

## CHAPTER II.

### The State of Marriage

**History of Marriage** – Social Control – Civil Marriage – Legal Contract - Marriage Vows – Compatibility – Cohabitation – Children of Cohabitors – Single Parents – Statistics – Fostering – Divorce – Nurturing – Child Centered – The Early Years – Social Workers – Custody – Pre and early Post Natal Development.

Prior to Christianity, marriage was a social controlling act to produce children, as much for the group, as the couple. Most were either arranged whilst others expected. It was not until much later that all weddings were performed 'at the church door', and then later still, the priest attended the ceremony... it took a further hundred years before the priest actually conducted the service. Marriage in the middle ages was mostly a practical affair with economic overtones. It took the French Revolution to introduce the compulsory civil marriage... leading towards a magistrate or civil official making the ceremony valid. If couples wanted a Religious weddings this came after the civil ceremony. Parents lost their influence over the marital choice by the middle of the nineteenth century. Marriage now is a legal contract – as a governmental institution and changes the personal and social status of the participants.

When I was fifteen, in 1950, a quarter of all future married couples met at the local dance hall. A further quarter met at some social event and fifteen per cent met at work. The vast majority admitted that they had been in love at the time of their marriage the remainder said they had not. A quarter of men and over half of all women were virgins... a quarter married the person they had first had sexual relations with. Marriage continued to be sustained as the most popular state for at least the next thirty years. Thereafter cohabitation began to erode the figures.

#### Marriage

Marriage is a very natural act. To be married shows: conformity, optimism, and faith... Society believes the act provides stability and a safe environment for children... which should be a shared desire - as well as a universal longing for happiness and contentment.

The marriage ceremony, church or civil, is a declaration of intent, before each other, each other's family, and wider society. This social act is prevalent throughout all societies... although the timing, preparedness and courting behavior differs... the union is entered into as a serious lifetime commitment.

The majority of couples – taking part in the act of courting or forming a partnership, still hope to get married eventually... believing that the state of marriage to be a culmination of all their hopes and desires. Marriage is therefore an end to casualness and frivolity - a start to greater responsibility, home building and possible parenthood... perpetuating the belief that marriage is the key to social stability.

Nursery rhymes, children's books, television programs, romantic novels, motion pictures, newspapers and magazines all speak of the marriage state: as a rite, a religious ceremony, an act of love, and a perspicuous act - to produce a new generation.

Taken from the Office for National Statistics for marriages the figures show there has been a quite rapid fall in the number of couples getting married. The plotted curve for all marriages, and first marriages, are almost identical. Of those marriages 67 per cent were civil marriages... showing a steady increase? Remarriages remain fairly consistent at just over a hundred thousand per annum. The graph shows a trend, that within ten years the curve for first marriages and remarriages will

join... Even though these are depressing statistics individuals still believe the positive act something to strive for – perhaps as a romantic goal rather than an institutional necessity.

In England and Wales, in 2007, it was recorded the lowest number of marriages since 1895. The long term picture of marriage is one of decline.

## **Compatibility**

To help achieve a greater understanding about each other's hopes and fears prospective couples are encouraged to discuss their fill in a simple statement, in the form of a questionnaire. This joint statement is not a legal undertaking but to serve as a prompt to help. To that end I have set out some questions that prospective partners can consider which might make the task that much easier... the completed questionnaire can be kept as a reminder, and updated when necessary.

I accept that some couples may not want, or are unable to have, children. Fostering, caring or adopting can be a rewarding occupation - but equally demanding, making our questionnaire still relevant and worthwhile.

No one could possibly imagine individuals not altering their wants and needs over time – there are so many choices; unforeseen natural events, unsolicited outside influences, and unmasked personal fears. These variables mean that everyone has to be flexible and adapt... It is to what degree we hope to unearth, and to help catch those changes as they occur.

2009 was not only a year of an election but a statistic downward curve in children's stable home life. There are ample statistics and research projects which tell us of the dire consequences of divorce on children. There are so many options for parents, particularly for mothers, to seek personal fulfillment. Having latchkey children is bad enough but parking them out in the first critical years is a disaster. Although a few are parented at home by the father it is the mother who is mentally, naturally and socially more fitting to take on this close parenting roles. Divorce interrupts, interferes and upsets children's equilibrium; children drop out of school, become stressed, show distress symptoms, confront the law, and dabble with smoking and drugs. Their lives are not happy ones.

Without knowing intimately each and every case it is impossible to speculate what the damaged child would have been like had the parents not been divorced. There are as many types of parents as there are types of child. Within those numbers there are bound to be parents who are totally unfitting and those who have not bonded with their offspring. It is no good blaming individuals for the ills of society. The more individuals understand about relationships and parenting the better off they and society will be.

