

**“Our Biblical Worldview”  
(5) Marriage & Family**

In our consideration of God as the Creator and its implications for our biblical world view, it is essential that we give attention and careful consideration to the institution of the family that God established at the beginning of biblical history. Marriage and family are the foundation to a stable and blessed society. One once wrote,

The Christian religion, by confining marriage to pairs, and rendering the relationship indissoluble, has by these two things done more toward the peace, happiness, settlement, and civilization of the world, than by any other part in this whole scheme of divine wisdom (Edmund Burke).<sup>1</sup>

And it was our 20<sup>th</sup> president, James Abram Garfield (1831-1881), who said, “The sanctity of marriage and the family relation make the corner-stone of our American society and civilization.”

Now we know that as we speak of marriage and family, it may not seem to apply directly to a number of us. There are single folks among us who have never married. There are divorced people who have remarried. There are widows among us. But in reality this subject does impact us all, either directly or indirectly. The well-being of our nation and its future is conditioned on this most important of human institutions. For we know from the Bible and from history that a culture that rejects and abandons marriage and family, as God had ordained them, will forfeit His blessing and incur His curse. God spoke through His prophet Malachi, condemning the men for having married foreign women who worshipped foreign gods, after these men had broken covenant with the wives of their youth. Here is Malachi 2:10 through 16:

<sup>10</sup>Have we not all one Father?  
Has not one God created us?  
Why do we deal treacherously with one another  
By profaning the covenant of the fathers?

<sup>11</sup>Judah has dealt treacherously,  
And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem,  
For Judah has profaned  
The LORD’s holy institution which He loves:  
He has married the daughter of a foreign god.

<sup>12</sup>May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob  
The man who does this, being awake and aware,  
Yet who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts!

<sup>13</sup>And this is the second thing you do:  
You cover the altar of the LORD with tears,  
With weeping and crying;  
So He does not regard the offering anymore,  
Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

<sup>14</sup>Yet you say, “For what reason?”  
Because the LORD has been witness  
Between you and the wife of your youth,  
With whom you have dealt treacherously;  
Yet she is your companion

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Burke (1729-1797). The quotation that is often attributed to him, but perhaps falsely: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

And your wife by covenant.

<sup>15</sup>But did He not make them one,  
Having a remnant of the Spirit?  
And why one?  
He seeks godly offspring.  
Therefore take heed to your spirit,  
And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

<sup>16</sup>“For the LORD God of Israel says  
That He hates divorce,  
For it covers one’s garment with violence,”  
Says the LORD of hosts.  
“Therefore take heed to your spirit,  
That you do not deal treacherously.”

To consider this very important matter, let us turn again to the first two chapters of Genesis to consider God’s creation of marriage and the institution of the family. I do not think that we will say anything that is not commonly understood and believed to be true by us all. However, what we say about these matters would be perceived by most people in our culture today as extremely narrow, bigoted, ignorant, and antiquated. It is quite an incredible thing to consider that teaching and reinforcing the belief and practice that has grounded civilization for so long could be perceived as antisocial and opposed to the common good. Nevertheless we declare these things to be the abiding will of God.

Here are the verses in Genesis 1 that speak to this. Although we have read these recently, we did so with a different emphasis. Today we will consider from these words God’s institution of marriage and the foundation of the family.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup>So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26-28)

In the second chapter of Genesis we read in greater detail the manner in which God created Eve as a gift and helper to Adam.

And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” <sup>19</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

<sup>21</sup>And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup>Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup>And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:18-25)

Although the matter of marriage and family can be found throughout both Testaments of our Bible, let us give attention and consideration to both of these contexts in which God created and institutionalized this most significant heart of human relations.

## **I. The Genesis record regarding the origin of marriage and the family (Gen. 1:28; 2:18-25)**

### **A. God's blessing and commission to Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28)**

We read again Genesis 1:28.

