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The whole matter of sex is considered in the Bible with a robust openness which is entirely wholesome. In this we may see a vivid contrast to the openness of modernity, which is not natural and wholesome but salacious. Our generation is sodden with sex, discusses it on the slightest provocation and exploits it for its commercial value. The Bible, on the other hand, deals with sex naturally and objectively, whether it is setting forth the divine ideal or facing the facts of human weakness and sin.

MARRIAGE THE NORM

To begin with, marriage is normal. It is not a concession to the flesh, permissible but inferior in moral quality; still less is it an eccentricity. 'Be fruitful and multiply . . .' (Gn. 1: 28). 'A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh' (Gn. 2: 24). Man as man and woman as woman are the product of the divine creation and marriage is a divine institution. Such a lofty view of marriage is confirmed by its metaphorical use, for it typifies God and His people. The prophetic denunciations of Israel's adultery and whoredom imply the relationship of marriage between the Lord and His chosen people. 'I am a husband unto you' (Je. 3: 14; cf. Je. 31: 32; Ezk. 16). 'Thou shalt call me *Ishi* (my husband . . . I will betroth thee unto me for ever . . . with (wedding gifts of) righteousness and judgment and lovingkindness and mercies . . . and faithfulness' (Ho. 2: 16, 19f.).

The Old Testament attitude is inherited by the New Testament. Our Lord is present at the wedding in Cana of Galilee and there is not the slightest hint of His disapproval. Far from it: He turned the water into wine (Jn. 2: 1-11). It is errorists who forbid marriage (1 Tim. 4: 3) according to Paul, who wishes the younger widows to marry to keep them out of mischief (1 Tim. 5: 14). So I understand from J. N. D. Kelly (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 1963, pp. 10ff., 93ff., 118f.). E. K. Simpson speaks of 'the medicine prescribed

for feminine levity' (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 1954, p. 76). Even the overseer who developed into the later bishop must be *the husband of one wife* (1 Tim. 3: 2). Whatever this means, whether a prohibition of polygamy or of second marriage, it implies marriage. The marriage metaphor of the Old Testament is repeated in the New Testament, with a significant difference. Now it is not God and His people *simpliciter*; it is Christ and His Church, a richer metaphor even than that of the Church as the body of Christ (Eph. 5: 22-6: 24; Rev. 21: 9ff.). Wives are to be subordinated to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives. These two injunctions must no more be separated than husband and wife. What God has joined together (husband and wife; love and subordination), let not man (he-man or human) put asunder (Mt. 19: 6).

Marriage, then, is the normal rather than the exceptional. But there is room for celibacy. In reply to points raised by the Corinthians Paul asserts that it is honourable (*kalon*) for a man not to touch a woman. Celibacy is not a disgrace (1 Cor. 7: 1). Indeed, like marriage itself, it is successful in virtue of a *charisma*. One man exercises his grace-gift in one way (*houtōs*) and another man in another way (*houtōs*): one in marriage and another in celibacy (1 Cor. 7: 7). We must not over-emphasize Paul's alleged predilection for unmarried men. I grant that he seems to have a preference. 'I will (Moffatt: 'I would like'; NEB: 'I should like') that all men should be as even I myself.' But does he really 'will' it? *thelō* is used in the Septuagint to represent the Hebrew *haphes*, to delight, be pleased. The accusative and infinitive construction in 1 Corinthians 7: 7 is paralleled by Job 33: 32 LXX (Rahlfs edition — from Origen), *thelō gar dikaiōthēnai se*. Might we tone down the Pauline 'will' to 'I delight in, have pleasure in, the thought of all men being as even I myself am'? (We should here keep in mind our Lord's saying in Mt. 19: 12 about the impotent, the castrated and those who have chosen celibacy as a Christian vocation.)

