

The Family and Sexual Ethics: Christian Foundations and Public Values

A collection of short
papers from the
International Conference
held in Hong Kong,
May 2011



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CENTRE**
A BIBLICAL VISION FOR SOCIETY

Edited by Sally Bertlin

Introduction

In 2010 Professor Kang Phee-Seng of the Hong Kong Baptist University indicated that he was planning to run a conference on the Family and Sexual Ethics from a Christian public policy perspective. This would have a particular emphasis on China, ideally with the participation of some Western scholars to work alongside Chinese academics in this whole arena.

The Jubilee Centre welcomed this opportunity to mobilise scholars in their thinking on the family and sexual ethics, as the Jubilee Centre had done significant work in this area in the recent past. We responded warmly to the invitation to participate, and the conference took place in May 2011.

In recent years there has been a growing international interest and concern about the pressures of the environment and the consequences of this, for the long-term survival of the planet. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the breakdown of the family and the consequences for the ecology of the planet. The breakdown of the family is being driven partly by divorce and partly by today's sexual ethics, which then impact on rates of family formation and disintegration.

So it is fitting to have such a forum considering the philosophical, ethical and practical issues around the family and sexual ethics, in the context of the largest nation in the world.

This document presents the short versions (of around 1000 words) of some of the papers presented at the conference. These are not summaries; all the text comes from the original papers, but the length has been cut down to less than 2 pages to serve as an outline of the author's main arguments. Those interested in reading any of the full papers should write to Sally Bertlin (s.bertlin@jubilee-centre.org).

Dr Michael Schluter CBE
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Contents

Introductory Address

Mr Stephen Lam, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Hong Kong p.4

The Dynamics of Formation and Change in Families, Marriage and Friendships: The theological and philosophical context

Jeremy Ive, Anglican Priest, UK p.6

Hong Kong Families under Pressure: Theological reflections on transforming values

Louie Kin Yip, Assistant Professor, China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong p.8

Biblical Sexual Ethics in the Age of Consent

Jonathan Burnside, Reader in Biblical Law, School of Law, University of Bristol, UK p.10

Human Rights and Sexual Ethics: With a focused reflection on college students' sexual ethics in current China

Wang Yunping, Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science, Xiamen University, China p.12

Family as the Basic Element of Social Community

Zhuo Xinping, Director and Professor, Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China p.14

The rWorld: Overcoming sexual politics in the 21st Century

Dale Kuehne, Professor of Politics, Saint Anselm College, USA p.16

Loved into Existence

Jennifer Roback Morse, Founder and President, Ruth Institute, USA p.18

Biblical Building Blocks for Strong Families: Profile, Purpose and Protection

Michael Schluter CBE, Founder and Life President, Jubilee Centre; Chief Executive, Relationships Global, UK p.20

Materialism or Emotionalism: Values of marriage among contemporary Chinese university students

Cheng Shengli, Professor, Department of Social Work, Shandong University, Jinan p.22

Introductory Address

Mr Stephen Lam, Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

I am most grateful to you for inviting me to address this very distinguished audience. The theme of the Conference, “The Family and Sexual Ethics: Christian Foundation and Public Values”, is a subject of central importance to the health of any community.

As a member of our government, I wish to say that it is always good having friends from overseas and Mainland of China visiting Hong Kong.

This morning I am speaking more as a member of the Christian church than as the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs. Nonetheless, since we pride ourselves on being Asia’s World City in Hong Kong, on behalf of the HKSAR Government, I warmly welcome all of you to Hong Kong.

Economic Prosperity

Many have said that Hong Kong is an economic miracle. From being a barren rock, we developed from a fishing village in the 19th century into an international metropolis in the 21st century. Just last week, the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland has rated Hong Kong as the most competitive economy in the world alongside the United States. The US Heritage Foundation has also rated Hong Kong to be the world’s freest economy.

Today, our per capita GDP stands at over US\$31,000 and we have a developed economy status. Prosperity brings many benefits. But alongside a wealthy and affluent living standard, we have social issues to address. In the past decade, the number of divorce decrees in Hong Kong has increased by 18 per cent. There is a ratio of one divorce case to every three cases of registered marriage. Our community pays the price for this.

Family and Social Services

This is why since 2007, the Government has established a Family Council to help preserve family values and to promote family life.

Indeed, for many years, family life education has been an important feature of our social services. Apart from the efforts of the Social Welfare Department, we in Hong Kong are blessed by the presence of the many non-governmental organisations (NGOs). For many decades, particularly since the end of World War II, these NGOs have established many service units including hospitals, schools and orphanages. They have

provided voluntary services and relief to the needy in the community.

The Government’s estimated expenditure for the current financial year exceeds HK\$370 billion. The social welfare budget accounts for over 17 per cent of the Government recurrent expenditure. This is second only to education. The Government and NGOs are jointly endeavouring to keep the Hong Kong community in shape.

I know there are many participants from the Mainland of China, where there has been a trend towards prosperity over the past 30 years. Currently, per capita GDP stands at over US\$4,500 in Mainland China. In Southern provinces such as Guangdong, which has already undergone industrialisation, GDP per capita is about US\$7,200. Since the open door policy was adopted in 1978, GDP per capita has increased by around 50-fold. As in Hong Kong, prosperity has improved the livelihood of the population but along with prosperity, social issues have emerged in Mainland China. In 2010, there was on average one divorce case recorded for every six marriages.

Hong Kong-Mainland Co-operation

The HKSAR Government co-operates very closely with Mainland authorities – in particular the Guangdong Provincial Government. Much of the co-operation concerns the economy, infrastructure and the flow of people across the border. We have over 20 bilateral expert groups. One of them is focused on exchanges in social services. Among other things, we share our experience with Guangdong counterparts on how we support NGOs in Hong Kong to provide a wide range of social services. It is, of course, for the Mainland authorities to decide how, and if so to what extent, Hong Kong’s experience is relevant and useful.

