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Cosmopolitan Revolt: ‘Born Again Virgin’ Movement Spawns Empowerment

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“Sex in the City” is out of vogue and has departed prime time. Every human wants to be loved and to love, but does not want to be used or abused. The culture of disposable morality and devalued intimacy has contributed to the diminishment of respect, commitment, accountability and wholesomeness. The growth of depression, suicide and a new “social-justice” crisis has emerged with a hunger for pure and enduring spirituality. Crimes of date and acquaintance rape and human-trafficking continue to rise and many cases are not officially reported. Reportedly 80% of the time the sexual predator is someone the victim knows and trusts. Sometimes a family member or a close friend, as was the recent case that made headline news in Santa Monica. Fortunately, that publicized event was witnessed by three bystanders who immediately reported the date-rapist to authorities. The perp turned out to be the trusted best friend of the victim. She was saved and he was arrested. It is also good news that more victims of sexual abuse are becoming empowered by joining the “born again virgin” movement and prayer-support groups. Not allowing the perpetrator to control them or their future in any way. The victim’s unjust shame is lifted by their powerful gain of grace!

Victims of sexual-abuse and of human-trafficking must be empowered by the knowledge that the perpetrator was wrong no matter what the circumstances or the efforts by the predator to excuse or exonerate their action, often causing the victim to unjustly feel blame. When the sexual-abuse happens by a family member or other trusted person, counseling experts at The Rape Foundation advise it is important for the entire family to circle the wagons and prevent the perpetrator any access to others within the family. The perp can no longer be trusted. They are usually repeat offenders assaulting new prey, especially when they get away with it. Because some family members are enablers who try to protect the perpetrator, the rape counseling professionals advise family to also stay away from the enabler. The enabler is part of the problem unless willing to be part of the solution, by participating in family sexual-abuse counseling, confronting the perpetrator and supporting accountability for their actions. The rape counselors advise that the enabler contributes to

new assaults being committed by the perp because of helping them feel supported rather than protecting the victims.

Fifty Year Circle

Now to move this conversation to consensual sex, love and to being born again virgins. My humble perspective combines life experiences with my recent degree in Systematic Theology earned at Berkeley, where the sexual revolution began in the sixties. Comparative religions with moral, global-ethics for international relations and conflict resolution, with expertise in Mariology and Franciscan spiritual formation is my theological degree emphasis, not psychology nor marriage-counseling. Growing up during the sixties revolution offered a unique preparation for life. I was educated by amazing Catholic nuns, whom I appreciated for their tough-love and life-saving guidance. But I was also formed by exposure to the seduction of the turbulent times. When I think back, my prudish Mom was actually pretty cool. She trusted me to hang out on the Sunset Strip and cruise Hollywood Boulevard in between taking me to nearby Father Peyton's Family Theatre to pray the rosary and to Blessed Sacrament Church for Mass with legendary actress Loretta Young. I witnessed Jim Morrison and The Doors play their first rendition of "Light My Fire" with teenagers striking bic lighters in concert with "baby, baby, light my fire" to meeting the "Lovin' Spoonful" in my Mom's Pink Cadillac as she gave them a ride humming their hit song "Do you believe in magic?" Traveling to Haight-Ashbury with her and watching a "love-in" at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco with Gracie Slick and Jefferson Airplane performing "White Rabbit" was just one part of my "street-smart" education. Although I was surrounded by some "girls gone wild," I was blessed to be securely grounded in my traditional Catholic roots and shared values with my Jewish best girlfriend, both my saving grace.

Later as a parent, I was sad to recall the scores of teaching nuns who left the classrooms and discarded their habits. Many took on the mantle of "social-justice" causes, but one could now argue that guiding children and youth to a safe future is the greatest social contribution. To be radical then was to promote "free-sex," which has since proven not to be free. To be radical today, in contrast, is to be chaste, free of sexual bondage in favor of real love. No shades of gray. The paradigm shift is underway as my academic-social research since 1966 to today informs. Fifty years later, the revolution has come full circle.

