

Religion and the Corruption of Eroticism

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The sexual embrace can only be compared with music and with prayer

~ Marcus Aurelius

Introduction

Using the words “Religion” and “Eroticism” in the same sentence generates a number of different responses, depending on the perspective of the reader. Some will immediately be suspicious and consider the combination of those two words as the sum of corrupting influences on what to them should be austere and holy. Others will perhaps smirk and replay their feeling of disgust with how traditional religion has supposedly trashed eroticism. Yet others may think that we must be discussing some type of new-age, free-love movement.

The goal of this article is to demonstrate that Christianity (as directed by Biblical teaching) and eroticism (in its proper context) fit very well together, and it is only because of historic distortions and

mischaracterizations that we have come to the point where many have abandoned or at least questioned the faith because it doesn't seem to square with "real life," and in particular with the sexual aspects of life.

Sexuality and Shame

Sexuality is, of course, a touchy subject and has been viewed in negative terms by many throughout history regardless of religious perspective. However, in contrast to these negative and questionable views of sex, the book of Genesis indicates that after God finished each element of the creation, He paused and called it "good." How did something that was supposedly good come to be seen as bad?

The book of Genesis indicates that the basic and primary reason for the corruption of eroticism was the fall of Adam and Eve. Prior to that event, both the man and the woman were "naked and unashamed" (Genesis 2:25), implying that they had no sexual hang-ups and no feelings of guilt. Everything about their bodies, their sexuality, and their relationship was pure and right, and shame for them was unknown. This nudity was not only physical—it was also psychological. They were completely open and honest with each other, with nothing to hide or conceal.

After their disobedience, however, the first feeling that they experienced was shame, and the first action they took was to sew leaves together to cover themselves (Genesis 3:7). It is significant that at this point, no other people were there, and the couple was completely alone. In other words, they had been so deeply affected by shame and guilt that they were not even comfortable being naked in front of each other with no one else there to see them except God.

The shame of their nudity was not simply related to their physical bodies—it was also psychological. From that point onward, in addition to the fig leaves to cover their genitals, they put on what all of us are intimately familiar with—"masks" to conceal their thoughts and hide their motives. They were afraid to fully reveal themselves, both to God and to each other, and became afflicted by the same psychological problems that we suffer with today—guilt, fears, deception, inferiority complexes, blaming others, and so on. Sexuality, which has deep connections to the associated male/female relationship and cannot be divorced from it, was thus corrupted in the first family, and at the beginning of humanity. In the centuries that followed our views of sexuality became twisted in a variety of additional ways, resulting in much human misery and suffering.

Misinterpreting the Bible

One of the major areas of concern in the Bible is human behavior – upholding and encouraging what is good and condemning and eliminating what is bad. In America the Bible is seen as being "narrow" and "confining," but that is the nature of all morality – it is necessary in order to promote peace, justice, and fairness. Furthermore, God is not a cosmic killjoy – the Ten Commandments and other expressions of Biblical morality are intended for our benefit. It is like a fence to keep us away from bad things.

In any society there is a direct correlation between the level of morality, and the happiness, success, and prosperity of the society. Here are a few examples:

- When people are generally moral and unselfish their marriages will be stronger and healthier, producing families with less dysfunctionality and abuse. Their children will tend to be more

balanced and productive, and less likely to grow up to be needy, addicted, or poverty-stricken.

- Moral societies have higher ethical standards for leaders, and there is much less tolerance of bad behavior. Therefore, people in general are treated better, and there are more limits on political corruption. Contrast the moral climate of America with that of a country like Uganda in Africa where dictators like Idi Amin killed people for sport.
- The elements of society intended to protect it from internal and external threats (the police and the military) will have more pressure on them to benefit society, and much less scope for corruption and the abuse of power.
- Business leaders likewise have to live up to higher standards, and their companies must produce safer and more reliable products and better services. Where there is fairness and an arms-length relationship between business and government, businesses have to become customer-focused and produce quality products at competitive prices in order to survive and prosper, rather than becoming part of the government and therefore monopolistic and uncaring.
- Business growth requires credit, which in turn requires a level of borrower honesty. Interest rates, the cost of money, are largely based on the risk of making loans – the more people that default, the larger the losses to the lenders, and therefore the higher the rate they will require in order to induce them to lend (which is the reason that interest rates on credit cards is so high). Correspondingly, the more honest and credit-worthy people are, the lower the interest rates will be, and the more competition there will be among lenders to gain the business of borrowers.
- Inculcated morality reduces crime rates, which in turn requires less resources and lower taxes from the society to protect itself – fewer police officers, less courts and lawyers, smaller prison and penal systems, less need for drug treatment programs, smaller homeless populations, less need for poverty relief, etc. This is especially striking when we understand that homelessness in America is largely due to substance abuse issues, and poverty in America is mostly the result of female-headed households.

People are still human, and this is not to say that morality will eliminate human problems and produce heaven on earth. The point is merely that an increase in general morality will typically give us a “two-fer”: an increase in productivity, and a decrease in social pathologies that weaken and damage societies. Therefore, every society has (or should have) a vested interest in promoting the morality of its members.

In regard to sexual issues, the Bible clearly spells out what is right (sex within a committed relationship) and what is wrong (sex in other contexts). Sexual morality is also intended as a benefit, and the social pathologies created by various types of wrongful sex are also clear – jealousy, distrust, hatred, betrayal, revenge, divorce, confused and conflicted kids, feelings of worthlessness, abortion, unwanted pregnancies, unwanted children, venereal diseases, and so on. Whether a person is Christian or not, adhering to Biblical advice on life and sex pays dividends, both for individuals and for the society at large.

However, some Biblical content has been used to teach or imply that sex is shameful and sexual desires are a disgrace. For example, Galatians 5:19 says, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality... those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” A quick reading of this and similar passages may give the impression that because

sex is a “deed of the flesh” that it therefore amounts to immorality, and so is wrong. But what the Apostle Paul is actually referring to here is the misuse of sex (unfaithfulness, adultery, rape, sex with multiple partners, casual sex, etc.) It is the misuse of sex that is a “deed of the flesh.” The abuse of sex is therefore the issue and twisting the passage to say that all sex is shameful/wrong is a misinterpretation.

Old Testament passages are sometimes cited that supposedly indicate the shamefulness of sexuality and the body, for example: “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: ‘When a woman gives birth and bears a child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.’”¹ But many things were declared by God as “unclean” not because the body or physical things were bad or evil, but rather due to health issues. In a day long before the discovery of bacteria, the Israelites were directed to wash their hands and clothes, and so prevent the spread of disease that could be caused by prolonged contact with body fluids. Furthermore, the uncleanness was temporary – after a person washed himself or herself, they would be considered clean again.

There are also areas in which the differences between societal norms and what the Bible teaches seem to be irreconcilable, such as the homosexual rights movement. Given the fact that human society throughout history has often been wrong and misguided on many issues, and that today’s societal leaders are just as human and mistake-prone as those of the past, it makes sense to take or at least lean toward Biblical views rather than those of the society.

Corruptions of Sexuality and Male/Female Relationships

There are numerous Biblical passages that touch on male/female issues, but it is the Song of Solomon, a short old-testament book, where the Bible’s approach to romance and sexuality is most fully revealed. Christianity and Catholicism have often been the target of accusations regarding sexual repression and prudery. But a careful reading of the Song of Solomon should disabuse us of the notion that the Bible is anti-sex, because this book is essentially a love poem celebrating eroticism. It is therefore worthy of careful consideration. See the following internet resources for a complete commentary on this important book, and on its application:

[Commentary on the Song of Solomon](#)

[The Redemption of Eroticism](#)

Many early Jewish rabbis believed that the Song of Solomon could not mean what it literally says. According to some of them, a book of sacred writing could not possibly be about sex and eroticism, so they ascribed spiritual and ethereal meanings to it. The early Christian writers, such as Jerome, Origen, and Augustine, largely followed the lead of those Jewish rabbis.