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

First, God instructed Adam and Eve to establish a family that would foster other families, in order to "fill the earth", or populate the world. He instructed Adam and Eve, and through them all mankind: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth. This is one of God's primary purposes for mankind, to increase population and occupy the world. God formed marriage for the procreation of the human race. God gave a command to Adam and Eve. He commissioned them to have offspring, so that their offspring would also be fruitful. The mandate was essentially open ended with regard to time. It does not seem that God was telling them they would ever achieve a full accomplishment of this command. God's command was not just for Adam and Eve, but for all humanity. Men and women are to marry and to bear children and fill God's earth. Our Baptist Confession of 1689 sets forth this as a major purpose in God creating the institution of marriage. "Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, *for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue*, and the preventing of uncleanness."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, God commanded Adam and Eve and their descendants not only to fill the earth, but they were to "subdue it." God intended mankind to fill His earth and to subdue it on His behalf. They were to govern the world according to His will, the One who had created and commissioned them. This subduing of the world involves managing the earth's resources, taming that which is wild, and subduing and improving that which is undeveloped. They were to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." They were God's co-regent rulers of His world.

"By the blessing in verse 28, God not only confers upon man the power to multiply and fill the earth, as upon the beasts in verse 22, but also gives him dominion over the earth and every beast."<sup>3</sup>

Subjugating the creation also involves wise stewardship and conservation of resources, putting to use all that is available for the betterment of humanity (their families) and the fulfilling of God's commission. I found this to be a good description of God's commission to the human race of verse 28:

God's purpose in creating man was that he should rule over the animal world (v. 26). Here this injunction is repeated and defined more precisely. "Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and every living creature... on earth." Because man is created in God's image, he is king over nature. He rules the world on God's behalf. This is of course no license for the unbridled exploitation and

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<sup>2</sup> Baptist Confession of 1689, Article 25, par. 2.

<sup>3</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, **Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes; Volume 1, The Pentateuch** (William B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 65.

subjugation of nature. Ancient oriental kings were expected to be devoted to the welfare of their subjects, especially the poorest and weakest members of society (Psa. 72:12-14). By upholding divine principles of law and justice, rulers promoted peace and prosperity for all their subjects. Similarly, mankind is here commissioned to rule nature as a benevolent king, acting as God's representative over them and therefore treating them in the same way as God who created them. Thus animals, though subject to man, are viewed as companions in 2:18-20. Noah, portrayed as uniquely righteous in 6:9, is also the arch-conservationist who built an ark to preserve all kinds of life from being destroyed in the flood (6:20; 7:3).<sup>4</sup>

In fulfilling God's will, Adam and Eve would experience God's blessing more fully and continually in their marriage and in their family. Of course the fall of Adam and Eve into sin damaged the enjoyment and experience of marriage. What God intended to bring the greatest blessing and source of enjoyment and fulfillment to a man and woman can become the center of much grief and conflict. But the blessedness of the marriage relationship may still be experienced and enjoyed in spite of the fall, if the marriage relationship is ordered according to the Lord's prescription and the husband and wife seek His blessing. **William Cowper** (1731-1800) once wrote,

Domestic happiness, thou only bliss,  
Of paradise that survived the fall.

**John Calvin** (1509-1564) wrote this regarding marriage after sin had entered the human condition:

Now, it has happened by our fault, and by the corruption of nature, that this happiness of marriage has, in a great measure, perished, or, at least, is mixed and infected with many inconveniences. Hence arise strifes, troubles, sorrows, dissensions, and a boundless sea of evils; and hence it follows, that men are often disturbed by their wives, and suffer through them many discouragements. Still, marriage was not capable of being so far vitiated by the depravity of men, that the blessing which God has once sanctioned by His word should be utterly abolished and extinguished. Therefore, amidst many inconveniences of marriage, which are the fruits of degenerate nature, some residue of divine good remains; as in the fire apparently smothered, some sparks still glitter.

