and reign over the earth (Revelation 5:10, cf. 2:26-27, 3:21) for such are God's true sons - Revelation 21:7. The ultimate family, as we have seen, will comprise numberless peoples from every age and people, and God's victory will be universal. See Revelation 21: 22-22: 2. We mean that the creational mandate, and the redemptional mandate, such as Christ gave to His church, will be fulfilled. The current attempt to divide male and female by the various "liberation" movements (so called), is an attempt to break the amazing power which male-female operations effect.

For us the conclusion is this - God has given us glorious roles .as men and women, be we married or unmarried. He has not limited the exercise of our masculinity and feminity to marriage, anymore than He has limited them within married or unmarried states. He has called us as co-workers with Him in His eternal plan. The fact is quite breath-taking, as also the operation is immensely demanding.

But what a role to glory in - that of being a man and a woman! It is a whole life; it is all life. Let us glory in it, and let us be in it, with everything we have been given. As we have said, the demands are immense; even the suffering may be great, but the playing of this role is its own reward, its own motivation, since it is for the ultimate glory of the Father Who planned it.

APPENDIX I

DEVIATIONS AND PERVERSIONS, THEIR FACT AND CURE

The Genesis of Deviation

A deviation is any departure from the norm. In Genesis Chapter one, God looks at each day or period, as He creates, and at the end of that period sees that what He has created is good. Finally, at the end of the sixth period He sees that it is "very good." "Good" means that it is in conformity with His Being, and His intention for creation. Hence the visible things can truly communicate His invisible things, namely His power and Godhead. Because they exist, they show His power as Creator, but the nature and function of them reveals Him as the dynamic God of purpose and action. This functional goodness, in order to show the glory of the Creator, must always remain true to its innate functionality. When it does not, that is when it deviates, it then indicates a god and creator of another nature.

This is why Romans 1:18 says God is revealing His wrath upon men who work in unrighteousness. The truth is "things as they really are," and unrighteousness is going against things as they really are. Hence hatred is a deviation from love. Hatred is a deviant element. Impurity is a perversion of purity. God's anger is against those who do such things. Before seeing the mode of this anger, let us read the entire passage from Romans 1:18 to 1:32. When we read it thoughtfully, the following principles emerge:-

- (i) God is seen from the nature of His creation.
- (ii) Men have been able to know God in this way, since the visible things express Him as He is in His unseen Being.
- (iii) Men did not wish to know Him, so they rejected the knowledge they had, of Him. In order to blot Him out they re-formed, in their own thinking, the nature of a god. Hence idolatry was born.

- (iv) Because the nature of the truth – things as they really are – is dependent upon the nature of God, men were forced, in their idolatry to pervert, for their own manner of thinking, the true nature of God.
- (v) Because the world is essentially (innately) functional along lines which God has ordained, and which reflect Him, rebellious man had to deny the functional norms, and seek others.
- (vi) God's anger operates upon evil in the following manner:- God increasingly gives man up to his twisted views of Him and the creation. Hence man goes increasingly into perversion. The first perversion is idolatry. man worshipping creation and its beings rather than God Who created it. Idolatry is giving to another person, animal, or thing, the nature and worship due to God. The result of this perversion is to use the body wrongly – or perversely. Hence sexual excess, and then sexual deviations. Homosexuality is one of these. God gives man up to his perversion, and the pain of it. When they persist through an act of will He allows them to run the full gamut of their desires. Now (vs. 28–32) they go the full distance in all kinds of relational perversions. They oppose every authority even to the point of murder, even denying their familial relationships. They move out into total and final chaos.

Modes of Deviation

In I Corinthians 6:9–10 Paul nominates the following deviations:- Immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, greediness, drunkenness, reviling, robbery, He says that any person practising these will not inherit the Kingdom of God. It is a curious fact that homosexuality is looked upon as a perversion, but fornication and adultery are seen as moral lapses, but not deviations. Since marriage is the functional norm for man, fornication and adultery are departures or deviations from the norm. In this manner we could go down the list.

