

GENESIS 2:18-25

A SHADOW OVER PARADISE

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.’

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”¹

There are two very practical and very human views of the creation of man and woman. One is the man’s view; the other is the woman’s view. Are you ready? The woman’s view of creation is first. Woman’s view says that God made the man, looked at him, and then He said, “I can do better than that.” So, He made the woman.

The man’s view states that God made the beasts and man, and then He rested. After a while, God created woman. Neither beast nor man has rested since.

Frankly, I relate jokes such as these with a degree of trepidation, because marriage is held in increasingly low esteem today; and even telling a joke can possibly be used to disparage commitment of a man to a woman and of a woman to a man. There are a great number of jokes illustrating the war between the sexes. I wonder if the humour directed at marriage actually masks a deep dissatisfaction, a gnawing resentment we moderns feel at the imposition of what we construe as a hopelessly outmoded institution.

If there is dissatisfaction with marriage, it likely arises out of ignorance of God’s design. Marriage is not the invention of government; candidly, though one could possibly make a case for government intervention to regulate marriage, it is difficult to imagine that government has a role in defining marriage. God performed the first wedding—He created the woman for the man and God brought her to the man. Her purpose was to ensure that man was complete.

God’s assessment of the situation confronting the man He had just created should disturb every careful student of the Word. God said, “It is not good.” Coming after the repeated affirmation of goodness following each step of creation, such a negative assessment should startle the reader. The reader has become used to benedictions at each stage of God’s work, and now there is pronounced a malediction—relatively speaking.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version** © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Light was pronounced “good” [GENESIS 1:4]. The earth, the seas and the land were all declared to be “good” by God [GENESIS 1:10]. Vegetation, which lends verdant hues to our world, was pronounced “good” [GENESIS 1:12]. The lights in the heavens—the sun, the moon and the stars—were affirmed as “good” [GENESIS 1:18]. Fish and fowl were confirmed as “good” when God reviewed His work through the fifth day [GENESIS 1:21]. Likewise, the animals, which would populate the land, were seen by God to be “good” [GENESIS 1:25]. In the final analysis the whole of Creation, working as God planned, was pronounced “very good” [GENESIS 1:31]. However, one aspect of God’s Creation brought a negative assessment, and that was man’s lack of one to make him complete—mankind was incomplete.

Out of God’s judgement concerning man’s incompleteness comes the one who is to be Adam’s wife and companion. You will note that the passage continues with this pronouncement: “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” [GENESIS 2:21, 22]. Underscore in your mind that woman was made *from* man. She was made *for* man. She was given *to* man—the greatest of God’s gifts at the Creation. We will learn that man named her.

COMPLEMENTARIAN, NOT EGALITARIAN — Despite what Pentagon officials contend, woman is not man’s equal. However, it must be stated that neither is man woman’s equal. The sexes are complementary—they strengthen one another and make each other complete through ensuring that the other is complete, all that the Creator intended. Thus, the biblical position for the roles of male and female, husband and wife, is assuredly complementarian and not egalitarian. This becomes evident when reviewing the biblical account of the creation of the woman.

Let’s refresh our memories so that none of us are left wondering how this all came about. “The LORD God formed out of the ground every living animal of the field and every bird of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man named all the animals, the birds of the air, and the living creatures of the field, but for Adam no companion who corresponded to him was found” [GENESIS 2:19, 20 NET BIBLE]. Older translations have God recognising that for Adam there was no “help meet” for him. In time, the two words merged in the popular mind to compose a new word, “helpmeet.” There is no such word as “helpmeet” in the Bible. Adam was bereft of a “help meet,” which is an older way of saying in the English tongue that for Adam there was no “helper fitted to” or “suited for” him.

After God stated His determination to make a helper suited to the man, the picture presented is as if God and the man stood side-by-side as the Creator caused the animals to pass before them. As each passed, Adam named that particular animal. From Aardvark to Zebra, the animals passed before him and Adam gave names to each one. The naming was likely based upon the nature of the animal and their relationship to man. The work of naming the animals as they paraded past was no arbitrary assignment of names; rather, it was a thoughtful statement of the nature of each animal.