The most intelligent person, the lucky billionaire and the professor's son can all be equally bad parents. Its about due regard - which is about compassion, patience – having a low irritation rate, displaying care, being concerned, and responsible, giving off positive vibrations by being in control.

## **Cohabitation**

This is a relatively modern approach to test out a relationship. It is considered a reasonable pre-marriage trial period. In reality cohabiting couples rarely stay together longer than a couple of years. It is seen as a stress free way to sleep with a partner without the binding act of promises before witnesses. It is clear that if couples had to suffer a very painful initiation ceremony before marriage, and later, a stringent financial penalty after - to end it, there would be fewer marriages.

Research figures show a trend towards cohabitation... the act of marriage to come later... present marriage statistics show a trend towards delayed parenting. Couples splitting up results in lone parenting, adding to the high numbers of young girls raising a child alone; and those losing

custody, usually the male, living alone. The average age for couples getting married is rising... maintaining the partnership figures. The figures for cohabitating couples are rising too, as are the numbers for dependant children. Cohabitation figures are expected to double by 2021.

The trend is for cohabitation couples to take two years to decide whether or not to get married... eventually 60 per cent of them do, the remainders split up, within ten years... those, now single, engage once again in cohabitation, which lasts a further five years.

Statistics show that conventional marriage rates are falling and the birth rate dropping. Cohabitation, and lone parenting figures, are rising, and that all these figures, both rising and falling, are acting together – in unison... that one in six children will soon be experiencing life in a stepfamily. Slowly the figures for marriage are dropping...

These depressing figures make one wonder: 'if couples are any more committed to the state of marriage than previous ages,' even though there is ample evidence that the impact of divorce on children is of great concern. You might think that the rising age rate for first marriages would produce less family break up – that older couples would be more stable, committed and reliable. The overwhelming belief is still, [the older the person the more they believe this to be so] that marriage is the most fitting place for having and raising children... Therefore, society is still capable of relying on the act of marriage to: 'offer all that it has ever done'. However, that the reality is not confirmed by the statistics does not change people's opinions. It follows therefore, that society's moral behaviour is weaker than its desires.

Reviewing these statistics it would seem that there must be a method whereby couples can embark upon marriage with a greater degree of sureness – that what they are doing is right and lasting - that their partner is the right one for them. As the divorce figures are almost seventy per cent, and steadily rising... they ought to take more care - in their choice of partner. It is how this can be done that I write this account and offer a suggestion...

## **Family Planning**

The aim of couples seeking to plan their family:

1. Judge an appropriate time when the female can have time off work.
2. Plan when there is sufficient capital saved to afford a reduction of income.
3. Choose a suitable period when the mother is fit and healthy.
4. Limit family size to accommodate the plans for private schooling.
5. Help overcome hereditary problems – give the new baby a better chance in life.
6. Improve environmental conditions – spacing out births.
7. Provide the correct equipment and furniture for the new birth.

All responsible couples give the above matters considerable thought. One or more of the list may not be accomplished - believing that by the time the child is born they will be in place. However hard up for cash or however well heeled - the parents are, they can choose the time and place. The latest contraception methods ensure this to be so and at the same time take care of proper reproductive health-care systems to support the mother. If the parents believe they should not copulate unless they are ready for a hoped for pregnancy that is their choice, they will have talked this through before marriage. It is of course imperative that all these questions and others are thoroughly discussed by the couple before embarking on marriage. That takes us back to my original premise that all couple should have a preconceived idea of each others hopes and fears in marriage.

Women want all the information they can possibly get about keeping control over what is happening to them, and to share in making decisions about having children with their partner. It is

so important that she understands everything that is happening to her – to feel positive about the decisions made. Whether to have the baby at home and will all the necessary preparations are made on time. It is a stressful time.

After the birth the mother watches every movement of the baby. Listening to each intake of breath, every twitch and turn, whimper and cry... this is a special psychological process that should not be interfered with... the mother and child's flow of communication... theory both need nurturing together and separately. Loving support from your partner or someone close is all important.

The importance of 'bonding' is enormous. A warm, comfortable, loving environment is essential to make the mother feel secure – able to express her own emotions. Mothering grows with the realization of the enormity of the event 'the act of birth'. Bonding is not just from the spiritual joy but from the pain of birth too. It is having the responsibility, commitment and maternal love to be you - to have given life... thereafter, continuing the bonding by breast feeding - to give strength and energy... an act which resonates throughout the mother's whole body.

### **Children of Cohabiting Parents**

Statistics show that cohabiting couples who have children do not stay together longer because they are tied to 'the family', but the reverse – it drives them apart. It seems that the results of a pregnancy, in all its forms, weaken the sexual desires of both partners and diverts their energies. The long term vision – starting to form a family, doesn't draw the couple together to complete their desires for: the woman temporally loses her sexual vulnerability and looks, and the man no longer becomes necessary to impregnate her. The pressure of withholding sexual advances and the thought of losing wealth, and employment opportunities - of his partner, creates emotional problems... and can promote his physical punishment of his female partner.

