



DIGNITY & EXPLOITATION

Richard P. Unsworth

ACSWP

Christian Reflections on Images of Sex in the 1970s

DIGNITY
&
EXPLOITATION

Richard P. Unsworth

A Study Document
Prepared at the request of and approved by the
Advisory Council on Church and Society
The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.
475 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y. 10027

CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
Introduction	3
Preface	5
The Occasion of This Study	8
Some Goals of the Study	10
The Image of God	14
Love	16
The Covenant	17
Some Legitimate Uses of Explicit Sexual Material	22
Attempts at a Definition of Terms	27
Commercialization of Sex	33
Obscenity, Pornography, and Censorship; The Legal Tightrope	35
Conclusion	40
Appendices	
I. Study Group Members	42
II. Resources—Books, Pamphlets, Articles, Films, Filmstrips, Records	43
III. Reference Addresses	49

INTRODUCTION

This study document is the result of an extended process. It began when the Advisory Council on Church and Society at a regular meeting began to discuss whether we should not, in fulfillment of our responsibilities to address matters of Christian social concern, develop a paper on what was clearly a matter of concern to many United Presbyterians, and to others as well—pornography and the increasing public presence of explicitly sexual materials.

As our discussion proceeded, we made two decisions. The first was to proceed with such an inquiry. The second was to broaden its scope and context so that a wider range of issues could be explored. Our discussion had persuaded us that there were present among and around us many forces and powers that distorted the meaning of human sexuality as much as does pornographic material. We were also aware that the present openness about sexuality is often a healthy and positive reality, contributing to human development and wholeness.

Although this study document is the progeny of the Advisory Council on Church and Society, the major burden of work was done by a task force which included the author, Professor Richard Unsworth. The Advisory Council believes that Christians ought to begin a discussion of sexual issues where Christians begin to treat all issues—with a biblical/theological view of how God intends human beings to live together. Lacking that, a Christian view on sexual matters would be truncated and itself distorted.

Happily, Richard Unsworth has started with a biblical theological perspective.

In a brief but highly illuminating and incisive way, Professor Unsworth provides discussion of the self as “image of God,” called to live a life of love within God’s covenant. If persons were to live such a life, Christians affirm, all would be people of dignity, affirmed and provided for, as well as affirming and providing for others.

In a broken, sinful world, however, people often exploit rather than contribute to the well-being of others. This exploitation has many forms, and can be direct or indirect. This study document

examines some ways by which we and others in our contemporary culture exploit persons sexually, using them rather than serving them, degrading rather than affirming them, sometimes directly, often indirectly. It looks at some old issues—pornography, for example—in the new sociocultural context that unites permissiveness with mass communications techniques. It discusses some recently emerged issues, sexism for example. And it suggests some directions and guidelines Christians might well employ in making judgments themselves, individually and/or in contributing to public policy decisions. In suggesting ways of acting, the study document applies biblical and theological insights directly to our task of providing for the dignity of all persons as children of God.

The Advisory Council on Church and Society, in forwarding this study document to the church, believes that churchwide reading and discussion and such other uses as individuals, families, groups and organizations may want to make of this paper would foster both better understanding and more faithful activity in relation to some issues of human sexuality. We are grateful for the work of members of the Task Force who helped to develop the document's direction and conclusions. We are thankful that such a sensitive, thoughtful and theologically literate person as Richard Unsworth was willing to expend his time and energies in writing the report. And we anticipate that church members and others will find their horizons of understanding and behavior extended as they read, ponder and discuss "Dignity and Exploitation: Christian Reflections on Images of Sex in the 1970s."

—JACK L. STOTTS

Chairperson

Advisory Council on Church and Society

PREFACE

This is a study document, not a policy statement. It is addressed to our concern, as members of a Christian fellowship and as citizens of a country, a culture and an age, about the images of sex and sexual relationship which are present around us. A policy statement would have to stake out some principles that we would all agree are what the Church ought to be saying about these concerns. A study document however should probe, explore, and raise questions, especially in areas where there is not much agreement about what the principles of thought and action ought to be.

The reason we are concerned about the images of sex is simply that there are in our time some truly new dimensions to the social and personal experience of sex and its meaning as an expression of the dignity and joy of human life. Being concerned about these new dimensions is not a euphemism for being alarmed, however; some of these images concern us in a very positive way. They are affirmative statements, as it were, about the life we live in the body and about the goodness of Creation itself. There are also images which enhance our capacity for tenderness, for consideration of one another, and for the fulfillment of our personal capacities as men and women.

Other images, however, are exploitive and damaging. They push us into expectations about our sexuality that are unrealistic and frustrating. Or they confine us to traditional roles which deny important parts of our being as persons. Some of the images are manipulated in a devious way through mass media for the simple purpose of prompting us to buy products. Sex is the great "come-on," as illustrated in a newspaper ad which consisted of the banner headline-sized word "SEX," followed by a text that began: "Now that I have your attention I'd like to tell you about my store. . ."