Normal Christian marriage is not only spiritual (J. N. D. Kelly speaks of Paul's 'criticism of "spiritual unions" in 1

Cor. 7: 36-38', *op. cit.*, pp. 75f.) but physical. Husband and wife should render to each other their physical due (1 Cor. 7: 3f.) and not deprive each other except (1) by agreement; (2) temporarily; (3) for a specific purpose, prayer; (4) with a view to resumption.

ILLICIT SEXUAL ACTIVITY

All this is within Christian marriage. But there are such persons as the *pornos* and the *pornē*, who *porneuousi* and thereby are guilty of *porneia*. These words, I believe, interlock, and refer to illicit sexual activity, fornication and adultery. (References to support the interlocking are: Lv. 21: 7; Ho. 4: 18; Am. 7: 17; Je. 3: 2, 3, 7, 8 all in LXX.) We must therefore consider what the New Testament has to say about 'every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse' (W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 1957, p. 699).

1. *It defiles*. According to our Lord's teaching, it is what comes out of a man which defiles him and thus makes him unfit to approach God. From within, from the heart, come all these evils — and the long list in Mark 7: 20-23 (Mt. 15: 18-20) includes theft, murder, adultery and *porneia*. Apart from the question of ceremonial defilement from without, there seems to have been a public opinion which regarded illicit sex as evil. 'We were not born of fornication' said the Jews with innuendo (Jn. 8: 41); and according to the elder brother the Prodigal Son devalued his father's living with harlots (*meta pornōn*; Lk. 15: 30). Such conduct comes under social censure. Deeper still, it is evil, wicked, sinful. It is not that sexual expression is wrong in itself. Such a view would be an affront to the Creator. 'Marriage is honourable among all' (Heb. 13: 4). What is wrong is the sexual expression which is outside marriage and is unlawful — *porneia*.

2. *Therefore the New Testament warns and prohibits in a variety of ways, which we hope to assemble in some sort of progressive, logical order.*

(a) Abstain from it. This comes from the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15: 20, 29; cf. 21: 25), which sought to regulate social intercourse between Jewish and Gentile Christians. It may be a re-affirmation of Leviticus 18. But Greek religion and Greek social life both involved too much sex, either from religious theory or from a general practice of promiscuity, so that the wider

reference to 'illicit sex' need not be ruled out. It would be appropriate to Gentile Christians who lived among 'the Gentiles who know not God' (1 Thes. 4: 5). Negative though it is to abstain, it is the will of God and it is a constituent part of sanctification (verse 3).

(b) We must not only abstain: we must beware of it (*phulassethai porneian*) (Acts 21: 25). We should observe that it is therefore regarded as a danger.

(c) Further: flee from it (1 Cor. 6: 18). You may fight the good fight of faith. But here the highest strategy is flight. This is abstaining with speed. To change the metaphor: do not skate on thin ice. (This is not unrelated to 'Lead us not into temptation'.)

(d) Put to death your members that are on the earth — what is earthly in you (Col. 3: 5), namely *porneian*, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greediness which is idolatry: because of these the wrath of God comes. Bad company and dire consequences! This is dealing with the situation before it arises. Paul does not say 'kill the girl' but kill that something within you which imagines her and desires her. 'That something' ultimately means 'me desiring'. I must 'kill this me'; which is what our Lord meant by taking up our cross. The self-centred ego must be crucified. The only possible comment is Galatians 2: 19f. 'I have been crucified with Christ; and I (*ego*) am no longer living but Christ is living in me; and the life which I am now living in the flesh I am living in faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.' It calls for a somewhat strange prayer. Thomas Fuller once quaintly said 'Lord, pinch me'. With a musical instrument in mind, we might well pray 'Lord, play me'. This so-called 'Christ-mysticism' which can only be understood from within, is illustrated by the unity which exists between a preacher and the interpreter of his sermon. After a short time they work as a team, each almost unaware of the other. (I find it hard to follow those who say that the 'mortification' becomes progressively possible to those who are united by baptism with the body of Christ. It is not baptism but faith and obedience; not the body of Christ but our Lord Himself.)