For example drunkenness, or the state of the alcoholic is dependence upon something other than God Himself. Thieving is the attempt to invade creation, and exploit it, rather than receive from it, by honest

labour, that which God has structured it to yield. So we could go down the line showing that every departure from the functional norm is a perversion. As we have said – hatred is a perversion of love, and impurity of purity. John says that he who hates his brother is, in fact, a murderer.

Effects of Deviation

Romans 1:24,26, and 28 explains the wrath of God. as God giving man up to the affects and effects of his own perverted desires. Each affect and effect takes man further away from the norm. He can only be truly satisfied with the norm, for it is for this norm he was creationally structured. To depart from it is to bring anguish to him as an existent in God's creation. For every deviation there is, therefore, a corresponding backlash of guilt. Man, is as it were, dislocating his true self, straining away from what he is into what he can never truly, essentially be, or become. This obtains in every form of perversion. His sense of loneliness, alienation from God and the creation, and his desperate attempts to rationalise his irrational behaviour bring their own consequent retribution. Whilst the deviant person will not admit to the deviant nature of his actions, he has no hope of recovery.

Release from Deviation

Part of the problem with deviations is that the deviant person will not accept moral responsibility for his state. He falls back on the excuse that he is a victim of hereditary and environmental elements. He sees them not so much as the occasion, as the cause of his deviation. He has physiological and psychological reasons for his deviation. Whilst, without doubt these cannot be discounted as ineffective, they are not the basic cause. (The interested reader should study the references included below.¹)

¹ References Taken from a Submission to the South Australian Parliament
It concerns the subject of Homosexual Law Reform, and was prepared by the Community Standards Organisation with the Festival of Light.
Whilst this paper deals only with the homosexual deviation, the *principle* of deviation can be fairly applied to all forms of deviation. Homosexuality is not singled out as. the only, or the worst deviation. Nevertheless its deviation is extremely serious and dangerous, as it is a denial of all we have said of the true functions of masculinity and femininity.

[i] **From Note 3:-** “There is no physiopathological basis (such as femininity or endocrine variations) which would obligate an individual to seek stimulation or satisfaction from the same sex.” This belief “may be easily unmasked as a scientific superstition.” (Alfred Adler in **The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler**, p.424). “The homosexual has been led astray by a generally human weakness in thinking...His argumentation is supported by much scientific superstition.” (Adler p.425).

According to the Wolfenden Report “There are no prima facie grounds for supposing that because of a particular person’s sexual propensity happens to lie in the direction of persons of his or her sex it is any less controllable than that of those whose propensity is for persons of the opposite sex.” (Cited from “**Report on Homosexuality.**” Church of England Diocese of Sydney). So the point of choice is whether to pursue homosexual fantasies or indulge in homosexual practices. (Alex Davidson, **The Returns of Love**, 1970).

[ii] **From Note 5:-** It is true that attention has been given recently to the psychological reclassification of homosexuality by various groups. The American Psychiatric Association Council recently proposed that homosexuality be no longer diagnosed as a “sociopathic personality disturbance,” but as a “sexual orientation disturbance.” The proposal raised a furore among members of the association. (Time magazine, April 1, 1974, p.41).

[iii] **From Note 8:-** Wyden quotes Dr. Edmund Bergler. “There are many healthy homosexuals, but no happy ones.” (op.cit., p.200) Again he records the testimony of a practising homosexual: “Most of the happiness that homosexuals talk about is artificial. They’re very miserable ... use up energies that you could use for something else, something more creative, more productive.” (ibid., p.201).

Dr. John Court concluded from a survey of studies on the causes of homosexuality that the influence of genetic or hormonal factors can largely be discounted, the significant cause being the imbalance in the family constellation resulting in the learning of a deviant set of attitudes. This is also the position adopted by Burt and Meeks (op.cit.p.155). Dr. Court goes on to say that this

conclusion is not happily accepted by some homosexuals who prefer to rationalise their problem in terms of a physical abnormality. It also raises the issue with them of the possibility of change when some prefer to retain their deviant orientation. (Dr. John Court “Homosexuality: A Scientific and Religious Perspective,” **Interchange**, p.13, p.24ff. (1973).