Some of these negative images are distasteful but relatively innocuous. Others are downright destructive of human dignity. It is the latter category of images that has aroused the loudest protest, some of it finding its way into court and culminating in legal decisions. We will look at that category carefully, and try to assess, from a Christian vantage point, the ethical issues that are involved in pornography, sex role stereotyping, obscenity, the protection of

minors, censorship and the right to privacy, to name the most obvious. But our concern is not primarily to comment on court decisions. Many of the images that we would want to affirm, as well as those we find more erosive of a Christian view of personal dignity, are never likely to become the material of court cases. What follows are primarily comments on a culture, on its courts as they both reflect and shape the culture.

There is probably more public parading of explicit sexual materials now than at any time in our Western past. Whatever else this may mean, it constitutes a disruption in the community. There are those for whom explicit sexual images are brutally shocking, others for whom they are clinically neutral, others for whom they are delightfully, playfully positive. In any case, we are being asked to deal directly and explicitly with the many sides of the sexual experience, including fantasies that we are accustomed to keep hidden even from ourselves. As the process of dealing openly with these many images of sex goes forward, we are haunted by the question, "Where will our fantasies lead us? and what becomes of us if we begin to act out the numerous and often contradictory sexual possibilities that run past our eyes and through our minds?" A study of the images of sex in the 1970s ought to look at all sorts of images and all sorts of reactions. This study will do so, although with no pretense of being comprehensive, and it will try to do so under the guidance of some basic Christian elements in understanding what it means to be human and what it means to be created male and female.

Our approach will be guided by the conviction that "perfect love casts out fear," for we are persuaded that many of the excessive reactions to images of sex in our culture are born out of fear: fear of the power of sex or fear of the consequences of sexual relationship. (A recent novel is entitled *If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever?*) That fear has given rise to both excesses of alarm and excesses of enthusiasm, and the rituals of condemnation or of praise that surround sex in our culture often border on the cultic, if not the absurd.

As Christians, we ought to be able to look at these phenomena with a clearer eye and a more even disposition than most, because our confidence and our awe is related only to God, and not to any of the powers that exist in Creation. These powers, sex included, are meant to serve the Creator. Sex is an aspect of our dignity, not a source of our condemnation; it is a function of our creatureliness, not a source of our salvation.

It is because of such an understanding of sex that we have chosen the title we have for this study: "Dignity and Exploitation." The norms of Christian life can be expressed in terms of dignity, the threats in terms of exploitation. Sex and its images constitute only one of the avenues of anti-human exploitation we experience in modern culture, but it is an important one because it touches so intimately the understanding we have of our dignity as humans, of our potential as persons. We think that these are also the parameters of a Christian's interest in the question of obscenity and pornography. Things consistent with our human dignity can hardly be called obscene. Likewise, things which despoil that dignity by using persons as if they were things need to be recognized as obscene, even if they do not fit our customary categories.

THE OCCASION OF THIS STUDY

The 182nd General Assembly (1970) received and recommended to the churches for study a document entitled "Sexuality and the Human Community." The end product of a two-year effort by a specially appointed task force, this study document addressed a wide spectrum of issues in human sexuality, including sex education, contraception, abortion, pre-marital and marital sexual practices, masturbation, homosexuality and others. In the three years that have ensued since the distribution of that study document, many changes have taken place in both practice and attitude, changes whose impact has been felt in both Church and culture.

Abortion law and practice have changed, sex education programs have multiplied, public awareness and acceptance of variant sexual practices and lifestyles have increased, mass communications media have become increasingly candid in the treatment of sexual themes, and sex research, both medical and sociological, has come to be seen as a legitimate aspect of inquiry into human behavior. Whatever we may think of these developments, human sexuality has come to be dealt with more openly and frankly than at any time in a century.

Under the circumstances of increasing candor about sex, it is not surprising that questions of obscenity, pornography and widespread sexual explicitness in the media have come up for re-examination as well. Having been compelled to re-examine a good many of our basic attitudes toward sexuality, we now have to ask anew what is appropriate "use" and what constitutes "abuse" of the gift of sexuality. Several things prompt a new look at that question:

- concern for young people and their experience of themselves as persons;
- concern for the structures of family life in our society and within the community of the Church;
- concern for the effect of an unregulated use of sexual materials on the network of aims and goals that animate society.

These are legitimate concerns, and they make us restless to get answers to some basic questions about the long-term social significance of these changes in the experience of human sexuality.

(1) There is the question of spiritual freedom. Are we merely witnessing the opening of new fields of human self-expression which deserve our interest, or are we becoming a kind of bloated Babylon, where people are taught, by the images and symbols of the culture, to be greedy for the narrow fulfillment of their immediate bodily needs and pleasures? Is it our freedom that has been increased, or our self-indulgence?