It has always amazed me when dealing with a difficult marriage situation, to see the great hostility and even hatred manifested one to the other, when there was a time when they so loved one another that they were desirous to stand together and commit to one another and before God to love and cherish one another until parted by death. Sin can result in the deterioration and destruction of what began as the best of relationships.

## **B. Further details of God establishing Adam and Eve in marriage (Gen. 2:18-25)**

Genesis 2 records in greater detail the manner in which God created Adam and Eve and the essential nature of the marriage relationship between the husband and wife. Here again is Genesis 2:18-25:

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." <sup>19</sup>Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

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<sup>4</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, **Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 1, Genesis 1-15** (Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1987), p. 33.

<sup>21</sup>And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup>Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup>And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:18-25)

God had pronounced everything that He created as having been “good.” But in having created the first man—Adam, God saw that he was yet incomplete. “It is not good that man should be alone.” This is after all of the animals were paraded before Adam and he had assigned names of them all. None of the animals served as a true companion for Adam. We read in verse 20, “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.” So God determined to form Eve to be his helper. She was also created on the sixth day as Genesis 1:27 reveals to us.

We read of the manner in which God created Eve in verses 21 and 22.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup>Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

God had created Adam from the dust of the earth, as He had all the land animals (2:19). But for a helper to Adam, God created Eve from Adam’s own body. **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) famously described God’s intention and meaning for Eve to have been created from Adam’s side:

That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

We read that after God had taken a rib from Adam’s side and had closed up his flesh, He brought Eve to Adam. Verse 22 reads, “Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” Having created Eve, we then read of God giving Eve to Adam, which we should understand as God having joined them in holy matrimony. God had joined them together, and once that was done, they or anyone else should never dissolve that union. As our Lord Jesus much later taught: “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mat. 19:6).

Adam was very grateful to God and he realized and confessed his union and unity with his wife. Verse 23 records, “And Adam said:

‘This is now bone of my bones  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man.’

Adam understood and regarded Eve as one with him. The two had in fact become as one. And before the fall of Adam and Eve into sin this would have been a cooperative, harmonious, fulfilling and satisfying relationship. Of course with the entrance of sin this relationship was damaged and the potential of disruptive

conflict, independence, and alienation is possible, even likely at times. It is all too often common experience within marriage.

Verse 24 affirms the indissoluble union of husband and wife upon their marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Here we see that it was not only marriage having been instituted, but that it was also the institution of the family as an independent unit of husband and wife with their children being implied, for the husband and wife had separated and become independent from their parents. Within this marriage relationship there is closeness and support of one another. There is an emotional and physical relationship in which there is mutual support and enjoyment, which takes place free of guilt and shame, for God had instituted and blessed their union.

And so, we read in the book of Genesis that God created a man to oversee His creation. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him. God gave Adam dominion over the creation. He was to manage God’s creation for God’s glory and for his own good. Adam was to be God’s servant in overseeing and caring for all that God had made. There was, however, a deficiency on the part of man. Although everything about Adam was good, it was not good that he was alone. He was in need of a helper to assist him in his responsibilities. She would be like him in many respects; she would be taken from his own side. Eve was equally a person as was Adam and was equal in worth to Adam. She, too, was made in the image of God. But she was different from Adam in significant ways (thankfully so). She had been given certain qualities that would strengthen and encourage Adam in doing God’s will. Adam did not need another identical to himself in qualities and abilities. He needed one who would stand beside him and strengthen him in ways where he was deficient. The two of them together would make a single team and they would be able to fulfill the responsibilities that God had entrusted to Adam that Adam was unable to accomplish alone. Adam was to perform the responsibilities God had assigned to him; Eve would assist him in his task. He needed her. He could not do all he was capable of doing apart from her assistance.

Throughout history the family comprised of father, mother, and children has been the foundation and strength of societies. This simple family unit is sometimes called “the nuclear family.” Anywhere in the world, in any culture, the family unit has consisted of the father, mother, and unmarried children. It has only been in the last generation in which this historic and biblical model has been challenged and rejected by segments of our society.

