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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 2, NO 1. THEME: CHRISTIAN FAMILY AND SEXUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

THE FAMILY IN AFRICA AS A SAFE SPACE

- Hannes Knoetze, Professor, University of Pretoria,
Department of Practical Theology and Mission
Studies Email: Johannes.Knoetze@up.ac.za 1-20

CHRISTIAN FAMILY AND THEOLOGY OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

- Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, Professor, University of the
Western Cape/ Christian Service University
College 21-48

LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

- Esther Olajumoke Ayo-Oladapo, Ph.D Adekunle Ajasin
University, Akungba Akoko,
esther.ayo-oladapo@aaua.edu.ng 49-61

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGE ON CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE IN NIGERIA

- John Ayo Oladapo, Ph.D Baptist College of Theology,
Igede-Ekiti, johnayoladapo@gmail.com and - Abiodun
James Aderele, The Nigerian Baptist Theological
Seminary, Ogbomosho Jamezb4@gmail.com 62-73

EXAMINATION OF THE RELEVANCE OF EFFECTIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

- Foluke Omobonike Odesola PhD, Baptist College of
Theology, Igede Ekiti, Ekiti State, folukeodesola@gmail.com
and - Adedayo Oladele Odesola PhD, Baptist College of

Theology, Igede Ekiti, Ekiti State
pastordayoodesola@gmail.com

74-86

**DILEMMA OF FAITH AND REASON IN GENOTYPE
INCOMPATIBILITY AMONG PROSPECTIVE
CHRISTIAN COUPLES**

- Michael Oluwajuwonlo Otun Department of Religious Studies, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria, otunmikke@gmail.com 87-106

**SEXUALITY IN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES:
ARE-READING OF GENESIS 1-2**

- Victor Umaru, Baptist College of Theology, Obinze. honagombi@gmail.com 107-128

**MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF STREET HAWKING
AMONG CHILDREN IN ANYIGBA, DEKINA
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE**

- **Gabriel Salifu, PhD**, Glorious Life Ministries, Ilorin, Kwara State, salifu_g@yahoo.com, 129-143

**ROLES OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN PROMOTING
SEXUAL SANCTITY AMONG TEENAGERS**

- Abraham Olutoye Odeleye PhD, Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso Nigeria, toyedeleye@gmail.com 144-160

**SEXUALITY AND POSTMODERNISM: EXPLORING
COMPLEXITIES OF ROMANTIC FREEDOM**

- Zechariah Manyok Biar, PhD., Diocesan Bishop, Diocese of Wanglei, Jonglei Internal Province, Episcopal Church of South Sudan-Anglican Communion manyokbiar@ebonycenter.org 161-177

THE CHALLENGES OF POSTMODERNISM TO AFRICAN CHRISTIAN FAMILY

- Job Ayinla Kosoluware, The Nigerian Baptist
Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso,
kosoluware@gmail.com 178-191

CHRISTIAN MORAL VICTORY: A CRITICAL BIBLICAL TEACHING

- David G.S. Atteh, MANT, MAOT, PhD, MNASR,
MNUSREL, Department of Religious Studies,
Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Kogi State University,
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olugba2001@yahoo.com 192-210

ETHICAL APPROACH TO RESOLVING MORAL ISSUES EMANATING FROM CONTEMPORARY SEXUAL INFIDELITY

- Samuel Olusanya Asaolu, PhD, Baptist College of
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- Oderinu Elizabeth Olubunmi, Baptist College of
Theology, Igede-Ekiti,
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THE PLACE OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

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Editorial

One of the pressing questions that reverberates often in African Christianity is: What is an (African) Christian family? Family is very important to the traditional Africans. Raising a family is not just a social and cultural demand that has to be meant, but also a conditional for eschatological redemption or salvation. For the African Christian, the place of family cannot also be over-emphasised. Thus, prayers for the family in all its ramifications occupy the central stage in personal and intercession sessions. Although African Christians have for a long time contended with the notions of the Christian family in general, there is a progressive acceptance of its monogynous union based on heterosexuality. However, Western values and globalisation forces have continued to shape Christian family discourses and practices. Sex and sexuality issues have been escalated and mediated so much so that Christian 'theology' of family, sexuality, and sex has to contend with the throes of globalisation.

This volume, which is a product of the 2023 conference on the theme: Christian Family and Sexuality in Contemporary Society, critically reflects the tensions, challenges, and theological prospects of a Christian family. In the lead article, Professor Knoetze departs from the general conception of the Christian family based on Christ's salvation. Although he points out that family is a contested issue in Africa, he argues that a radical conception of the Christian family should centre around relationality, forging a missional relationship with the Trinitarian God. This is in contrast with the soteriological conception of family that has blurred the missional prospects that understanding family can birth for a long time.

Adu-Gyamfi's article also radically takes on the traditional conception of sex as a purely private issue, and attempts to strike a balance between it and the sexual revolution that theology of sexuality has to contend with. Coming from a heteronormative perspective, Adu-Gyamfi strongly maintains conservative theological stand on sexuality. He argues that the biblical

understanding of sexuality cannot be traded with the offering of the over-sexualised world.