(2) There is the question of privacy. The courts and the society at large have begun to acknowledge the right of consenting adults to define as they will their personal and private sexual behavior. But there is also a question of privacy involved in a person's desire not to have his or her sensibilities assaulted by behavior which is felt to be destructive of human dignity, whether that be acted out or staring down from newsstand shelf or theater marquee. Perhaps more than any other, this is an age in which graphic images abound. The technology of mass communications has become so sophisticated that it is hard to find a place or a time when one can escape the commercially subsidized projection of someone else's image of what we ought to think or how we ought to behave.

Most of us are willing and all too uncritical victims of this phenomenon of over-talk. We absentmindedly flick on the TV or flip the pages of the slick magazine, and consciously or sub-consciously absorb an endless array of suggestions of what it means to be male or female, what it means to be sexually adequate, what it means to be attractive and desirable. If many of the images that are projected are, in our opinion, degrading to some basic canons of human dignity, what wonder then that some of us have become increasingly restive and uncertain about the changes we witness going on about us in the culture?

(3) There is a question of freedom of speech. Obscenity and pornography have become increasingly sensitive public issues in the United States, to the extent that new Supreme Court decisions have been sought and delivered on the relation of First Amendment guarantees of free speech to the widespread distribution of sexually explicit themes and materials in all manner of communications media.

All of these questions are up for a new and a careful re-examination. Thus it was that, early in 1973, the Advisory Council on

Church and Society proposed that a study be prepared and circulated by the Advisory Council which would concern itself with the growing commercial misuses of sex, and with the allied concerns of obscenity and pornography. The concern, expressed in passing in the 1970 document on human sexuality, needs now to be examined more thoroughly. The same underlying ethical issue exists, but a new social context has heightened the urgency of the question.

SOME GOALS OF THE STUDY

Before going further, we should state some goals of this study. Human sexuality is a vast, complex and comprehensive matter, so we ought first to limit the ground. These, then, are some of the things a document like this should do:

- (1) point up some Christian presuppositions about human dignity;
- (2) restate Christianity's affirmative understanding of human sexuality;
- (3) examine ethical concerns being aired by the Women's Movement, such as sex stereotyping and discrimination;
- (4) make some clear distinction between uses and abuses of explicit sexual materials in the media;
- (5) offer guidance for dealing with obscenity and pornography as public issues;
- (6) lay some foundations for ethically sound response by Christians to forthcoming legislative and administrative action on pornography in local areas; and,
- (7) encourage thoughtful and effective critique of the communications media and their handling of sexual themes.

We will review these goals in the following paragraphs.

A discussion of the impact of contemporary images of sex on *human dignity*, and the potential for exploitation by image, must begin with some statements about human dignity as the Christian message helps us to understand it. At the heart of the Christian Gospel is an affirmation of humanity: God's YES to the human. Our humanity is a state to be celebrated, not bemoaned. It is God's *good* gift to us, meant to include visible pleasures, strength, wisdom, hope and joy. At the same time, the Gospel affirmation is realistic about our humanity, because it suffers no illusions about the stubborn self-centeredness that bedevils us all. It is realistic because it sees us as selves-in-

community, and because it celebrates freedom in a context of responsibility. A primary goal of the study, therefore, will be to bring some light to bear on the Christian presuppositions about human dignity. We are a community of faith; always in ferment, it's true, but always looking to a common event—God's love made plain in Christ—to inform our self-understanding and our behavior in the present.

That great story has caught our imaginations and our trust, which is what we mean by "faith." So we look to the story of Jesus and what precedes and follows it in the literature of the Bible as a source for shaping our perspective on things.*

A second goal is to clarify our *affirmative understanding of human sexuality*. Since sexual differences and sexual relationships are part of the scheme of creation, we regard them as both purposeful and good. Yet, too often, the image of sex within the Christian community has been satanic. Its power has been the power to destroy and its pleasures have been seen as a temptation to abandon God. We have often feared our sexuality more than we have given thanks for it. Yet, fear should not be a Christian's typical emotion about sex. Celebration—yes; respect—certainly; discretion and dignity; but not fear. We should not be afraid to call it a gift of God meant for our delight as well as our survival. One of the themes that has emerged in the development of this document is the suspicion that fearful attitudes toward sex have done incalculable mischief among us, and such fear deserves to be dispelled by the confidence that is intrinsic to the Gospel.