At times throughout history, the church as well as secular society has demonstrated a loathing of sex, a feeling that the body is unworthy, and a view of women as the cause of temptation and evil. Where did these negative views of sexuality and male/female relationships come from?

As mentioned above, the basic and primary reason is the fall of Adam and Eve and the associated decline of humanity in selfishness and deceit. This was followed by the reduction in the status of women and later coupled with misinterpretations and misapplications of Biblical principles and texts.

¹ Leviticus 12:2

However, there were a number of specific theological and philosophic developments throughout history that further twisted people's views of marriage and sexuality.

Ancient Societies

Men and women are biologically different – men are generally stronger and taller than women. However, the most significant disparity is that male and female brains are wired differently, causing the stereotypical desires and thought patterns of each gender.² Women are generally drawn to care, nurturance, and cooperation, while men are drawn to dominance, provision, and competition. Sometimes the pattern is reversed, and some women are more dominant than some men. Nevertheless, the stereotype is valid as a general rule, and there is a direct correspondence between the physical and psychological characteristics of each gender. Given the fact that these traits are biological, they will not change, meaning that men and women have been the same all through the ages.

Ancient peoples fully expressed those differences, and their societies were typically very male dominant with women having little say. As in all eras there were a few powerful women (e.g., Semiramus, Nefertiti, Cleopatra, Hapshetsut, Jezebel, etc.) But virtually all of them gained their power because of their association with a man as his queen, or in succeeding him after his death. They were the power behind the throne. There were also a few powerful goddesses (e.g., Ishtar, Isis, Astarte, Venus, and Aphrodite), but the same was true of them – gods and goddesses were a reflection of their human counterparts – the ruling gods were mostly male, their consorts were female, and they had the same faults and foibles as their human subjects. A typical example is the male god Baal who was the head and master, and his consort Ashtoreth, the goddess of sex and fertility. The sex may have ecstatic, but it was often done with multiple sex partners and little respect for women.

All ancient societies followed this general pattern – Sumer & Akkad, Assyria, Egypt, Persia³, Greece, and Rome. The only significant exceptions in which God was not a fallible human counterpart were the Jews and Christians, and later the Muslims.

Gnosticism

In addition to the fall described above and therefore the natural squeamishness that people feel about sex, the source of hostile views toward sexuality was largely the religion of Gnosticism and the ideas of Plato which were the foundation upon which Gnosticism was based.

The Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 400 BC), believed that the heavenly form or archetype of all things was the ideal, and that earthly things are only shadows of the heavenly, and therefore inferior. The influence of Platonic thought had declined after the destruction of the Greek Empire, but his ideas were revived by the Neoplatonists, led by the Greek philosopher Plotinus (ca. AD 205-270) who lived during the early Christian era, as well as by various Gnostic sects.

² Anne Moir and David Jessel, *Brain Sex*, New York: Dell, 1989, 1991

³ For example, when the Persian king Ahasuerus' (Xerxes) wife and queen refused his command to come and show herself at one of his banquets, the king deposed her and sent out a proclamation: "So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house." Esther 1:10-21

Gnosticism (from the Greek word “gnosis” meaning inner knowledge or wisdom), was based on the Platonic concept of the superiority of the spiritual over the physical. Gnosticism taught that only the spiritual aspects of a person were good, and the body was evil. This meant that sex, and especially the female body, were from the “dark side.” Being truly spiritual thus meant removing oneself from the physical aspects of life, to the extent that this is possible, and the adepts who understood this hidden wisdom would seek to remove all fleshly influences from their lives. These views were often based on and justified by the misinterpretations of the Bible mentioned above.

Gnostic theology is also dualistic—God and the devil are essentially equal in power and are constantly at war with each other. Some Gnostic philosophers taught that this continuous war between God and Satan was the main source of human misery and suffering.

Why was there a surge in Gnosticism’s appeal during the second century? It was a reaction on the part of some to the despair and darkness of those times. In Israel, traditional Judaism had held the upper hand over Jewish Christians from the standpoint of politics and money, and they had persecuted the church since a few years after the death and resurrection of Christ. The Jews also continued their revolt against Roman power, which led to the Roman general Titus invading Jerusalem in 70 AD, and destroying the Jewish temple so thoroughly that there was “not one stone left on top of another.” The temple mount that still exists today is all that survived (the Islamic Dome of the Rock was built there six hundred years later).

Further unrest followed, culminating in the Bar Kokba rebellion of 132-135 AD, in which the Sanhedrin regarded their military commander, Simon Bar Kokba, as the Jewish Messiah, causing a deep schism between traditional and Christian Jews. The Roman emperor Hadrian, determined to wipe out Jewish resistance to Roman rule once and for all, crushed this revolt with great ferocity. His armies destroyed every fortification and razed almost every town in the land, and over a half-million Jews were slaughtered. Hadrian then burned a copy of the Torah on the temple mount, banished Jews from Jerusalem, forcibly resettled survivors in other lands, and renamed the land “Palestine” in place of “Judea” in order to wipe out its existence. Hadrian is the source of the term “Palestinian.”

In the bitter aftermath of this catastrophe, betrayed by false hopes of a Messianic military deliverance, many turned away, sought other religions, and created a number of antinomian sects. The Gnostic Cainites were an example of this—former Jews who came together after the Bar Kokba revolt, and who rejected all prior teaching. The Cainites taught that Jehovah of the Old Testament was evil, and they venerated Cain, the son of Adam, who was the first murderer in history. The *Gospel of Judas* in which Judas Iscariot is the hero, was a Cainite writing.

Gnosticism was also formally promoted by the ex-Christian theologian Valentinius (c. AD 100 – c. 160). He was an influential man who was attracted by the Gnostic concept of a “secret and hidden wisdom.” He came to Rome around AD 136 to become involved with the church. However, the other leaders failed to appoint him to a position of authority, and he eventually left the church in order to teach his own theology of Gnosticism.

Perhaps the largest and best-known Gnostic group were the Cathari of southern France. Like other Gnostics, the Cathari believed in theological dualism, were anti-sex, and were hostile to maternity and family, at least for those in the inner circle of Catharism. Pregnant female Cathar followers were told that they “carried demons in their bellies.”

While the church never seriously considered adopting the dualistic concepts of Gnosticism, which are antithetical to the Bible, it unfortunately allowed some of the anti-sexual overtones of the Gnostics and the Neoplatonists to creep in through the influential theologian Augustine (354–430 AD) and others. In his early life, Augustine was deeply influenced by Plato and the Greek philosophers, and therefore no doubt internalized some of the Platonic/Gnostic prejudices concerning sexuality. Augustine went from being a playboy and besotted with sex as a young man (and very much ashamed of what he had done), to becoming a leader in the church. He eventually became the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in his later years. By the end of his life, his view of sexuality had taken a 180-degree turn. Having been obsessed with lust as a youth and deeply troubled by his obsession, he then condemned even marital sex, and censured other teachers who objected to his views. In his *Soliloquies* he wrote, “Nothing is so powerful in drawing the spirit of a man downward as the caresses of a woman, and that physical intercourse which is part of marriage.” Augustine’s immense contributions to the church in the realms of theology and philosophy were thus darkened by his negative view of sexuality, and the negativity he fostered continues on the part of some to this day.

