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The Fornication Fallacy

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The practice of sex outside of marriage in modern society is everywhere. There is virtually no place you can go in the public square that views sexual relations as having any boundaries. Perhaps the only exceptions, as of this writing, is bestiality, and perhaps adultery (though it is not the sex act itself that is objectionable, but the act of betraying a trust – unless, of course, both partners agree it is okay, then there is no problem with it). Watch almost any TV show or movie and sex will be treated as actually a part of even the most casual of relationships – particularly for those who are unmarried. In fact, not only is it seen as unremarkable, it is viewed as something that is actually expected between any two people (or sometimes even more) who find themselves attracted to one another.

The Bible is pretty clear that all sexual immorality is wrong, but in modern society it is difficult to find people who will define any sexual act as immoral. So, to make this clear, we need to identify various kinds of sexual relationships and deal with them individually. In this article, we are going to look at the topic of fornication. Fornication is simply the act of voluntary sexual intercourse between two people who are not married to one another – this applies to both opposite sex and same sex relationships.

What is the Issue?

Those who are a part of the "free sex" crowd consider sexual relations as nothing more than a natural interaction between two people who are attracted to one another. They do not see any kind of moral issue involved. After all, it is only a part of human relationships. Their argument is

that sex is a natural and normal human activity, and that no one should be denied the enjoyment of this act. But is this really true?

In actual fact, this is not a mere relationship issue. There is an actual objective moral component associated with it. Those who think otherwise are not divorcing morality from the sex act, they are simply creating a moral definition that fits their preferences.

The Presuppositions of Conflicting Notions of Fornication

Biblical Theism

The biblical point of view is that all sexual relations outside of the bonds of marriage are immoral. The Bible teaches that sex is, indeed, a good thing, but only within the context of the marriage between one man and one woman. God created and defined the parameters of the marriage relationship for a specific purpose and deemed it sacred. Note these verses in the Bible that share God's revelation concerning sexual relationships (all are from the ESV).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Ephesians 5:3

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For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. Matthew 15:19

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Naturalism

The "free sex" point of view, however, has an entirely different foundation. Rather than being based on biblical teachings, it is built upon naturalistic assumptions.

Naturalism is the belief that the only thing that exists is the natural universe. There is no God, so there is no place for an objective moral code to come from. Thus, based on naturalistic beliefs, biblical teachings about sex and sexuality are not true in the sense that they apply to all of humanity. They can be true for individuals and useful in certain societal contexts, but are not true in an objective sense.

Not only does Naturalism reject belief in God, but also asserts that the existence of humanity is the result

of a natural evolutionary process. As evolution progressed and various living things emerged, man also came forth from a particular evolutionary line of animals. So, human beings are nothing more than one species of natural animal.

According to Naturalism, the one really unique thing about the human animal is that we have the trait of self-consciousness that no other animal has. This puts us in a position to have a moral sense. We sense some things to be right and some things to be wrong. It is not that any particular moral belief is objectively right or wrong, but Naturalists believe that this "sense" evolved in human beings as a survival trait. By having a sense of morality, human groups are able to agree on common moral standards that promote cohesion within a society. Of course, since these moral beliefs are not objectively true and applicable to every group of people, you will find different moral standards operative in different societies.

When it comes to moral views on sex, there are times and places where particular moral beliefs promote cohesion within a particular group. For instance, since homosexuality can't produce children, societies that need children to maintain their existence would discourage behavior that worked against that goal. Another example might be that since in some societies the traditional family unit provides the kind of order needed for the group's survival, fornication or adultery are considered immoral.

However, since human beings are believed to be merely one species of natural animal and there is no such thing as an objectively true moral code, there is no reason homosexuality or fornication or adultery can't be considered moral in societies where those actions don't impact the survival of the collective. And those who promote a "free-sex" ethic in modern society argue that

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there is no particular societal benefit to restricting sexual pleasure in ways that were formerly considered immoral. Thus, what used to be considered immoral can now be changed and considered moral.

Is the Secularist View of Fornication True?

For Naturalists, it is silly to even ask the question, "Is the "free sex" point of view true?" For them, there is no such thing as "true or false" when it comes to moral beliefs. For them, the optimal question is, "Is it useful or helpful for society?"

That, however, assumes that the naturalistic point of view itself is true. If, indeed, human beings are nothing more than natural animals in a reality where the natural universe is all that exists, then Naturalists certainly have a case. If the only morality is that which human beings make up to promote their survival, then sex is nothing more than a natural act that all animals do.

But this brings us again to the question, "Is Naturalism true?" And the straight answer is, "No!" The most basic presuppositions of Naturalism require that everything in every part of reality be explainable by empirical science. It has to be explainable because there is nothing outside of the natural laws of the universe. What now exists had to have come into existence based on those laws. Of course, virtually all Naturalists will readily admit that we do not yet have it all figured out, but insist that one day we will, as we continue to understand more about how the natural world works.

But therein is the rub. Naturalism assumes that the natural universe is all that exists and that everything can be explained by natural laws. But they have to assert that premise based on their "belief" that their assumptions are true – not on any actual science that they can produce. In

other words, their naturalistic beliefs are a faith system, not a demonstrable scientific fact.

What is the Answer?

If God actually exists and has, indeed, revealed himself and his ways to mankind through the Bible, then the moral beliefs about sexuality contained in it are not merely moral suggestions, but are objectively true moral truths. And as we look at what is happening in the world as it relates to sexual morality, biblical beliefs actually do reflect the way reality works in the world.

Let's look at some examples of the results of a "free-sex" morality.

1. Venereal disease - According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sexually transmitted diseases are at a record high, and are trending upward.
2. Breakdown of the family - While divorce rates are down among the younger generation, that statistic is deceptive. Young people are actually entering their first co-residential relationships at about the same age as people did in the past – only they are doing it as a cohabitational relationship rather than marriage. The average length of these relationships is about five years. Among older Americans, the divorce rate is dramatically increasing.
3. Abortion - Abortion rates have been declining over the last decade, but this is also a deceptive statistic. Much of this is due to more stringent laws that make abortions more difficult to obtain. Another element is an increased use of contraceptives. Still, worldwide, there are between 40-50 million abortions per year. In the United States there are about 650,000 per year, which is nearly 1,800 per day.
4. Unwanted pregnancies - The percentage of pregnancies that are considered "unwanted" are at about 45 percent. Most of these represent people who are unmarried.

5. Sex trafficking - Over the last ten years there has been an 842 percent increase in sex trafficking reports.
6. Prostitution - Since prostitution is illegal, hard statistics are difficult to come by. However, estimates are that currently there are between 1-2 million prostitutes in America. That is up from an estimated 84,000 back in the 1980s.

As we look at these statistics, it becomes very evident that a "free-sex" ethic is damaging to both individuals and society. Even using naturalistic reasoning, it is hard to justify the results as being helpful for the survival of the collective.

Most Naturalists accuse people who hold biblical beliefs about sexuality of being "prudish." That is not true, however. Christians are not anti-sex. Christians only recognize that sex belongs within a particular context – and that context reflects the way God actually ordered reality. It is the "free-sex" belief system that operates in a fantasy world, and it ultimately ends up destroying human society, not making it better. Rather, it is biblical beliefs that order society in a way that promotes not only the survival of the collective, but also puts the individual in a position to thrive, both materially and spiritually.

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