A third goal concerns the *questions being raised by the Women's Movement*. Some of them have centered on economics; discrimination in hiring, unfair pay differentials, and the like. Those are important but surface issues. Underneath them are the subtler and more stubborn issues of sex-role stereotyping and essentially contemptuous caricatures of women that are laced through our social practices, our social consciousness, the mass media and even in our jokes and epigrams. Christianity has been both the victim and the

* It will be obvious as we go along, however, that we will be appealing **not** to "proof-texts" but to basic themes like "the image of God," "love" and "covenant," and their meaning in the broad sweep of the Bible. The "proof-text" approach suffers by giving equal weight and equal authority to all the texts of scripture, a method that can be confusing, misleading and a violation of common sense. The "basic themes" approach assumes that the times, social conditions and spiritual experiences change, but that the fundamental insights of the Bible remain true and useful.

perpetrator of negative images of women. It is our conviction that our theology is better than our performance on this score, and that the Christian community has both the means and the obligation to deal straightforwardly with the very damaging images of women that still assault our sensibilities, and which have enjoyed a kind of unexamined immunity from public critique until recently.

We set it as a fourth goal to provide some insight into the *uses and abuses of explicit sexual materials* in print, in art and in photography. There are many legitimate uses of the direct portrayal of sexual characteristics and sexual behavior, some educational, some aesthetic, which stand to be censored if society, in a backlash against "permissiveness," reacts indiscriminately against things that arouse so-called prurient interests in some of us. Western society has already had its hey-day of putting fig-leaves on Renaissance masterpieces. It doesn't need a repetition of such misplaced moralism. At the present time, however, the makings of such a backlash are in the air. It would be most unfortunate for the Christian community to become identified with an indiscriminate and censorious backlash movement. Ours should be a role of discriminate criticism. We should be among those who are most jealous to protect freedom of artistic expression, candor in education, integrity in scientific and academic research, and the like. As long as our judgments about the use of explicit sexual materials are no more than a conditioned negative reflex, we will accomplish little in dealing with the exploitation of sex. We need standards of judgment that clarify the difference between the legitimate use and the exploitive abuse of our sexuality.

A fifth goal in the list is that of offering *guidance for dealing with obscenity and pornography as public issues*. Before we can deal with a problem, however, we must know what the problem is. Thus we must explore the problem of defining obscenity and pornography, knowing beforehand how inevitably subjective and imprecise such definitions are bound to be. Even so eminent a legal authority as Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart acknowledged the slippery subjectivism involved in defining pornography when he wrote, "I cannot define it, but I know it when I see it." A later development is the appointment of a blind man as chief censor in a Rockland County, New York, town. His response to the question of blindness was, "Pornography isn't a case of seeing, it's a case of feeling." Precisely so!

The subjectivity of the problem has not deterred the Supreme Court from declaring on it. We will need to comment on those decisions, again from the vantage point of Christian ethical

considerations. Our goal will not be to generate approval or disapproval of the Court's decisions, but to get a clearer view of the Christian values we would express through our response to the Court's decisions.

As an outgrowth of examining the issues of obscenity and pornography, we should be able to address our sixth goal: to lay the groundwork for sound decisions about our *response as Christian men and women to the legislative and administrative actions* that will occur in our several local and state communities as a consequence of the Supreme Court's most recent series of decisions, issued in June of 1973. The likelihood is great that there will be a flurry of legal activity surrounding charges of obscenity and pornography in the immediate future. We ought to be prepared, by thoughtful recourse to the resources of Christian faith, to make a response to such activity that will reflect our faith more than our fears.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we stated the goal of *equipping Christians with the material of a sound and effective critique of the mass media*, reinforcing the use of dignified images of men and women, their sexual identities and their sexual behavior. It is not enough to criticize the media for tastelessness. The potential cash register effect of such criticism may work a change (although a cursory look at a day's programming on any television station is not very encouraging). Beyond questions of taste, however, are those of ethical responsibility in the use of sexual imagery in advertising. It is not just a question of using a pretty girl to attract attention to a dull product. Much more serious are the questions of role-casting, of weaving a web of false criteria for what it means to fulfill the role of man or woman, and of what it means to be attractive and adequate in one's sexuality.

Perhaps it will be apparent from the above precis that the Christian community, in a changing world, is required to go back to the touchstones of its faith. It is easier—and quicker—to respond to change by bemoaning it, and by assuming that the new and unfamiliar are automatically threats to abiding Christian values. They may not be. The opposite may be true; new styles of life and interrelationship may also carry us a step further in the fulfillment of our destiny as creatures of God's love.

How do we sort out what is enhancing and what is degrading to human dignity? What is celebration and what is exploitation of our sexual character? These are the questions we have tried to face in our conversations and in this document.

THE IMAGE OF GOD

We belong to a community of faith, a fellowship that has grown up around events that we say are revealing about ultimate reality.