Asceticism

An even more significant source of sexual condemnation were the ascetic and monastic movements. Medieval society was often brutish, coarsely sensual, and corrupt, and many felt a desire to purify themselves in order to approach God. Thus, a number of ascetic and monastic movements were launched, including the Cluniacs, Cistercians, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, Hospitallers, and even the Knights Templar. Each of these organizations had different rules for their members, but most required or preferred celibacy, because sexuality was often seen as moral pollution or compromise. These groups often went beyond mere personal abstention, to believing and preaching that sex itself was wrong and/or evil.

All of us have the tendency to think that our own desires are normative—in other words, that everyone else should live in the same way and have the same desires as ours. Those with lower levels of sexual desire will thus tend to look down on people with higher sex drives, and think of them, correctly or incorrectly, as lustful, licentious, and decadent, whereas those with higher levels of desire tend to view those with lower sex drives as repressed, inhibited prudes.

Many people define their religion partially or wholly in terms of the things that they do not do. In other words, there is a tendency to think of oneself as “a real Christian,” “a real Catholic,” “a real Humanist,” or “a good person” because one does not smoke, drink alcohol, snort cocaine, or “xxx”—fill in the blank. This is spiritual pride, the sin of the Pharisees, which Jesus condemned in the strongest terms. The danger of spiritual pride is that a person will go beyond merely giving up “xxx” as a personal calling intended just for them. He or she begins to think that “xxx” must be given up by all in order to become truly spiritual. Next, the person begins to think of others who engage in such things as sub-par and inferior, and to tout their own piety and spirituality, as well as maligning those who have a different perspective.

The Gnostic, Platonic, and ascetic influences combined with spiritual pride, resulted in many harmful teachings:

1. Sexual pleasure is tinged with evil.
2. Sex is for procreation only.
3. Birth control is wrong.
4. Women are a temptation that must be avoided if a man would be truly spiritual.

5. Priests and official ministers of the church must be celibate.

The life of bishops and priests throughout most of the history of Catholicism thus swung back and forth between celibacy and the complete condemnation of sex on the one hand, and a debauchery of sexual excess on the other. The history of the Papacy is depressingly replete with men for whom celibacy was a thinly-veiled hypocrisy (see the article [Criticism of the Church](#) for more information). Bishops and priests were and are just as red-blooded as any other males, and when their sexual desires had no valid outlet, it resulted in homosexuality, concubinage, prostitution, affairs with married women, and the resulting social problems and feelings of betrayal by those in the church who looked to the Pope and the bishops as both moral and spiritual leaders. The current problems with homosexual and pedophile priests in the Catholic Church may well be a modern symptom of this issue.

This is not to say that asceticism is evil. The Bible directs us to fast at times, not because food is evil, but because we sometimes need to put aside all other concerns when praying and entering the presence of God. Likewise, celibacy is not innately wrong or bad. Some may be called to it and have the necessary personal discipline and/or the lack of sexual desire to remain in a celibate state without undue frustration. Some of the most successful people in history never married, such as John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, Leonardo Davinci, Queen Elizabeth, and Mother Theresa. A celibate person has “mastered his or her own body,” and therefore celibacy can become a source of power, pride, self-esteem, and purity, as well as providing more time and energy for other activities.⁴

But celibacy should never have been turned into an obligation because God created us with sexual appetites, and never intended that celibacy should be a requirement for ministry. The Old Testament contains detailed instructions on marriage for priests, who were almost always married, and the New Testament likewise takes the view that church leaders will marry. A married leader is better able to understand and relate to the concerns of the rest of society and has the perspective of a member of the opposite sex living with them. Mandatory clerical celibacy was therefore not the command of God, but the mistake of men.

Bridal Mysticism

Another way that sexuality was twisted by the Catholic Church was through the teachings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Bernard was an ascetic and one of the founders and champions of the Cistercian monastic order, as well as being the European spokesman for the Knights Templar, a confidant of several Popes, and the “power behind the throne.” He was probably the most influential man of his times.

In addition to his monastic and political activities, Bernard wrote many sermons on the Song of Solomon and used this book to construct his theological doctrine of “Bridal Mysticism.” The New Testament indicates that the church as a whole is the bride of Christ, but Bernard took this a step further, applying feminine imagery to everyone in the church, men as well as women. According to Bernard, every believer should become the literal “Bride of Christ.”

Masculinity with its aggressive and competitive urges was seen by Bernard as inherently unspiritual. Men were therefore told to abandon their masculine nature as being inimical to spirituality, and to

⁴ Bonnie MacLachlan and Judith Fletcher, editors, *Virginity Revisited: Configurations of the Unpossessed Body*, University of Toronto Press, 2007

adopt the feminine mindset of a receptive vessel for the grace of God. For example, Bernard urged his male monks to “let your breasts swell with the milk of compassion.” This sounds twisted and repugnant to most men, with overtones of homosexuality and bisexuality.

Ironically, Bernard was also the main European cheerleader for the Knights Templar, a military order in Palestine that was founded after the First Crusade, in which control of the city of Jerusalem was wrested from the Muslims. The Knights were thus dedicated to the defense of pilgrims and the support of the Crusaders in the Holy Land.⁵ Bernard himself wrote the charter and the code of conduct for the Knights, basing it on the same rules used for his Cistercian monks, for which celibacy was a requirement. Therefore, in Bernard’s view, a militaristic man could only serve God if he gave up wife and family, and dedicated his life to fighting, with the additional limitation that the conflicts had to be sanctioned by the Pope. Only in this way could the aggressiveness of masculinity be redeemed. The Templars venerated Bernard, and taking his theological concepts, they melded them into the Templar version of chivalry, which was total devotion to fighting the enemies of God, whoever they may be. For his part, Bernard was always mindful of the tenuous hold that the Crusader Kingdom and the Knights Templar had on Jerusalem, and it was due to Bernard’s insistence that Pope Eugenius III (who, in the opinion of many, was Bernard’s lackey and mouthpiece) launched the disastrous Second Crusade in 1145.⁶

Bernard was also obsessed with the Virgin Mary (with her passive and receptive nature) and Bernard’s ideas and writings formed much of the basis for the veneration of Mary, and the later declaration of the Catholic Church that Mary herself had no sin and was “immaculately conceived.” The idea that goddesses could recover their virginity after sexual experience was an ancient concept. Led by Bernard, this idea was increasingly applied to the Virgin Mary by church leaders. Seven hundred years later, Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) formalized the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary as official church policy and declared that Mary was a “perpetual virgin.” This same pope also declared that pontiffs are infallible in matters of faith and morality. However, Pius IX merely formalized these concepts, as they had been part of the standard papal operating policy for centuries.

⁵ The Knights Templars came to France in 1128 seeking support for their order. At the time they were still a tiny group but with significant political influence given their role in preserving Christian control of the Holy Land. Bernard organized a church council in Troyes to honor them, and Troyes became the European capital for the order. Two years later in 1130 Bernard was successful in having Innocent II appointed Pope, and in the same year Innocent granted Papal recognition and exemption from all secular taxation and control to the Templars.

