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Love and Sexuality Part 2

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THE first marriage had immeasurable advantages over those of today, yet it failed in the greatest essential of all—the religious-spiritual aspect. Adam and Eve experienced love at first sight (a rare occurrence these days, fortunately, considering the risk factor involved). They were perfectly compatible, perfect as individuals, and with unlimited promise for being perfect spouses.

There could be no chance of a wrong choice—there were no other men or women to choose. They had no long history of sin to becloud the judgment and to make the passions less reliable. They had no economic problems, needed no dowry or savings with which to start. There was no possibility of a mistake, since God had provided the partner for each. Since life was to go on always, plans could be made for indefinite periods. They did not have to give serious attention to the spacing of their children. They had no warped ideas about sex, no unhealthy inhibitions, no phobias, no anxieties.

The list could go on, but this is enough to indicate that their chances of success were incredibly greater than for any marriage taking place today. Yet from the time that in mistaken chivalry Adam joined in eating the fruit, it was not long until he was blaming Eve for being the cause of his fall. When their love for God and their loyalty to Him failed to pass the first great test, the love and loyalty of their own relationship inevitably suffered.

For the first five days of the first week of earth's history, the Lord created "things" and the lower orders of life. On the sixth day, after Adam had given names to all the animals, the Lord made it evident to him that he lacked a mate. The animals had passed in review in pairs. Did Adam increasingly sense that he was alone? In any case, the Lord Himself said that this condition was not good and proceeded to provide Adam with a help meet (suitable) for him.

It should not be difficult for any happily married husband to imagine Adam's delight on seeing this beautiful woman standing before him. In every meaning of the term, she was womanly in the highest sense. And her rapture on seeing him should be easily imagined by any happily married wife.

Note that maleness and femaleness are pointed up in the Lord's announcement of the creation of man. That the sexuality of human beings is implied in this statement can hardly be denied. Yet man's sexuality was superior to that of the lower animals. He reflected the image of God and was to express himself as one aware of that

The Bible and Sex

By C. E. WITTSCHIEBE

high rank. It was left to man to choose the frequency of love-making and to exercise judgment and conscience in the choice of a mate. The animals, in the main, were governed in this by "built-in" rhythms.

Basic Elements Revealed in Eden

The basic elements of marriage and the sex relationship appear in Genesis 1 to 3. The Lord made them male and female, made them to be fruitful, and allowed them to be naked and yet unashamed. He performed the first wedding service. No matter what symbolism the words "one flesh" contain, no matter how spiritually they are to be interpreted, the fact remains that with them the Lord also describes a physical relationship. This basic significance still holds in spite of the deterioration, corruption, and perversion that have damaged it since the Fall.

Even though all of us today suffer the consequences of our wrong choices, we must recognize that Adam's reason for accepting the fruit from his wife's hands was his great love for her and his feeling that he could not live without her. Here was the first act of "chivalry," but one that failed because it left out of account a higher claim to allegiance and obedience.

In Genesis 26 is the narrative of Isaac's lie about his wife, Rebekah. He had told Abimelech, his host, that she was his sister. One day, however, the king looked out a window and saw Isaac "fondling" (R.S.V.) his wife. Evidently the caresses were not those one would ordinarily lavish on

a sister. No doubt remained in the king's mind as to the real relationship.

Why was this detail related? Why could not the Lord simply have mentioned through Moses that the king found out that Isaac had lied to him? It seems rather odd that the detail should be mentioned at all. That it is, indicates the lack of prudishness that is characteristic of much conventional religious writing on such subjects today.

Genesis 29 and 30 tell the story of Jacob's love for Rachel and his willingness to work several years to win her as his wife. The trickery of Laban and Leah is recounted. Tragedy centered on Leah, for after their first night together when Jacob thought she was Rachel, she never knew the real love of a husband. This is revealed in the names given to her children and her continual hope that she could someday be loved by him as Rachel was.

In fact, one incident is related in which she "bought" her husband's attentions for one night from her rival. This detail could easily have been left out. But the Bible is describing real people, real men and women, people in whose lives love and the sexual relationship (and the desire for children) are considered normal and wholesome.

In Genesis 39 Moses reports the incident of the attempted seduction of Joseph by Potiphar's wife. Again, the episode could have been referred to in an abbreviated and formal way, but the actual attempt is described. Full credit is given to Joseph for mas-

Doubtless as much danger confronts the church today by failure and wrong in the area of sex and marriage as in any apostasy or group of apostasies current at this time.

tering his normal masculine drives because of commitment to the Lord and allegiance to Potiphar.