Bible and Lessons on Morality

Preserving the family unit as an institution of modern society will continue to be an on-going challenge. In this regard, the Bible has valuable lessons for us. We are all familiar with Samson’s story; his relationship with Delilah and with prostitutes. (Judges 16, verses 4-30). King David also had his fall. Instead of doing battle at the frontier of war, he cast his eyes on Bathsheba and ended up committing adultery with her. Thereafter, David committed murder against Bathsheba’s husband by sending him to the frontier of war to be killed by his enemies (2 Samuel 11, verses 1-27). Suffering came as a result and the lessons from the Bible are clear. Sexual immorality breeds destruction and breaks up families. David did repent and the Lord blessed him with his son

Solomon, who succeeded his throne (1 Kings 2, verse 12).

As a Government official, I find encouragement in the story of Joseph. While he was a slave and long before becoming the Prime Minister of Egypt, Joseph refused the advances of his master's wife. Joseph fled from the house when he was seduced (Genesis, Chapter 39, verses 6-11). Though he was unfairly imprisoned, the Lord did not forget Joseph and raised him to a place of honour second only to Pharaoh (Genesis 41, verse 40).

There are several lessons which we can glean from these stories in the Old Testament. Firstly, sin and immorality wreak destruction on one's personal life and the family. That was the bitter experience of Samson and David. But the Lord's blessing can still be found in repentance.

Secondly, one must flee and flee immediately, from temptation when it presents itself. That is what Joseph did. He fled from his master's house. Joseph lost his shirt, but he kept his soul (Genesis 39, verse 12).

Thirdly, an important feature of the evolution of human society involves the pursuit of freedom. In the name of freedom, many causes have been pursued over the centuries. In the 19th century, President Lincoln freed the slaves of America through the Civil War. In Britain, Lord Wilberforce succeeded in enacting legislation to outlaw slave trading in the United Kingdom. Both Lincoln and Wilberforce were eminent Christians in their own time.

At the other end of the freedom spectrum, Samson and David abused their personal freedoms and brought pain upon themselves and their families.

On the question of freedom, the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel is clear. In the Gospel of John, Christ said to those who had believed in Him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8, verse 31-32). True freedom is found in faith built on salvation by Jesus Christ. This is why I believe, the spreading of the gospel will contribute to our efforts to preserve the family as a building block of human society.

Among the galaxy of academic talent gathered here today, I have made some initial remarks only to convey to you these thoughts in the hope that they may be of some help in stimulating your discussions over the next two days. I have put forth these thoughts with a heart of humility knowing full well these are indeed difficult issues. As our Lord Jesus has said, in Chapter 8 of the Gospel of John, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone" (John 8, verse 7).

The conference organisers have set a tall order for this occasion; the family, sexual ethics and public values are issues which spiritual and temporal leaders have faced for many centuries. All of you have many years of research experience. I have every confidence that your gathering will be of value and contribute to research in the respective areas.

The Dynamics of Formation and Change in Families, Marriages and Friendships

by Rev Dr Jeremy Ive

Introduction

In this paper, I shall focus on the dynamics of family, marriage and friendship using three different 'descriptive views': individuals over time, relationships over time, and individuals in relation at a given time. I shall use the Relational Proximity model, in which parity of respect, directness of communication, continuity of story, 'multiplexity' (many-sidedness) of knowledge and 'commonality' (shared values) are all together regarded as providing the necessary framework for sound relationships.

1. Family

A family is a natural community in that it is founded biotically (i.e. through sexual procreation):

a) Family as individual/s over time

In a healthy family situation, the individuality of the family members is nurtured and enhanced by their membership of their family. Parity of respect means that there is in-built authority structure of relationships. There is a norm of love which governs the family.

The individuality of both the family and the family members can be undermined in two ways: in a 'traditional' family the full individuality of the children can be suppressed when children are seen as economic units, e.g. as units in a marriage settlement between families. Conversely in an individualistic society, children can see their membership of families as a burden and rebel as 'teenagers' and neglect their parents, especially in their old age.

b) Family as relations over time

Family relations are not a matter of personal choice – they are founded on natural relations. However, individual family members need to nurture and develop these relations in multiplex ways.

c) Family as individual/s in relation at a given time

The family is part of a network and each family brings together the two family networks of the respective partners. This is the extended family; the breakdown of which can lead to rootlessness.

d) Family as individual/s in relation over time (360 degree view)

Families as natural communities, then, are typically founded biotically, but should be governed and guided by a benevolent concern by the parents for the children and then by the family members with one another. The main way families build links with other families, and new families come into being, is through marriage.

2. Marriage

The distinctiveness and role of marriage is worked out according to the same descriptive views.

a) Marriage as individual/s over time

A marriage comes into being as a new structured whole out of the intersubjective relationship between two individuals. Through human history there has been polygamy but there is strictly no such thing as a polygamous marriage, but an overlapping number of marriages with a shared partner.

b) Marriage as relations over time

Marriage (like the family) is a natural community and is guided by the ethical love relation of life-long fidelity. There are two forms of marriage which fall short of the Christian idea. Firstly in more traditional societies, economic relations may have much earlier and greater salience. Secondly in an individualistic society, the biological relations may be brought forward in time in a non-normative way. Against both these views, marriage cannot be reduced to a mere contract, be it 'arranged' marriages or as limited or temporary arrangements. Over time, marriages can open up or close down, for example they may become more multiplex as the partners grow in love and commitment, which needs to be unfolded in a context of commonality, i.e. a shared worldview and aims.

c) Marriage as individual/s in relation at a given time

The two partners are not alone – individually and together they belong to a bigger picture – it is set within the wider context of the families to which those two individuals belong and networked through family, friendships and other networks.

d) Marriage as individual/s in relation over time (360 degree view)

Marriages need to be guided by benevolent concern of one partner for another, in mutual lifelong commitment.