⁶ Pope Eugenius III (1145-1153) was Bernard’s ex-disciple, and it was through Bernard’s lobbying efforts that Eugenius was appointed Pope in 1145. Many believed that Bernard was the real Pope and Eugenius was his puppet; Bernard was thus a man of great power and influence, but who preferred to work behind the scenes. At the urging of Bernard, Eugenius immediately proclaimed a Second Crusade as one of the first acts of his Papacy, and Bernard then crisscrossed Europe, preaching and urging people to get involved. Many responded to this appeal and the Second Crusade was launched, but it suffered from the same serious problem that had almost caused the failure of the First Crusade, namely the lack of an overall leader who could command respect and enforce discipline among all of the other fractious leaders and troops. The Second Crusade went in three directions at once and was an unmitigated fiasco. Bernard was blamed for it and he spent the last years of his life dealing with the criticism that was heaped upon him. His answer was that the people of Europe had become too sinful and therefore were not sufficiently worthy of God’s help. Bernard was thus an interesting, complex, and great man who was at once both an ascetic, living an austere life, as well as being a man-of-the-world, heavily involved with politics and power. Prior to 1112 when Bernard joined the Cistercians, the finances of the order were very limited, but shortly thereafter, the Cistercians expanded tremendously. By the time of Bernard’s death, there were over three hundred Cistercian abbeys, many of which Bernard had personally established. The Knights Templar became even more successful. They were reportedly wealthier than any country in Europe at the height of their influence and contributed extensively to Bernard’s Cistercian ministry.

Many have noted that men are largely absent from Catholic churches and have been for a long time. This is especially true in Latin America where “church is for females and girly men.” The top leadership is male, but those who attend and become active in church ministries are mostly female. This was not always so—in the early church male and female participation was relatively equal. More equal participation is also true of many Protestant denominations, as well as Judaism and Islam, and Muslim men may be more religiously active than Muslim women. The negative influences of St. Bernard’s teachings have thus persisted in Catholicism down to the present.

In addition to denying any literal translation of Song of Solomon, Bernard was also one of the main proponents of his time of the notion that only the designated representatives of church could read and interpret the Scriptures, and that the common man should simply listen to his religious leaders and obey them without question. In contrast, Peter Abélard, the famed lover of Héloïse, and a contemporary of Bernard, was one of the first church teachers to espouse personal reading and consideration of the Bible. His treatise *Sic et Non* was an attempt to apply logic to the questions of theology. This is routine practice for Christians today, but it was a revolutionary idea in the twelfth century. Due to Bernard’s opposition, Abélard teachings cost him his life.⁷

St. Bernard of Clairvaux was canonized as a saint, and his teaching on Mary and his doctrine of bridal mysticism had the benefit of elevating the status of women and ascribing spiritual value to femininity. But this was achieved at the cost of denigrating masculinity and corrupting the church’s view of sexuality. His concepts of bridal mysticism, combined with the Gnostic/Platonic/ascetic anti-sex and anti-female biases described above, have been largely responsible for the Catholic Church’s failure to treat sexuality in a positive and affirming way down through the centuries.

Courtly Love

The Middle Ages also witnessed the flowering of chivalry and *amour courtois*, or “courtly love,” which idealized women as the fair sex and put them on a pedestal. This movement began in southern France primarily through the influence of William IX, Duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127), the great-grandfather of King Richard the Lionhearted. In addition to being a political leader, William IX was also a poet, and the first well-known troubadour of history. He was a Casanova-type of man, singing the praises of women, as he hopped from one bed to the next. Courtly love was later championed by Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard’s mother, and the powerful wife of Henry II.

Love and affection were poor reasons for marital coupling in the thinking of that era. Marriage, especially for the high-born, was a formal affair, often arranged by parents when the children were infants. It was primarily concerned with property rights and dynastic maintenance. Love, if it occurred at all, was a secondary consideration. *Amour courtois* was thus an attempt to reintroduce love, romance, and eroticism back into male/female relationships, to curb the brutishness of men during a

⁷ The story of Peter Abélard and Héloïse is a poignant tale of that time. Héloïse was a student of Abélard, and they soon fell in love with each other. But Abélard could not marry her due to his clerical commitment to celibacy. After discovering their relationship, Héloïse’s guardian sent her to a nunnery and had Abélard castrated. In spite of this, they continued their devotion to each other for the rest of their lives, but without ever seeing each other again. In anguish, Abélard wrote many letters, poems, and songs to and for her, and lived the rest of his life in sorrow over her. Abélard was opposed by Bernard of Clairvaux, who had long despised his views (that the common people should read and interpret the Bible for themselves). The two of them agreed to a debate, which took place in 1141. But Bernard, who was no match for Abélard, turned the debate into an inquisition and sought to have Abélard condemned and burned as a heretic. Abélard fled but died soon afterward. He and Héloïse were finally united in death. She died twenty years after him and was buried beside him.

violent era, and to elevate the status of women. But on the other hand, it was also intended to justify adultery and break down the hegemony of marriage, so that men could sample the charms of many women, and that married women could be free to engage in affairs.

The church responded in predictable fashion, denouncing the sensual and adulterous impulses of courtly love. The Albigensian Crusade of the 1200's against the Gnostic Cathars of southern France (who ironically also condemned eroticism and demanded celibacy of their followers) perhaps was also an attempt to repress the libertine practices of that region.

The same fault lines exist today—an “anything goes” mentality pushed by liberal cultural forces, opposed by conservatives who condemn it. Unfortunately, the balance provided by the Song of Solomon—unbridled eroticism within the context of marriage—was then and still is today, often lost in the shuffle.

Feminism

Being a modern movement, most people are quite familiar with feminism and its influences. It has been instrumental in shaping the contemporary Western mind, but despite its accomplishments on behalf of women, feminism is responsible for a number of serious marital and familial pathologies, and so needs to be included in the list of ways that the male/female dynamic has been corrupted. Feminism is not typically thought of in a religious sense, but as we shall see, its leaders are quite religious, and they proselytize very aggressively, even using taxpayer monies to push their agenda.

Considering problems with a popular mindset can be painful, but analyzing it is all the more necessary, because feminism is the one of the most powerful forces in current times that is damaging sexuality and polluting male/female relationships. Therefore, we shall consider it in detail.

Feminism is rooted in and was the result of the wrenching changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Up to that time, and for decades afterward, society was largely rural and agrarian. There were few stores where goods could be purchased, and little division of labor, i.e., each household produced virtually everything necessary for life. Goods were generally handmade, children were educated largely by their parents, and most activities centered around the home. Husband and wife were each essential because survival required the application of both masculine and feminine skills. Life meant hard work for all, but there was often a deep satisfaction in such a life, because everyone was needed, and the roles were clear. Feminine traits and skills were highly valued and appreciated because they were necessary for the survival and prosperity of the family. Therefore, even though the lot of women was often very hard (as was also the lot of men), their place in society as wife and mother was generally honored and held in high esteem. They certainly had fewer rights than men did, but they also had a relatively high level of respect.

However, the Industrial Revolution changed all that. Transportation facilities were developed and people who had once spent their entire life in one locale began to move. Men left their homes and farms to labor in the factories. Formerly they had worked closely with their wives, but now their time was largely spent away from home, developing a separate work life. Manufactured goods became common, and many labor-saving devices were invented. Thus, the homemaking and handicraft skills of wives were increasingly rendered unnecessary. Public schools, started in the 1850s, increasingly became the place where children were educated, in contrast to earlier times in which education was done at home and in privately funded local schools (in colonial times, it was assumed that when a child started school they already knew how to read, and ironically, the level of literacy was higher

than it is today). These changes took a long time to fully sink in, and were not completely realized until the twentieth century.

As the transformations wrought by the Industrial Revolution took hold, women gradually woke up to find themselves dispossessed. Her central place in the home was gone, which meant that her economic significance had disappeared. Her role as teacher and moral guide to her children was increasingly usurped by the public schools. She no longer had a close working relationship with her husband, and both men and kids left the home. The elements that defined womanhood, that gave it worth and value, were therefore devalued in the eyes of many women. Significantly, the feminist movement was launched in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft with her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, twenty-three years after James Watt's invention of the steam engine. This invention was considered by many as the starting point of the Industrial Revolution.

