

AGAPE PRESCRIBES MONOGAMY: IT'S GOOD FOR US

Gn 1:28, 2:18-24; Song of Songs 7:6

I. FOR FECUNDITY (Gn 1:28)—children & large families biblical blessings

- A. Biologically & biblically, sex primarily procreative—“all about babies”
- B. Instinctual/natural law approbation: “good” they be—children (generally speaking) prove to be blessings—thus fortunate the “man who has his quiver full” (Ps 127:5)
- C. Current demography concerns (cf. Ben Wattenberg’s *Fewer* and Jonathan Last’s *What to Expect When No One’s Expecting: America’s Coming Demographic Disaster*)—much of Europe imploding, complicated by Muslim immigration; US increase due to immigration—cultural, civilizational prospects
- E. Political implications—singles (especially single women) vote differently from married (mainly with little concern for coming generations), favoring paternal government

II. FOR FLOURISHING

- A. Friendship (Gn 2:18-24)
 - 1. “Best friend” (especially following death of spouse) affirmations striking
 - 2. Sexual differences needed, blended, in covenant (friendly) relationship—
cf. Stephen Rhoads: *Taking Sex Differences Seriously* (NB: not “gender”)
 - a. Male/masculine ingredients? *Men are from Mars!* (athletics, action games, risky endeavors, personal independence, silences)
 - b. Female/feminine ingredients? *Women are from Venus!* (value relationships, conversation, domestic interests, nurturing—esp. children—characteristics) NB: prominent feminists (Germain Greer & Naomi Wolfe) change minds re children
- B. Health/personal well-being: men, women, children all thrive best in two-parent homes—
Ecc 4:9-10—scholarly evidence overwhelming
 - 1. Adults:
 - a. Physical; less smoking, alcoholism, suicide, illnesses etc.; thus increased longevity
 - b. Mental/emotional: less stress, loneliness, depression; more togetherness, mutual aid, happiness—N.B. not true for cohabiting couples!
 - c. Spiritual: family altar, priesthood, ministry—father’s role especially important for church-going, children’s discipline, development
 - 2. Children:
 - a. Virtually all indices indicate children need mom & dad (fatherless boys tend toward violence; fatherless girls tend toward promiscuity)
 - b. Poverty largely restricted to single-parent (female-headed) homes
 - 3. Safety: traditional marriage makes home best place—only 10% domestic violence by husbands! children mainly abused by boyfriends & stepfathers

III. FOR FUN (*Song of Songs* 1:2-3, 12-17; 7:6)

- A. Aesthetic
 - 1. Visual: added beauty to home, both in person and through work
 - 2. Auditory: comforting/alluring voices
- B. Sensual—“naked and not ashamed” (Gn 2)
 - 1. Biological insight: unique human attraction not purely reproductive
 - 2. Data correlates religious commitments & sexual satisfaction—cf. Andrew Greeley’s *Faithful Attraction*

MARRIAGE & FUTURE OF FAMILY

In *Marriage and the Future of the Family*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese took an historian's stance, seeking to place this issue in its proper context. But as a concerned woman she also sought to contribute to the formation of better, stronger families. Discerning "the signs of the times," she acknowledged that the modern family faces great stresses and that our children are doing poorly. It is obvious "that children would fare better if their mothers did not work outside the home, or, at least, if one of their parents were at home when the children return from school. These days only the most unreconstructed traditionalists—many with some hesitation—dare to suggest that a mother and a father may play different roles in a child's life and, hence, have different responsibilities" (p. 17). Unfortunately there is an "astounding complacency toward the ominous tendencies of our political, social, and cultural life, for within a remarkably brief period we have, almost without noticing, embraced a cataclysmic transformation of the very nature of our society" (p. 17).

In part this results from the historic rise of individualism. To many, personal autonomy—releasing the chains that tie them to spouses or children or parents, communities or traditions, churches or theology—is life's *summum bonum*. This love of freedom flourished, particularly on the American frontier, from the country's earliest days, but it was, until recently, counterbalanced by strong families—staunchly hierarchical and traditional—wherein the father assumed "authority over all, including his wife," and parents assumed "authority over their children" (p. 21). By reacting against any husband's authority, however, 19th century feminists launched a liberation movement that subtly bore fruit in the 20th century. Yet, Fox-Genovese asserts: "One thing is blindingly clear: 'The transformation of women's lives and expectations during recent decades has no historical precedent, and its consequences reach into every aspect of family a societal life. Above all, the changes in women's lives and expectations are having a radical impact on families and the very idea of the family, and therefore on the lives of children, and therefore on the character and prospects of future generations" (p. 24).

The very freedoms enjoyed by modern women bring with them another set of challenges. Sexual liberation, secured by abortion rights, has certainly been less than an unmixed blessing. Recourse to abortion, of course, frees a woman from "children—the possible consequence other sexuality. This strategy effectively divorces children from any social institution by labeling them the concern of a woman rather than of a woman and a man" (p. 28). The courts declared "the husband has no more stake in his wife's pregnancy than any other individual, which effectively strips him of any stake in the family and strips the family of any standing as an organic unit" (p. 29). Inevitably—it necessarily follows—the family loses standing, subject to the volatile desires of adults and children—who may or may not choose to live together. Sexual liberation cannot but cause "the disintegration of the family" (p. 31).

Though virtually all careful studies demonstrate how children suffer when their parents divorce, roughly half of them will spend at least part of their lives in a single parent home. With an inexorable inevitability, in the wake of the "equality" of the sexes came the "skyrocketing number of out-of-wedlock births and the declining rate of marriage" (p. 32), developments hardly anticipated by the champions of women's liberation 50 years ago. Like it or not, Fox-Genovese says; "The sexual liberation of women, combined with the feminist campaign against marriage and motherhood as the special vocation of women, has directly contributed to the declining birthrate, the proliferation of single-parent or single-mother families, and the number of children born outside of marriage" (p. 35).

Even apparently bland feminist demands, including calls for egalitarian marriages and insisting men and women should abandon traditional roles with men cleaning and cooking and keeping house, spoil domestic tranquility, for "couples in which men share domestic tasks with their wives are more likely to divorce than those in which they do not, those in which the man earns more than 50 percent of the family's income are less likely to divorce than those in which he does not; and the larger the share of the family's income the wife earns, the more likely her husband is to abuse her" (p. 34). Forgotten is the fact that marriage, unlike a business deal, demands surrendering rather than promoting one's rights!

While this great social upheaval has transformed our social world, the only institution (the Church) capable of providing guidance amidst it all has "showed little enthusiasm for condemning the disintegrative forces out of hand" (p. 37). Quite the opposite! The churches have in fact become agents for sexual liberation and feminist theology. To Fox-Genovese—so lately returned to the Christian faith—this poses a major challenge. Indeed; "The greatest danger of all may lie in the dissemination of sexual egalitarianism within our churches, for the core of Christianity has always lain in the simultaneous reality of our particularity and our universality" (p. 44).