

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEX

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1. The Christian attitude towards sex is part of the Christian attitude towards life as a whole: and the Christian attitude towards life is positive and not negative. The Buddhist attitude is negative. It says you can find salvation if you deny certain aspects of life, escape desire, and live apart from the main stream of human vigour and energy. The Christian attitude is positive. The Christian says do not run away from life, but use life properly.

2. Christianity is not a book religion. Christianity is a religion of action. Christianity says God has done something for us. "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Christian attitude to life is based on that act of God. St. Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who was made in the likeness of men." God used human life to reveal his own character. The Christian view of life then is that human life is good, but, like all good things it can be wrongly, selfishly, sinfully used.

3. Unfortunately an old tradition of the Church, which may or may not be true, has suggested that God did not use sex when he came into the world in Jesus Christ. There is a tradition that Jesus had no human father. Remember St. Paul knows nothing of this tradition: and does not base his belief in Jesus as the Son of God upon it.

It may be true that Jesus had no human father: but we must not base our view of sex on the tradition that he had no human father. There is another tradition, namely that one of Jesus first public actions was to attend a wedding feast: and that he worked a miracle there to save the family from shame when they ran short of wine. Those two traditions cancel each other out. One appears to suggest that sex is unclean and therefore could not be used to make the word of God flesh: the other—the wedding tradition—shows Jesus publicly blessing married life. We cannot therefore prove from the N. T. that sex is unclean: on the contrary it is so much part of life as God has made it that we must believe it is good.

4. The Christian view of sex then is that it is good: and it is good for four reasons at least.

(1) God has linked sex and Beauty very closely together: and any man who says that beauty is evil is a mad man. The beauty of flowers, the beauty of animals, the beauty of men and women is closely linked with sex. Sex is good then because it is part of the beauty God has made in the world.

(2) Then sex is associated with Happiness and with Joy. The happy sex love of a young man and young woman is one of the most joyful things in the world. And it always makes other people happy to see them happy, share their joy. We have an English saying, "All the world loves a lover." And Jesus when he wanted to describe the joy of his life said he was like a bridegroom. He compared himself to a young man filled with the joy of sex love.

(3) Then sex is an intimate part of friendship. Jesus used the word "Friend" to describe our relationship to him: and there is no friendship deeper, happier, more understanding and more intimate than the friendship of a man and a woman when they love each other. I am not saying all friendship has a sexual basis. Just as I have not said that all beauty has a sexual basis, or that all joy has a sexual basis: but that God has linked sex very closely with these three things that mean so much to us—beauty, joy and friendship. God means sex therefore to be a beautiful and a joyful thing, able to strengthen and beautify human life and human friendship.

(4) Fourthly, God has made sex the means of Creation. It is by what we call the sex act that we can create new human life. In one sense a man and woman are nearest to God when their bodies are united together in the sex act and a new human life is conceived in the woman's womb. God is creator: and he has made it possible for us also to create by the use of sex. Sex then is not only beautiful, joyful, and a source of friendship—it is a holy and sacred thing—it is part of the divine passion for creation of new life which God shares with us.

But there is something else we must remember, and that is sin. Man is not slowly evolving to perfection. He is sinful. In the 51st Psalm—the writer says "in sin did my mother conceive me." This may be true, but it is not necessarily true. Jesus says, "Any man who looks on a woman to lust upon her hath committed adultery already in his heart." It is possible for a new human life to be made because a man, or a woman, or both, desire to use the other body as a means in their own enjoyment of the sensations and the feelings of sex: and this is sinful. And remember this—it is just as sinful to use your wife, or your husband, like that as it is to use another man or another woman. The real sin in adultery is not sex but selfish exploitation of other person.

I can think of two cases of excommunication of which I have some knowledge. In each case the man has taken a second wife: but in each case he has not been excommunicated because of sex but because of selfishness. In one case the first wife had no child and the man said "I want a son." That is sin. We are not animals. Human beings must not be bred as we breed animals. To use a woman in marriage as a means of giving the family a son is adultery—for the man is not then treating his wife as a person—but as a thing. He is treating her as an incubator, not as a woman. In the second case the man had genuinely fallen in love with a younger woman, young enough to be his daughter, and had had sexual relations with her. But if he had stayed away that girl would have happily married someone else—but he would not let her go. He wanted her. He was selfish. He made public what he had done so that no one else would marry her. Now she is his concubine. He is excommunicated because he was selfish, not because he loved her. There is no sin in love: and there is no sin in sex. But selfish love and selfish sex, possessive, greedy self-indulgent, motives—these things are the devil's work to destroy the beautiful, joyful, holy gift of sex which God has given to men.

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AN EASTER SERVICE OF SONG*

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THE Churches in this city, Wenchow, Chekiang, have in recent years seen something of a revival in hymn-singing. Each now has its choir, although enthusiasm tends to wax and wane. Improvements in standards, such as the Western device of partsinging, have been introduced in a rudimentary fashion. If still true that the singing tends to sameness in tonal qualities, and to be expressionless, with little understanding that the singing of a hymn should interpret the words, yet the improvement on earlier standards has been so great as to make possible an attempt at a special festival of hymn music, of which this article is a description.

We have often toyed with the idea that Services of Song, such as used to be employed with good results in Mission Halls in England, might well be prepared and used in China, because of their eminent suitability for unsophisticated audiences. They contain music, narrative, and other features dear to every Chinese. Moreover, being simple to produce, many a village Church could successfully undertake

*Mr. Aylott has Chinese copies of the program of this "Easter Service of Song" as printed on pages 421-422. He is ready to send copies to those who wish them. His address is Methodist Mission, Wenchow, Chekiang.

a simplified programme. The Service of Song consists of a read story with musical items frequently interspersed in the narrative, at points where there is correspondence of meaning. Thus came our idea of using a Bible narrative, and, with Easter fast approaching, the story of Easter.

After a deal of thought the following service was composed, and its performance several weeks later revealed very few defective places that we would have preferred to be different. In fact it is expected that it will be repeated without important alteration next Easter. This is our justification for so confidently recommending it to other churches. However, this is not in any way to suggest that the scheme is perfect, or that better hymns and tunes might not be substituted in places, or that other alterations might not be made with benefit. A programme such as this allows for any amount of adaptation and improvement, because personal choice had much to do with the selections made. Also one has to bear in mind the preference of the audience for whom the effort is being prepared, and, accordingly, for reasons of local importance, the hymns included in our programme are of several varieties. Again, both Scriptures, and Hymns, as well as the general scheme, were prepared with an eye on the greatest dramatic effect.

The Scriptures selected actually contain in briefest form the most significant features of an almost complete history of the Passion and Resurrection. Even with this shortening, there is too much material to be *read* throughout, so the longer and less pregnant passages are meant to be *narrated*. It is convenient to have two, a Reader and a Narrator, each selected for ability in his appointed task. The Reader should never be dull, but must make the text live and grip the attention of the audience. The Narrator should have a flair for condensation, extracting the significant details of the narrative, with some power in dramatization. Neither the Reader nor the Narrator need read or speak from the Bible text, but instead fully prepared manuscripts should be taken into the Church. There is no time for turning up the Scripture passages, nor should the service be broken into in any such way. Directly any hymn has been sung, the Reader, or Narrator, will stand and commence the next Scripture, without any announcement of chapter and verse, etc.

It will add enormously to the meaning of the service and its power for moving hearts if the programme containing the Scripture reference and subject (as below), with also the words in full of each accompanying hymn, is printed and distributed. This will enable the listener to follow intelligently.