3. Friendship

A friendship is an 'inter-individual' community, entered into freely on the basis of mutual respect, which can only be built up over time.

a) Friendship as relations over time

The relationships which constitute friendships can open out in a 'multiplex' way as different kinds of relationship are established through different meetings and points of contact ('directness') over time. Friendship helps to hold society together.

b) Friendship as individual/s in relationship at a given time

In this, we see the multiplex way in which the different relationships can be distinguished from one another plus the importance of a shared worldview (or 'commonality') which the individual friends enjoy. In the information age, there is a question about shallow versus deep relationships in friendships. A good friendship needs to have depth; this includes meeting in a common physical location, not merely in 'cyberspace' where interaction is limited.

Conclusion

The family is a 'natural community', i.e. it comes into being typically (although not exclusively) through the procreation of children, with a structure of relations which diversify and open up through shared interests,

experiences and issues of common concern linking its members into a wider network of relations.

In the case of marriage, it is joined intimately to the institution of the family, although it retains and develops its distinctive character through the stages of marriage within which the relations between the two partners diversify and mature, with the result that the partners of a marriage are bound into a wider network of relations.

In the case of friendship, it is not a natural community (as with the family and marriage), nor an organised institution, as with a church, a state or a voluntary association (none of which is dealt with in this paper). Rather it has a loose inter-individual structure, founded on the sociality of the members but growing and opening up as the different points of 'directness' (i.e. intersubjective communication) are made and developed between and among the friends; so that here, as with family and marriage, there is a wider network of connections and 'mutual friends' with an exponentially wide reach.

Hong Kong Families under Pressure: Theological Reflections on Transforming Values

by Louie Kin Yip

In this paper we look at the meaning of family and parenting from a biblical perspective. With a biblical model of healthy family life, we consider the pressure that postmodern capitalism and traditional Chinese values place on Hong Kong families. We conclude by briefly considering some possible, but imperfect, remedies.

According to the Christian tradition, family has at least three important functions: identity formation; communion and support; and economic production. Firstly, we assume that each person requires a healthy sense of personal identity. The family is the primary cradle for building a sense of personal identity. To gain a sense of identity, a person has to go through a process of socialization. However, theologically speaking, an even more important function of personal identity formation is the experience of being treated as a relational person.

In the biblical narrative, identity is realized within the context of a covenant relationship. God initiates the relationship by empowering the Israelites and they respond by submitting to God's leadership. Likewise, God initiates the relationship in grace, and in response, the Israelites celebrate the greatness and faithfulness of God in public and private worship. For healthy personhood to develop, there needs to be occasion for a person to play both initiating and receiving roles in family life.

Secondly, theologically speaking the family is a place for communion. Although earthly family is always mixed with tensions and strife, it points to the eschatological perfect communion that we shall share with God. It is also an image of the intra-Trinitarian communion of the Godhead.

Lastly, family is a basic unit of economic production. In Genesis 2, Adam and Eve's task was to cultivate the garden. Family is the context where children learn many of the basic skills for participation in the larger economy.

The Hong Kong economy has moved from classical capitalism into postmodern capitalism. In postmodern capitalism, capital accumulation depends on 'flexible' marketing where one is able to create new market niches. In the postmodern economy, human capital

becomes more and more important. However, rather than having more children in order to increase family labour ability, parents finance extensive, and expensive, education for one child in the hope that she will be successful in the postmodern economy. The pressure is on the child to prove herself different and superior, presumably as early as possible.

In contrast to the empowerment and grace involved in building a healthy self-identity, in the postmodern economy parents are pressured to develop and demonstrate marketable skills in their children in a hurry. In response to such pressures, many middle and upper class children are afraid to voice their true opinion, as a wrong answer would be labeled as failure.

Chinese traditional values exacerbate the pressure of market capitalism on family life in Hong Kong. Traditionally, Chinese family relationships are based more on duty than intimacy. The father is often seen as an authoritative figure providing material needs and prestige to the family. The mother is praised for her ability to discipline children, rather than for her tenderness towards them. The children's duty as a young child is to obey the parents, and as an adult to honor the parents.

In Hong Kong society today, egalitarianism has modified the hierarchal mentality of traditional Chinese culture. However, a focus on socialization for success has continued to dominate parenting in Hong Kong. At home children learn that their success is also the honor of the family. The resulting kind of pride or shame game can put enormous pressure on family relationships. Children often find themselves struggling to believe that they are accepted and valued. Likewise, parents are under pressure as they measure their value according to their children's performance.

Shame as a tool of motivation is hardly compatible with the grace that is involved in healthy identity formation. Without empowerment and grace, it is difficult for children to either obey or celebrate or both. Moreover, the combination of traditional Chinese values and postmodernism damages the communion that is central to family life.

In the Confucian tradition, there is the danger of substituting socialization for communion. The parents are supposed to impose the wisdom of life on the younger generation to protect them and guide them. However, while parents are eager to teach, they are not confident that their wisdom is still valid in the rapidly changing society. Children often understand that parents love them, but they do not feel that parents can give them adequate support. In this situation, traditional Chinese values seem to lack the resources to

respond to postmodernism. The consequence is a fragmented relationship between parents and children.

The purpose of this short paper is to demonstrate the usefulness of a theological analysis of social problems. Using Hong Kong as an example, we have shown how the modern social condition and ancient social tradition work together to distort the process of parenting (as interpreted from a Christian perspective). A good answer to this situation will require parents to

be actively aware of the values shaping their tradition, and to consider how they can build healthy relationships with their children. It will also require the government to develop social policy that helps to mitigate the risks in our postmodern economy. It needs to rethink the place of social policy. It will also require designing a more egalitarian system of education where children can have second or third chances. All these, and more, require further studies.

Biblical Sexual Ethics in the Age of Consent

by Dr Jonathan Burnside

Consent is one of the key building blocks for constructing public sexual ethics in modern Western societies. It is valued because it is bound up with our concerns for privacy and autonomy. We say: you can be whatever you want to be. But the desire to be unconstrained is a very particular idea of freedom.

The biblical teaching on sexual behaviour rests on a different foundation to that of consent, because it is founded on a different idea of freedom. The Psalmist declares: “I run in the path of Your [i.e. God’s] commands, for You have set my heart free” (Psalm 119:32; New International Version). The Psalmist’s heart is free because he runs – enthusiastically – in the path of God’s commands. He knows that his freedom is boundaried, because if there is total freedom we cannot live. There has to be form because without form there is no life.