On her own, Ayo-Oladayo explores the significance and nexus between language education and family development. She points out that effective communication in the family is a *sine qua non* for cohesion, unity, and progress. In addition to fostering cultural understanding, supporting cognitive growth, and fostering stronger family ties, it also improves communication abilities. Oladapo and Adererele examine the positive impacts of social change, particularly technological advancement, on the family. They opine that despite the advantages derived from modern communications devices, Christian theological understanding of the family should be countenanced and appropriated by Christian families.

Odesola and Odesola reflect on the significance of sex education in the church. Although sex education has not been a major interest in missional and catechetical teaching, they suggest that contemporary challenges make it imperative for the church to be interested in sex education. Otun's article introduces a philosophical dimension to sexuality discourse. Otun views the relegation of reason in choice- and decision-making processes as unacceptable and recommends a balanced deployment of both reason and faith in sexuality matters. Gombi re-examines the accounts of Genesis and contemporary sexual expressions. In the Genesis creation stories, an explanation of the nature of sexuality takes a central, climactic positioning and is given as a fundamental fact of creation. The excessive amount of material given to sexuality highlights its relevance in the Hebrew Bible within the cosmic context of the creation narratives. The foundation for the rest of the biblical narrative and discourse on human sexuality is provided by the profound depiction of God's original plan for human sexuality at the beginning of the canon, which also captures the core ideas of sexuality. Salifu enumerates the negative effects of street hawking, such as rape, unplanned pregnancies, and violence. He recommends that the state and social institutions should intervene to stem the corrosive tide of street hawking in Nigeria.

Biar explores the disagreement between 'pre-modernism' and postmodernism. He argues that the different positions these schools of thought hold have created serious tension in how to understand human sexuality. The recognition of feeling over reason and the relativistic contours that encircle the arguments of postmodernism, modernism, and premodernism all have impact on Christian notion of sexuality. He, however, maintains that the Bible still reserves the best model of sexual appreciation in contemporary society. For Kosoluware, the negative influences of postmodernism should be frontally addressed by contemporary African Christians. It is essential that the Church in Africa rise to the challenge through teaching, counseling and intentional preaching of the gospel. Atteh examines Christian moral victory, and points out the tensions that have characterised its different interpretations. He opines that the best approach to the theological issue is to insist that the victory believers have over the flesh nature is both positional and progressive, encompassing both the divine and the human responsibilities. Asaolu tackles the increasing cases of marital infidelity in society. Articulating the causes and effects of marital infidelity, Asaolu recommends that couples act in such a way that their actions could conform with Kantian categorical imperative. Finally, Ajao makes a case for sex education as a part of socialisation in the family. He notes that it is no longer possible to hold the view that sex talk is a taboo. Therefore, there should be a conscious approach to addressing sexuality issues.

This volume is a coterie of discourses on sex, sexuality and family. The burning issues raised from multidisciplinary perspectives enrich the volume and provide a critical resource for further engagement. However, the ideas are solely the responsibility of the authors rather than the editorial board of the journal.

Benson Ohihon Igbion
Editor-in-Chief

SEXUALITY IN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES: A RE-READING OF GENESIS 1-2

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Abstract

Old Testament's view of human sexuality is hotly debated in religious and theological circles. Different theological perspectives interpret the exegetical findings differently based on church tradition and councils, science and reason, and other factors. Sexuality, however, is an essential topic in the Old Testament and has hardly been mentioned in the literature of Old Testament research. A serious endeavour to establish the biblical basis for understanding human sexuality has recently begun, notably in the wake of the modern feminist movement, new literary criticism, and social scientists' studies on sexuality. Despite many scholarships on individual areas of sexuality in the Old Testament, a holistic study of sexuality in the Old Testament has received very little attention. This study undertakes the synchronic task of examining Genesis 1-2 in the Hebrew Bible, dealing in an attempt to lay bare the basic contours of human sexuality in the canonical form of the Old Testament text. The findings of this research would establish that sexuality was created from the beginning and is done between males and females. Also, the concept of male and female denotes equality and not inferiority.

Keywords: Sexuality, Old Testament, Male and Female, Heterosexuality, Monogamy.

Introduction

The subject of sexuality is barely discussed; even if it is, a different meaning is usually attached to it. Probably the reason Christians are turning away from such discussion is not to be tagged 'unholy' people. While they are running away from such discussion, the world is defining it from a different context and misapplying it in the

marketplace. Modern society has tried to redefine sexuality as a personal choice that can be made in any way. Similar to any life decision, sexual activity is regarded as a matter of personal preference.

Meanwhile, the term “sin” has virtually disappeared from modern man's culture and vocabulary due to popular opinion. The only sexual expression that is deemed “bad” by the definer is that which they find repulsive. However, because societal acceptance varies widely, many would defend even the most heinous deeds. The Bible is very explicit about the rules, and the One who created sexuality also has the right to establish its boundaries. God united Adam and Eve in marriage and declared it to be “very good” when He created Adam and gave him the first woman, Eve (Genesis 1:31; 2:18, 24). God created sexuality then and established rules for how it should be expressed. God named the marriage between a husband and wife “becoming one flesh,” and He formed it (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:31). Jesus continued by defining any sexual conduct that does not take place in a marriage as a breach of His gift. Intentions God had when He created the sexual act are all violated by fornication, homosexuality, pornography, and lust (1 Corinthians 6:9,18; Galatians 5:19-20; Jude 1:7; Matthew 5:28; Hebrews 13:4).