(e) In fact, don't do it (Mk. 10: 19, *mē porneusēs*). (This follows C. H. Turner, who favours D k Iren. Cf. *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed.

Charles Gore, 1928, Pt. III, p. 88.)

(f) Further, don't associate with it (*mē sunanamignusthai pornois*, 1 Cor. 5: 9-11). The rule is not absolute, or the Corinthians would have to depart from the world. You could not move far in Corinth without encountering sinners. 'Business' — including such tasks as shopping — must be carried on; but there should be no social friendliness or Christian fellowship with notorious (*onomazomenos*, verse 11) sinners. This is partly discipline, no doubt; but Paul may well have had in mind also the fact that 'bad company ruins good character' (1 Cor. 15: 33). This is the cloister in the world.

(g) Further still, don't even speak of it. *mēde onomazesthō en hēmin* (Eph. 5: 3). It is fitting that Christian men should watch their speech. Speaking of sin in details may make us familiar with it, and this could be the first step to its practice. The Victorians were not entirely wrong.

(h) Finally, to sum up, it is against the law (1 Tim. 1: 9f.). The Christian man is not under law but under grace. Christ is the end of the law. But the *pornois* need the message of the law — in this case the Decalogue.

3. Paul now proceeds to a positive direction. *porneia* has many and varied forms and temptation is everywhere. In view of this he advocates marriage for each man and each woman. This is not a concession to the flesh but a pastoral directive. Not everybody has the *charisma* for the unmarried state; marriage is natural and is a divine institution. Let them therefore embark on Christian marriage.

4. *Illicit sex will be judged*. 'Marriage is honourable among all.' (Keep this in mind.) For *pornous gar kai moichous krinai ho theos* (Heb. 13: 4).

The seriousness of such a judgment is shown by the fact that those who perpetrate unlawful sexual conduct will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5: 21; Eph. 5: 5; Rev. 21: 8; 22: 15). How terrifying is the word *exō!* This truth should be proclaimed from the rooftops.

5. *Now why is this kind of sin so serious?* It is because:

(a) *porneia* is one of the deeds or products of the flesh. If 'body' means 'man as made for God', 'flesh' means 'man in his distance from God' (J. A. T. Robinson, *The Body: a Study in Pauline Theology*, 1952, p. 31). As Calvin said, 'flesh' means all that is not in Christ. It may indeed stand for the human per-

son as such ('the Word was made flesh') or be used in the neutral sense of 'humanly speaking' (2 Cor. 5: 16). It may mean 'pre-Christian' or 'before conversion' 'when we were in the flesh, in our sinful and self-righteous past', Rom. 7: 5). It may mean 'sub-Christian' or failing to match our profession with our deeds or our spirit. Jealousy and strife are carnal or fleshly (1 Cor. 3: 3). It may mean just sinful, the old man within us. Or it may suggest a bridgehead for sin, the corrupting element, the involuntary accomplice rather than the criminal (W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948, 1952 p. 19). However we describe this elusive word, we see its characteristic work in Romans 7. There we see man under law as viewed by the man freed from the law (cf. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ET by G. W. Bromiley, I, 1964, pp. 311, 384).

(b) Such a sinner sins against his own body (1 Cor. 6: 18). He violates the temple of the Holy Spirit.

(c) He breaks away from Christ. 'Shall I detach (*aras*) the members (limbs) of Christ and make them *pornēs melē?*' (1 Cor. 6: 15).

(d) He unites with a harlot (1 Cor. 6: 16). He becomes one body with her. This is reminiscent of Genesis 2: 24 and Matthew 19: 5. The result is a sort of counterfeit marriage. In the nature of the case it is only temporary and only physical. But a unity has been set up and there is a permanent bond between them, whatever their future course. Sin is thus committed against the divine institution of marriage.

(e) The body is not for *porneia* but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body (1 Cor. 6: 13). He has rights in it and a use for it — now denied to Him. Its resurrection is placed in jeopardy.