The fact that we have dictionaries is evidence that Adam’s labour was definitive for mankind. The words we employ reflect our understanding of the nature of all creation; and Adam began this work. This need to assign a name on the basis of character is the essence of man’s unique nature expressed through the work God assigned in naming the animals. Adam studied and categorised each animal. As part of his study, Adam was to see if there was to be found within all God’s creation any creature complementary to him.

Man can enjoy the presence of a dog. Man and dog can spend hours together and man can enjoy the companionship of that dog. The dog can be taught to play games, providing for greater enjoyment still. Nevertheless, the fellowship must be on the level of the dog because a dog can communicate only on a dog's level. If Adam was to have a companion, either it would be on the level of that which was decidedly inferior or God would be compelled to intervene. There was to be found among all the creatures that God had made no other creature which was specially created by the hand of God and which bore the image of God.

What a blow to those blind individuals who insist upon the evolution of man! That there are similarities between man and some of the animals is evident. No one would question such similarities. All animals breathe air and share in common basic metabolic features. All animals move, interact with other animals and react to common stimuli. The point of **verses nineteen and twenty**, however, is that the dissimilarities were even greater than were the similarities. Although similar in some respects, none of the animals was *like* Adam.

Henry Morris, commenting on this particular passage, perceptively states: "It is abundantly clear and certain that he had not recently *evolved from* them! If the latter were true, and his body were still essentially an ape's body (or the body of whatever 'hominid' form may have been his immediate progenitor), it seems strange that he could have found nothing in common with either parents or siblings. On this point, as on many others, the notion of human evolution confronts and contradicts the plain statements of Scripture."² Adam was unique in intelligence and in spirituality; there was no creature corresponding to him, nor was there one that could be said to make him complete. Adam was no evolutionist.

We can say definitively that Adam was prepared for Eve; now, Eve was to be prepared for Adam. God was prepared to make Eve as Adam's ideal complement in this world.

The point is necessary, in part because the war of the sexes rages. As a young man, when the feminist movement was just beginning, some women endeavoured to assert their independence of man. At that time, they thought it was funny to say, "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." To be certain, no woman *needs* a man; however, it is important to note that woman was made from man to ensure that man is complete. Consequently, marriage permits a woman to fulfil her God-ordained role.

Children delight to pose riddles and we adults are equally delighted to listen to children's recitation of riddles, in no small measure because their joy in stumping us is so delightful. A child's riddle asks the question, "What is most like half of the moon?" Adults will guess, "Half of an orange?" "No." "Half of a basketball?" "No." "Half of an Edam cheese?" "No!" The obvious delight at the adult's inability to correctly guess the answer is apparent in their reaction. The grown up will mention everything round and orange coloured that she can think of until at last she says, "I give up. What is most like half of the moon?" The child is delighted to answer, "The other half of the moon!"

That is correct. The thing most like half of the moon is the other half of the moon. Just so, what is most like a man? We answer, a woman. What is most like a woman? And the answer is, a man. Men and women are different, but they are more alike than anything else in all creation. "Vive le difference," as the French say. Long live the similarity, for the purpose of the sexes is to complement one another. Among the animals there was not found a helper complementary to Adam, so God made a helper complementary to Adam—one who was adequate to his needs and complementary to his person.

² Henry M. Morris, **The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings** (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1976) 98

WOMAN WAS MADE FROM MAN — Listen to the text. “The LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man’s side and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man” [GENESIS 2:21, 22 NET BIBLE]. Just as man comes from the hand of the Living God, so woman is comes from the hand of God. This truth is recognised earlier in the book, when Moses writes:

“God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.”

[GENESIS 1:27]

It is vital to note that there is not a hint of superiority in Adam’s response when he first saw the woman God brought to him. Adam was ecstatic; he was enraptured. Surely, Eve was a lovely woman—the epitome of feminine beauty. However, it is apparent that Adam was captivated by more than her beauty. Adam’s response to seeing Eve for the first time makes it apparent that the complementarity is uppermost in his mind. “The man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.’

[GENESIS 2:23]

In short, Adam was delighted to note that she was like himself! And, yet, she differs. She made him complete; she complemented his life. The woman whom God brought to the man was the missing component of his being; and that was immediately evident to Adam.