We say, for example, that in our very creation as human beings there is traced the image of God. Theologians have, over the centuries, had a great deal to say about the meaning of the claim that we are created "in the image of God." Their conclusions have been complex and numerous, but there is agreement on a few essentials. It means, at least, that we are created with a significant freedom to affect our own destiny. No one is a puppet, nor is anyone intended to be simply a mirror of another. The fact of our freedom means that each one of us is unique, and uniquely endowed with the capacity for praise, for purpose and for love. Our dignity is expressed and enhanced when we fulfill those capacities to the highest degree possible. Whatever frustrates those capacities is an assault on our dignity as creatures made in the image of God.

There is nothing about the *imago dei* that is exclusively male or female, and attempts to prove the intrinsic superiority of the male by referring to male-dominated language about God are both wrongheaded and Biblically unsound. There are those who would prove the primacy of the male by pointing out that Adam's creation preceded Eve's. But by the course of that logic, one of the creation accounts in Genesis would make fish, fowl and creeping things all superior to Adam because they, too, are prior in the sequence of creation.

The image of God in us is not an exclusively male or an exclusively female image; it is the image of freedom—freedom expressed in our purposes, our praise and our love. Being created in God's image means having as our "chief end" (in the words of the Shorter Catechism) "to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Clearly it is an image not of gender but of selfhood, or a self endowed with the mysterious capacity to create, to respond freely to God's promptings and to each other's, to reflect on ultimate questions, and to decide things for ourselves. Freedoms like those are not abstract, and therefore they are not without their limits. There is a givenness in each of our situations which cannot be denied or forgotten. Part of that givenness is the fact of living in one era of human history rather than another. Another part is the fact of having our consciousness shaped by one culture rather than another. And part of that givenness—the

part that concerns us most in this discussion—is the fact of being male or female. The image of God is an image that comprehends these limits but does not deny them. So each of us reflects the image of God from inside the borders of our own given limits and beyond those borders, as we relate to other persons, in other ages, in other cultures and with other sexual experiences than our own. The image of God is at once particular and relational, concrete and comprehensive.

Thus, while the *imago dei* is not male, just as God is not a man, the image is traced within the limits of our given sexual character as male or female. So we believe that we are called upon to give expression to the image of God within us in our characteristically male or female ways of being. If this sounds like a plea for equal regard for the dignity of each person's sexual identity, it is exactly that. The roots of that plea are to be found in the Bible that records the history of the community of faith.

It is true that the language of the Bible is dominated by male imagery. God is referred to by the male pronoun, or as "Father" or as Lord (not Lady). One hopes that we would not impose on the Bible, retroactively, the demand that its language reflect the experience of our time. It reflects its own times, and those were uniformly times in which men dominated women in virtually every way. Yet, regard for the dignity of women is everywhere in the Bible: in its poetry, in its laws, in its recounting of the lives of the heroic figures of the faith. If one quotes Scripture now, out of context, to prove that women ought to keep in their places (as defined by men) it is worth remembering Martin Luther's comment that "even the Devil quotes Scripture." For Scripture as a whole does not support a mandate for the suppression of anyone. To the contrary, it contains a mandate for human freedom and fulfillment.

Since freedom and self-determination are such essential characteristics of the image of God in us, Christians ought to be especially alert to all forms of exploitation of humans by each other. We cannot sit back and accept the economic and political exploitation that we have come to regard as inevitable. Neither can we accept without protest the exploitation of sex. Later in this discussion, we will point to some of the ways that sexual anxieties are exploited in the mass media, especially but not exclusively at the expense of women.

Exploitation takes other forms as well. Wheeling and dealing, with call girls provided for the entertainment of the customers, is a too common form of exploitation in a business society.

One prostitute, on a garment manufacturer's payroll, justified her profession by pointing out "people in business sell themselves. Why shouldn't women? It's the American way." More prevalent than prostitution, however, is wage exploitation of women, still a major problem in our society. And much of the lucrative market in pornography is based on degrading images of women and exploitive appeals to the sexual uncertainties of men.

All exploitive images—call girls, sexual athlete, pornohero, hard-core heroine, tooth-paste fall guy or perpetual den mother—all of them do a disservice to our conviction that we are, women and men alike, created in the image of God.

LOVE

Another source of opposition to the exploitation of sex is our commitment to "neighbor love" as the most essential and characteristic expression of the Good News in our relations with one another. "Neighbor love," as Christians use the term, (*agape* is the New Testament Greek term) means love without preference, or love undominated by self-interest. It means love that serves the true welfare of our fellow humans. Clearly the logic of *agape* is contrary to the logic of exploitation. The neighbor is everyone, including and even especially the one who doesn't fit our common-sense definitions of the neighbor. That is the meaning of Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan, for to his hearers "good Samaritan" was a contradiction in terms. Samaritans were supposed to be inferior folk. So, when Jesus told the story of the man cruelly robbed and beaten and left for dead on the road to Jericho, he deliberately picked the unlikely figure of the Samaritan to play the role of true neighbor.