Statistics record that cohabiting couples experience greater strains on their relationship than married couples, and that children from cohabiting couples suffer from emotional problems as a result of insecurity. Households with step-parents are considered unsafe for young children of both sexes. In times of stress and unhappiness both couples can resort to physical punishment of the child.

In a cohabiting household the woman frequently comes off worse. The male quickly loses his emotional tie with the increasing strain associated with parenting and the household budget. Women with young children not only have less money to keep the household going but lose position in their previous employment pay structure. In many cases it comes down to exploitation as the male disappears out the door leaving the mother to provide care until the child is old enough the look after itself.

### **Single Parents**

Children from single parent homes suffer from the problems of the parent – the parents: concerns, loneliness, anxiety, strains, depression, anger and sadness. These negativities are passed on to the child in many different guises... the child suffers from doubts – feels annoyed at the lack of support – loses confidence and sometimes cannot account why they feel so alone. Natural growth becomes stunted and misshapen. It may take many years before the guilt, resentments and hatreds subside sufficiently to enable the child to make a commitment towards another person. As for the children of that child, they too take on some of the anger of the parent. In many cases the child cannot explain why the parent is angry or recount the details surrounding the original case. Over the

years some minor upset is magnified out of all proportion, to become an enormous mountain..., in the past, a vendetta.

Time does take away or mask the original cause allowing some repair to be made, allowing the formation of a proper relationship... but underneath the fire still smolders ready to break out at a moments notice. It takes a great deal of personal happiness to make the person forgive completely – for their positive thoughts to come to the fore. Unfortunately by that time others have become affected.

Grudges are harbored and hardships remembered... errors and slip-ups put down to the parent's single status. In later life there is an urge to seek out the missing parent to either confront them, explain the pain they caused, or ease the pain of separation.

Both the single parent and the child share the lack of the absent parent and whenever life becomes hard the absent parent gets the blame. This becomes a standard let out for all moments of stress and even if the absent parent did not cause the split-up in the first place they are made to feel, and shoulder, the blame.

The conventional married couple is a unit bound by vows of duty and honour – a union created - to secure a fit home for children. It takes regard for most eventualities including absence, illness or death of one of the partners. In some single parent homes, where a decision is made purposely to omit one parent the possibility of total collapse, disruption or mental bruising, of the child or children, is considerable. These results in one or more helpers, friends or relatives, being permanently affected. The children from such homes carry around an inbuilt insecurity.

### **Pre and Early Post Natal Development**

Pregnancy occurs two weeks after the prospective mother's period begins. The sperm travels along the fallopian tube uniting with the released mother's egg to fertilize – becoming a one-celled zygote. This zygote has number of chromosomes – half from the father and half from the mother determine sex and colour etc., still travels down the tube to the uterus, growing as it does so. This growth is now the multi-celled blast cyst having inner and outer cells. The inner the embryo and the outer the membrane sack which nourishes and protects the embryo. When the blast cyst reaches the uterus it burrows into the sidewall – the uterine wall, to obtain nourishment. The placenta – the membrane sack, also begins to grow.

We now reach the beginning of the embryonic period when the brain, and other organs, begins to form. The embryo has three layers: The top the ectoderm, the middle the mesoderm, and outer the peripheral. The brain develops along with the other systems. From the fifth week the brain makes links to the main organs and makes connections - that relate to learning, knowledge and awareness.

The mother's diet, peace of mind, and settled state, is associated with her child's cognitive and neurological development - is part of the child's normal shaping of neurological connections in the early development of cognitive functioning. Neurological development of the child is firmly linked to a mother's healthy life style. A mother's depression, alcohol and nicotine intake, low education level, and negative lifestyle – including outside the home work levels, are significant factors of impaired cerebral development in the child.

The mother's happiness and well socialized state is transmitted to the unborn child. This is thought to start at the tenth week of pregnancy, or seventh week conception period. A calm voice, unhurried work level, and harmonious relationships with those around the mother are the beginning of the child's social skills. This continues through the pregnancy and birth, responding to others, engaging in discovering those things around him all the while the mother's bond to her child is reinforced... touching, cuddling, holding and stoking are all part of the process.

Continuing these positive features the child will enjoy playing whilst interacting with others. At first he will be possessive but in a short space of time will share and empathize with others, making friends.

You will become aware how fixed his attentions are and how direct his actions develop. His neurological understanding advances through visual perception, desires, beliefs, to making up imaginary situations – these stages are the basis of ‘The theory of mind development’.

The pregnant women’s diet is all important in the first two months. Put away all those pet hatreds for cabbage, sprouts and spinach. This is just what you should have for they are rich in folic acid. Whole grain bread, become accustomed to muesli, and do eat an apple a day. Try and eat natural unprocessed meals.