Now as we trace the story of the Bible from the beginning, one would be hard-pressed to discover what we might consider to have been an ideal family that might serve as a model to emulate. The families depicted through the Old Testament record are quite “dysfunctional”, to use a modern psychologized term. There is recorded much infidelity and polygamy, much injustice and dissension within family relationships.<sup>5</sup> It is actually in the New Testament that we have set before us more clearly God’s will regarding the marriage relationship.

## **II. The New Testament revelation regarding marriage and the family.**

The Lord Jesus addressed and corrected the common perception and practice of easily dissolving marriage relationship. In His Sermon on the Mount He introduced the subject by saying these words:

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. (Matt. 5:31f).

The Lord repeated His teaching on a later occasion when some Pharisees had challenged Him. We read in Matthew 19 this interchange:

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<sup>5</sup> Polygamy may have served the protection and provision for women who otherwise might have been destitute in a world in which men were often scarce due to the nature and prevalence of ancient warfare.

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”

<sup>4</sup>And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ <sup>5</sup>and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup>So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

<sup>7</sup>They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

<sup>8</sup>He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup>And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” (Matt. 19:3-9)

The Apostle Paul wrote most clearly and fully regarding the permanence of the marriage relationship. The city of Corinth, Greece, was a notorious place, the “sin city” of the Roman Empire. The Christian converts in this place needed thorough instruction regarding the nature of marriage before the Lord. The church had asked Paul about these matters and he answered them in his epistle. We read of Paul’s authoritative instruction in 1 Corinthians 7.

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. <sup>2</sup>Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. <sup>3</sup>Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup>Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup>But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. <sup>7</sup>For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

<sup>8</sup>But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; <sup>9</sup>but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

<sup>10</sup>Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. <sup>11</sup>But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

<sup>12</sup>But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. <sup>13</sup>And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. <sup>14</sup>For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. <sup>15</sup>But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. <sup>16</sup>For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Cor. 7:1-16).

The apostle recorded instruction that the Lord Jesus had directly communicated to him and (perhaps) others. But he also gave his informed (and inspired) apostolic instruction regarding the marriage relationship. Both sources of information are, of course, God’s inspired and authoritative Word. This entire passage sets forth the will of God respecting these matters.

But it was in Paul’s epistle to the church at Ephesus that he gave the clearest and most complete instruction of what a husband and wife relationship was to be like. The analogy that beautifully illustrated the matter was the love that Jesus Christ has for His bride, His church and the manner that love is manifested. Paul gave this apostolic instruction to the church:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup>Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup>that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup>that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup>So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. <sup>30</sup>For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. <sup>31</sup>“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:22-33)

Paul gave similar instruction in his epistle to the church at Colossae:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

<sup>19</sup>Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

<sup>20</sup>Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

<sup>21</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (Col. 3:18-21)

What we have set before us in the Word of God is the traditional, nuclear family of the husband/father, the wife/mother, and their children. The husband and wife are to be a life-long enduring relationship which only ends in the death of one of the spouses. The husband is the head of the home, in that he leads his wife and children and they are to support and follow him. He is to have and exercise his authority as Christ serves His bride, the church. He desires and lives for her security and support. He uses his authority to serve her and his children, leading and supporting them in knowing and doing the will of God. She in turn is to be his willing and compliant helper. She is to encourage her husband and assist him in achieving and accomplishing the raising of a godly heritage in their children.

### **III. Cultural challenges to the biblical teaching regarding marriage and the family.**

#### **1. Challenges within Christian families themselves**

Chief among Adam’s responsibilities that God had given him was for him to love and care for Eve. Adam was to assure that she had the things which she had needed. He was to be her loving provider and protector, lovingly leading her as they both sought to fulfill God’s will. She in turn was to use her abilities to assist Adam. The two existed in this blessed state for a time of unknown duration. There was a loving cooperative relationship between the two of them. They worked side by side, Adam directing their work, Eve supporting him in whatever ways he was in need. But with their fall into sin, their ideal marriage relationship suffered. Due to the results of their defection from God, they departed from one another. Husband and wife relations have never been the same since.