We have traditionally referred to the germ of that story when dealing with racial or political or economic oppression. Its meaning is just as applicable to the fact of sexual exploitation, for we could not actively care for our neighbor and at the same time use his or her sexual needs as a means of manipulating the person.

There is a cautionary note about *agape* that ought to be entered here. Too often it has been set in opposition to *eros*, the notion of love as desire. There is a tension between the two in the fact that the erotic element of love suggests that love is fulfilled in possession of the person of thing that is loved. But it is a caricature of this opposition between *agape* and *eros* that views *agape* as purely spiritual and *eros* as purely carnal. If we accept this caricature, we are

saddled with an obligation to be loving without affection, and to see all sensual response between persons as a threat to Christian love. *Agape* may include warmth, affection, even sexual excitement, or it may include none of these. What makes for *agape* love is *caring* for the neighbor's integrity as a person.

The caricature is not warranted by the New Testament uses of *agape*. In fact, the picture of *agape* as purely spiritual drives all sexual desire in love underground and identifies it with the principle of corruption. No wonder, then, that fears and taboos about sex abound in the history of the Church. No wonder either that exploitive misuses of sex abound as well, as certainly they must if sex is relegated to the dark and sinister side of our human nature. But if *agape* means love that regards the needs and the integrity of the neighbor, it is a love that thrives in the light, a love without shame and subterfuge, and a love that can include affection and sexual expression.

The point of the tension between *agape* and *eros* is not to oppose the spiritual and the sensual, but only to keep us from the self-serving rationalizations by which we regularly prefer the neighbor who can best serve us in return, and turn our backs on the needs of the neighbor who has nothing to offer us. *Agape* underscores a simple but essential insight: that love is a gift, not a bargain or a *quid pro quo*.

THE COVENANT

Since our sexuality is so intimately related to our corporate existence, we should look at the corporate structure of love in the Bible: the idea of the covenant. First a reminder that covenant is not a strange or esoteric idea, but one that lies at the heart of the relationship between God and the chosen people. We call the two collections of writings that make up Christian scriptures the Old Testament (i.e. the Old Covenant) and the New Testament (i.e. the New Covenant). They are records of the content and meaning of an agreement, given through history, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, narratives and epistles.

At least these three things can be said in describing the covenant: it contains a promise, it provides a structure and it has a purpose.

The last statement made about *agape* was that love is a gift, not a bargain or a *quid pro quo*. The covenant is also a gift of love, a promise that God freely gives that "I will be your God and you shall be

my people." The promise is rich with the language of affection and loyalty, in which God's power and being are committed to this relationship with the people. It is not a gift that is withheld until we have earned it, but one that is given so that we can respond to it.

There is something about this covenant that makes it different from all sorts of contracts to which we might compare it, for it is rooted in an act of will that rests on itself alone, not on any outside reference. When two people make a legal contract with one another, the agreement has force because there is an outside power that can be brought to bear on either of the parties to the contract, should they fail to keep its terms. The outside power, of course, is the law, and the law-enforcing power of the community. But the covenant is binding by reason of an *inside*, not an outside, power. God's word has integrity, and once given it cannot be taken back or compromised. The power of this word is intrinsic; it needs no reinforcement from the outside.

The peoples of Israel and the New Israel of the Church are those who recognize they have been invited into the covenant. They are the folk who have given themselves in return. They can and often do renege on aspects of this covenant between themselves and God. That fact provides much of the grist for the mills of the prophets. But even the faithlessness of the peoples does not destroy the covenant, because God's loyalty to its terms remains an undiminished and unqualified gift.

The very personal quality of the covenant suggests some of the ways it is significant for our concerns. It is rooted in the dignity, that is, the presumptive integrity, of the persons who are party to the covenant. It rests on their integrity as persons, not on any outside power they can appeal to, nor on any talent or abstract quality they may possess. Since it is so rooted, it opposes exploitation. To exploit another to whom your word has been given is to break that word, and threaten the covenant between you. We do it all the time, in casual relationships, in marriage, in family life, sometimes to the ultimate destruction of these relationships. But the covenant is an agreement to keep alive the flow of giving and forgiving that makes caring relationships possible.

The internal substance of the covenant is this gift and promise of love. The external structure of covenant is the law, a body of mandates that give flesh and blood meaning to the fact of the covenant. The law is a series of statements about the particular

content of our responsibility, and it emphasizes that the covenant is both reciprocal and concrete. Through law, God says to the partners in this covenant, "If you mean to share this covenant-life with Me, here are things you must know about your treatment of each other, your posture toward Me and the means by which you can keep your own integrity."