Perhaps it should not have to be said, but because of our propensity for evil it must be said—woman was not made subservient to man, she was made that each might fulfil the other. As I review the creation account, I observe a significant matter related to the creation of woman. When God created the material world, He spoke all things into being. God spoke, and light came into being. He spoke again, and there was an expanse separating the earth and the heavens. Yet again God spoke, and the waters were gathered into bodies and the dry land appeared. Again God spoke, and the earth sprouted vegetation, plants and trees. One more time the LORD God spoke, and the sun, the moon and the stars came into being. Speaking yet again, the Creator called into being the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and the animals.

However, when God made man, he dirtied His hands, stooping down to form man from the dust of the ground. Then, God breathed into the man the breath of life. Now, when He was to make the woman, He again was intimately involved, forming her from the side of the man. The rabbim noted long years past, that when God created the woman, he did not take her from the head of the man, lest she should rule over him. Neither did God take her from the foot of man, so that he would not tread on her. Rather, the LORD God took her from man’s side, so that she might stand next to him and be held near to him as precious. Truly, a man is to honour woman, giving his strength to protect her and to respect her as his equal in the grace of God. Though the concept may seem quaint in this modern world, the requirement for men to treat women—all women—with respect and honour has never been repealed.

WOMAN WAS MADE FOR MAN — It is vital to point out that despite Eve’s physical, mental and moral excellence—far surpassing that of any woman today—she was made *for* the man. Eve was made as a helper corresponding to him. Eve was the man’s ultimate complement, just as women are still man’s complement. Understanding this truth provides a clue for women, pointing to her unique position in marriage to this day.

I am aware that merely making the statement that woman was made for man is likely to infuriate contemporary feminists. The idea that the sexes are complementary to each other must appear to be rank prejudice enshrining inequality in the estimate of doctrinaire feminists. To insist that woman was made for man surely appears as patently unjust to many modern women. It is a sorrowful commentary on the contemporary pulpit that few ministers of the Gospel appear prepared to defend the biblical position in the face of feminist fury set in opposition to the concept that woman was created for man.

The reason for feminist fury and an obvious neglect to provide sound instruction on the part of the modern pulpit must lie in the fact that few ministers appear prepared to define equality. Elisabeth Elliot provides an answer to the question of what equality means when she writes, “In what sense is red equal to blue? They are equal only in the sense that both are colours in the spectrum. Apart from that they are different. In what sense is hot equal to cold? They are both temperatures, but beyond this it is almost meaningless to talk about equality.”³

Whenever we speak of men and women as equal, it is necessary to insist that the sphere within which equality occurs is defined. Men and women are not equal in hormonal profile. Men have eleven times more testosterone than do women. This accounts for the disparity in strength generally noted between the two sexes. Women have elevated estrogen which significantly increases their ability to resist some conditions and contributes to a longer lifespan. Anatomy differs significantly, permitting each to fulfil the role for which he or she was designed. Gaits differ, musculature differs, there are even significant differences in brain development for boys and girls. The brain regions develop in different sequences. Thus, the sexes find different subjects interesting at different times and the ability to recall minute details differs in the sexes. The ability to visualise spatially differs. Therefore, equality cannot refer to anatomy and physiology, or even in such matters as information processing. Noting such differences is not saying that intelligence or worth is either inferior or superior for either sex, however.

Nevertheless, both males and females are created in the image of God. This ensures that the woman is suitable for the man, just as it ensures that man is suitable for woman. This also explains why the animals cannot be suitable companions for man since animals are not created in the image of God. Both the man and the woman are placed under the moral command of God and thus they are each morally responsible before God. Both man and woman disobeyed the command of God and they were alike judged by God. Today, both men and women die as result of our first parents’ sin and both men and women are responsible to answer to God for their own sin. Both men and women are objects of God’s grace revealed in Christ Jesus and both receive the same salvation by faith in the Risen Son of God.

Referring to access to the promises of God, **GALATIANS 3:28** assures us that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. All that God has promised is offered to each of us alike, without distinction. Salvation, placement in the Body of Christ, adoption into the Family of God—each is distributed freely to all without distinction.

