

A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF *THE UB*
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PART IX: What Does *The UB* Say about Marriage?

“Marriage which culminates in the home is indeed man’s most exalted institution, but it is essentially human; it should never have been called a sacrament.”
(83.8.1)

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
(Genesis 2:24)

A Debasement of Holy Matrimony

Paper 82 of *The UB* (“The Evolution of Marriage”) is the first of three successive papers that broach the topics of human sexuality, marriage, and the family. These three papers assert that marriage is the product of social evolution, a “reactional adjustment” (82:0.1) to our being sexually reproductive creatures. It is through marriage that mankind has developed the home life, “the crowning glory of the whole long and arduous evolutionary struggle” (*ibid.*). In fact, the sexual urge is an innate propensity from which “marriage is its evolutionary social repercussion” (82:1.1). Paper 83 (“The Marriage Institution”) likewise continues with the theme that the institution of marriage as presented by *The UB* is a purely human invention, one that was not ordained by God: “Marriage which culminates in the home is indeed man’s most exalted institution, but it is essentially human; it should never have been called a sacrament” (83:8.1). Elsewhere, Paper 83 refers to “the Christian error of regarding marriage as a sacrament” (83:6.3). Paper 84 (“Marriage and Family Life”) tells us that “material necessity founded marriage” (84:0.1) and that marriage “implies the evolution of society” (84:0.2).

Because *The UB* forges ahead with its evolutionary paradigm, it must entreat us with the “fact” of human evolution from species of lower intellectual and spiritual capacity. And with this premise in full force, the institution of marriage must thereby be cast in light of its evolutionary scheme. As with all human institutions, the history of marriage must be told in terms of its development from primitive beginnings among the savage beast that man once was. As the biblical Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God, have been supplanted with a pair of extraterrestrial beings of superior genes who came to planet Urantia for the express purpose of biologically improving the already-existent human races, so goes the God-ordained covenant relationship between one man and one woman known as holy matrimony.

In stark contrast, the Bible tells us that the sacrament of marriage was sanctioned by God to be practiced by mankind: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

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The UB's barrage on marriage continues with the following passages, each of which are in direct opposition to what Scripture has to say on the matter:

“The story of the evolution of marriage is simply the history of sex control through the pressure of social, religious, and civil restrictions.” (82:2.1)

“But while marriages may be approved or disapproved on high, they are hardly made in heaven. The human family is a distinctly human institution, an evolutionary development.” (83:1.2)

“The likening of human associations to divine associations is most unfortunate. The union of husband and wife in the marriage-home relationship is a material function of the mortals of the evolutionary worlds. True, indeed, much spiritual progress may accrue consequent upon the sincere human efforts of husband and wife to progress, but this does not mean that marriage is necessarily sacred.” (83:8.2)

Whoever these “celestial” authors may be, they apparently have a difference of opinion with Jesus of the New Testament, who affirmed the Genesis edict:

“Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matthew 19:4-6; cf. Mark 10:5-9)

But the *UB* authors seem to want to call Jesus of the New Testament on the carpet, inculcating Him as someone who knows not whereof He speaks as to whether marriage should be considered a God-ordained institution:

“It is also unfortunate that certain groups of mortals have conceived of marriage as being consummated by divine action. Such beliefs lead directly to the concept of the indissolubility of the marital state regardless of the circumstances or wishes of the contracting parties. But the very fact of marriage dissolution itself indicates that Deity is not a conjoining party to such unions. If God has once joined any two things or persons together, they will remain thus joined until such a time as the divine will decrees their separation. But, regarding marriage, which is a human institution, who shall presume to sit in judgment, to say which marriages are unions that might be approved by the universe supervisors in contrast with those which are purely human in nature and origin?” (83:8.4)

Such ruminations are common among human critics of the institution of marriage who advocate the cause of “no-fault” divorce and cohabitation without any strings attached. And we are all aware of the emotional and financial devastation that decades of social acceptance of these practices have wrought. Furthermore, marriage is not the only God-ordained institution that man has forsaken, as the Ten Commandments bear witness to the lawless nature of man. But even the straw-man argument that the marriage sacrament forces a binding-no-matter-what mentality is itself not biblical, as Jesus also pointed out:

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“Furthermore it has been said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason *except sexual immorality* causes her to commit adultery”(Matthew 5:31-32, emphasis added; cf. Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18)

The preamble to Paper 83 indicates that the institution of marriage “has progressed steadily from the loose and promiscuous matings of the herd through many variations and adaptations, even to the appearance of those marriage standards which eventually culminated in the realization of pair matings, the union of one man and one woman to establish a home of the highest social order” (83:0.1). In other words, it was neither the intended design nor the mandate of God that one man and one woman be united in a covenant relationship of physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy, but that our primate ancestors gradually stumbled upon the idea after eons of trial and error.