Even though the Hebrew Scriptures contain several examples of sexual activity and relationships, no one word can be used to describe sex or sexuality. Additionally, the Old Testament hardly uses any sexual vocabulary at all. Almost always, references to sexual organs and behaviours are couched in euphemistic language. This is partial because classical Hebrew's limits lacked the contemporary lexicon of scientific anatomy. The language barrier, in turn, represents the Hebrew perspective on humanity: Male and female genitalia are typically characterised in their relationship to the complete body since separate organs frequently figuratively allude to distinct attitudinal manifestations of the total self (Harrison, 1980, 248).

Circumlocutions are also used since exposing one's genital parts publicly causes embarrassment and a sense of impropriety. The male and female reproductive and sexual organs should not be exposed in reality, and euphemisms “conceal in words what must not be exposed in actuality” (Elliott, 2006, 161-76). The claim that the biblical texts represent a negative view of sexuality is refuted by the euphemistic depiction of sexual organs and behaviours are frequently accompanied by a remarkably candid and open discussion of sexuality.

Note the terminology used to describe the human sexual organs first. The male organ of regeneration has no formal name in the OT; only euphemisms are used. As in Genesis 17:1: “You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins,” the term “flesh” (בָּשָׂר) is sometimes used to refer to the penis. Again, the word יָרֵךְ, which means “thigh” or “loin,” denotes the general area of the body that serves as the seat of the procreative power. It also occasionally works as a circumlocution for the male genitalia, particularly when a certain level of linguistic finesse is required (Gen 24:2, 9; 46:26; 47:29; Exod 1:5; Judg 8:30). This study undertakes the synchronic task of examining Genesis 1-2 in the Hebrew Bible, dealing in an attempt to lay bare the basic contours of human sexuality in the canonical form of the Old Testament text. It will not look into the text's potential pre-canonical past, instead focusing on how to comprehend the central theological message of Scripture as it currently appears in the Bible.

Through the synchronic approach in examining Genesis 1-2 in the Hebrew Bible, we deal with an attempt to lay bare the basic contours of human sexuality in the canonical form of the Old Testament text. The re-reading of Genesis 1-2 reveals several issues on sexuality and the context in which it should be understood and practised as follows:

I. Genesis 1-2 Reveals that God creates Sexuality

Genesis 1:26-28 reveals the high point and objective towards which all of God's creativity from v. 1 on was oriented have been completed. Until recently, the additional statement that humans are made as both male and female was disregarded entirely in the theological discussion of this verse, which has always focused on what it means to be created in God's "image" (Jewett, 1975, 19). In keeping with the objectives of this research, emphasis has been placed on the phrase "male and female he made them" while also considering the chapter's overall context and the *imago Dei* debate.

The two chapters explain that the creation of male and female genders in sexual distinction is presented as a creation by God rather than as a component of the inherent character of divinity itself (1:27c). Both Genesis 1 and 2 give narratives give sexuality to the created order rather than the divine realm. However, Genesis 2 dispels any lingering notions that creation occurred via divine reproduction, even though Genesis 1 does not explicitly explain how God created. The second chapter of the Bible describes the creation of man from ground dust and the creation of woman from one of man's ribs .

II. Genesis 1-2 Depicts Humans as Dual Heterosexual

Human sexuality that comes from re-reading Genesis 1 and 2 is the belief that God created the bipolarity of the sexes from the beginning. The language of Genesis 1 does not support that אֱדָם וְאִשָּׁה is depicted in 1: 2 as an ideal androgynous (or hermaphrodite) being later divided into two sexes. In order to avoid the erroneous assumption that an androgynous man was formed at the beginning, the plural "he made them" in verse 27 is deliberately contrasted with the singular "him" (Grudem, 2004, 111-13). The following passage (1:28), in which God congratulated them and told them to multiply, supports this. Only a heterosexual couple, not a bisexual creature, could carry out this instruction. The related text of 5:2, where the plural "them/they" is

again used, further supports an original duality of sexes and not an androgynous creature: “Male and female he formed them, and he blessed them and called them 'Humankind' when they were created.”

Some modern scholars assert that the initial אָדָם portrayed in Genesis 2 was androgynous, one creature combining two sexes, or “a sexually undifferentiated earth creature (Triple, 1978, 80; Bal, 1987, 112-14). However, the text does not provide evidence for such an assertion. What God makes before the woman is referred to as אָדָם , “the man,” or more accurately, “the human,” in 2:7-8, 15-16. 18 The Bible does not mention a bisexual or sexually indiscriminate individual becoming divided into two sexes. The androgynous interpretation contends that sexuality is not innate in humans, which contradicts the anthropology presented in Genesis 1–2. Originally androgynous, אָדָם , “the human,” created before woman, was actually “crafted in anticipation of He was conceived with the desires for oneness with his opposite. This is made clear by the first human's contact with the animals, which brought out his need for “a helper as his companion” in a dramatic way (vv. 18, 20). When he meets a lady and fully understands his sexuality about his sexual compliment, this need is satisfied. The lack of animal sexual partners for man suggests, among other things, that by divine design, human sexual activity is to occur only between human partners and not with animals as sexual partners (bestiality).