The Biblical book of Leviticus (Lev. 20) is all about form. It describes what is in fact the only freedom we can ever have. One aspect of this structure is that Lev. 20 follows the sequence of taboos in the Decalogue (e.g. Exodus 20:3-14). The Ten Commandments begin with the prohibition of ‘serving other gods,’ followed by the command to ‘honour father and mother’ and then the prohibition of adultery. This pattern is followed in Lev. 20 which prohibits Molech worship (in verse 5, Molech being an Ammonite deity), ‘cursing parents’ (in verse 9, which carries the sense of ‘holding cheap the honour’ of one’s parents), and finally the prohibition, not only of adultery, but of a range of sexual behaviours (verses 10 – 21).

The idea that Lev. 20 repeats the sequence of the Ten Commandments is important. When the Bible wants to speak of prohibited sexual relationships (in verses 11 – 21) it doesn’t create a separate category of what we might call ‘sexual offences’. It uses the existing categories of ‘idolatry,’ ‘dishonouring parents’ and ‘adultery.’ As human beings, made in the image of God, we need categories and we need the right categories. Lev. 20 gives form to sexual freedom by showing that the right categories to make sense of sexual dysfunction are: idolatry, dishonouring parents and adultery.

The category of idolatry reminds us of our need for spiritual intimacy. Because we are made in the image of a God who is Trinity, and relational, we have a yearning to know and be known, both by Him and each other. It is because we are spiritual beings that we want to seek after another – and the One whom we are designed to seek after the most is God.

The second major category which Leviticus provides for in categorising what we would call ‘sexual offences’ is: dishonouring parents. While consent is necessary in biblical law (because otherwise it would be rape),¹ it is not sufficient to determine whether a sexual relationship is appropriate. It’s a question not simply of consent, but of relational order. The category of dishonouring parents shows us that “the morality of a decision regarding sexual practice can only adequately be judged when the interests of third parties are taken into account.”² In our independence we’ve lost the sense that anything we do affects anybody. In fact, sexual behaviour is likely to impact third parties even more significantly because it involves intimacy with people who are made in the image of God.

The third, and final, category Lev. 20 provides is: adultery. This category reminds us of our need to locate the centre for sexual behaviour in the covenant of heterosexual marriage. There is a high degree of form in the presentation of this category. Just as there is a connection between verse 9 (‘dishonouring parents’) and verse 10 (adultery), so there is a connection between verse 10 (adultery) and verses 11 – 16 (forms of adultery). These verses are connected and developed through a series of ‘binary oppositions’ – a pair of terms conventionally regarded as opposites (e.g. hot/cold; on/off). By structuring reality through **related** oppositions, binary oppositions allow us to establish categories, construct sense and create order. Binary oppositions create the structure within which life can exist and flourish.

In providing structure and form, Leviticus echoes God’s purposes in creation – to establish and to bless us. Leviticus is a distinctly priestly book because it is the priests’ job to speak and bring blessing to the world. This is how blessing is done; by establishing the right categories and bringing order and life to the world.

¹ For a discussion of the role of consent in biblical law relating to sexual behaviour see Jonathan Burnside, *God, Justice and Society* (New York: OUP, 2011), pp. 326-336.

² Fletcher, Jason. 2006. ‘Foreword,’ in Jonathan Burnside, *Consent versus community: What basis for sexual offences reform?* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre, 2006), p. 5.

The re-establishment of categories in Lev 20 is important because when we see sexual chaos in our society, we need to locate the centre, and departures from the centre, and say why they are departures. Lev. 20 enables us to do that. Christians might see, in this explicit use of categories, something of God's heart for the world, which is to redeem the damage that has been caused and to recover the form that gives us our true freedom.

To conclude, concern for consent in biblical law goes beyond the parties involved in the sexual act to include the consent of certain family members. Biblical law thus offers a public sexual ethic that is less individualistic than modern law, and which is positively oriented towards the community as a whole. In this way, we can make an important connection between Christian foundations and public value in the field of family and sexual ethics.

Human Rights and Sexual Ethics

With a Focused Reflection on the Sexual Ethics of College Students in Current China

by Wang Yunping

In contemporary China it seems that sex is categorized as a purely private matter. So the public's responsibility is to respect and support young people's sexual practice, preventing pregnancy and disease, through the promotion of 'safe sex' education. Human community should live in a way that does not negate or violate the idea of human rights.

Freedom of will is typically a rights word, often referring in this context to the norms of privacy and noninterference, with a strong connection between autonomy and human rights. Autonomy means that the person is the agent holding both the ethical decision-making right and the responsibility for that moral decision.

Another consideration is whether a rational person, when reaching a certain age, has the capacity to make ethical decisions.

The language of human rights is connected with the concept of autonomy, which in turn presupposes a somewhat narrow and individualistic understanding of the self, which raises the issue of consent. The liberal consent ethic asserts that so long as both able parties, involved in a sexual practice make the decision out of mutual and entirely voluntary consent, and the practice does not result in any significant harm to other parties, then it is morally permissible.

College students are often single, unmarried adults, so it follows that, according to this sexual ethic, their mutual and valid consent provides sufficient justification of their sexual choice and practice. Married adults have more roles to play, and their sexual practice has implications for more people than the two parties involved. Thus single and unmarried adults seem to enjoy more "freedom" to practice casual sex, without at the same time causing any obvious harm to third parties. In the past female college students considered it permissible to have a sexual relationship when both parties loved each other and regarded the partner as their future spouse; more recently some female students have begun to deem a sexual relationship permissible when both parties love each other but do not necessarily see the partner as their future spouse. But the most current view is that so long as the two parties do not take advantage of each other, a sexual relationship is acceptable even if they do not love each other. The liberal view values the freedom of adults to

arrange one's sexual life according to one's own preferences. So long as the above conditions are met, sexual diversity and free sexual practice is merely a life-style choice and should be fully respected. Sex is thus an entirely private matter. No further moral judgment or interference is justified. Instead of appealing to parental consent, it is also suggested that adolescents should merely be informed of both the practice and context of sex before they make any sexual choice. However, college students are already adults with rights and duties. But there also needs to be accommodation for a community-relevant and social relations-based perspective of sex.