In Exodus 19 Moses gave directions to the people to prepare for the coming appearance of the Lord on Mount Sinai. Included in the counsel was the command to abstain from sexual intercourse. We do not necessarily know how to apply the principle—if there was one—of this one-time event to anything involving the church today, but it remains evident that the whole people were given this explicit advice. There is frankness without any thought of suggestiveness or impurity. Unless the children were totally segregated in this meeting, they must have heard the counsel.

In Exodus 21:10 protection is legislated for a female slave betrothed to a man. If this man, after taking her, brought another woman into his home, then he was not to deprive the slave-wife of food, clothing, or conjugal rights (Moffatt). Here the place of sex is frankly recognized and considered to be a "right" (as in 1 Corinthians 7).

In Deuteronomy 21:11 there is recognition that a man's attraction toward a woman could arise, at least in the beginning of the relationship, from the fact that she is beautiful. There is no criticism of a man's conduct in wanting such a woman—only protection is provided for women who are captives.

If repetition and extended comment are criteria of importance, then one of the major subjects of the book of Proverbs is the warnings against

becoming involved in adultery. The writer points out the intense sensual attraction exerted by the passionate solicitation of a married woman. She offers her potential partner his "fill of love" (chap. 7:18). Implicit in these statements is the recognition that sexual pleasure has a strong attraction for man.

Strength to Meet Temptation

The basic strength against such a temptation is, of course, a life dedicated to God and an ear open to His wisdom and counsel. However, man being what he is, the Lord advises him to find satisfaction for his legitimate drives in his own marriage. In Proverbs 5:19 he is told to be satisfied at all times with his wife as his sexual partner. He is encouraged to be "ravished" with her love. When the wife reciprocates with a response that is the feminine equivalent of "ravish," then the husband will find little appeal in the attractions of "the other woman."

Doubtless the finest example of pure-but-passionate relationship appears in another book by the same author—the Song of Solomon. The frankness of the symbolism used has embarrassed some theologians who feel that the sentiments expressed are too "earthy," too far below the high level of "spirituality" one would expect to see in canonical writings. Yet this love story, with all of its unself-conscious pleasure in the phy-

sical presence and affection of the beloved, has been taken by many to be a description of the basic relationship between Christ and His church. To Him she is the bride, and His banner over her is love. If wholesome human love can be used as a vehicle for conveying the meaning of Christ's love for us, it can hardly be considered sordid, carnal, or sensual.

Hosea's story touches us in a very human way. Granted that he was one of the great prophets, honored by the Lord as a spiritual leader, yet this man knew the ecstasy, the longing, the betrayal, and the hurt of a woman's love and infidelity. He cared for Gomer, but she ran off and left him. Evidently her attraction for other men was strong enough to cause her to leave her children. Yet Hosea's love for her did not die. He finally brought her home again.

The Lord saw fit to use this man's experience as a way of showing His love for unfaithful Israel. What Hosea felt for Gomer, the Lord felt for Israel; what Hosea had done for Gomer, the Lord wanted to do for Israel. The imperfections in this analogy need no pointing out; but the Father must use illustrations that can convey meaning to us on the human plane.

Paul Not a Misogynist

In his unmatched letters to the church of his time, Paul laid the foundation for much that constitutes theology today. Seventh-day Advent-

Conversion

By LYNNE KOBASHIGAWA

I gazed reluctantly at the scene before me. Only a few weeks before I had trodden the same path. At that time outstretched arms had summoned me to enter into another world. I had yielded to the beckoning and soon found myself under a canopy of daintily tinted leaves whose delicate faces were illuminated in mellowest pastels. A gentle breeze had glided over me while tempting the whispering objects above and around me to follow him. Some, fascinated by his alluring ways, willingly submitted to his call.

Now, an empty scene rested before me. The trees stood bare as their motionless branches nonchalantly looked at me. I stared at the ugly disrobed trees that stood so lifeless and colorless. The fallen canopy, browned and shriveled, had been left on the ground. Disappointed at the sight, I turned homeward.

A few weeks later I found myself at the same spot. The once-ugly view had now been transformed into a beautiful spectacle. The lifeless trees were now enameled with a slick coating of ice, which, beneath the penetrating light of the sun, refracted prismatic rays like precious diamonds. The once-brown floor was now carpeted by clean white snow. Nature had converted ugliness into beauty.

The sinner is ugly and browned with sin as he yields to the cunning temptations of Satan. However, when he realizes his wrong, repents, and asks God's forgiveness, the Compassionate One freely pardons his sin and imputes to him the purity of His own life. The Lord kindly announces, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). Then the sinner is converted from sinfulness to sinlessness, from ugliness to loveliness.

ists in general are well versed in the great themes he propounded. However, his writings on marriage have been relatively neglected. Volumes and sets of volumes have been piled high in interpreting righteousness by faith, faith and works, the meaning of the law, the preconversion and postconversion state of the believer. Yet relatively little has been said or published on his "theology" of marriage.