The 1800s also ushered in the Victorian era, which is remembered for its prim and properness. But it is also remembered for its repressive attitudes toward women. Victorian sexuality, by-and-large, was male-oriented, and typically denied that sex could be pleasurable for women. The Victorians developed their own brand of feminism, which taught that sex was a woman's unpleasant duty. This served to exacerbate male-female tensions by encouraging women to remain chaste and refusing to have sex as a way of gaining moral superiority and control over men.

Another cultural shift of the 1800s, of great significance for contemporary feminism, was the so-called Romantic Movement. Romantic philosophers and writers, such as Fichte, Rousseau, Hegel, and Goethe emphasized emotion and feelings over reason—that a person could tap into the “world soul” and experience “personal truth” that stood above, and often in conflict with, reason and everyday reality. Implicit in romantic thinking is that morality is self-defined, and that truth is relative and mutable.

American women received voting rights via the 19th amendment to the Constitution in 1920. In the same era, Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, began to advocate for birth control and later abortion. She was an atheist who preached birth control partly as a racist and eugenic tool to reduce the size of undesirable elements in the population, setting up clinics in poor black neighborhoods for that purpose.

The rumblings continued through the early twentieth century, when World War I and especially World War II moved many American women out of the home and got them involved in wartime factory production. Finally, the sexual revolution of the 1950's and 60's (essentially a repudiation of Victorian ideas of sexuality) set the stage for a widespread discontent with traditional femininity. The Vietnam War years of the 1960's and 70's popularized rebellion and was the heyday of feminist movement. After success in supporting birth control, the energies of the feminist movement were turned to the struggle for abortion rights, culminating in the controversial *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision of 1973.

Feminism has made significant achievements for women, such as the following:

1. New educational and career opportunities that were previously perceived to be the exclusive domain of males were opened to women.
2. Greater appreciation was paid to female ideas and concerns.

3. More freedom was available to women to make unfettered decisions about their lives (the previously perceived obligations of marriage and motherhood came to be seen as options, rather than absolute requirements).
4. Equal pay for equal work.
5. More financial independence for women.

However, just as the Catholic Church has brought both blessing and tribulation to society, providing peace and purpose but also afflicting us with asceticism and bridal mysticism, so feminism has likewise been a mixed blessing. It has achieved some good things but has also produced dark and bitter fruit. Rather than trying to find ways of rebuilding the family and restoring the wife to a place of honor in the home, the women's movement took the opposite tack, and sought to instruct women that femininity was bankrupt and had to be abandoned. They told women that in order to have any sense of worth, they had to become like men.

Like other broad social movements, feminism encompasses a wide variety of perspectives. On one end of the spectrum are women who love men, or are at least willing to put up with them, and simply want more freedom and power in their relationships. On the other end are women who hate men and feel that marriage and sex dehumanizes and enslaves women by its very nature. The latter group was the driving force of the feminist movement, using rhetoric that was often hostile and virulent. Among other things, they taught that:

“Male/female differences have no biological basis.” Kate Millett, considered to be one of the founders of the contemporary feminism, said, “It is time that we realized that the whole structure of male and female personality is entirely imposed by social conditioning.”⁸

The notion that personality is plastic did not originate with feminism. Behavioral psychologists such as Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner, claimed that they could, in Watson's words, “shape a child into any form desired by conditioning it, provided that the conditioning began in infancy.” Freud popularized the idea of a single overriding motivation for all people. For Freud it was sex; for Adler, superiority; for Rogers and Maslow, self-actualization. A theory of personality based on a single overriding motivation is appealing because it simplifies the enormous complexities of psychology, but unfortunately it does not accord with the reality of human nature. Most of Freud's theories have long been discredited, and despite the claims of the behaviorists, children retain their inborn gender orientation and personality despite the efforts of parents and society to alter them. David Keirse, in his excellent book *Please Understand Me*, explains:

There are two sides to personality—temperament and character. Temperament is a configuration of inclinations, while character is a configuration of habits. Character is disposition, temperament is pre-disposition... Put another way, our brain is a sort of computer which has temperament for its hardware and character for its software. The hardware is the physical base from which character emerges, placing an identifiable fingerprint on each individual's attitudes and actions. This underlying consistency can be observed from a very early age—some features earlier than others—long before individual experience or social context (the software) has had time to imprint the person. Thus, temperament is the inborn

⁸ Kate Millett, *Barnard Alumnae*, Spring, 1970, p. 28

form of human nature; character, the emergent form, which develops through the interaction of temperament and environment.

I furthermore want to emphasize that temperament, character, and personality are configured, which means that, not only are we predisposed to develop certain attitudes and not others, but that these actions and attitudes are unified—they hang together... For example, SJ's [Guardian personality-type individuals] base their self-image on reliability, service, and respectability, these three traits emerging together as a unified structure of personality. These traits preclude the emergence, for example, of an SP self-image [Artisan personality-type individuals] which are based on artistic action, audacity, and adaptability to circumstances.⁹

Kiersey's insights help to explain many otherwise puzzling aspects of human nature. For example, it becomes clear that the large difference in perspective on sexuality by liberals and conservatives is not primarily due to church teaching or lack of it. Rather, it is because social conservatives are overwhelming the Guardian personality type mentioned above, whereas liberals are largely Artisans. Guardians are concerned with rules and social propriety, whereas Artisans are concerned with freedom and unfettered experience. Given the fact that temperament is immutable, both types of people will always see the world through their own mental filters and be drawn to teachers and institutions that support their own biases. It is inevitable that they will butt heads to some degree.

Gender, like temperament, is an inborn trait. Thus, the notion that male/female differences are primarily environmental is a falsehood, as most sexual differentiation is biological in nature. It has been definitively shown that, along with male/female hormonal differences (testosterone vs. estrogen), the structure and wiring of male and female brains are strikingly different, explaining the persistent and stereotypical differences between the sexes.¹⁰ Environment and upbringing can certainly be influential, but the inborn factors of temperament and gender impose limits on character.

While gender is hard-wired, the way that gender expresses itself in society is learned and becomes part of the individual's "software." This takes place by the infant observing how older individuals of each gender conduct themselves, and eventually identifying with and mimicking that conduct. Culture essentially confirms and gives expression to what biology has already determined.

People are thus elastic to a degree, but there are limits to this elasticity. As parents have known for generations, babies are born with their sexual identity firmly in place, and resist efforts by parents or society to transgender them. Genetic re-engineering would be necessary in order to significantly alter the major differences between males and females.

But due to feminist stridency and the politically correct straight jacket thrown over academia, research that contravened feminist theory has typically been rejected or suppressed. Researchers who did not hew to the party line were in danger of losing their positions and financial support. This problem continues today, with many American institutes of higher education being bastions of feminist intolerance and censorship.

⁹ David Kiersey, *Please Understand Me II*, Prometheus Nemesis Books, 1998, p. 20

¹⁰ Anne Moir and David Jessel, *Brain Sex*, New York: Dell, 1989, 1991

Why is it so important to feminists that male/female differences be environmental rather than biological, even when the evidence is completely against them? Because then they can claim that society is responsible for keeping men in power and holding women back. This erroneous belief allowed feminists to claim that environmental forces such as religion (read Christianity), and the family are responsible for enslaving women and keeping them down, and that the submission of women was simply a long-running patriarchal conspiracy. Furthermore, it has given them the justification and the moral high ground for demanding the radical legal and societal changes that have been made.