After surveying recent reports of a successful treatment of homosexuals (Bieber et al -1962; Ellis -1956, 1965; and Feldman and MacCulloch - 1971, Dr. Court concluded: “It is now possible to refute categorically the view that the homosexual cannot be effectively treated.” The being willing to change poses the challenge. Inertia is fostered by the threat of leaving the known for the unknown; the propaganda of aggressive homosexuals; the poor recovery prognosis reports of the past; and the self-pity and self-preoccupation of the homosexuals with their problem. (**Sydney Diocese Report**, p. 17)

In another paper, “**Behaviour Therapy with Homosexuals**” (1972) Dr. John Court refers to additional reports of significant successes by psychologists and psychiatrists - Mayerson and Lief (Tulane University); Goldstein (Los Angeles psychologist); and Hadden (Philadelphia psychiatrist). Wilson cites Mackworth, psychiatrist at Wormwood Scrubs Prison, U.K., as agreeing that those with homosexual traits due to environment or upbringing are “often ‘amenable to treatment.’” (Wilson, op.cit., p.59).

[iv] **From Note 11:-** Judge Sir Reginald Sholl of the Victorian Supreme Court raised strong reactions from homosexual spokesmen recently when he asserted that homosexuality is one of the worst and surest ways of spreading venereal disease around the world, Challenged to support his claims and sources he did so, and that ended the debate, in public at least. The primary source of his information was a report presented by Mrs. Barbara Sherman, N.S.W. Government Epidemiologist, presented to the A. & N.Z. Conference on Venereology in N.S.W. in 1971. Figures showed that despite legalisation of homosexuality in London, V.D. infection due to homosexual contacts had risen from 72 percent in 1966 to a current 80 percent.

The N.S.W. study showed that 70 percent of VD. patients treated in the clinic traced their infection to homosexual contacts. The promiscuity of homosexuals was seen in the report that 42 practising homosexuals were responsible for 141 contacts while the 18 heterosexuals reported only 21 contacts. (The Age, March 20, 1974, p.5)

For any form of deviation the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous should be read. In order to cure a deviation, and so revert to the norm, the deviation should be seen as a deviation. The deviant person should acknowledge himself to be responsible for it, primarily. He should realise that its origin lies in the area of rejection of some authority, if not all. His submission to God or a person for help and healing will be a rejection of his own autonomy (arrogant self-rule), and he will be well on the way to recovery. He needs of course the help of another, and when this one is primarily God, he need not fear that he will not be delivered. He surely will be delivered.

It should be seen that even when Paul speaks of the wrath of God upon deviant behaviour – Romans 1: 18–32 – he is stating this only with a view to the fact that God justifies, i.e. acquits from guilt, the deviant person, through the Cross.¹ Paul is not moralistically attacking deviants. He is revealing their deviation, so that, recognising it, they can see their release through the propitiating act of the Cross. In the Cross Christ was totally identified with every deviation of every person. In fact “God made Him to be sin, for us, that we might become the righteousness of God, in Him.” (II Corinthians 5:21 cf. Romans 1:21ff.)

A study of I Corinthians 6:9–11 shows that those who were deviants, such as fornicators, adulterers, idolators, homosexuals and drunkards, were in fact totally released. Says Paul, “You were washed, you

¹ Note that Paul argues the point that both Jew and Gentile are under wrath. He then proceeds to show that God has delivered man from wrath, whether he be Jew or Gentile, by the propitiation of the Cross — to be appropriated by Faith.

were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.” This should be linked with Titus 3:1–7 where Paul shows that this remarkable change, linked with justification is effected by “the washing of regeneration, and the renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

Put in terms that we understand it means that the guilt of past failure and deviation is completely expunged. There is now no link with the past. The guilt syndrome has been broken, and a man is free to be himself, in the creational norm. Whilst we do not suggest that this is always in a flash, and always immediately total, yet in the long run it is total, and faith in the action of God is what makes whole.

