



"The problems of America are the family problems multiplied a million-fold."

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

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Standing With God (Part One)

The Failure of the American Left and Right—and the Responsibility of God's People

Sociologists often point to the decline of the twin institutions of marriage and the family as the fount of most American cultural ills. The causes of their decline are undoubtedly many, but the following are their five principal assailants:

- **The Pill.** Put bluntly, marriage renders sexual union legitimate. By removing the "cost" of sexual intercourse—unwanted pregnancies—reliable and widely available contraceptives remove a powerful inducement to marriage. There is no doubt that the development and marketing of safe pharmaceutical contraceptives have reduced marriage rates.
- **Cohabitation.** When it removes the stigma of casual relationships, society sends a message to couples, especially young ones with more active hormones than synapses, that cohabitation is an acceptable alternative to marriage. As common-law relationships increase, marriage rates decrease.

- **Divorce.** Divorce, especially the "no-fault" variety enshrined in one form or another into the law of almost all states, has transformed marriage from a sacred vow to a legal contract. To divorce is simply to exercise the "exit clause" of that contract. By its very nature, divorce denigrates marriage; pandemic divorce assaults it.
- **Tort law regarding the alienation of affection.** Historically, seducing another individual's spouse was an action remediable in civil courts. The law of torts recognized such alienation of affection as injurious to another person, an action for which the perpetrator could be held liable for monetary damages. Such tort laws have generally gone by the board. Civil suits for alienation of affection are almost unheard-of today. [Adultery](#) is no longer remediable in the civil courts. Another deterrent to infidelity is gone.
- **Women working outside the home.** The economic independence afforded to women working outside the home has led to a decrease in marriage. Women no longer need to marry to gain economic support. Women's working alongside men in the workplace is considered a key cause of falling marriage rates. Also, there is almost a perfect inverse correlation between women's level of education and number of children: More years of education, fewer children. Further, modern women's financial independence makes divorce easier; a divorced working woman is not dependent on a man to support her.

All these assailants find traction in a single, powerful concept: *autonomy*. Autonomy, which literally means "self-law," appears in popular culture under the moniker of choice or "free choice," as in the "pro-choice" movement regarding abortion. Behind this concept of autonomy lies individualism, a philosophical doctrine deeply embedded in the American psyche. The Preamble of the Constitution recognizes individualism as a good—a "blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity"—to be sought after.

However, choice comes at a cost. A tension exists between individual choice and societal good. Here are just a few of the downsides to choice:

- To choose the pill is to deprive society of the children required for its continued existence.

- To choose extra-marital cohabitation is to deny a name to any offspring that may come along.
- To choose divorce is to inflict vast economic and social damage on children.
- To choose career over family, a woman of necessity "outsources" the inculcation of values in her children to non-family actors.

In all cases, society loses as the individual exercises the freedom to choose.

By definition, conservatives are those individuals most interested in *preserving* the traditions and institutions of a culture in the name of societal stability. In resolving the issue of choice versus societal good, where have all the conservatives gone? Well, where were conservatives when the pill was announced? A few winced. But with the notable exception of some Catholics, most conservatives were silent, and remain silent, about the moral consequences of readily available, cheap contraception.

The same is true concerning the other assailants of marriage and family. Where is the conservative voice arguing loud and clear against "shacking up"? Rare is the conservative who would try to legislate against common-law relationships, or even implement public policy (such as tax regulations) that would work to make it unpopular for economic reasons.

Does any conservative today speak stridently yet articulately for a rollback of today's easy divorce laws? Does any such voice suggest that extra-marital promiscuity could be at least curtailed through tort law revisions, making it feasible for an injured spouse to claim damages for alienation of affection? Finally, only "fringe" conservatives would suggest developing tax laws biased toward the housewife rather than the career woman. Pro-family public policy is not on any conservative's agenda.

So, where have all the conservatives gone? They appear to be on the run. The bankruptcy of conservatism is the result of years of compromising what is morally right for the expedience of political survival. If not utterly defunct, responsible American conservatism is moribund, in its death throes.

- Charles Whitaker

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Politics and Christ's Return](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In the church, we are not politically liberal, conservative, or moderate—we are "God-ists." The world considers us liberals because we are not bound by its religious orthodoxy. Conversely, we are conservative when following God's constitutional code, His holy standards, living by the spirit of the law rather than just by the letter. Ultimately, religion and politics do not mix at all because in weak men, political expediency trumps righteousness every time. Because we are set apart by God, we are not to become involved in the world's political, judicial, or military systems. Our term in office has not yet begun.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Sex, Sin and Marriage](#)

by Staff

Sexual topics and imagery are all around us, yet God covers the whole subject with His very terse and direct seventh commandment: You shall not commit adultery. Sex and marriage are God-given experiences that Christians need a proper perspective of, as this article shows.

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