Paper 83 continues on about the marriage institution=s progressive phases, from tribal promiscuity, to serial monogamy, to group marriage, to polygamy, and finally true monogamous marriage. The narrative reads as though coming from an objective, matter-of-fact perspective. There is nothing observed to be intrinsically wrong with the fact that mankind’s ideas of sexual relations evolved into such a colorful array. Several unobtrusive examples of history are provided, perhaps as an attempt to ease our collective minds of our past premarital and extramarital transgressions. After all, we are all members of an ever-changing movement, the progression of the human animal into the respectable, dignified creature that he was destined to be.

If such is the case, that marriage is an invention of man and not an edict from God, then we can imagine the base circumstances by which this invention eventually came about as man evolved from his beastly ancestry. Again, the author of Paper 83 provides us with an effective description of said effect:

“It is because of the sex urge that selfish man is lured into making something better than an animal out of himself. The self-regarding and self-gratifying sex relationship entails the certain consequences of self-denial and insures the assumption of altruistic duties and numerous race-benefiting home responsibilities. Herein has sex been the unrecognized and unsuspected civilizer of the savage; for this same sex impulse automatically and unerringly *compels man to think* and eventually *leads him to love.*” (83:0.3; emphasis original)

Under the premise of human evolution, it seems so simple to understand and accept the degrading circumstances by which mankind supposedly came to equate sexual gratification with love, and by which the urge to merge doth soothe the savage beast. But what if mankind did not evolve from lower creatures? What if, as the Bible states, Adam and Eve were the first human couple, whom God personally married and exhorted to uphold the marriage covenant? Then the *UB* authors’ observations, despite the celestial heights from whence they supposedly hail, have gotten the whole issue turned upside down. Despite God’s initiation of the marriage institution with the very first human couple, humanity has abused and misapplied the sexual urge and the exclusive context by which God had designed for its expression in every way imaginable throughout the ages since. Indeed, if a study of history is to tell us anything, it is that mankind has consistently maintained an appetite for the “promiscuous matings of the herd through many variations and adaptations” to one degree or another since recorded time.

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Marriage, then, is not a sacred institution according to *The UB*. Today's militant homosexual community would quite agree. The efforts to legally recognize same-sex couples as candidates for marriage (and all the legal benefits bestowed thereupon) are slowly coming to fruition in many parts of the "civilized" world. *The UB* is strangely silent on the issue of homosexuality; yet it does recognize that the "man-ordained" institution of marriage is the means by which the sexual urge is bridled for the benefit of the family and as the true means of sexual fulfillment between a man and woman. On what basis, then, does one condemn homosexuality if the concept of monogamous heterosexual marriage was not ordained by God Himself? If one believes, as *The UB* prolifically posits, that we humans evolved from hominids by the naturalistic evolutionary method, then the contention that homosexuality is wrong has no basis, for such behavior is obviously a "normal" occurrence in nature, as demonstrated by other primates. What position should *UB* devotees take, then, on the issue of same-sex marriage? If one condones homosexual marriage, which is after all an institution that is quickly becoming ordained by humans, then one has positioned oneself in opposition to that which *The UB* claims is the means by which family maintenance is promulgated (a same-sex couple will find it physically impossible to procreate). On the other hand, if same-sex marriage is condemned, one has denied said couples the legally recognized, humanly-ordained means by which their sexual urges are "ideally" fulfilled according to their own human intuition!

A Primitive Theory

In case the reader has not yet recognized it as such, the evolutionary view of marriage and sexual mores adopted in *The UB* is based upon yet another outdated theory. All authorities agree that during historical times promiscuity has been either non-existent or confined to a few small groups. But did it prevail to any extent during the prehistoric period of the human race? Writing between 1860 and 1890, a considerable number of anthropologists, such as Johann Bachofen (1815-1887), Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881), and Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913), maintained that this was the original relationship between the sexes among practically all peoples. So rapidly did the theory win favor that in 1891 it was, according to Westermarck, "treated by many writers as a demonstrated truth."¹ It appealed strongly to those believers in organic evolution who assumed that the social customs of primitive man, including sex relations, must have evolved from the corresponding usages among the brutes. Indeed, the vogue which the theory of primitive promiscuity for a time enjoyed seems to have been primarily due to presumptive considerations that were rooted in biologic evolution rather than to tangible evidence.