God orchestrated the first marriage, as described in Genesis 2, and the divinely intended marital form involved a heterosexual couple, a “man” and a “woman” (2:22-23). Gen 2:24 provides a brief theology of marriage, on sexuality as a relationship, based on the experience of the first couple in Eden. However, in this instance, the mention of “a man (אָדָם)... and... his wife (אִשָּׁה)” about the marriage union. The phrase אָדָם וְאִשָּׁתּוֹ “man and his wife,” refers to a heterosexual marriage between a man and woman as the ideal marriage partnership throughout history. So, from the very beginning, the divine paradigm for humans has been the inherent

duality of male and female and the heterosexual marital form, which involves a sexual union between a man and a woman rather than a man and a man or an animal.

III. Genesis 1-2 Depicts Marriage as Monogamous

It is possible to affirm that the marital form God presented as the archetypal one for humans from the beginning is a monogamous one, as described in Gen 1-2. The use of singular nouns and pronouns in the narrator's account of the first marriage in Genesis 2: 1-8 is significant. God intended to create for אָדָם הָאֶחָד "the man" אִשָּׁה אֶחָדָה "a woman" (Gen 2: 18).

אִשָּׁה אֶחָדָה a "helper as his partner" (v. 18). However, when naming the animals, "the man" did not find "a helper as his partner" (v. 20). God then took "one of his [the man's] ribs" and fashioned "a woman," bringing" (v. 23). This terminology unmistakably indicates a union of a man and a woman. The phrase "אָדָם אֶחָדָה... and... אִשָּׁה אֶחָדָה" in 2:24, which was previously mentioned, with both nouns in the singular, shows clearly that the sexual relationship envisioned is monogamous, to be shared by two marriage partners, (Vogels, 1997, 223-24; Loader, 2004, 42). Genesis 2:24 only clearly states that one man and one woman become one flesh, indicating that it solely pertains to monogamy. The creation story claims that monogamy is the divinely intended marital form.

IV. Genesis 1-2 Depicts Gender Equality

Genesis 1:27 states, אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֱדָם בְּצַלְמוֹתָיו בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתָם זָכָר וּמְצֻלָּה יִבְרָא אֱדָם "So God created humankind in his image and likeness; he formed them, male and female." David J. A. Clines argues that "male and female" in 1:27 only refers to two different types of human beings, just as other creatures are created "according to their kind" (Clines, 1990, 25-48). The proponents of male leadership as a creation ordinance accept the ontological equality of the sexes but argue that 1:26 implies a practical leadership position. In the Bible, the word "Adam" never refers to a "man" in the sense or connotation of the male gender. It is a general phrase that

denotes humanity or human beings: The relative status of the sexes has been the central issue that has dominated the academic study of sexuality in Genesis 2. The “traditional” view, held by the vast majority of Christian commentators and theologians before the 20th century, has been that women as a class or race are not competent and must be prohibited from leadership or exercising authority in the home, church, or society because, according to Genesis 2, they were created by nature inferior to men. Many contemporary scholars, including liberal feminists and those who support male leadership as a creation ordinance, now acknowledge that Gen 1 emphasises equality on the ontological, personal, and spiritual levels while still holding that Gen 2 emphasises hierarchy or leadership/submission in male-female relationships on the functional or societal levels, (Stanton, 1993, 20-21).

First, it has been claimed that because the man was created before woman, “the priority and superiority of the male, and the dependency of the woman upon the man, are established as an ordinance of divine creation” (Dennis, 1994, 13). Evangelical hierarchical lists currently advocate for male leadership from this order of creation rather than using the word “superiority” for man.

The subject of a second argument is the priority of speaking and being talked to in the story. It has been argued that the fact that God addresses the man rather than the woman and that the man, rather than the woman, speaks in the story of Genesis 2 reveals the man's authority over his wife before the Fall. Such a claim, however, ignores the narrative's progression from incompleteness to completion and conclusion, as was previously mentioned. God speaks to the man, admonishing him not to eat of the forbidden tree, as part of making him aware of his “hunger for wholeness,” that he is alone and needs a companion like the other creatures. Such knowledge was necessary as soon as God created a human being in order for that person to avoid transgression and to be a free moral agent with the capacity for free will. However, the fact that God gave the man this knowledge before the woman was made does not imply

that he is in charge of her. This need not imply any superiority on the side of the male; it simply means that he needed to hear the command as soon as he was present in Eden.