Forms of Love

Can one control carnal desire, be willing to self-control for a deeper love than *eros* and attain a higher purpose in life? Absolutely, if one desires a higher level of dignity, reverence and humility as illustrated by the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ. He illustrated the beauty of *kenosis* by emptying Himself for the future of others as witnessed by His selfless death on the cross. Jesus raised the significance

of *agape* and *philia* love to new heights. The beloved and respected Indian mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, also promoted the importance of this selfless love discovered in friendship relationships and charity. He challenged men to respect women by waiting for sex until married and taught women to resist men by exerting their power to say no and maintain self-control. Gandhi, Hindu by birth, also embraced and followed the tenets of Jesus instructing humanity to recognize the “sanctity of marriage” as foundational for the human race. Gandhi argued that without procreation, humanity would cease to exist. Gandhi was one of the most outspoken opponents of abortion, adamantly opposing artificial birth control, teaching abstinence and that sex was only for creating life. For men the “born again virgin” commitment is called “celibacy” which comes from the Latin word, *caelibatus*, which interestingly means heavenly or heaven now. For women it means embracing “chastity,” derived from the Latin word *castitas*, meaning purity and self-control. In other words, both genders desiring a higher form of love, without sex. The political and philosophical debate about sexuality discusses who has the power over human desires, God or self. Free-will, desiring and accepting God’s grace is the Judeo-Christian teaching. The topic of sexuality has become a cultural, health and deeply spiritual and theological consideration. One of the most worthwhile series of lessons and retreat programs addressing human sexuality, marriage and family life was created by St. John Paul II, called “Theology of The Body.” It offers great pearls of faith and wisdom interiorly, emanating from the Revelation of Christ.

Peer pressure has played a significant role in devaluing modesty and mocking virtuous behavior as has film, television, advertising, social media, celebrity focus and fashion. Sex has become a commercial commodity or is taken for granted as an entitlement by some and a tool by others. None of these uses was God’s intent for humanity according to Sacred Scripture. Sex is supposed to be a holy and beautiful expression of love, but only as an intimate part of the relationship within the “sanctity of marriage.” And I personally believe the teachings found in the Bible inform the Word of God and that the “Sacrament of Marriage” between a man and a woman is the true and only marriage covenant.

I believe that for same-sex relationships, there is a possible special spiritual calling for a sanctified life together; meaning embracing “*philia*”- “*agape*” love, the unique non-marital, non-procreation bond of commitment with caring, selfless non-sexual affection, willing good and eternal life for one another. Arguably a higher form of love. Giving one’s soul to God, like some heterosexual couples or individuals desiring sanctification who choose *Divine Intimacy* in union with God over sexual relations.

“I’m No Fool-Having Fun!”

Growing up I fondly remember my Dad sharing the safety lessons of Jiminy Cricket, the conscience of Pinocchio, his 1955 song just before the sixties sexual revolution:

I’m no fool! No sir-ee!

I wanna live to be 103.

I play safe for you and me.

‘Cause I’m no fool!

Anyone can be a fool

And do things which are wrong

But fools find out when it’s too late

They don’t live so long!

Does one have to have sex to have fun? And maybe not live so long. When one considers the sexually transmitted diseases, including 1 in 5 Americans with Herpes, which is incurable-the booby prize (pun intended) is a life sentence. Not to mention, nor forget the reality of HIV-Aids, syphilis or gonorrhea, leading to serious health risks with possible deadly outcomes resulting from sex, bolstering the compelling “play it safe” argument, virginity or abstinence. Then the abortion debate becomes moot, exercising self-control before it’s too late, waiting for sex until ready to be a parent. Add to health risks the mentality of a culture where sex is a commodity and big business. In fact, I attended a FBI-Human Rights Watch briefing that shockingly informed us that human-trafficking was now the world’s largest illicit industry overtaking drugs because a body can be sold for sex over and over again. With a transformed way of thinking and less demand for gratuitous sex, human-trafficking would be less of a global crisis.