In keeping with its roots in the Romantic movement of the 19th century, feminists “feel” the truth of their cause even when it is contradicted by the facts. This type of deception has become common, and spokespersons routinely lie to support the women’s movement:

1. Gloria Steinem originally reported that 150,000 young women (age 15 to 24) die every year of anorexia nervosa — actual numbers are in the range of 50-100.¹¹ Her statistic has been widely quoted despite its utter absurdity.
2. Public service ads for women’s shelters have indicated an increase in domestic violence of up to 40% during the Super Bowl week—no such increase has ever been detected.¹²
3. Both the anorexia and super bowl hoax stories above were advocated by the feminist media watchdog organization FAIR (“Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting,” or more accurately, “Feminist Agenda in Reporting”). When the 150,000 anorexia death number was questioned, FAIR indicated that the total was incorrect because deaths from heart failure or suicide may have been wrongly interpreted. Unfortunately for FAIR, the numbers for 1991 (the year in question) for deaths of young women from heart failure was 19 and the total number of suicides was 649 in the target group, and most of the suicide deaths were clearly not due to anorexia.¹³
4. A widely reported feminist statistic states that 1 out of every 4 college women is the victim of rape or attempted rape every year.¹⁴ In other words, every woman who goes to a four-year college has essentially a 100% likelihood of being raped. This is only true if you stretch the definition of “rape” to include “flirtation” and “undesired advance.”
5. An even more popular statistic cited in many feminist works, is that an astounding 9,000,000 women were slaughtered in witch hunts carried out by Christians over the last 500 years. This number was first created by the early radical feminist Matilda Gage in her 1893 work *Women, Church and State*, a book that was so extreme and farfetched that it soon went out of print but was revived by a feminist publishing house in the 1970s. The actual number is around 50,000, and many of those were men. When one researcher challenged the nine million statistic, the response was to demand that “International laws be created to outlaw such anti-feminitism.”¹⁵

¹¹ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, New York: Doubleday, 1991

¹² Christina H. Sommers, “Reply to Left Wing Media Watchdog Group FAIR”, March 15, 1995

¹³ Christina H. Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*, New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994

¹⁴ Elisabeth Carnell, “Rape Statistics Motivated By Politics, Not Facts,” *Critiques of Feminism*, www.carnell.com/feminism/rape/rape002.html

¹⁵ Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality*, Dallas: Spence Publishing, 1998, pp. 289-290, 398

6. A recent article (January 16, 2007) in the New York Times, a feminist stronghold, indicated that over 51% of women are now living without a spouse. A subsequent National Public Radio (another feminist mouthpiece) report announced: “Single Women Take the Lead in America—for what may be the first time ever, 51 percent of American women are living without a husband. Single women are more socially connected, economically stable, and happier than ever before.” But a more careful analysis of the study revealed that the number included all females over age 15 living at home, wives of men who are absent due to military and work commitments, and other categories of women whose single status is problematic. In other words, the study author grabbed every possible female living without a man, truly single or not, in a desperate attempt to reach the 51% number, and then pontificated that since this is a majority, single women must be happier.
7. An even more recent report (April 28, 2007) stated that the value of a stay-at-home wife’s services is approximately \$130,000 per year. As this is higher than even the *combined average income* of American families, the immediate question is, “how could that number possibly be so high?” As with the 51% single woman analysis above, this was done by taking the highest cost of different services that a professional would provide, rather than hiring an individual to do all of them. The reason for this type of statistic is to support the feminist contention that the market discriminates against women, and that the government should step in and arbitrarily set the wages of all “female” occupations at a multiple of the current market rate, and implement socialistic wage and price controls.

The feminist movement thus continually attempts to lie with statistics and then trumpet the numbers through their liberal media mouthpieces, knowing that the corrections and retractions will be seen and heard by much smaller audiences. The homosexual movement, of which many feminists are also members, uses similar mendacious propaganda (e.g., the lie that 10% of the American population is homosexual—the reality is around 2% are homosexual, meaning that 98% of the population is heterosexual). Ann Scales, herself a feminist and a legal scholar, said, “Feminist analysis begins with the principle that objective reality is a myth.”¹⁶

Feminists and homosexuals excuse these deceptions because their position “feels right to them,” as well as on the basis that the transformation of society and the destruction of male dominance is supposedly so important that their lies are acceptable. The idea is to trumpet your propaganda as loudly as possible so as to quickly gain power and influence—once in power the group will be able to mute and minimize the criticism of opponents. As the feminist author, Monique Wittig, said: “Remember. Make an effort to remember. Or failing that, invent.”¹⁷

- “The traditional family is the source of societal problems.” Despite the obvious and common-sense benefits of a two-parent family, many feminist studies were and are being produced to attempt to demonstrate the benefits of single-parent and homosexual homes, and to denigrate traditional families.
- “All depictions of women being submissive to men should be outlawed.” This was a petition of Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon from the University of Michigan to the Supreme Court. According to Dworkin: “The immutable self of the male boils down to an utterly unselfconscious parasitism...Self is incrementally expanded as the parasite drains off self from

¹⁶ Ann Scales, Yale Law School Review, c. 1990

¹⁷ Monique Wittig, La Guerillieres, as quoted in “Why Women Need the Goddess,” Womanspirit Rising, p. 277

those not entitled to it...As a child the first self he drains is that of his mother...He uses her up.”¹⁸ In her book *Intercourse*, Dworkin characterizes male sexual urges as a desire to make women “dirty,” and compares the female sexual organs to a toilet.¹⁹ According to Dworkin: “If she wants him sexually he calls her slut; if she does not want him he rapes her and says she does; he beats her and names it ‘proof of love’...Marriage as an institution developed from rape as a practice. Rape, originally defined as abduction, became marriage by capture.”²⁰

Mary Daly, a longtime professor of philosophy at Boston College, wrote, “All females, from four-month-old babies to octogenarians are potential victims in a rapist society whose male members function as ‘lethal organs.’”²¹ Daly also accused those who had let the abovementioned 1893 book *Women, Church and State* go out of print, of committing “mind-rape” against women.

These statements are hate speech, and these women should have been considered psychotic and a danger to society, but sadly they were instead given tenured positions and pulpits in academia from which to spew their venom and force their intolerance on others. “The housewife is a parasite.” This was a direct attack on traditional women and families, and an attempt to make them feel guilty for staying home and caring for their children. Such women were demeaned at every turn by statements from prominent feminists, such as:

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman: “The housewife is a parasitic creature.”²²
2. Simone de Beauvoir: “Women’s work within the home has no direct benefit to society...her work produces nothing, and the housewife is therefore subordinate, secondary, and parasitic.” “With all of the respect thrown around it by society, the function of gestation still inspires a spontaneous feeling of revulsion.”²³
3. Kate Millet: “The family, as that term is presently understood, must go.”²⁴
4. Jessie Barnard: “[To be happy in a traditional marriage] a woman must be slightly ill mentally.”²⁵
5. Carolyn G. Heilbrun: “[The woman who devotes herself to home and family] lacks selfhood since she fails to act in the public domain. She is a female impersonator, simply fulfilling the needs of others.”²⁶
6. Karen DeCrow: “No man should allow himself to support his wife—no matter how much she favors the idea, no matter how many centuries this domestic pattern has existed, no matter how

¹⁸ Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography – Men Possessing Women*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989, p. 13-14

¹⁹ Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, New York: The Free Press, 1987, pp. 186-188

²⁰ Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography – Men Possessing Women*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989, pp. 18-19

²¹ Mary Daly, *GynEcology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*, p. 239

²² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, edited by Carl N. Deglar, New York: Harper & Row, 1966 (originally published in 1898), p. 62

²³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York: Knopf, 1978 (originally published in 1949)

²⁴ Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969, p. 127

²⁵ Jessie Barnard, *The Future of Marriage*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, p. 51

²⁶ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing A Woman’s Life*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1988, pp. 17, 130

logical the economics of the arrangement may appear, no matter how good it makes him feel.”²⁷

7. Betty Friedan: “Why, despite the opportunities open to all women now, do so few have any purpose in life other than to be a wife and mother?... They are victims of a mistaken choice... not growing up but continually infantilizing... and living in a state inferior to their true capabilities... They are mindless and thing-hungry... and not people... They are trapped in trivial domestic routine and meaningless busywork... and by declining to pursue a professional career, she evades a serious commitment through which she might finally realize herself.”²⁸

Millions of women are indeed fulfilled by marriage and motherhood, and many would gladly reduce their work responsibilities in order to spend more time with their children. Friedan and the others seem to be incapable of understanding this, or perhaps more realistically, deliberately trash those desires in order to justify and promote their own personal biases.