Most of the specific laws of the Old Testament are designed to prevent exploitation, either of other persons, or of the natural world (see the laws governing the treatment of animals), or of our relationship with God. They are designed to protect the dignity of persons, especially those who have no status, no power, no means of protecting themselves. The Leviticus code of law, for example, demands that special consideration be given the stranger in the land, the person who would have no property or any friends to offer him protection. And the law code in Deuteronomy requires compassion for the servant and the poor person, since both are at a disadvantage in the society.

We think of many of the Biblical laws governing sexual behavior as repressive, and based on the assumption that a woman is part of the property entourage of the man. Such presumptions can indeed be found in the laws about sexual behavior, as can rigorous taboos against homosexuality, incest and sexual contact with animals. The social circumstances in which such laws were promulgated make many of these taboos quite understandable. What is often overlooked is another strain of laws about sex which are designed to protect the dignity of persons. The harshness of some laws about sex in the Old Testament must be measured by the insights and practices of the times, however. A careful look at some typical law codes of the nations surrounding Israel will show that Hebrew law usually spoke for more restrained and humane concepts of punishment than are to be found in comparable codes of other nations.

Jesus takes that humanizing approach to law a long step further, of course, in teachings about internalizing the law, examining one's own motives, and exercising great restraint in the judgment or punishment of others. "Judge not, that you be not judged," for example, asks by implication that we put ourselves in the shoes of those who become the object of our own righteous outburst.

The law is the structure of the covenant, to be sure, but the thrust of Christian faith is to ask each of us to bear the burden of the law within ourselves and to refrain, so far as possible, from standing in judgment upon others. That should offer some guidance to Christians

in our time as they attempt to deal with the relation of moral law to civil law. Our first obligation is not to be flawless judges of other people's conduct but faithful witnesses to God's covenant in our own.

Our third claim about the covenant was that it has a purpose. The purpose is to bring about the condition of peace (*shalom* is the Hebrew word, now become more familiar in our society) in the human community. Jesus left his peace among us (John 14) in anticipation of his return to establish God's peace throughout the world.

Clearly, *peace* means more than the absence of war, in its Biblical usage. It refers to a condition of wholeness of life, of life marked by unity and harmony in the individual spirit and in the community. "Its fundamental meaning is totality; it means the untrammelled, free growth of the soul. But this, in its turn, means the same as harmonious community; the soul can only expand in conjunction with other souls. There is 'totality' in a community when there is harmony, and the blessing flows freely among its members, everyone giving and taking whatever he is able to do." (Johannes Pedersen, *Israel*, pp. 263-264.)

If we take covenant-love as a basis for our judgments about sexual behavior, then, we will regard sex as one of the aspects of our humanity through which we address each other in our totality. Anything that breaks a sexual gesture away from this context will likely give rise to exploitation; anything that preserves this context will likely reinforce human dignity. So, both moralism and hedonism can be exploitive, for both concern themselves with sexual acts taken apart from human intention, and both tend to disregard the fact that sex is a power which can serve the peace (*shalom*) of persons and of the community.

This suggests also that our judgments about the use of sexual materials in art, entertainment, education and the like, must be measured by the intentions expressed and the goals served, not by the mere degree of explicitness of the sexual imagery. Many a novelist has shown that a description can be explicit in dealing with a sexual encounter or a sexual reverie, and do so in a way that shows us something essential about a character, about the dramatic movement of a plot, or even about ourselves as readers. In so doing, the writer may touch a sensitive spot in our own consciousness: the encounter or the reverie may be all too personally familiar. Are we then to condemn the prose for being explicit? Not unless the prose (and our own conduct or our dreams) is clearly designed to focus on sex *apart* from

persons-in-relationship. When that happens, a kind of idolatry is before us, an idolatry that tempts us to look to sexual endowments or performance as the source of our significance as persons. Sex becomes an idolatrous object in itself, capable of destroying interpersonal relationship—the very thing it should be helping to create and secure.

One of the best forms of insurance against idolatry is humor. Charlie Chaplin's satire of Hitler in the "Great Dictator" and Mark Twain's puncturing of Victorian balloons, even Isaiah's delighted exposure of the absurdity of idolatry in chapter 44; all these suggest that humor has a way of cutting pretentiousness down to size. So, humor also has its functions in underlining our idolatry of sex. The pious tend to overestimate the power of sex to work mischief, and the hedonist overestimates its power to work salvation. But ribaldry can cut both absurdities down to size by saying, in effect, "sex can be mischievous but not *that* mischievous; and it can be good, but not *that* good." In so doing, the jokes help us to keep both our expectations and our anxieties about sex within human bounds.

To recapitulate, we have suggested that explicitness, by itself, is not the question. The question is what kind of human image it serves: persons, imaging God in themselves and in their covenant relationships with one another? or things, objects for use by others, or manipulators who market their prowess, or sensation-seekers whose god is the groin?