College students are still childlike. In high schools, students are not encouraged to develop independent and critical thinking, and commonly lack the maturity required to make complex decisions.

It is no exaggeration to say that under the Chinese education system and its underlying ethics, the capacities required for autonomy are not easily developed. College students are certainly more open than their predecessors, with access to information about sex through the internet and media. Therefore, their view of sex is quickly "enlightened" and they throw off the constraints of traditional ethics without too much of a struggle. Some of them decide to have casual sex, or multiple sexual partners, or move out of campus to cohabit. Some female college students decide to have sex with married and rich (and usually older) men for material and psychological benefits. For many young people in China their commitment to and expectations from marriage will have been undermined. This means that young people are not so ready for long-term responsibility. The "celebration" of "sexual freedom" has been accompanied by a decline in the institution of marriage. Female students having casual sexual partners or entering cohabitation are vulnerable to falling pregnant, which will both damage their own future marriage and encumber their parents' family in terms of healthcare and other costs.

When talking about sex in the context of college students, we should have a more positive concern for the communities we value and seek to protect, rather than a laissez faire attitude.

Human rights thinking is alien to traditional ethics in China in the sense that the latter is more responsibility-based than rights-based. The Confucian self is not the liberal individualistic self but a more communitarian one. Sex education in schools is largely teaching about sexual practice, including information about contraception and preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. But students are at the threshold

of adult life where they are often confused and bewildered when confronting choice.

We need to teach an alternative ethic which both contains a broader and more inclusive conception of the self and is more community and care-based; an informed education including physical aspects, but also psychological, social, and emotional aspects. No intimate human relation is sustainable and constructive without responsibility, mutual commitment and extended concern for the broader relational context and the wider public. When college students are fully informed of this perspective, they will be better prepared to make choices regarding sexual practice.

The government should try to promote social justice in order to reduce female students' sexual practice to meet material needs. Governments should further rethink and renew the education and examination system, to include education for life, including sexuality rather than exclusively information and technology. Family also has a role in developing the child development to 'whole-person maturity' rather than achievement, material goods and social status.

Teaching on sex based on "true love is worth waiting for" is typically grounded on the sexual ethics embodied in the Bible, although such courses do not explicitly refer to the Bible and God. It may not be feasible to promote "a constructive Christian ethic" explicitly in campus under current circumstances but a morality-based approach to sex could be taught. Young people can be helped to "understand sexuality as part of the whole human experience, tapping into their interest in social justice". Thus the view that sexual choice is derived from human rights and is therefore to be taken as a 'lifestyle choice' would be significantly challenged.

Family as a Basic Element of Social Community

by Prof Zhuo Xinping

Abstract:

Family forms the basic element of social community, and has various connections with society. By looking at family relationships we can find clues to handle social relationships, society, the nation and the whole world. In Christian understanding of human community, family is an element of community and a building block of society. Family has an important function as the 'primary economic, educational and spiritual community'. This paper evaluates the significance and function of family within society from a religious perspective, and from a Christian perspective.

Introduction

In contemporary China the attitude toward marriage and family has changed greatly. To an extent marriage has lost its traditional sacred position, and as a result, the family has lost its stability. The divorce rate is rising considerably. Because of social change there are a variety of family patterns in China today. In the countryside many families are only grandparents and grandchildren, because parents are working in cities and elsewhere.

In China, the family forms the basic structure and has various connections with the rest of society. The basic level is the family: if the family is harmonious, then all is well. The second level is the nation or state. Family and nation have a close relationship. For the Chinese the whole nation is a big family, while the individual family of blood ties is just a small family. 'Nation' as 'our common family' is more important than 'my own family'. In feudal China, the emperor was considered and respected as 'parent of the big family', requiring absolute obedience. Normally family ties are close and children are bound to their parents but in the case of national need, loyalty to the nation has priority over filial piety.

The final level is the whole 'land under heaven', that is the whole world. Principles such as 'cultivating one's moral character, regulating one's own family, administrating the nation and harmonizing the whole world' are thus enshrined.

In the Christian understanding of community, the family should be the building block of society. It ensures social stability and harmony. If there are many family crises, then it might be a signal of an approaching social crisis.

1. Family in the Understanding of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism

For Confucianism, benevolence stands as the central tenet of all Confucian teaching. The family principle of filial piety lies at the root and foundation of benevolence. The basic principle of loyalty is also developed and expanded from the principle of filial piety. Filial piety in the family is the most important principle, and the basis of all social ethics, in traditional China. Within the social ethics of Confucianism, a woman always has a subordinate status: 'a ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife'. China has maintained this patrilineal social structure in both the family and in state politics.

As a result of this family structure, many families were composed of a husband with a wife and one or more concubines. Polygamy was quite normal till 1949. In past history there was a struggle against the polygamy of Chinese society by Catholic missionaries. But Confucian family ties, even when they involved polygamy, were more stable than today's family relation of 'flash marriage' and 'flash divorce'. However, when people praise Confucian values, they need to be aware of the burdens it put on women throughout history.

In Taoism, 'harmony' is the most important concept for maintaining family ties. Lao Zi considered that family principles such as filial piety and parental affection were more important than other social ethical principles: 'Only when benevolence and righteousness are discarded can people return to filial piety and parental affection.' Such filial piety and parental affection are decisive for the harmony and stability of a family. Family harmony should be achieved through a natural process of simplicity.

Buddhism, from an Indian cultural heritage, originally put stress on sacerdotal celibacy. So, in the development of Buddhism, many people renounced the family to become monks. However, at a popular level Buddhist ethics has stressed the value of mutual honesty and affection between husband and wife. Recently Buddhist ethics has had more influence in Chinese society, which has improved family relations greatly.