But if the goal is, as it seems to be, to make sure the best and brightest women don't get distracted by the temptation of love and motherhood—the feminine role—there must be no “turning back the clock” on divorce. Women must be permanently at risk of abandonment and poverty, so that they will be forced to work continuously. And if society must make special accommodations for motherhood, these benefits must be structured so as to keep women on the job, lest the most ambitious feel odd or awkward because they aren't fulfilling traditional female roles. In keeping with this goal, the achievements of women as wives and mothers must be continually downgraded and suppressed because there is no other way that cultivating the feminine virtues in ourselves will help us write original philosophy or become great statesmen... This is why liberal feminists have such contempt for any proposal to improve women's lives that rejects androgyny.²⁹

Dworkin is certainly correct that sex is inherently “unequal.” In sex the man takes the woman and penetrates her, and it is always the woman who bears the children and gives birth to them. Our slang for sex reflects this: “scoring,” “conquest,” “impregnation,” etc. Liberalism in general and feminism in particular, while applauding free love, is very uncomfortable with the fact that men and women are inherently asymmetrical. Liberals and social justice aficionados desperately seek to make all of us equivalent, as if that will somehow make things better and fairer for all. But the truth is that we cannot be made equivalent; men and women will always be the way they are because of immutable biological realities. Social justice crusaders cannot even create economic equality, much less sexual equality.

Rather than fulminate over these unalterable differences, why not accept and enjoy them— as the French say, *Vive la Différence!* Why not structure relationships so that the asymmetric masculine and feminine qualities of a couple are employed for their mutual pleasure and benefit, as people have done for centuries? If Dworkin, Daly, and others hate and fear sexuality so much, why don't they just avoid marriage and male involvement, and be exclusively lesbian? Why must they attempt to infect others with their toxins, and pollute and trash the lives of those who enjoy the way we are made, like the couple in *The Song*? One of the main reasons is that feminism for some has become a religion, and

²⁷ Karen DeCrow, Letters to the Editor, The New York Times Magazine, May 31, 1992, p. 12

²⁸ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: Dell, 1984, pp. 153-55, 230-32, 243-45

²⁹ Maggie Gallagher, *Enemies of Eros: How the Sexual Revolution is Killing Family, Marriage, and Sex, and What We Can Do About It*, Bonus Books, 1989, pp. 147-8

seeks to convert the masses. But unlike Christian missionaries who have to rely on voluntary contributions, feminists use the resources of society – the government and the public schools to preach and inculcate its message. See the article:

[Feminist Theology.](#)

Feminism Today

In recent years many women have rejected doctrinaire feminism, or at least tried to tone down some of its more outlandish claims. A few former advocates of the women's movement are writing books, such as Laura Doyle's *The Surrendered Wife*, and Maggie Gallagher's *Enemies of Eros—How the Sexual Revolution Is Killing Family, Marriage, and Sex and What We Can Do About It*, which contain some of the same relationship advice that Solomon gave in *The Song*. As Henry Kissinger said, "The war between the sexes will never be won because there is too much fraternizing with the enemy." Laura Doyle states in her preface to *The Surrendered Wife*:

Like millions of women, I wanted my marriage to be better. But when I tried to get my husband to be more romantic, helpful and ambitious, he withdrew—and I was lonely and exhausted from controlling everything.

Nevertheless, as feminism has become less strident, at the same time, it has also become more deeply entrenched in the psyche of virtually all western nations, especially in the areas of government, media, academia, and public education. Thought-police organizations are still operating as before, and the western nations of America and Europe are heavily steeped in feministic thinking.

Supporters of feminism are not evil or bad. They are typically serious people who, in their own way, are attempting to make the world a better place. They are thus even more dangerous because they are deceived. Continued support requires ongoing deception, and therefore academia continues to twist sociological statistics, and to interpret them in ways that defy common sense.³⁰ For example, we are told that:

- "Children are an expensive luxury, and that we would be much better off with a smaller population."

Reality: the birth rate in America and Europe is below replacement levels, and this will have disastrous implications for social security and many other aspects of the economy. Western societies are dying.

- "A wife's earnings are much more important than her child-rearing efforts, which can easily be assumed by schools and daycare. American men have come to expect that their wives will work, and often feel that dedication to children is less important than earning a paycheck. A wife's desire to stay home with her young children is therefore a needless luxury and a waste of her time."

Reality: the efforts of a wife to provide a loving environment for both children and husband typically provide much more happiness and satisfaction for everyone than the money she could

³⁰ Robert Shaw, MD, *The Epidemic – The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children*, ReganBooks, 2003

have earned and are often essential in raising successful children. Contrary to the idea of the homemaker sitting at home, watching soap operas, and eating bon-bons, raising children is a serious challenge, often harder than working at a job, which is why government and public schools fail so badly at assuming the parental mantle. Successfully bringing up the next generation is hard work, but it is also a deeply rewarding effort, worthy of much study and energy. The home-schooling movement demonstrates that kids educated at home are typically more self-disciplined, more intelligent, and better educated and socially adjusted than their public-school peers.

- “Children do just fine in institutional daycare and, in some cases, do better than with a mother at home.”

Reality: children are certainly resilient and there are exceptions to every rule, but those in daycare with little parental contact are more passive-aggressive, more peer-dependent, and less secure and less happy than those at home or with relatives. The children who do better in daycare are typically only those who have dysfunctional parents in the first place. Unhealthy environments are another little-explored daycare problem—consider the impact of many small kids crawling on a communal floor and continually putting everything into their mouth.

- “Divorce is unpleasant, but children recover; it is more important to preserve the freedom and choices of the wife and husband.”

Reality: divorce can be necessary in some cases, but it is a great evil. It is usually a disaster for children, causing guilt, long term bitterness, and feelings of betrayal. With easy divorce, the secure foundation that children and even adults crave is easily destroyed, generating profound insecurities that are very difficult to overcome. Rather than providing resolution, divorce often makes problems worse, as parents fight over visitation rights and other issues. They waste a significant portion of their energy and resources on lawyers and on fighting each other, and often use their children as combatants in the domestic war. Divorce usually impoverishes the wife, and typically results in the husband, who would ordinarily pour time and energy into his kids, losing touch with and failing to support them as he moves on to his next family.

- “Single-parent and homosexual homes are just as effective in raising kids as a two-parent household.”