Genesis 2:18 and 20 attest to this equality of rank with the word next to *עֵזֶר*?נֶגֶד. The direct meaning of *נֶגֶד* is “like his counterpart” since the word *neged* נֶגֶד connotes “in front of,” “opposite,” or “counterpart.” This prepositional word suggests no less than equality without hierarchy when used with *עֵזֶר*: Eve is Adam’s “benefactor/helper,” someone who is “corresponding to him, i.e., equal and adequate to himself” in terms of position and status, (Brown, 1996, 19). As “a power equal to man,” Eve is Adam’s “soul-mate” and his functional and ontological equal. Meanwhile, it can be said that the phrase *עֵזֶר*?נֶגֶד in no way implies male leadership or female subordination as part of the creation order.

It has been asserted that a woman has a derivative existence, is dependent on man, and is subject to his power because she was created from a man and issued through his rib. It is hard to dispute the fact that she was “derived” from Adam in some way. However, derivation does not imply subordination. In the case of Adam, for example, the fact that he was “derived” from the earth (v. 7) does not suggest that the ground was Adam’s superior or his leader (Brown, 1996:19). Just the symbolism of the rib suggests equality over hierarchy. A side or a rib can both be referred to as *צֵלַע*. The word “צֵלַע” in verse 22 is plural, and God is said to have taken “one of” them; therefore, the reference in this verse is probably to a rib from Adam’s side. By “making” Eve out of one of Adam’s ribs from his side, God appears to be emphasising the “mutual bond” (Westermann, 1974, 230), the “singleness of existence” (Kramer, 1959, 146) that binds man and woman. The rib “signifies equality and community.” Eve was created from Adam’s “rib” to stand as a peer to him. As Peter Lombard (quoted in Babbage, 1963, 540) noted, Eve was taken from Adam’s side to be his valued companion rather than from his feet to be his slave or from his head to be his ruler. This reading appears to be supported by the man’s poetic language in verse

23 when he first meets the woman: “This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” When someone is defined as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” it is assumed that they are as near as one’s own body. It denotes physical unification and “a commonality of concern, devotion, and obligation” (Brueggemann, 1970, 540).

V. Genesis 1-2 Reveals Oneness in Sexuality

Gen. 1-2 incorporates “male and female” with the *imago Dei* as a fifth aspect of sexual theology. אָדָם וְאִשָּׁה, a general phrase for humans in Genesis 1:27, refers to both men and women. Man (human) comprises “the man and the woman together.” Only when males and females are seen together does the whole picture of humanity become clear. Man and woman are created in God’s image and the likeness of God (v. 26). Such a statement emphasises the uniqueness and complementarity of the sexes.

Gen 2 provides more specific evidence that God created male and female to participate in this wholeness than Gen 1, which allowed for the general conclusion that both genders are equally necessary to create the image of God. Man is created at the beginning of the creation account in Genesis 2. However, creation is not complete. The man is unfinished and alone. Furthermore, this is לֹא טוֹב "not good" (v. 18) (Breja, 2003, 1-19). Man needs an אִשָּׁה; thus, man’s effort to sate his “hunger for wholeness” engendered by God begins. For the man to understand that his animal companions cannot satisfy his hunger, the Lord God brings the creatures to him for him to name (identify). He also seems to understand that he does not, whereas all animals and birds have partners.

In their egalitarian complementarity, Adam and Eve were not supposed to have any interests apart from one another but had distinct ways of thinking and acting (Kim, 2000, 268). They were equal in being and rank, bone of each other’s bone and flesh of each other’s flesh, but they were still distinct persons. “Oneness does not reduce life to sameness; it permits distinctions free from conflict or hierarchy” (Trible, 110).

Despite the complementarity between the sexes implied in Gen. 1-2, no stereotyped roles are presented as the “essence” of manhood or female, respectively. Both sexes are created in the likeness of God, and both are given the mandate to procreate and multiply, to populate and conquer the planet, and to exercise dominion over all other living things (1:27-28). They are mutually supportive, full partners who do not have a hierarchy and fully reciprocate with one another (2: 18). Any attempt to extract the essential elements of the “roles” of man and woman from the first few chapters of Genesis goes beyond what the text reveals, (Piper & Grudem, 1991; Saucy & TenElshof, eds., 2001). The portrayal of sexuality in Genesis 1 and 2 is complementary wholeness without hierarchy.

The comparison of God's distinction and interaction in considering the creation of humanity emphasises the notion of interpersonal relationships between the male and female even more. It is scarcely a coincidence that God refers to the divine in the plural only once in the Genesis creation account—in 1:26—“Let us build people in our image, after our likeness!” There have been numerous attempts to explain this plural usage, but the one that fits the immediate context and the analogies of Scripture best describes it as a plural of fullness. The phrase “let us” as a statement of completeness reflects “an intra-divine deliberation among 'persons' within the divine Being” and “supposes that there is within the divine Being the distinction of personalities” (Kidner, 1967, 52).