How much are we as a society willing to personally sacrifice to make real progress in preventing forced sex and enslavement. Meaning there is a human rights factor to the “Born Again Virgin Movement” which is gaining momentum, ultimately saving lives and strengthening souls. What’s more, health-care costs are reduced as there is a purification and transformation of society. Arguably, the new desire to “be good” is more fulfilling and sustainable than the fleeting moment of “feeling good” only to feel bad when one’s conscience ultimately kicks in, hopefully before “foolish” damage is done.

Real Love

It is a universal dilemma, whether in Quebec or Havana, San Diego or Berlin, couples living together having children but no marriage. Every single story relayed to me by those seeking advice, is exactly the same. The man was married or in a relationship before and tells the woman he doesn’t want to

make the same mistake again, or he wants to be engaged for an extended time to make sure the relationship doesn't sour like the last one. She "foolishly" falls for the story and 5, 10, 15, 20 years later she is still asking for help to convince the guy, the father of their children, that he should ask her to marry him. In my view, she is wasting her time and her beauty and souls are in jeopardy. Sadly, their children see the lack of commitment. They are insecure and follow the same "foolish" pattern. Fear of abandonment with lack of faith in themselves and trust in God's grace impedes breaking the cycle of bondage and opening the path to real love and happiness.

For women, co-habiting (even just for overnights) is to "mark their territory," but they foolishly forgo the Mrs. title, and they give up the deed of trust, literally and allegorically. For men, sex before marriage is to try out how the latest model drives, before committing to buy the car. And then why buy the car if you have one readily to use without any financial or emotional responsibility. You even get off the hook of paying insurance. Like my Mom (God rest her wise soul) used to say: "why buy the cow? when you can get the milk delivered to your door and bed, free and flowing." And on the practical side to consider, what guy will want to make the big "M" commitment when he knows how sloppy or perfectionist you are, bitchy and gaseous at times, and without morning make-up-not looking your best? What girl wants to be with a guy the rest of her life who snores, swears or ignores her too much? Don't buy into the seductive argument "but it's good to know everything about each other before you marry, and the only way is to live or have sex with each other to make sure it is a good fit" (literally and metaphorically).

All of the imperfect habits we have are the reality of married life, but so is the deeper reason to choose marriage over co-habitation, you become real soul-mates not just play-mates and you become more than a "significant other" or even just a couple, you become a family. You know you can trust each other to always accept your faults and cover your back. You know that the vows you made are unconditional love, not based on sex, but rather for "in-sickness and in-health", "rich or poor," supportive of one another till death do you part. And even then you can enjoy eternal life together, if you both follow the rules of the road to grace and ever-lasting love leading to the Beatific Vision in the ultimate Paradise, with the most beautiful triple rainbow found in Heaven, even beyond Hawaii.

"Baby, I Do"

Now some social-justice advocates are helping victims of sexual abuse to be healed and many millennials are putting greater emphasis on encouraging a "sex-free" revolution promoting virginity and "born again virginity" until marriage. Certainly worth pondering over a glass of wine or chai tea. It

is cool to be retro-radical and return to God's original plan empowered to patiently wait for more than a ring and a promise, only say YES to SEX after both vow "Baby, I DO," and the marriage commitment is sealed. By the way, for anything to last it needs a strong foundation. For marriage it helps to have God in the center holding the two of you together.

The other good argument for re-considering living together, even if engaged, is that studies show married couples who tried each other out before marriage ended up in divorce court more often than those who waited to co-habitate until they vowed "I DO."

So to all feeling the heat out there in the complicated dating world, get out of the fire fast! Male or female, join the real cool crowd of "born again virgins." Have fun without sex until you hear 7 sacred words, "I now pronounce you husband and wife!" Or choose to be a cool single, enjoying a healthy life of laughter and loving friendships, without the burdens of "sex in the city," storing up an abundance of good grace for the match made in heaven and eternal life.

Now in my 33rd year of marriage with seven children and three grand-children, I can attest it was worth waiting for the right mate.

Brothers and Sisters, Sons and Daughters, Alleluia. Amen.