Because of what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 7, some liberal theologians have considered him to be at best somewhat neurotic in his feelings about women and marriage and at worst a decided misogynist (woman hater). This is usually due to some presuppositions on the part of these scholars and to a failure to see that the chapter is grounded on the implications of verse 26.

Paul Is Frank and Open

Whatever one thinks of Paul, it must be conceded that in the opening verses of the chapter he deals in a frank and open manner with the sexual relationship. He advises the Christian couples in Corinth not to refrain from intercourse for too long a period of time, and then only by mutual consent and for a particularly important purpose. He does not recommend abstinence as a way of increasing sanctity, nor does he even remotely imply that the physical intimacy of marriage is in any way detrimental to the spirituality of the partners.

He wrote this with a keen awareness of the level of morality obtaining in Corinth at that time and a certain knowledge of the temptations present in that loose metropolis. Even today one can describe a man who lives luxuriously or dissolutely as a "Corinthian"; and "to Corinthianize" in that time was to "paint the town red." One wonders what the atmosphere of the church service was the day the presiding elder read this communication to the congregation.

Obviously, in a short series we can hardly deal with all the aspects of this subject, nor can we pretend to offer anything more than suggestions for an "orthodox" theology of sex. However, it seems evident that such a task faces the church. All through the ages "sex" has been a major source of danger to the spiritual progress of God's people. No one can argue that this is not a gravely serious problem in this time. Doubtless as much danger confronts the church today by failure and wrong in the area of sex and marriage as in any apostasy or group of apostasies current at this time. ♦♦

(Concluded next week)

A Personal Message From Your General Conference President

HEART to HEART



Beloved Brethren and Sisters in Many Lands:

Paul's charge to the elders of Ephesus has recently made a special impression on my mind: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Here the old apostle is warning us to watch—be on guard, keep your eyes open, expect men to arise from within the church teaching subtle error and half-truths "to draw away disciples after them." An excellent note penned by the Lord's messenger explains Paul's words in more detail. As members of God's church of the remnant we should study these words carefully and prayerfully. They apply to the times in which we live and serve now. We neglect their message of truth only at the risk of eternal loss!

Read and reread these words prayerfully: "Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming upon the earth. As the coming of Christ draws nigh, he will be more determined and decisive in his efforts to overthrow them. Men and women will arise professing to have some new light or some new revelation whose tendency is to unsettle faith in the old landmarks. Their doctrines will not bear the test of God's word, yet souls will be deceived. False reports will be circulated, and some will be taken in this snare. They will believe these rumors and in their turn will repeat them, and thus a link will be formed connecting them with the archdeceiver. This spirit will not always be manifested in an open defiance of the messages that God sends, but a settled unbelief is expressed in many ways. Every false statement that is made feeds and strengthens this unbelief, and through this means many souls will be balanced in the wrong direction.

"We cannot be too watchful against every form of error, for Satan is constantly seeking to draw men from the truth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 295, 296.

What an arresting statement: "Satan hopes to involve the remnant people of God in the general ruin that is coming

upon the earth." Moral, social, spiritual ruin is ahead. God's Word foretells it. Current events shriek its fast approach. Satan would like to see God's people a part of the world, their faith gone, careening madly toward moral, social, and spiritual bankruptcy. If the evil one had his way, God's remnant would be plunged unprepared into eternity with the vast masses of the lost.

So Satan attacks the Advent message—the bulwark God has thrown about His people for their moral, their social, their spiritual protection. "Men and women will arise professing to have some new light" with a "tendency . . . to unsettle faith in the old landmarks." From the extreme "right" and from the extreme "left" the evil one will launch his attacks. This "new light" will seek cunningly to undermine confidence in the church, its leadership, and its institutions. They will quote and misquote the Spirit of Prophecy. "False reports will be circulated, and some will be taken in this snare."

Satan will also attempt to insinuate among the ranks of God's people the faithless tenets of the new morality, the current liberal theology. Old standards will be ridiculed and challenged. We will be told the Advent messages must be updated and brought to terms with secular philosophy. Questions will be raised, doubts created. Faith will be subtly eroded. "This spirit will not always be manifested in an open defiance of the messages that God sends, but a settled unbelief is expressed in many ways"—"to unsettle faith in the old landmarks."

In such an hour of satanic attack upon the church and the old landmarks God's people will need to be much on their knees and in a deep study of the Word.

"We cannot be too watchful against every form of error, for Satan is constantly seeking to draw men from the truth." "Watch and remember." (Italics supplied.)

Read these words from volume 5 over and over again!

Yours for confidence in God's message,