It is not without meaning that the plurality of the divine “let us” in verse 26 is placed next to the plurality of “them” (male and female) in verses 26–28. The declaration of this dialogue “preserves with great care the otherness of God,” 103 rejecting any idea of God being bisexual, but at the same time emphasising the tremendous significance of the interpersonal connection and reciprocity of communion in human existence as male and female. However, Genesis 1 also starts to paint a picture of what that holistic partnership entails. Man and wife are to have children together, in

close fellowship and relationship with one another and with God: “Be fruitful and multiply” and “fill the land” (1:28). Together, they are to “flood the land and conquer (? בָּרַךְ) it” (1:28), but not via exploitation but rather by “moulding the creation into a higher degree of beauty and usefulness.” Together, man and woman are to be “co-managers” of God's creation (1:28). They are to “have dominion over” (הִרְבִּי) the animal kingdom, again not via exploitation but by wisely demonstrating God's rule over the world. Finally, God revealed a “palace in time” where the human family can come together in spiritual fellowship and communion with their Creator during the Sabbath (2: 1-3), which He gave at the culmination of the creation week.

VI. Genesis 1-2 Reveals the Restrictiveness of Sexuality

Gen. 2:24 emphasises the component of restrictiveness as a model of sexuality. The man departs בָּרַךְ, the first of three activities mentioned in this verse. The word בָּרַךְ has a strong connotation. Its precise meaning is “to abandon, forsake,” It is usually used to refer to Israel's rejection of Yahweh in favour of pagan gods (Deut 28:20; Judg 10:13; 2 Chr 34:25; Isa 1:4). The departure at 2:24 suggests the need for complete freedom from external influences on the sexual relationship. In a genuine sense, according to Barth, Genesis 2 serves as the “Old Testament Magna Charta of mankind,” as Adam was given the freedom to affirm the woman as his partner freely and exuberantly. This independence is vital to all successful sexual relationships, just as in the Garden.

The fact that the man is to leave stands out most in verse 24. When Genesis 2 was written, the wife naturally left her parents since it was the norm in the patriarchal society of the period (Doukhan, 1998, 32, 41; Teubal, 1990). The husband's “leaving” was a revolutionary act (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). This phrase implies that both parties must part ways and let go of any ties that might interfere with their relationship's independence and freedom. This means the internal moving—the psychological break away from dependence on

parents—and the external moving to establish a new home. It entails “beginning a new relationship in which the fundamental loyalty is not to the priorities, customs, or influences of parents, but to a completely new family that must determine its trajectory, form, and purpose” (Doukhan, 1998, 32, 41; Teubal, 1990).

This separation also suggests the exclusivity of the union: the husband and wife, and no other intervening party, are made of one another's flesh and bones. The monotheistic essence of God is ultimately the source of this exclusivity in the marriage bond. In the same way that the one and only God (Yahweh Elohim) made all of humanity have fellowship with him, so were the man and woman created in God's image to be wholly devoted to one another in marriage. Contrarily, the polytheistic pantheon of the ANE pagan religions indulged in promiscuous sex with one another; therefore, it is unsurprising that the civilizations that adopted these faiths did not uphold a standard of monogamous exclusivity within marriage.

VII. Genesis 1-2 Reveals Permanency and Sexuality

The Edenic paradigm for marriage in Gen 2:24 emphasises the element of permanency, which is the seventh facet of a theology of sexuality. Man clings to the second of the three behaviours in this Scripture (דָּבַק). Another forceful phrase that denotes a deep personal attachment is the Hebrew verb *dabaq*. The word initially connoted sticking, clinging, and remaining physically close, as skin adheres to flesh and bone. The OT frequently uses it as a technical term for the covenant that describes Israel's ongoing ties to the Lord. When applied to the gender connection in 2:24, it indicates a covenant setting, i.e., a marriage covenant.

The word “clings” is akin to the “oath of solidarity” and “covenant partnership” wording Adam used about Eve in the preceding verse. Adam expressed his marriage covenant vow when he said of Eve in 2:23a, “This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The third person reference ('this') in Gen. 2:23 and the assertion of God's presence in the immediate context further suggest that Adam was addressing his statement to God as a witness rather

than Eve or himself (Hugenberger, 1998, 202). The fact that God presented the lady to the man suggests that He presided over the solemn covenant-making ritual and the first garden wedding! The divine desire for every husband and wife is for their marriage to be formalised with a clinging-mutual commitment articulated in a formal covenant ceremony, according to the narrator, as it was with Adam.

Clinging, however, entails more than just a legal bond. The Arabic word *qabala* also highlights the covenant bond's internal attitudinal aspects. It “implies a dedication and an unwavering faith between humans; it connotes a lasting desire which exceeds genital union, to which, yet, it lends significance.” In verse 2:24, the term “clings” captures the subtleties of Adam's covenant promises. In addition to reaffirming the existence of a covenant, the phrase “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” also expresses “the entire range of intermediate possibilities from the extreme of frailty (flesh) to power (bones)... (It is) a formula of abiding loyalty for every changing circumstance” (Brueggemann, 534-35). It is analogous to the current pledge of “in sickness and in health, hardship or prosperity” in a marriage. In the marriage covenant, when a man clings to a woman, he promises to stay in the covenant partnership no matter what happens. The marriage pact is irrevocable and eternal.