Reality: while there are certainly good single-parent homes and bad ones with both a mother and a father, well over 50% of female-headed households are near the poverty line—the problem of poverty in America is mostly the problem of female-headed households. Furthermore, the positive impact of a father in the home is well-documented, and the lack of a father creates many problems beyond simple finances. The average kid raised in single-parent homes has many more potential problems—shorter attention span, sexual identity problems, increased likelihood of teen-pregnancy and welfare dependency, lower reading and educational levels, lower feelings of self-worth, greater aggressiveness that generates on-going conflict and discipline issues, and so on.

- “As women assume more power, men will become more androgynized, and will be more helpful with children and housework.”

Reality: just the opposite—men do even less housework, and are often even less involved with

children, especially in households where the wife's income approaches and exceeds that of the husband. Wives with high incomes are often perceived as a threat by their husbands, who then dedicate even more of their energy and effort to their career and leave their homes behind. Rather than the home being a haven from the cares of the world, female dedication to power and income production typically creates an environment of resentment and competition. A recent study found that the average American husband spends an average of 37 seconds a day with his own children when they are very young, the least of any country in the world.³¹

What is the result of attempting to abolish sex roles by proclamation? Men, abandoning a civilized male role, increasingly turn to promiscuous sex and violence as their primary route to male identity. Women remain in their traditional role as caretakers of children—poorer, overworked, more vulnerable to male abandonment and abuse. And children, both male and female, become the most vulnerable of all.

The result is not a gender-free society. If we do not offer our children—by word and deed—a constructive sense of gender, destructive sex roles will emerge to fill the vacuum. When we try to repress gender... our children will eventually emerge with a new sense of gender based on what they observe in the world around them: women are poor and have children, and men make love, money, and trouble. Something very like this conception of gender appears to have emerged in America's ghettos.³²

Feminist yearnings and government mandates cannot change human nature. Following is a summary of the problems to which feminism has been and continues to be a significant contributing factor:³³

1. Magnification of female dissatisfaction with femininity. This is especially ironic, because as women reject the feminine to take on masculine qualities, they are rejecting their own nature, which can lead to intense frustration.
2. Degradation and trivialization of motherhood. Rearing children is said to be a sacrifice and caring for home and family is beneath a woman's dignity. Presumably any woman with a brain in her head would immediately dump her kids in a day care center and go off to work. This is one of the sickest and most disgusting lies of feminism.
3. Dissatisfaction with the opposite sex. With feminist pressures seeking to androgynize us, women say, "where are the real men?" and men say, "where are the real women?" As John Steinbeck said, "The American girl makes a servant out of her husband and then finds him contemptible for being a servant."
4. High divorce rate. The teaching that "if marriage is not fulfilling, leave it" has helped to generate a society-wide, me-first selfishness. Selfishness for both sexes has been "institutionalized." Having been trained to be independent, the commitment and self-sacrifice necessary to sustain a marriage is too hard for many, and well over one-half of American

³¹ Cited in George Rekers, "Fathers at Home," *Persuasion at Work*, April, 1986, p. 2

³² Maggie Gallagher, *Enemies of Eros: How the Sexual Revolution is Killing Family, Marriage, and Sex, and What We Can Do About It*, p. 151

³³ F. Carolyn Graglia, *Domestic Tranquility: A Brief Against Feminism*, Spense Publishing, Dallas, 1998

marriages now end in divorce. Girls are continually taught that the basic female impulse toward the domesticity of serving and nurturing is a despicable weakness, and that they will be exploited unless they harden themselves. Boys learn that masculinity is not appreciated or encouraged, and often develop passive-aggressive behavior patterns toward women and children—uninvolvement and disengagement alternating with overt aggressiveness. There are other causes of societal selfishness and divorce, but feminism is a significant factor.

5. Increasing levels of male disrespect and suspicion towards women. Women are continually cast in a victim role (e.g., the Duke University lacrosse team rape case prior to the truth being revealed).
6. Disassociation of sex from committed relationships. Women should supposedly desire casual sex as much as many men do. Dream on.
7. Embittered and confused children. The products of divorced households are children who often have many problems adjusting to society.
8. Abortion and the cheapening of human life. When relationships are transitory and throw-away, and human sexuality is considered to be like animals rutting, then babies are an inconvenience and life itself is cheapened.

In recent decades the liberal left has gained the upper hand in the gender wars, and so they seek to impose their vision on all of us in a totalitarian fashion (as totalitarian as can be accomplished in a relatively free society) through the power of government, public education, and the media. These forces have been very successful in exerting pressure, especially on women, who are naturally more concerned with what others think, and with fitting into what the culture deems to be an appropriate female role.

Nevertheless, many men and woman are deeply attracted to some form of the “white knight and fair maiden” paradigm. They feel that the general kind of relationship described in the Song of Solomon is in their blood, but they have kept those desires secret and have suppressed them because our largely feministic society has told them that female submissiveness is a sickness and a betrayal of womanhood, and male dominance is cruelty and abuse, and should be criminalized. This is simply a lie and part of the stupidity of American culture—reject it and be free.

We hunger for gender differences, and find androgynism to be unsatisfying and even disgusting, while at the same time we are made to feel guilty by our culture for thinking such things. Attempts to force roles on people will never work in the long run, and the feminist message is being rejected as people begin to listen to their heart and follow it, instead of the culture. Small children often understand gender better than many psychologists and lawyers, who have advanced degrees, but are lacking in common sense.³⁴ Perhaps a child is necessary to tell us that the feminist empress is indeed naked, or at least down to her bra and panties.

As explored above, some feminists would claim that we have entered a new age. We are now supposedly different in fundamental ways from people in the past, so the lessons of history no longer apply. They believe, as discussed above, that masculine and feminine characteristics are simply

³⁴ Genevie and Margolies, *The Motherhood Report*, p. 302

psychological and behavioral figments of our collective imagination, created by society and by parents. They have a “born-yesterday” approach to history that ignores and trivializes the past and rejects its lessons because it does not fit with their preconceived notions. But having been conditioned by our culture, and constantly bombarded with messages from advertisements, the media, and government that traditional relationships are abusive, it is hard to go against the grain. Here it is helpful to remember two things: 1) culture has often gotten things wrong—prior cultures also erred, and the current culture’s overreaction in the opposite direction is equally wrong; and 2) human nature has not changed—men are still men and women are still women, just as they were in Solomon’s day.

A reader of the book *Enemies of Eros* mentioned above made this poignant statement on the Amazon.com web site:

“I have recently been struggling with whether or not I consider myself a feminist. Of course, I love women, after all I am one, and I want the best for my sex, including equality. However, this book eloquently verbalized my internal struggle with feminism, and discussed its far-reaching destruction in conjunction with the sexual revolution. Looking back on my life and the lives of all the women I love, I can now clearly see how feminism has brought layers of degradation upon us, however unintentional, and I can no longer imagine how their philosophy was ever tempting to me.”

Conclusion

Along with the distortions of Gnosticism, asceticism, and bridal mysticism from the past, the feminist doctrines that seek to androgynize us should be rejected. We have considered above how religion and various cultural forces have warped and corrupted our views of sexuality. In other words, we have considered the negative side of the coin. To turn the coin over and consider the positive aspects—how Christianity and sexuality fit together, see the following:

The Redemption of Eroticism Commentary on the Song of Solomon

Male/female relationships can be corrupted in hundreds of ways, but the answer is not to abandon marriage and the masculine/feminine dynamic, but rather to understand and practice these things correctly, as they are the well-spring from which flow our deepest longings and desires.

God is a hedonist at heart. All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a facade. Or only like foam on the seashore. Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure. He makes no secret of it: at His right hand there are “pleasures for evermore.” C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Romance is the deepest thing in life; romance is deeper than reality. G.K.
Chesterton

Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a
gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices. *The Song of Solomon*