2. Family in the Understanding of Christianity

For a Christian, sexual ethics is essentially that conjugal love in the family should be the only sexual love. The necessity of procreation is quite similar to Confucianism which allowed even polygyny for procreation. In human society, this conjugal love as the framework for sexual expression reflects already the basic social relationship, where there is mutual reverence and love between a man and woman. This

principle of mutual reverence in the family has universal value, and has already become the general principle for the whole of society. The institution of marriage and family creates the proper conditions for the procreation and upbringing of children.

So the basic elements of a society can be found already clearly in the family. Through this understanding of Christianity concerning the significance of family, we realize that the stability of the family is the basis and the

guarantee of the stability of the whole society. In the onslaught of secularism and its influence on the contemporary family, we can learn from the various religions in Chinese history. These ethics can help to strengthen family ties, because without family harmony, it is impossible to achieve wider social harmony and its sustainable development.

The rWorld: overcoming sexual politics in the 21st Century

by Rev Dr Dale Kuehne

Introduction

There are two questions being asked by our society:

1. Should adults be able to engage in any form of sexual relations so long as it is consensual?
2. Will we be denied the best of human fulfillment and intimacy if we are not allowed freedom to engage in consensual sexual relationships outside that of a marriage between a man and a woman?

The iWorld, the world of postmodern individualism and particularly in the West, has clearly answered yes to each, saying that we ought to have the maximum freedom to do and be whatever we wish. But the rWorld (Relational World) is an alternative which more fully satisfies the longings of the human heart.

The rWorld

The rWorld is based on the belief that humans are made for relationship and find their deepest fulfillment, not when seeking self-fulfillment but when living and engaging in the full constellation of healthy human relationships. The alternative of going back to the traditional world (tWorld) is not viable because it is impossible to resurrect it and there were flaws eg slavery. Although the rWorld is consistent with the c(hristian)World, the thinking about relationships transcends the boundaries of any particular religion. We can only go forwards, rediscovering the relational essence of Christianity and in so doing discovering an alternative model.

The Bible is primarily about relationship - the creation of relationship, the destruction of relationship, and the redemption of relationship. Whereas the iWorld focuses on self-fulfillment, the Bible teaches that self-fulfillment is an impossibility - we were created to relate to God and each other. The essence of the rWorld is not in the rules and regulations against which the iWorld rebels, but rather in the protections and quality of life provided.

Creating the rWorld

The first step involves making “r”elationships and not “i” the priority of our lives and decisions. Secondly the rWorld’s approach to public policy will be the creation of a rich relational matrix, involving personal and community participation, and governmental support.

This is not the tWorld – women and men work together in a complementary way. It also requires a reorientation of citizens away from me and I to us and we.

The Relational Matrix of the rWorld

In the iWorld we lose sight of the relational matrix. In the rWorld this matrix comprises the following relationships: 3G family, marriage, extended family, friendships, neighborhoods, geographic communities, faith communities, the world as our neighbor. In the rWorld, life is not spent searching for people to make us happy but cultivating the relationships we already have.

Healthy Relational Roles and Boundaries

The relational health of a society can be measured by the health of its relationships. The focus of the rWorld is on strengthening our relationships by enhancing our ability to love and be intimate, which are key components of human relational fulfillment. Since love and intimacy can only be nourished in a safe place, honoring relational roles and relational boundaries are essential for relational fulfillment. But we are not creating roles and boundaries that would condemn people to stay in abusive or toxic relationships. The relational boundaries and roles of the rWorld exist to protect us from harm, and provide the environment best suited to promote relational health. These serve to guide, protect, and help mature all of our varied relationships: marriage, family, neighborhood, community, and friendship.

Relational Freedom

There is a fundamental disagreement between the iWorld and the rWorld about the nature of freedom. The iWorld believes that individual freedom is found in the absence of rules, restraint, and structure. The rWorld believes that freedom is found relationally in a multidimensional social structure with rules and boundaries that are anchored in personal and collective self-restraint. People need to have choice in the relationships but within a family if there are unhealthy or abusive relationships, we must have the freedom and opportunity to seek safe haven.

Gender Distinctiveness

Gender matters individually and relationally. We need relationships with both women and men. In the rWorld government can play a role in maintaining gender distinctiveness, seeing that men and women complement each other relationally.

Boundaries on Sexual Relations

We are made with a sex drive, but sexual relations are not an essential element of human fulfillment, and when sexual boundaries are violated, the relational and social consequences are significant. When children are born to those who are unmarried, the cost to the child, and society is significant. There is no question that an unmarried individual or couple can care for and nurture a child, but as we have seen, the statistical reality is that children in such relational settings tend not to do well. Governments need to consider how to ensure that all adults face up to the full economic cost to society of their sexual behavior, particularly in the areas of child welfare and long-term health costs.

Marriage

Society would be well served to recover the understanding of marriage as a lifetime union between a man and a woman, along with the understanding that it exists in service of the family and others. The evidence for the positive social impact of this definition of marriage, especially as it pertains to the care of children, is overwhelming.

Gender Matters

Gender matters to marriage. Society's support not merely of same-sex unions but also same-sex marriages is due to the neutering of male and female designations in contemporary society, providing the tipping point for the social revolution over same-sex marriage. The full impact of what the neutering means won't be immediately apparent, but it will be revealed in time. Gender matters and, maintaining marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman is of far reaching importance; in procreation, in the quality of the relationship, and in parenting. Even proponents of same-sex marriage agree that marriage is the best social institution for raising children. Civil partnerships and cohabitation are presently less stable and currently produce demonstrably inferior outcomes for children.

As a result of all these factors, public policy should endeavor to support and reinforce traditional marriage and the boundaries that surround it. By setting proper boundaries for relationships everyone will have a greater chance of finding the love and intimacy for which they yearn, regardless of whether or not they are married.