VIII. Genesis 1-2 Reveals Intimacy and Sexuality

The divine pattern for all future marriages, as laid forth in Gen 2:24, emphasises the element of intimacy as the eighth component of a theology of sexuality. Man and wife “become one flesh” (רַבְּרַבִּים לֶבָרֶךְ אֶחָד וְאֶחָד לֶבָרֶךְ אֶחָד) are the third of three events mentioned in this poem. Note that the “clinging” comes after this union of one flesh. The one-flesh union of sexual activity so emphasises that it belongs within the context of the marriage covenant, according to the Edenic model for romantic partnerships. The unitive goal of sexuality is to have fulfillment in a committed marriage. Furthermore, the phrase “man and his wife” implies that the sexual connection envisioned is a heterosexual, monogamous one, as already mentioned earlier.

The intimacy of sexual union and sexual contact is at the heart of the “one-flesh” connection (Stuhlmiller, 1979, 3-9). The physical act of coitus, which appears to be the symbol of the marriage covenant in the context of this verse's covenant, is the primary method of establishing the “innermost mystery” of oneness. The “therefore” connecting 2:24 with the preceding verses indicates that Adam and Eve personally experienced the “one-flesh” union intended for all marriages in the future in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. As a result, sexual activity was undoubtedly a part of their unitive relationship before and during their ongoing relationship outside the Garden (4:1).

The “one flesh” feeling extends beyond sexual activity. In the OT, “flesh,” *basar*, describes a person's physical body and a human bond (Gen 29:14; 37:27; Lev 18:6; 25:49; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:13-14). A “sexual concourse and psychological concurrence, in the full sense of the conjunction of bodies and minds, at once through eros and agape... a psychic as well as a physiological gift of loyalty and exchange” (Terrien, 15-16) “the deepest harmonious community that exists between people, which is the unity between husband and wife in all its dimensions, emotional, physical, and spiritual” are connoted by the term “one flesh” (Vogels, 223). It denotes unity and intimacy in the entire relationship between the husband and wife whole persons, as well as harmony and togetherness in everything.

Genesis 2:24c does not suggest that the one-fleshness is a state that is instantly attained. $\text{וְהָיָה לְבָרִךְ אֶתְּכֶם אֶתְּכֶם}$ is more accurately translated as “they will become (not be) one flesh.” The Hebrew nuance, which is rarely expressed in English translations, shows that this state of “unicarnation”—to use a neologism—results from a process of development that increases in intensity and reinforces itself through time rather than fading away like a straw fire (Terrien, 15). Genesis 2:24 suggests intimacy, but it also most likely suggests unwelcome levels of intimacy within the family. Men and women must separate from their parents; they must not wed. Certain blood relationships were implicitly viewed as being off-limits for marriage

since it was anticipated that the clinging and becoming one flesh would occur with a spouse other than the parents. From the start, mother-son and father-daughter connections were reportedly regarded as banned degrees of intimacy for marriage. The deepest level of intimacy and complete openness between spouses are part of the one-flesh experience of marriage, as stated in verse 25: And both the husband and wife were exposed in front of each other and showed no signs of embarrassment (*hitpa'el*). The consequences of this climactic creation statement for sexuality will be covered at the end of this chapter.

IX. Genesis 1-2 Reveals Sexuality and Fertility

According to 1:27, “in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them,” humankind is said to be made in God's likeness. It is interesting that “this specific allusion [to sexuality] belongs not to procreation but to the image of God” when humanity is defined as being “male and female.” The imperative to understand that human procreation “is not considered as an emanation or manifestation of his (the man's) creation in the image of God” may be found in the next verse (1:28), which states that one of the fundamental functions of sexuality is procreation. Instead, “God's image is taken from human procreative power and shifted to a particular word of benediction. It is demonstrated that procreation is a specific extra benefit incorporated into the divine design for human sexuality. This divine command/benediction is to be taken seriously and carried out with the authority that comes with God's blessing. Adam and Eve are granted the joyful privilege of procreation, imitating (to a certain extent) and, in a way, carrying on God's creative activity (Gen. 1:22).

Nevertheless, the desire to have children cannot wholly supersede sexuality. Beyond only being a means of reproduction, a sexual distinction has significance. On the fifth day, the procreative blessing is also bestowed on the fish and the birds (v. 22), but only people are created in God's image. God explicitly made the sexual

distinction between men and women for male and female companionship and fellowship, as stated in Genesis 1.

The absence of any mention of child reproduction in Gen 2 highlights the centrality of the unitive aim of sexuality. This omission does not negate the value of reproduction, which is demonstrated in the following chapters of Scripture. However, the “full-stop” (Trosch, 1971, 20) that follows “one body” in verse 24 gives sexuality its distinct significance and worth. It is unnecessary to justify it as a route to procreation, which is a greater purpose in and of itself. The text does not support the interpretation proposed by others, according to which a husband and wife merge into one flesh in the flesh of their children. The creation pattern values sexual love for its own sake.

X. Genesis 1-2 Reveals the Perfect, Sacred Beauty of Sexuality

The personal evaluation of God's creation in Gen. 1-2 yields the tenth and final aspect of the theology of human sexuality. The sexuality of his last creation according to 1:31, “God beheld everything that he had made,” and “truly, it was very nice.” **וַיַּבְרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּיוֹמֵהוּ**, which translates to “extremely good” in Hebrew, denotes the height of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, and beauty. It is what is visually and morally pleasing. The syllogism is simple to understand. God created humanity as the pinnacle of his creative work, and part of that work included sexuality (including the act of sexual activity).