Unfortunately legalistic Christians look with horror on deviations and feel that they so utterly warp the personalities and minds of the deviant persons, that recovery cannot be total. This is to demean the power of the Cross and the resurrection. A moralistic condemnation of evil only serves to drive the deviant more deeply into his state. There is no call to condone this state, but there is a call to offer deliverance, and this offer should be a humble, if firm one.

APPENDIX II

THE FAMILY AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

There is a great deal of discussion revolving around the ideas of the family, the extended family and the practice of Christian communities. The nuclear family is that unit naturally comprised of parents and the children. The extended family is the nuclear family extended to take in other members. The Christian community cannot be defined after one particular order. Currently it takes many forms. Some Christian communities are comprised of Christian families who live out in the general community, but come together for worship, fellowship and action. Other groups are located in the one immediate area, and may consist of a gathering of nuclear families, may include extended families, or may be comprised of a number of persons, without any actual families, as such, participating.

There are theories which relate to the family, the extended family and the community. It is suggested that the nuclear family is not a significant unit, and that families would do well to extend themselves. Others see the community as mattering most. Whatever the value of these theories, the practical fact is that many Christian nuclear families exist, that extended families are on the increase, and that there is a sudden and significant growth in the Christian communities.

The nuclear family in the Old Testament is very significant. It is undoubtedly the primary unit. Whilst there is rarely a nuclear family which does not relate to the wider community, and in fact which does not relate to its own family group of the parents, grandparents and so on, yet the truth of marriage, as we have seen, is that a man leaves his mother and father and cleaves to his wife. The two become one flesh, and so a new nuclear unit commences. Often, perhaps generally, in the Old Testament nuclear families lived together in a

wider household. This did not weaken the discreteness of the nuclear family, but rather strengthened it. In this case a number of nuclear families comprised the one household, and lived under the one roof, with distinct sections allotted to each family, or they travelled together in the one caravan, pitching their tents accordingly.

Israel is regarded as God's family. Some have denied this, saying that God is Father to a corporate son-being. That is when God is seen as Father in such passages as Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11: 1, then Israel corporately – as a people – is a son of God. This is undoubtedly true. Yet it is not all the truth. Deuteronomy 14:1 states "You are the sons of the Lord your God..." Passages such as Isaiah 63:16, 64:8 and Malachi 2:10 would probably include both ideas. The fact that the parents are placed highly within a nuclear family situation, is good evidence that the family as such was a significant part of the community. A true principle would be that the community, whilst it strengthens the nuclear family, will only be what it is by nature of its component nuclear families.

In Asia-African and American countries much of the household concept still obtains, and hence nuclear families exist in community situations. When we come to examine the idea of the extended family, we also find that many cultures extend their families to incorporate widows or widowers, or children who have become orphans. The nearest relatives absorb them into families. It is almost certain that the nature of the nuclear family, with its natural **esprit de corps** is not radically changed by the inclusion of new members. Some changes, of course, must take place.

It is advisable for parents to think the matter through before suddenly, or significantly extending the family. The primary charge God has given parents is their own children. When a family is largely extended much of that nuclear family balance of relationships is lost. Some claim it is even enhanced, but children seem to have an innate conviction that they have a right to their own parents. When this is denied in complete measure, there is often a reaction. Extended families, per se, are not necessarily good. Parents have to consider well before they introduce a new set of relationships within their nuclear group. In some cases

nuclear families lose their identity as such and take on a new identity. It has even been suggested that the father is not necessarily the man who can handle the new extended group. In fact it has been said, that by nature of the case he cannot.

There is, of course, a case for extended families. A sacrifice is made in order to give to another child the family life it may have been denied. In the case of the introduction of adults, or younger persons to the extended family, these gain what they may never have had – a true family experience. Yet the matter must be pondered, and a criterion for its operation must be whether in fact the children of the nuclear family will not lose, or their loss be significant over and against the gain which may come to the new member/s.