³ Elisabeth Elliot, “Masculinity and Femininity Under God,” in **Our Savior God: Studies of Man, Christ and the Atonement**, James M. Boice (ed.), (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI 1980) 41

Because woman was made for the man, God will insist that she display an attitude of submission. In making this statement, I realise that I am again introducing a concept that is anathema in modern feminist thought. Nevertheless, it is a biblical concept, and the godly woman will voluntarily offer loving submission to her own husband. In doing so, she reveals a spirit in tune with the Triune God. Through a submissive attitude toward her own husband, a woman demonstrates her understanding of the nature of God. Let me stress, that the attitude of submission is toward her own husband and not toward males in general. What is expected of the godly woman in this instance in the home is expected of all Christians toward those whom God appoints as leaders within the assembly. Moreover, each believer is to display precisely such an attitude toward the True and Living God.

In what way can the display of godly submission toward her husband reveal a woman's understanding of the nature of God? Think of the Triune God. Theologians distinguish between the *essential Trinity* and the *economic Trinity*.⁴ The *essential Trinity* is defined as three Persons in the Godhead—the same in substance, equal in power and glory. The *economic Trinity* reveals that although one in substance, equal in power and glory, various members of the Godhead willingly and deliberately submit themselves to another in the work of redemption. The Son submits to the Father and the Holy Spirit submits both to the Father and to the Son. This relationship parallels the relationship of the family in the will of God.

We must not ignore the teaching of the New Testament, which clearly addresses the relationship of husbands and wives, including willing and gracious submission of a wife to her husband. “The head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” [1 CORINTHIANS 11:3]. The identical truth is revealed in Ephesians. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” [EPHESIANS 5:22-24].

One must marvel at how biblical feminists (so-called) dare insist that the marriage relationship established in the Garden has been abolished. Their argument is that woman's submission is part of the curse and that a wife's submission is now annulled by Christ's atonement. However, take careful note that the subordinate relationship of wife to husband is found in Genesis first, not after the Fall, but before it!

The submission required of woman is **within marriage**, and because of divine parallels, **within the church**. Nothing in the Word of God implies that every woman is to exist for every man, still less that a woman must be obedient to all men. The consistent teaching of the Word is that the submission required of a woman must be voluntary. No woman is obliged to accept a proposal to marry; but if she does (and if she is a Christian woman) she must know that the pattern for her relationship is found in **GENESIS 2** where the LORD God stated that He would make a “helper fit for” Adam. If a woman cannot be a helper to her man, or if she does not wish to be a helper, she should not marry that man. If, however, she does marry, she is responsible before God to submit to her man, serving as his helper.

⁴ See Carl F. H. Henry, **God, Revelation, and Authority: God Who Stands and Stays, Volume V** (Word Books, Waco, TX 1982) 165 ff.; William Burt Pope, **A Compendium of Christian Theology: Being Analytical Outlines of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical, Volume 2** (Beveridge and Co., London 1879) 101 ff.; L. Berkhof, **Systematic Theology** (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1938) 82 ff.; Alexander Balmain Bruce, **The Humiliation of Christ in its Physical, Ethical and Official Aspects** (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh 1900) 405-10; William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, **Vol. 1-2, Exposition of the Gospel According to John: New Testament Commentary** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1953-2001) Jn. 10:30

WOMAN WAS BROUGHT TO MAN — Note carefully the wording of the twenty-second verse: “the LORD God ... brought [the woman] to the man.” It is important to understand that God brought Eve to Adam. It is as though we are witnessing a divine wedding celebration. Adam did not discover Eve; God brought her to the man. At this point, it is important to interject that no man dare be a tyrant over his wife if he understands the teaching provided in this account. Woman is a gift to man; and in the marriage relationship, though a wife is enjoined to exhibit gracious and willing submission to her husbands, husbands are responsible to treat their wives with respect and honour.

Because of our fallen nature, it is vital that I again stress that wives are enjoined to submit to their husbands. Nevertheless, it is a fact that much more space is expended in Scripture in instructing men how to demonstrate love toward their wives. For instance, Paul has written, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” [EPHESIANS 5:25-33].

This teaching for men is iterated through the Apostle Peter in his first letter. “Husbands ... treat your wives with consideration as the weaker partners and show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In this way nothing will hinder your prayers” [1 PETER 3:7 NET BIBLE]. Because the woman was a gift to the man, husbands are to demonstrate an attitude toward their wives that honours God for the gift He has given. I iterate, husbands are to receive their wives as a gracious gift from the hand of the True and Living God. Were men to understand this truth, much of contemporary attitudes depreciating marriage would be transformed.