Loved Into Existence

by Dr Jennifer Roback Morse

Abstract:

Every person is 'loved into existence'. Whatever the circumstances of conception, including IVF treatments or even rape, God is always present in love at the moment of conception. The primary business of parents is to provide faithful and supportive love to the child throughout its upbringing. This then raises the question of why adults in Western societies often hesitate to get married, and have such difficulty staying married. Often it is only when marriages are delayed or break up that issues of sexual ethics take on great importance in the lives of the individual. The commitment of parents to bring up children in a loving context not only is vital for the wellbeing of the children as they mature, but also is the foundation of a society's ability to sustain a market economy and compete effectively in global markets. It is also the key to long-term political stability.

Summary:

First, I will explain what the Church teaches, which is for myself from Roman Catholic teaching. God loves each and every person into existence, and desires that human beings love the next generation into existence. This means that children should be begotten by their parents within an institutional context of permanent committed love, in other words, in marriage.

Second, I will show that science supports the broad outline of Christian teaching. The human person is meant for love. Children thrive as individuals within married households. Society needs people who have developed consciences and self-control. This takes place in childhood, by being in a relationship with a loving adult. The economy and the political system, actually depend on love. Finally, I will show what this Christian understanding of the family implies for public policy.

We believe that God created the universe out of nothing, as an act of pure love. And we are created as an act of love, just as man and woman are to love one another. Human love is part of the divine plan. Marriage places the couple in a position to be relationally prepared for parenthood. Their relationship will be the foundation for their child's life. By getting married, they make themselves ready for a child, even if they are poor in material things.

What science demonstrates:

Science now substantiates many of the important claims that Christianity has been making since the beginning.

Let me begin with the most basic. The human person is meant for love.

Science shows that the human person is meant for love both through sexual attachment and through infant attachment.

Children who are abandoned by their families often end up in orphanages and deprived of the love of a mother. But the relationship of the baby to his mother is really important. The human brain is so large compared with the rest of our bodies that it is not fully developed before birth. If our brains were fully developed in utero, our heads would be too big to make it out of the birth canal without killing our mothers. Much of the development of the limbic brain takes place after birth. The limbic brain develops in response to being in a relationship with the mother.

In other words, the human infant's physical and mental well-being depends upon their being loved. Hence, my claim: science can show that the human person is indeed meant for love.

Unmarried families are a financial burden to the state.

The break-up of families, or the failure to form families, also leads to an expansion of state expenditure. Children from disrupted families do worse than the children of intact married couple households in virtually every way. Children are more likely to have physical and mental health problems.

These observations support the wisdom of the ancient Christian teaching that sex and childbearing belong within marriage. The alternatives to marriage are expensive to the taxpayer, as well as being a source of great unhappiness for individuals.

Family breakdown burdens the government with trivial matters.

The American experience with no-fault divorce illustrates that the dissolution of marriage involves the state in trivial family matters.

Involving the family court in the minutiae of family life is hardly the behavior of an efficient modern state.

These observations too, support the wisdom of the ancient Christian teaching that sex and childbearing belong within marriage.

Conclusion: What we ought to do

This is what we believe: God loves each of us into existence, and wants us to participate in His creative process through love.

I hope that this analysis helps you understand the Christian teaching about many policy areas, that are now considered controversial, for example on abortion and also contraception outside the womb, as well as why sex outside of marriage is so often so deeply disappointing, even if it is safely contracepted.

Marriage prepares the couple for parenthood and should be permanent and exclusive. At the center of the universe, is a deep abiding love. And we are called to be part of it. We are not ashamed to believe this. You can believe it too.

Biblical Building Blocks for Strong Families: Profile, Purpose and Protection

by Dr Michael Schluter

Families and Worldview: the Contemporary Context

In Western societies today, families are not viewed from the perspective of organisations or institutions but rather as a loose network of relationships between individuals. Relatively little attention, if any is given to how families as organised groups relate to government or other institutions.

The evidence from high-income Western and Asian societies is that relationships within families are under pressure. At the same time, there is growing recognition of the importance of families for a growing and 'low cost' economy

In biblical law, the relational God provides a framework for the ordering of a relational society where the extended family is central.

What Profile (or Definition) for the Family?

As argued in Jubilee Manifesto, the family is assumed to be what we would call today an 'extended family'. Within this understanding, the Bible (Mk 7:9-13) sets down 6 markers:

1. Love for God must take precedence over all family relationships.
2. The husband-wife relationship takes precedence over obligations to parents.
3. The husband-wife-children group, i.e. the nuclear family or household, takes priority over the extended family.
4. The husband is in some sense 'head' of the wife and must be willing to sacrifice all in his love for her.
5. In the three-generational (3-G) family, adult children have a strong obligation to care and provide for ageing parents.
6. Everyone has an obligation to provide for members of the extended family.

Perhaps this biblical model or profile can best be described as the 'nucleated extended family'. And within that marriage is to take precedence over ethnic

and clan loyalties. This sets Israelite and Christian teaching apart from many contemporary national cultures. .

What practical relevance does this description of family profile have in a modern society?

- If genealogy and lineage records are important then it is important for a society at national, regional, metropolitan and familial levels to keep careful records of births, deaths and marriages.
- Every effort must be made to keep marriages together, as broken marriages not only cause harm to children but undermine extended family solidarity and threaten the usefulness of family structure for political, economic and social purposes.
- Policies which encourage relatives to live close to each other are likely to increase shared interests among family members, and a sense of shared purpose, and thus reduce marriage break-up.
- A requirement on the media to portray the true pain and personal costs of marriage breakdown.

What purpose for the family?

All institutions, in any society, need a shared purpose to flourish, or even to survive. The primary purpose of the family in scripture appears to be the caring and loving of its members without regard for the status, wealth or ability of the family member.

If this analysis is right, a major factor in the disintegration of the family is its loss of purpose or role in modern society. Its functions have been taken over by other institutions, often provided by government. The able and capable individual too easily can opt to go his own way and ignore the family. To have strong families in the future will mean giving families back some of the financial and caring roles now exercised by other institutions in society. Such changes will not be easy as society must at the same time maintain some overall social safety net.

