

Author: Paul F. Bosch [paulbosch31@gmail.com]
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INTIMATE COMPANIONSHIP: SEPARATING SEX FROM MARRIAGE: PART TWO 21st Century Realities and Eschatological Prolepsis

45 I take up in Part Two a further exploration of some issues left unresolved in Part One. And I continue my numbering from Part 1 to indicate to you that these two Essays are all of a piece. To comprehend the entire argument implicit in my title above, you'll have to read Part One in its entirety, Essay 222, September 2018.

46 (As above, the three dots at the end of each point below mean to suggest that much more needs to be said.)

47 What of abortion? A short answer: Abortion is terrible as a birth control technology. But I can imagine a necessity for it, that necessity to be determined by a woman and her doctor. So-called “pro-life” arguments are for the most part simply an endorsement of the Genesis 1 position that I criticize above: That the possibility of procreation is absolutely fundamental to any human sex act. It's a position that I find patriarchal and mysoginist in the extreme. It reduces women simply to Baby-Making Machines. I endorse president Bill Clinton's standard: Abortion should be safe, legal -- and rare...

48 What of homosexuality? Short answer: “We are all bisexual,” a respected psychologist mentor of mine maintains. All people, without exception, find themselves, from an early age, somewhere along a broad continuum stretching from almost exclusively hetero to almost exclusively homo. And each of us, without exception, is at least a little of both. So I am prepared now not simply to tolerate or to endure this rich human diversity, but to celebrate it. I am prepared to argue that God's Holy Spirit is doing a truly New Thing in our day, in enlarging contemporary human consciousness of our rich human diversity...

49 And it's a pity that Canadian courts and parliaments have heard and heeded the Spirit's voice in this matter, while many Christian churches – and many another social institution, East and West – have not. See Joel 2:28...

50 Same-sex marriages and blessings – see paragraph 59 below – have been legal in Canada, from coast to coast to coast, for twelve years now, and the sky hasn't fallen. It's only a matter of time – maybe lots of time! -- before other nations make it all but unanimous world-wide. Gamaliel's advice in Acts 5 seems as pertinent today as in Apostolic times: “If this...undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them – in that case you may even be found fighting against God...”

51 What of polygamy? Short answer: Unacceptable in almost all circumstances I can think of. Polygamy, despite its persistence throughout Biblical history – Indeed, polygamy could be described as the Biblical model for marriage! Hah! – is irredeemably patriarchal and misogynist and a threat to women’s well-being...

52 Same with polyandry (one woman, many husbands). Surely less common, but equally unacceptable. It’s matriarchal, and therefore unjust to men...

53 What of prostitution? Short answer: Sex workers, yes. Sex slaves, male or female, no. Sex workers, under proper protections and regulations, might serve a morally defensible position in a future society. Standards 27, 28, and 29 above would of course be observed. Sexual slavery is always wrong...

54 What of so-called “open marriage”? This was popularly spoken of in the ‘Sixties and ‘Seventies to refer to a situation where married spouses felt free, by mutual prior consent, to engage in intimacies outside their marriage commitment. Short answer: Based on reports I remember from the ‘60s and ‘70s, I’m not optimistic that “open marriages” can survive. Most of them, in those days, ended pretty quickly in divorce....

55 What of incest? Short answer: Unacceptable. It most likely would violate one or more of my Principles 27-28-29 above. Further, the genetic horrors of inbreeding have been well-documented throughout history....

56 What of masturbation? Short answer: Again, in my view, a relatively safe, harmless, and morally unobjectionable way to find personal sexual satisfaction...

57 What of vasectomy, tubal ligation and other forms of voluntary, permanent sterilization? Short answer: No moral problem for me. The human species these days produces more than enough babies. A warning, however: As of this writing, many of these surgical procedures remain for the most part surgically irreversible...

58 What of divorce? Short answer: sometimes a tragic necessity. Always tragic, sometimes necessary. Divorce is always tragic, in its permanent, irreversible damage to the couple, and to their families and friends, to the children involved, to the social fabric, and, importantly, to the image of an Undying Divine Agape now permanently sullied. (See paragraph 35 above.) All parties to divorce share blame, not excluding the Church that blessed the original marriage. Certainly counselling, perhaps a program of Restorative Justice, and perhaps even the Rite of Confession and Forgiveness: Each of these maybe be necessary for some kind of healing to take place. Nevertheless, in divorce as in other contested areas of life, our principle should always be “What is the most loving thing to do, in a chaos of competing possibilities?” Divorce may well be the most loving response in a bad situation...

59 What of re-marriage after divorce? Short answer: Permissible, if all the aspects noted above in paragraph 58 are acknowledged by all parties and dealt with...

60 What of bestiality? Short answer: A non-issue. Most often put forward by opponents of change without any serious expectations of alarm. There’s surely no long-term threat here to anyone’s piety or morality. Jokes about the farm boy and the sheep are usually just that: antic wheezes. Same with presumed intimacies between the lonely widow and the gorilla. (“He never phones. He never writes....”)

61 And will the church of the future marry? Or bless? I've argued before in this space that the Christian church should get out of the marrying business altogether. Homo and hetero. And simply bless. That's our calling. Leave the legalities of marriage to the civic authorities. That's their calling. In Europe, even Roman Catholic sensibilities have managed to accommodate this position...

62 Well. I'm out of steam. What do you think? Am I dangerously antinomian? Am I opening the door to rampant licentiousness?

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