

# Days of Darkness

**Dr Jon Garvey considers the effects that liberal and progressive attitudes towards sex and marriage have had on British society in the light of medical evidence**

*“Great oaks from little acorns grow.”*

**H**ow easy it is to forget what an infectious and deadly disease sin is. Both in personal and community life Satan has only to gain a small foothold for all hell to be let loose. Remember it was the eating of one small apple that got us where we are today. But we can trace within many of our own lifetimes the course of an epidemic of sin which makes AIDS look like a stuffy nose in comparison.

## **Serious relationships**

**J**ust forty years ago, in a world of moral certainties, the discussion amongst progressive people was about whether sex before marriage might not always be wrong. It harmed no-one, and helped towards those who found it difficult to wait until they had enough money to wed. The arrival of the Pill dealt with the one obvious weakness in this argument, and with a bit of help from Hollywood and the rock business sex before marriage began to move towards being the norm rather than the exception.

Only of course, it was a bit strait-laced to expect people to be stuck for life with the first person they'd had sex with, so agony-aunts started to talk about “serious relationships” instead of marriages. Once the natural link between sex and marriage had been broken it wasn't that long before the word “serious” seemed a bit prudish as well. In just over a generation, then, we have gone from “courting” (19 year olds looking for a marriage partner), through “going out” (17 year olds necking in the back row of the Odeon), to “first relationship” (15 year olds sleeping together after homework).

## **Later life**

**L**et's briefly detour into the effects of this in later life. A large survey of Bristol Family Planning Clinic some years ago found that age of first intercourse was the most reliable indicator of the number of sexual partners throughout life. In other words, our 15 year olds will be less able, or willing, to maintain long-term relationships throughout their lives. We will expect more affairs (“new relationships”), and more divorces – currently, as is well known, the end for about a half of all marriages.

Flowing from this are the social problems for deserted spouses and, more, for deserted children. Recent evidence suggests that only 1 in 5 children of divorced couples gets into serious long-term problems. But even ignoring the fact that one may be emotionally damaged without failing at school or becoming a criminal or a drug addict, that is still an awful lot of delinquent children. And looking at the evidence the other way round, a massive proportion of social delinquency arises in those from broken homes.

## **Consequences of the new lifestyle**

**I**f we return to our almost-cohabiting 15 year olds (17 year olds, if they are from Christian families: churchgoing youngsters take a little longer to overcome their consciences) there are some other consequences of the new lifestyle. Most immediately, since few parents willingly agree to their children being sexually active at this age, the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment is also jettisoned. There has never been a generation so consistent in lying to its parents (the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment). Usually the parents find out at last, sigh deeply,

and continue to support their children. But trust has gone, and with it the essential parental role of trusted advisor.

A second consequence is sexually-transmitted disease. Not many young people die of this (though they would if it weren't for the expensive provision of a cervical smear program, which has revealed that the abnormal smear rate is doubling every 4-5 years because of infections with *Papilloma* and *Herpes* viruses). But *Chlamidial* infection is having a great effect on future fertility at a time when the NHS can no longer afford to treat it. AIDS is also on the increase in the heterosexual population.

A third consequence is unplanned pregnancy. Contrary to much propaganda many who become pregnant are using contraception, but don't realise that perhaps 6% of women using condoms will get pregnant in any one year. Even 2 in every 1,000 on the pill will fall pregnant annually. Most teenagers are opposed to abortion – until they themselves are pregnant with no means of supporting a child and with their career prospects on the line.

## **Children or Career**

**N**owadays 1 in 4 pregnancies is terminated, which means a majority of women are likely to have destroyed their own offspring. My experience is that even those who believe that they are killing a baby will more often than not seek an abortion, because the alternative seems worse. One has to sympathise, because the alternative is certainly an unattractive option – but they have also been indoctrinated by 30 years of social abortion to believe that “now is not the right time for a baby” is a justification for putting it to death. But few pause to reflect that their

dilemma over the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment is the direct result of their wilfully breaking the 7<sup>th</sup>. Fornication was forbidden by God partly to protect children.

It is depressing how many boyfriends desert their “partners” when they become pregnant: after all, they too have their all-important careers to think of, and in any case were interested in sex more than “relationships”, still less marriage. But it is hard to know whether it is more disloyal for a man to walk out on his partner or for a woman to walk out on her child. Both seem a long way from the intellectuals’ arguments for sex before marriage. But in any case, such an early experience of being unfaithful bodes ill for future relationships.

### **The victim of unnatural prejudice**

**J**ust recently parliament voted to lower the age of consent for homosexuals to 16. The success of the homosexual lobby, representing less than 2% of the population, outstrips the moon landings as one of the wonders of this century. They have, without any evidence to speak of, persuaded most of the civilised world (and many in the Church) that a self-evidently unnatural practice has actually been the victim of unnatural prejudice. This flies in the face of the evidence of reproductive biology, sexual physiology, epidemiology and sociology. But it was perhaps an inevitable consequence of that first breaking of the link between “sex” and “marriage”: if “relationships” are the be-all and end-all, then sex can be the legitimate outcome of any relationship. Including incest, and worse. It all follows naturally from “sex before marriage”.

The day after parliament’s vote, there were people in the media pushing for the lowering of the age of consent to 14. In the light of recent history, is there any reason why it should not happen, and soon?

### **The last ten minutes of the Roman Empire**

**W**hen all these things are put together they paint rather a gloomy picture, less like *New Britain*

than a total collapse of society. Is this a jaundiced view? There are, indeed, many indications that our society is heading towards destruction. Perhaps, as Alistair Cook said in a recent *Letter from America* on Radio 4, we are witnessing “*the last ten minutes of the Roman Empire*”. We must not be blind to this, for when God moves in judgement on a nation he does not only judge the nations, but the individuals in it. We Christians will have to give an account before God’s throne of our own conduct, and of the faithfulness of our testimony to others. But in addition, for each act of lust, for each murdered baby, for each word of contempt for a parent God will require an accounting from this generation, for “*although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only do these very things but also approve of those who practise them. (Rom.1:32).*”

In the light of this, if we have any compassion for those who are perishing, we must surely be sounding a greater note of warning, for the day of God’s wrath cannot be far away. How will those around us seek forgiveness unless they come to understand the depth of their sin? Let our preaching, our evangelism, our Alpha courses, our conversations have more of the urgency of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, whose baptism with the Holy Spirit led him to cry to the people, “*Save yourselves from this wicked generation!*” **PT**