An essential precondition for returning to families many of the welfare roles is to make it possible for relatives to 'co-locate', i.e. live close enough together to provide not just emotional and spiritual support but also physical support in terms of eg 'granny-sitting' or baby-sitting. Colocation can be encouraged by governments through fiscal incentives and housing policy, and by both public and larger private sector employers through employment practices. A second approach to restoring a role to extended families, is to encourage and facilitate extended families to set up

'Family Associations'. (See work done by Relationships Foundation).

Protection of the Family

1. Deep and lasting debt was considered dangerous, something from which people needed protection.
2. The protective framework given by the law was the protection of property and roots provided by the Jubilee provision.
3. A careful circumscribing of the role of the state – from it trying to control every sphere of life.
4. In the Law of Israel protection is also through restriction on freedom of speech.
5. The most important in the 10 commandments is the Sabbath legislation. This guaranteed families a shared day off each week so that they could spend time in relationship with God and with one another.

What governments can do to strengthen families

1. Governments can provide the opportunities families require if they are to provide support for their members. In Asia, governments could limit work to 48 hours a week. Governments can also reduce travel time to work by limiting the size of conurbations, investing in infrastructure and facilitating colocation of relatives.
2. Governments can increase the motivation for shared family activity and cooperation by the carrot or the stick, for example the responsibility for welfare.
3. Governments can provide support for families to increase the stability of family relationships and provision of care for those in need, for example funding training courses in relational skills.

Conclusion

Probably the greatest social experiment of the twentieth century was the decision by Western countries after the Second World War that the State should provide 'free' financial and social support to those whose families could not or would not provide support. While this seemed to work well initially, gradually the number dependent on such support has risen, and the range and cost of support provided, with the result that the system has now become financially unsustainable. The ageing of the population in many high-income countries, which often also have a low birth rate, is exacerbating the problem further.

As governments in the West are forced to reduce borrowing, and cut down on levels of support given to individuals in need over the coming decades, many vulnerable people will suffer acutely from inadequate provision of physical care and emotional support.

The lessons are twofold. First, those countries which still have strong and co-located extended families with an ethos of mutual care and responsibility need to preserve this most precious and most productive of all human institutions. Secondly, those nations like the UK and the US which have squandered the relational wealth of their extended families need to work hard and with urgency to rescue and rebuild what they can. As we have shown, biblical revelation has much to say about how why this is necessary and how it can be accomplished.

Materialism or Affectionism: Marriage values among Contemporary Chinese University Students

by Dr Cheng Shengli

Abstract:

Using a scale designed by the researcher, this study tests the marriage values of university students both in terms of material values and those of affection. The results show that the students' average score for values in the affectional dimension is significantly higher than for the material dimension. This indicates that university students tend to emphasize the affectional aspects of love and marriage over the material, although some students demonstrate a strong materialist tendency. Employing cluster analysis, the respondents can be divided into three categories in terms of the value they attach to marriage: a) the extreme in terms of affection group which emphasizes emotion and disregards the material aspect of love and marriage; b) the rationalist group which emphasizes emotion but does not disregard material aspects in love and marriage; and c) the materialist group which emphasizes material aspects but does not disregard emotion in love and marriage. The data shows that most students (64.6%) are rationalist, about one quarter of the students (23.9%) is extreme affectionist, and only a small percentage (11.5%) of students is materialist.

1. Research question

Marriage values are the perceptions and judgments which people hold about what is important in love and marriage relationships. China is experiencing profound economic and social transformation, due in no small part to on-going reforms and increased openness in the country. Values are changing so this research shows the characteristics and trends in people's values in marriage in the country as a whole. This may serve not only as a snapshot of the changes in society's values in general, but also as an aid to developing more targeted, effective measures to guide people (especially younger generations) in building up marriage values, and in reducing emotional distress and family conflict caused by unbalanced marriage values. This in turn will promote more harmonious marriages, leading to greater general social stability.

2. Literature review

In recent years, increasingly serious problems of divorce led to more significant research about marriage and marriage values. Some studies to date suggest that the Chinese younger generation is more idealistic, and

places more emphasis on emotional factors in marriage values; some studies suggest that the Chinese young generation is more pragmatic, and places more emphasis on the economic and family background of their lover.

3. Definition of the concept, research methods and the composition of the subjects

To compensate for the weakness of previous studies, this study uses the term "marriage values" to describe the researchers' subject, which only focuses on people's values related to love and marriage and does not include other issues such as "acceptance of dating of university students", and "acceptance of intimacy in sexual behavior between the lovers before marriage".

4. Conclusion and discussion

i. Emphasizing affectional values in marriage is the mainstream view of university students' marriage values in contemporary China. The current reforms, social development and increasing openness in China are transforming Chinese society from a traditional to a modern one. The younger generation is more autonomous and free to choose their lover or spouse, beyond traditionally emphasizing political, moral and family related factors. This emphasizes affectional value in marriage and is an inevitable trend of social development. It also represents the future developing trend of Chinese university students towards marriage values.

ii. Material and practical marriage values are being accepted increasingly by contemporary Chinese university students.

iii. Love and marriage are primarily emotional relationships which should be built on the basis of affection. No matter how strong the material base of a marriage, without affection as its foundation it will fail to constitute a happy relationship.

iv. The rational approach to marriage seems to be the one we should encourage and promote.

It is pleasing that this study suggests that, in spite of the fears of some people, material marriage values are not becoming mainstream among contemporary young people in China (only a small proportion of the respondents - 10% - held materialist marriage values). Most young people hold rationalist marriage values - almost two-thirds of the total respondents. Furthermore, almost 20% of respondents adhere to the super affectionist marriage values which can be expected to become rationalist values.

Although many studies have already been conducted, systematic studies of marriage values are in the early

stages. Being married or not is a factor which should be considered: do unmarried people hold differing marriage values and ideals to those who are married? Of course, many other factors which influence marriage values are worthy of further study, such as education, family background and so on.

Another interesting research area is how marriage values might affect love and marriage. Research might consider questions such as, "How do different types of marriage values affect the quality of love and marriage and the happiness of those involved in these relationships?" and "How do parents' marriage values influence their children's?", and so on.