Furthermore, according to the first chapter of Genesis, God's creation is excellent and very beautiful. It is not an error, a sinful aberration, an unfortunate necessity, or an embarrassing event, as it has frequently been viewed throughout the history of Christian and pagan philosophy. Human sexuality, as both an ontological condition and a relational experience, is, instead, divinely inaugurated; it was intended as a critical component of human existence from the beginning as part of God's perfect plan (Davidson, 1988, 6).

It is what is appealing to the eye and ethically correct. The syllogism is straightforward to comprehend. As the culmination of his creative endeavour, God created humanity, which includes sexuality (including the act of sexual activity). Moreover, God's creation is superb and stunning. So, according to the first chapter of Genesis, sex is excellent and lovely, very good and beautiful even. It has frequently been examined throughout Christian and pagan philosophy; it is not an error, a sinful aberration, a regrettable necessity, or a humiliating event. Instead, human sexuality is divinely inaugurated; it was planned as a crucial aspect of human existence as part of God's perfect plan. Sexuality is both an ontological state and a relational experience.

What a happy occasion that first marriage was. Adam's first words are captured with passionate joy as he introduces his new wife. He suddenly starts singing and writing poetry. It is challenging to convert the opening line of Adam (וַיֹּאמֶר אָדָם) from Hebrew to vibrant English. It denotes something akin to “Wow! At last! The one is here!” As we have already mentioned, the woman is stunningly attractive and well-built (v. 22) just for him, and he is giddy with excitement and joy. As Adam accepts who she is, he also accepts who he truly is. His play on the words אִשָּׁה, “Woman,” and “

אִשָּׁה,” as has already been mentioned, is a declaration of covenant loyalty—his wedding vows. However, does this wordplay suggest that Adam has a playful disposition in his heart? Adam now feels that he is finally complete with an intimate partner, both in terms of work and dominance, certainly, but also in terms of sexual intimacy and play, just as he has observed the animals each romping and playing with their mate. Adam's tone of voice in his reaction to Eve's creation appears to speak not only covenant fidelity but also sensual delight, adventure anticipation, and jubilant celebration, and the final verses of Gen 2 support this jubilant interpretation.

God's Edenic ideal of sexuality is finally addressed in verse 25: וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֱדָם בְּיַמֵּינוּ וַיִּבְרָא אֱדָם בְּיַמֵּינוּ וַיִּבְרָא אֱדָם בְּיַמֵּינוּ

“And the man and his wife were undressed and unashamed.” The final English word might be better rendered as “they were not humiliated before one another” (*hitpa'el*) in Hebrew (Marsman, 2003, 101-2). The meaning of this passage is evident when compared to the “total (shameful) nakedness” (Hamilton, 1982, 41-42) stated in Gen. 3: “Shameless sexuality was divinely ordered; shameful sexuality is the outcome of sin” (Davidson, 1988, 27-32). Sexuality is pure, lovely, and excellent in God's original plan. It is intended to be shared between partners without inhibitions, fear, or other negative emotions; the narrative of Gen. 2 “has a sensual ambience that is not ashamed to be so. There is no ascetic or puritanical denigration of sexuality. The couple's union is the healthy fulfillment of the Creator's design, without shadow or qualifier, and the story bears no trace of moral or cultic impurity.” (Terrien, 16).

The heavenly approval of unrestrained sensual, yet erotic sexuality is stated in this last stanza of the creation accounts. Adam and Eve are exposed and unashamed in front of each other. They admire one another's bodies as they gaze at each other. They are utterly, fervently, and romantically in love. The narrator portrays a picture of human sexuality as God intended it to be, with sparse language and delicate taste.

Being naked implies more than physical nudity, just as the one-flesh experience extends beyond the physical union (Gardner, 2000). To “stand before each other, stripped and undisguised, without pretensions, without hiding anything, seeing the partner as he or she is, and presenting myself to him or her as I am-and still not to be ashamed” is implied (Heimbach, 2004, 142-45). Yancey (2003, 46-61) would say Adam and Eve were exposed as they faced one another, yet they were not ashamed. They did not feel any shame, guilt, or self-consciousness when around one another since they were open and vulnerable.

Conclusion

The topic of human sexuality is covered extensively and directly in the first two chapters of the Bible. In the Genesis creation stories, an explanation of the nature of sexuality takes a central, climactic positioning and is given as a fundamental fact of creation. The excessive amount of material given to sexuality highlights its relevance in the Hebrew Bible within the cosmic context of the creation narratives. The foundation for the rest of the biblical narrative and discourse on human sexuality is provided by the profound depiction of God's original plan for human sexuality at the beginning of the canon, which also captures the core ideas of sexuality. Genesis 2:24 makes it clear that God's initial plan for sexuality and marriage in the relationship between Adam and Eve serves as a model for all subsequent sexual relationships.

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