In one particularly beautiful saying of the wise man, Solomon teaches:

“An excellent wife is the crown of her husband”

[PROVERBS 12:4].

Clearly Solomon was inspired by the Spirit of God to write the truth that a wife, distinguished by her gracious character, would enhance her husband in the eyes of all people. Such a woman is precious to the man blessed to have as his wife a woman of character.

Another saying concerning the character of a wife is recorded in PROVERBS 18:22.

“He who finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favour from the LORD.”

Here, the blessing is not restricted to a wife of noble character; rather, a wife herself is to be received as good. Clearly, God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. Ideally, a wife will exhibit wisdom in her lifestyle, and the Word of God assures the man blessed with a prudent wife that his wife is a divine gift. “A prudent wife is from the LORD” [PROVERBS 19:14].

Later in the same book of Proverbs we read:

“An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her
and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.”

[PROVERBS 31:10-12]

Clearly the Bible teaches that a husband is to rejoice in his wife, receiving her as a divine gift. A man is to esteem his wife, treating her with respect. He is to recognise that she is able to make his life complete as she fulfils the role that God has assigned. Husbands, each of us is to realise that God has given to us a gift nonpareil—a wife. After all, didn't God bring Eve to Adam when she was prepared for him?

WOMAN WAS NAMED BY MAN — The text presents a most beautiful passage, a passage that tells us how the man named the woman. “The man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.’

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” [GENESIS 2:23, 24].

Adam seems instantly to have recognised what happened. It is not simply that this woman is a beautiful creature, but he recognises her origin. He seems to grasp immediately what God has done and he rejoices in their shared origin and in their shared responsibility before God. In our fallen state we might be tempted to think that woman was to be man's servant, but Genesis gives no comfort to such a fallen thought. Instead, it is obvious that Adam understands that Eve is his companion—the one who will make his life complete—and so he breaks into verse in celebration of their essential similarity and union.

He names her *isha*, indicating that he understands her purpose as revealed in her origin. In Hebrew, man is *ish*, and woman is *isha*. Even our English language recognises the origin and the union of the two—*woman* is derived from *man*. Tracing the word back through the mists of time, we obtained our word *woman* from Middle English, which in turn was based on the Old English *wifman*. This was a combination of two nouns, *wif* (which meant either a *woman* or a *wife*) and *man* (which represented a *human being* or a *man*). Thus, even in English the Hebrew concept is maintained. In naming the woman, Adam indicated that he understood Eve's unique position, her singular role and her divine origin. All husbands, and all men who aspire to be good husbands, need to remember this feature of the account of the origin of woman.

Both man and woman were created in the image of God. This means that each reflects the Holy Trinity in that each is a tripartite being. Man and woman each possess a body. Each is a living soul. Each receives a spirit. Thus, in the process of becoming one flesh the will of God is that husband and wife should be united in precisely this triune manner.

A union of bodies is easily accomplished. We speak of such union as a sexual union. A marriage based on nothing but sex is fragile and is liable to end in divorce. Though sex is a powerful force in human life, it is lousy glue. Eventually, physical attraction alone will prove insufficient to maintain a marriage. Tragically, the modern emphasis upon sexual gratification without consideration of the person is guaranteed to ensure weak unions, serial marriages as men and women flee from one disappointing, unfulfilling relationship to another. The stress upon physical attraction as necessary to personal fulfilment can only lead to sorrow and a fruitless, never-ending search for that which is ephemeral and continually elusive.

A better marriage is one that unites soul to soul. This refers to the intellectual and emotional aspects of marriage and refers to the fact that husband and wife share common interests. The union of soul ensures that a couple will enjoy the same types of entertainment, similar activities and the same friends. There is a meeting of the minds, both intellectually and emotionally, when there is a union of soul to soul. A marriage built on the union of souls is certainly stronger than one built solely upon the physical and it is more likely to continue beyond the physical attraction. There is much going that such a marriage will ensure strength.