Due to sin, men tend to fail in their responsibilities to lovingly lead their wives and families; wives fail to submit willingly to the leadership of their husbands. Since and because of the fall, men tend to become slacker husbands; wives tend toward becoming bossy wives. The fact is, that the potential and danger exists for great tension within every marriage, and sadly division often results. Even among “Christians” this is the case. And so it is, down through history the relationship between a husband and wife has only functioned in a healthy and harmonious manner when God’s Word is followed and each spouse submits to God and His design for their relationship.



At the heart of these differences between men and women is a common sin. All of us, whether male or female, struggle to a degree with temptations to reject authority, some more than others. We want to be our own gods. We do not naturally desire to serve another, rather, we want and expect others to serve us. We have this sin nature within us that leads us to reject authority. We do not want anyone, whether it is a parent, a husband, a pastor or a church, and certainly not the government, to tell us what to do. Husbands do not want their responsibilities to impose upon their time, money, or energy. He perceives that everything and everyone seems to be working against him and his desires. Just as the ground was no longer co-operative with Adam after the fall, neither would his wife fully support him and cooperate with him. He has the responsibility to be her authority; but her tendency is to resist and resent that authority. He has the responsibility to lead her, but her desire would be to control him. There would not be willing compliance, but rather an ever-present tendency for resistance. This is very troubling and discouraging for husbands. Oh yes, she would “desire” to have her husband lead her, as long as it is in a manner that she wants to be lead. But when he wants to go in a direction that differs from her, then tension and resistance may result. A battle often ensues, for there is not a natural willingness on her part to comply. It is only when the husband and wife humble themselves and embrace the roles that God has assigned them, only then will they again experience the satisfaction and fulfilment that a Christian marriage may give them. To have and enjoy a good and blessed marriage, the husband and the wife need to embrace and conform to the biblical model and each seek the grace of God to fulfil one’s God-given responsibilities first and foremost.

## **2. The challenges of our godless culture that reject the traditional family**

The ideal marriage and family relationship that we have set forth has dominated western culture for many centuries. It was actually in the 500s AD that laws respecting marriage and divorce, and the care and welfare of children in families was established in the Roman Empire. Those standards and laws have been perpetually maintained throughout Western history until this generation in which we live. For much of our present world, the family as set forth in the Word of God no longer is the norm; it is viewed as repressive and unjust. The family has been effectively redefined in our culture. We reaffirm committed to the biblical definition and description of the family. Although the world now recognizes and celebrates same sex marriage, adoption of children into homes of homosexuals, we must continue to advocate strongly for biblical teaching.

But we do not limit our rejection of sin in the forms mentioned. We declare that not only homosexual activity is sinful, but all heterosexual activity outside marriage is sinful. Sexual relations are only permitted and blessed of God within the marriage relationship. But this does not include all marriages, but only those marriages that God regards as legitimate in His sight--biblically sanctioned marriages, those that He has joined together. The Lord Jesus spoke to this. We read in Mark 10:10-12 these words of Jesus:

In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. <sup>11</sup>So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup>And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Premarital sexual relations are sinful in the sight of God. They are declared to be acts of fornication. And the Word of God declares, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral (lit. fornicators) and adulterous” (Heb. 13:4). Is this a problem in the United States (and throughout our world)? In the United States it is reported that only 6% of those who enter marriage are virgins.