However, about the only direct testimony in favor of this theory is found in fragmentary statements of some ancient writers, such as Herodotus and Strabo, concerning few unimportant peoples, and in the accounts of some modern travelers regarding some uncivilized tribes of the present day. Neither of these classes of testimony clearly shows that the peoples to which they refer practiced promiscuity, and both are entirely too few to justify the generalization that all peoples lived originally in the conditions described. As for indirect evidence in favor of the theory, consisting of inferences from such social customs as the tracing of kinship through the mother ("In early times all descent was reckoned in the female line, that being the only part of inheritance which was at all certain" [84:2.1]), religious prostitution, unrestrained sexual intercourse previous to marriage among some savage peoples ("Marriage was not needed by primitive man, who indulged his sex appetite freely without encumbering himself with the responsibilities of wife, children, and home" [84:1.1]), and primitive community of goods, none of these conditions can be proved to have been universal at any stage of human development. In fact, every one of them can be explained more easily and more naturally on other

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grounds than on the assumption of promiscuity. The positive arguments in favor of the theory of primitive promiscuity seem insufficient to give it any degree of probability, while the biological, economic, psychological, and historical arguments brought against it by many recent writers (e.g., Westermarck, *op. cit.*, pp. iv-vi) seem to render it unworthy of serious consideration. The attitude of contemporary scholars is thus described by Howard: “The researchers of several recent writers, notably those of Starcke and Westermarck, confirming in part a further developing the earlier conclusions of Darwin and Spencer, have established a probability that marriage or pairing between one man and one woman, though the union be often transitory and the rule frequently violated, is the typical form of sexual union from the infancy of the human race.”²

The Problem with Paul (Part II)

While we are on the topic of marriage, we cannot ignore *The UB*'s gross mishandling of the apostle Paul's position on the subject. There is a passage in Paper 89 of *The UB* that portrays the apostle Paul to be a devotee of an extreme “celibacy cult” who advocated celibacy for everyone: “If the advice of the tentmaker-teacher [Paul] were to be literally and universally obeyed, then would the human race come to a sudden and inglorious end” (89:3.6). The passage continues to say furthermore that “the involvement of a religion with the ancient continence cult leads directly to a war against marriage and the home” (*ibid.*), implying that Paul was an “enemy” of marriage. The passage then goes on to cite Pauline verses that have been snatched out of context, such as First Corinthians 7:1 (“It is good for a man not to touch a woman”) and 7:7 (“I would that all men were even as I myself”), as “proof” of Paul's anti-marital stance.

But the alleged celestial author who presented this diatribe apparently ignored a few other verses from Paul's letters. For example, Paul provides instruction on the principals of marriage in First Corinthians chapter 7, which includes this piece of advice: “. . . let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1Corinthians 7:2). Paul continues by admonishing his fellow believers at Corinth to keep their marriage vows even if their spouse is not a believer (1Corinthians 7:10-16). And to the unmarried and widows, Paul says it is permissible to marry: “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned” (1Corinthians 7:28). Paul provides marital advice to wives and husbands in other letters as well, imploring couples to uphold their marriage in emulation of the sanctity between Christ and His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Paul highly commends marriage in his first epistle to Timothy: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife . . .” (1Timothy 3:2); “Let deacons be the husbands of one wife . . .” (1Timothy 3:12); “Therefore I desire that the younger widows *marry, bear children, manage the house . . .*” (1Timothy 5:14; emphasis added). This latter statement of Paul's does not at all sound like a declaration of “war against marriage and the home” (89:3.6), but rather a ringing endorsement for “society's veritable foundation and the basic institution of human progress” (*ibid.*).

Why, Paul goes so far as to declare that forbidding to marry is a doctrine of devils:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons . . . , forbidding to marry For . . . it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” (1Timothy 4:1-5)

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And surely Paul would not have included himself among those who practice the doctrines of devils! I don't know about you, dear reader, but I get a bit warmed up when the authors of a book who claim to be God's divinely appointed messengers attempt to persuade me of their views by lying to me. This portion of *The UB* appears to be guilty of gross misrepresentation at the very least.

ENDNOTES

1. Westermarck, Edward (1862-1939), *History of Human Marriage* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1921), p. 51. Cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "History of Marriage," 1917 (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09693a.htm>).
2. Howard, George Elliot (1849-1928), *History of Matrimonial Institutions, Vol. I* (New York: Humanities Press, 1964, c. 1904), pp. 90, 91. Cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "History of Marriage," 1917 (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09693a.htm>).