No doubt many Christians are racing ahead at this point and concluding that there must be a third parameter to the strongest possible marriage and that because they enjoy a union of spirit to spirit the union of souls is unimportant. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are soulish creatures. Communication is vital for a strong marriage. It is unlikely that we will long share spiritual pursuits—truly share in pursuit of God, if we fail to speak to one another and fail to care for the emotional and intellectual health of our spouse. What I am saying is that the union of souls requires work and each party within a Christian marriage is responsible to strive to join soul to soul.

When a couple marries, both husband and wife have a vision of what their spouse is like. It is likely that the vision each has of the other is unrealistic. Shortly after marriage they will discover that their ideal is not reality. What happens when a wife discovers that her husband is not what she thought and when a husband discovers that his wife cannot fulfil his wonderful expectations? When an individual discovers that his or her spouse is not what he or she envisioned they might centre their minds on the difference between their ideal and what they are discovering their spouse actually to be.

Focused on the difference between image and reality they will try, either openly or subversively, to push their spouse into their image of what the other should be. Such action ensures resistance and increasing hostility on the part of the spouse being pushed. In fact, frequently that spouse is pushing back in an effort to conform the other member of the marriage to a vision that fails to conform to reality. The two parties in this instance will be unhappy and may well conclude that they share nothing in common. Be careful if you are drawing such conclusions that you are not confusing image with reality.

Alternatively, a couple that discovers that image and reality are in conflict may, by the grace of God, come to accept each other as they are. This means that both husband and wife will come to accept the other member of the marriage as they truly are. This does not mean that either is ignorant of divine standards of what their spouse should be, but it means that each accepts responsibility for himself or herself before God. In this instance, under God's reign each partner will seek to conform to the best and the most uplifting of those divine standards.

At last, I am prepared to speak of the union of spirits. For a marriage that will honour God both husband and wife must share worship of Christ the Lord. I am unapologetic in stating that for the strongest possible marriage, both husband and wife must be Christians.

This is not merely concession to a nominal title, but it means that each must be committed to the Faith of Christ—not merely professing the Faith, but actually living out the precepts of the Faith. If you are a Christian you must marry another Christian or not marry at all. If you marry a non-Christian—or one who merely plays the part of a Christian—you are wilfully choosing a life of unremitting conflict and sorrow. God’s blessing cannot rest on the marriage that is outside the Faith. As a Christian, you will be unable to share what is most precious to you, and you *will* make concessions concerning the Faith of Christ the Master.

In the event you marry a non-Christian, your situation will parallel that of Solomon. Solomon married many foreign women who did not share the Faith of the Living God. Though he enjoyed rich blessings because of his father David, Solomon could not share the joy of worship with his wives—and he knew it! In the Bible we read that he married the daughter of Pharaoh. This marriage was not within the will of God because this daughter of Pharaoh could not share in worship at the Temple. Listen to these sorrowful words. “Solomon brought Pharaoh’s daughter up from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, ‘My wife shall not live in the house of David king of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy’” [2 CHRONICLES 8:11].

Solomon said in effect, “I know that this woman is not a believer in the True and Living God. I know that we cannot share in this wonderful activity of worship. Whenever I bring her near the palace of David or approach the Temple I feel guilty and my conscience bothers me. The only solution is to build her another house and hereafter to live my life separately as possible from her.”

If you marry a non-Christian, that is what will happen to you. It will be as though you are carrying a dead person on your back. Your spouse will be dead to spiritual truth, dead to the joys of heaven, dead to God and dead to the peace that attends walking with Christ the Lord. Do not imagine that in time your dead spouse will come to faith in Christ. Though such may happen, seldom does it work out that way. God is gracious, but the hardened heart is unlikely to turn to faith simply because you push. In time, you will grow embittered and discover that your own effort to worship is stunted. You will have disobeyed the will of God and the price you pay will exceed your darkest imaginations.

If your fiancée or fiancé is not a Christian, she or he is not the person for you. I tell you this on the authority of God’s Word. The Apostle deals with this when he warns, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness” [2 CORINTHIANS 6:14]? In your wilful disobedience, you will have a marriage of body with body and perhaps you will even discover a union of souls; but you will not have a marriage of spirit with spirit and so you will fall short of the will of God for your joy and for His glory. Amen.