The subject of Christian communities is not easy to resolve. Some Christian communities are based upon a certain understanding of the early church, often derived from Acts Chapters 2 to 5, and perhaps including Chapter. 13. It is thought that the early Christians actually lived together in a community. This is scarcely the case. The fact is they lived in their own houses – for they often ate “from house to house,” i.e. shared fellowship and hospitality together. It is doubtful whether they lived together in a particular area or a community. Hence Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 11:33 “When you come together to eat..” meaning that they were not already, location-wise, gathered together. The church is the people of God, no doubt, when it is not gathered locationally, but it is truly the people of God when it comes together to worship, hence Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 14:26, “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson,” and so on. The coming together was not for living, but for worship.

It is clear that in this case also, the strength of the gathered community – at worship, teaching, prayer and praise – would be greatly related to the strength of the nuclear families. This is why Paul advises that elders and deacons be drawn from families which have proved themselves and in which the fathers truly control their children. The “community of the Holy Spirit” (II Corinthians 13:14, cf. Acts 2:42., and Philippians 2:1-2), may not always be gathered, but yet it remains the community. This is probably consistent

with Christ’s principle of sending them into the world, to live with people, and to relate as families with other families, persons with other persons.

What then of communities which live together? The answer is that they must avoid the principle of gathering permanently to protect one another, or to develop a situation which may threaten the regular local community. This will depend largely on what they are about in their gathered nature. Many communities have started up, even in the name of the Christian Gospel where nuclear families are ignored, and sometimes even despised. It has been said that nuclear families are selfish. In some cases the critics of the nuclear family have themselves been hurt or disappointed in childhood, and so they come to such conclusions which are often generalisations. Many non-Christian community groups are seeking to find in the gathered situation that which they did not experience as children – a good set of family relationships. If this is the case then it is a testimony to the value and need of the nuclear *family*. Those who insist on the extended family must first be sure that they are not working out some aberration of their own. Nor must the Christian community be built merely upon the desire to rehabilitate those who have missed out on family relationships.

The Church is the true family and household of God. God is truly Father. In the context of the church, whether it be gathered together for community, or worship, or not, the believer will find more than enough compensation for a deficient familyhood or Parent-relationship. He finds the true Father, and the true brethren. Whilst not all members of Christ’s Body act as they ought, yet here is the context of full family living.

For this reason the whole idea of the nuclear family, the extended family and the Christian community must be looked at in the light of the whole family of God. Personal predilections must give way to true Biblical principles and teaching. The church is not the family for its own intrinsic experience of ‘family’, but rather to do the will of God, and to bring others to the Father, through the Son, by means of the Spirit. When it is doing that, then the principle of true familyhood will be experienced, whether in the nuclear, the extended, or

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the community family context. We must be clear, that the nature of the church is that of the true family, and any idea or practice of community which we have, will be within the full community of the total people of God.

This brings us to the vexed question of denominations. Separatists in their indignation simply ignore denominations, never dreaming that they are simply extending the principle of people in their separate boxes. To ignore denominations is no answer, even if we seem to belong to the very best of them. In fact, if we are Christ's people, then we all belong to one another. Whilst denominations may have their virtues, especially in the local gathering for worship, life and witness, yet in fact we belong to the whole church. Whilst we may – and generally must – live in denominations, we must relate to the entire family, in which the distinction of denominations must be, for the most part, lost and dissolved. When we do this we can approach more calmly the various demands and problems related to the nuclear family, the extended family and any form of Christian community which we may believe should be effected.

Finally we must look to the future Family. When sexuality as such will be neither needed nor operative – sexuality having completed its full procreative work – we will all be as one. This will be the complete answer to Jesus' prayer of John 17:20–26. He will have united us, totally. We will be as the angels, neither marrying, nor giving in marriage. We will love totally all others, and each other. Doubtless this community, gathered under the Father, the older Brother, and the Spirit-of-the-Father-and-the-Son, will understand true familyhood, revel in it, and move out to effect whatever operations God has designed within and for eternity.