6. *But there is a gleam of hope. The judgment may be averted*. Even *porneia* may be the subject of repentance (2 Cor. 12: 21; cf. Rev. 2: 21; 9: 21). And Paul could look round the church at Corinth and without mentioning names could remind the members of the trophies of divine grace in their midst. *Pornois* will not inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But — and here the gleam bursts forth into flashing splendour — you had yourselves washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6: 9-11). Paul had found at Corinth that his preaching of the gospel was indeed the power of God

unto salvation — as his Master had done before him. 'The tax-collectors and *hai pornoi* lead the way for you into the Kingdom of God' (Mt. 21: 31f., cf. Jn. 7: 53-8: 11, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more').

In view of certain advocates of a 'morality' which differs from that of the New Testament, we ought to say that though as a result of repentance and faith a man is forgiven, we have no right to say that he may continue in sin. This fails to distinguish between *hina* and *hōste!* We can show the enormity of some proposals by a simple illustration. I heard on the wireless that a bishop had confirmed a convicted murderer and had administered the Holy Communion to him. I infer that the man had repented and had made his peace with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Even the murderer can be saved. But we should be outraged at the suggestion that men might be allowed, even encouraged, to go out and commit murder. 'Go and sin no more.'

It is similar with fornication and adultery. These sins may be forgiven. But first there must be repentance and then faith; a forsaking of sin and a turning to Christ — and staying with Him. 'Go and sin no more.'

DIVORCE

We must now consider the question of divorce. Is marriage binding until death us do part or are there reasons in virtue of which a state of marriage may cease? In this discussion we ought not to forget that Joseph is described as a righteous man who nevertheless intended to divorce Mary (Mt. 1: 19). Can a righteous man still divorce his wife?

The relevant references are Matthew 5: 32; and the Markan tradition of Matthew 19: 3-12; Mark 10: 2-12; and Luke 16: 18. Decision largely turns on the exceptive phrases *parektos logou porneias* in Matthew 5: 32 and *mē epi porneia* in Matthew 19: 9. They seem to be widely attested. Stauffer in a fine exposition of marriage (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, I, p. 650) states 'Matthew . . . in both cases in-

roduces a qualification which blunts the saying and is obviously designed to justify the practice of the Early Church. . . . These casuistic clauses can hardly derive from Jesus.' This is a value-judgment rather than textual criticism and it would be obvious only to certain persons. I am not sure that it is not *petitio principii*.

The disciples' reply, which T. W. Manson characterizes as insolent as well as spiritually blind (*The Sayings of Jesus*, 1949, p. 215), prompts the rather neglected statement of Jesus: Not all *chōrousin ton logon touton all'hois dedotai*. Not all 'have room for' this word. The verb is used in John 2: 6 and 21: 25 (in the former *ana* is adverbial; cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, p. 69), and in 2 Corinthians 7: 2. It appears with abstract nouns in 4 Maccabees 7: 6 'thou didst not befoul with unclean meat thy belly that had room only for piety and purity'.

Not all have room for this word; it is thus only for those to whom it has been given. This reminds us of the *charisma* of celibacy and of marriage. So, by analogy, rigorism in the matter of divorce is a gift. But what of those who have been denied the gift?

Moses permitted a failure to observe the divine idea in view of an existing situation, the hardness of heart of men. So, can we argue, our Lord saw that some, not necessarily with hardness of heart but with lack of gift, could fall short of the divine ideal if faced with evidence of a marriage partner's *porneia*?

Could separation be followed by re-marriage? It would seem that, after every effort has been made for the salvation of a partner, if he or she 'separates' it is to be allowed to take its course. In such instances the partner who is left is not bound (*ou dedoulōtai*: 1 Cor. 7: 15). This is an agonising situation for partner and pastor alike: not the ideal, certainly not the rigorous ideal for those with a 'gift'; but freedom to serve Christ in a new Christian union.

I do not proclaim all this with a prophetic 'thus saith the Lord'. I submit it for the discussion of learned and Christian brethren.