But we also decry the quickly sought and easily obtained divorce settlements that take place both inside and outside of churches. Now granted, the Lord saves many of His people who have come out of many various backgrounds, who have been immoral in the past, perhaps having divorced and remarried in the past when not having biblical warrant to have done so. But this is to be understood regarded as other sin that God has saved us from. When we learn what the Word of God says about a matter and we come to understand that our past actions were transgressions against His laws, then we humbly acknowledge our failures before Him, affirm our faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus for having atoned for our sin,

and then we attempt to adopt and practice that which is condoned in Scripture in the future. We must be willing to stand for principle and biblical precedent regardless of the direction the world would have us go. We must have policies as a church that are clearly stated that we support and defend the biblical (traditional) family, even as we recognize the broken and troubled families that we are attempting to restore and support. But homosexual marriage and sex change therapy we cannot condone. They are contrary to the will of God and to our convictions as the people of God. God created Adam and then Eve, a man and a woman, and He joined them in marriage. There is no legitimate marriage before God, regardless of what the fallen world insists and demands that we recognize and regard. May the Lord enable us to be true and faithful to Him, and to the generation in which He has called us to bear witness of Him and His ways.

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## Herman Bavinck

(1854-1921)

on

### The Image of God in the human race collectively

Last Lord's Day we addressed the unique and important role of both the man and the woman as the image of God. We emphasized this should shape and inform us on the manner in which we esteem all human beings. But although every person is the image of God individually, there is a sense in which we are the image of God collectively. God created mankind that humanity as a whole would display and reflect who God is and in a measure what God is like. Below are the words of Herman Bavinck setting forth the larger picture of all of humanity collectively as the image of God.

“Adam was not created *alone*. As a man and by himself he was incomplete. He lacked something that no lower creature could make up (Gen. 2:20). As a man by himself, accordingly, neither was he yet the fully unfolded image of God. The creation of humankind in God's image was only completed on the sixth day, when God created both man and woman in union with each other, in His image. Still, even in this creation in God's image of man and woman in conjunction is not the end but the beginning of God's journey with mankind. It is not good that man be alone. Upon the two of them God immediately pronounced the blessing of multiplication (Gen. 1:28). Not the man alone, nor the man and woman together, but only the whole of humanity is the fully developed image of God, His children, His offspring. The image of god is much too rich for it to be fully realized in a single human being, however richly gifted that human being may be. It can only be somewhat unfolded in its depth and riches in a humanity counting billions of members. Just as the traces of God (*vestigia Dei*) are spread over many, many works, in both space and time, so also the image of God can only be displayed in all its dimensions and characteristic features in a humanity whose members exist both successively one after the other and contemporaneously side by side. But just as the cosmos is a unity and receives its head and master in humankind; just as the traces of God (*vestigia Dei*) scattered throughout the entire world are bundled and raised up to the image of God of humankind; so also that humanity in turn is to be conceived as an organism that, precisely as such, is finally the only fully developed image of God. Not as a heap of souls on a tract of land, not as a loose aggregate of individuals, but as having been created out of one blood; as one household and one family, humanity is the image and likeness of God. Belonging to that humanity is also its development, its history, its ever-expanding dominion over the earth, its progress in science and art, its subjugation of all creatures. All these things as well constitute the unfolding of the image and likeness of God in keeping with which humanity was created. Just as God did not reveal Himself all at once at creation, but continues and expands that revelation from day to day and from age to age, so also the image of God is not a static entity but extends and unfolds itself in the forms of space and time. It is both a gift (*Gabe*) and a mandate (*Aufgabe*). It is an undeserved gift of grace that was given to the first human being immediately at the creation but at the same time is the grounding principle and germ of an altogether rich and glorious development. Only humanity in its entirety—as one complete organism, summed up under a single head, spread out over the whole earth, as prophet proclaiming the truth of God, as priest dedicating itself to God, as ruler controlling the earth and the whole of creation—only it is the fully finished image, the most telling and striking likeness of God.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Herman Bavinck, **Reformed Dogmatics, Volume 2: God and Creation** (Baker Academic, 2004), pp. 576f.