The first half of our study has stated some goals and developed some Christian images for pursuing them. Let us review these briefly before going on to see how they might apply to the specific questions of obscenity, pornography, the commercialization of sex, and the judicial decisions that have been taken on these matters. Our intentions are:

1. To state some Christian presuppositions about human dignity;
2. To articulate an affirmative, rather than a fear-ridden, understanding of human sexuality;
3. To understand the human concerns being raised by the Women's Movement;
4. To make distinctions between legitimate use and exploitive abuse of explicit sexual materials;

5. To define what we really mean by terms like *obscenity*, *pornography* and *commercialization*;
6. To equip ourselves for making a measured and thoughtful response to legislative issues in this area; and
7. To develop the critical faculties that can help us comment intelligently on the sexual materials we see in advertising and mass media programming.

For making progress toward these goals, we have pointed to some of the resources we have at hand in our Christian tradition and faith:

1. The idea of the *image of God* as the source of our human dignity and of our protest against all forms of exploitation of our sexual nature;
2. Christian "neighbor love" that is distinguished from but may include *eros*, the love we more commonly associate with sexual relationships; and
3. The *covenant* in which God gives a promise and a hope to us, and by which we are drawn into loving relationship with both God and other people.

Now we need to look at the particular questions which have prompted this study.

SOME LEGITIMATE USES OF EXPLICIT SEXUAL MATERIAL

Sex Research

Sex research is really a product of this century and probably resulted from—as much as anything else—the development of psychoanalytic theory. The inquiries of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and other pioneers in the field, brought a new understanding of the sexual needs of humans and the way those needs find expression in both feelings and behavior. At first, the reaction of many in the religious communities was to object strenuously to this whole development (1) because sexual motives seemed to be such unworthy motives for human action, and (2) because the view of human nature seemed so totally this-worldly as to be unalterably opposed to any spiritual estimate of humanity.

As time has gone on, psychoanalytic theory has become increasingly sophisticated, and we have learned that we can separate the contents from the package. One does not have to buy into an entire anthropology in order to benefit from the insights of the psychologists. By the same token, we have also learned that candor in dealing with sex is like candor in dealing with any other aspect of the truth: it is both useful and refreshing, as long as the object of being candid is illumination, not shock.

So, when Dr. Alfred Kinsey and his collaborators published the findings of their research into the sexual behavior of American men and women, the first reaction from some quarters was to call down a curse upon them because they had spoken of the unspeakable. By exposing behavioral realities to view, they had threatened to unravel the moral fiber of the nation. But the Kinsey studies have now become an accepted part of the developing research into sex, a research which has helped us deal with questions of our sexual promptings and actions more understandingly. One of the effects of the Kinsey studies was to unburden many people of the guilt they felt for being "the only one who ever. . .". The mere fact of discovering that some aspect of one's sexual behavior might not be "abnormal" or "perverted" is a step in the direction of gaining and exercising the power to make decisions about one's own sexuality.

Generally our ethical judgments are confused more than they are clarified by feelings of guilt. Thus, the object of sex research has been, by and large, therapeutic. The point has been to enable people to function better as human beings. Part of that function is served when people are given better ways to be in touch with the realities of their own sexuality. Overcoming a problem of frigidity, for example, is sure to improve the chances for intimacy and tenderness in a marriage. By the same token, knowledge of what is sexually satisfying to one's partner simply makes it more possible to communicate one's own loving feeling to the other.

This therapeutic aim has been served as well by the research team of Masters and Johnson, whose clinical data has unraveled some mysteries and put the lie to some false notions about sexual functioning. The development of clinics where a couple can learn to become more effective in their own sexual functioning has contributed to the saving of some relationships and the improvement of the quality of others.

Such research efforts or their clinical applications could not proceed without the use of explicit sexual materials. By now it should be clear, too, that the vast majority of those who know anything about the nature and the object of such research are approving in their attitude toward it, just as they would be toward legitimate research in any other area of human health and welfare.

The question of invading privacy has come up at each stage of the development of research into human sexual behavior. So has the question of overemphasizing sexual technique so that people come to feel self-conscious about their "performance," hardly a useful measure of the worth of the person. Those are serious ethical questions, indeed, and they are still being pursued, as much by the researchers as by their critics.

The value of sex research goes far beyond the few people it now touches clinically, and far beyond the serious sexual malfunctions it may help to correct. There is hardly a medical practitioner who will not benefit from this research in dealing with ordinary marital and family problems. It is hard to imagine how such research could go on, or be published, without the use of the most explicit possible sexual materials. Circumlocution is a bad habit in medicine. It obscures as much as it reveals.

Sex Education

Sex education is another legitimate arena for the use of explicit sexual materials. If circumlocution is bad practice in medicine, it is equally so in the education of children and young people about sex. It seems that most adults have gotten most of their sex education on the street corner and in the school locker room. That, at least, is the report they give of their own experience, according to the *Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography* (Bantam Books, 1970, p. 33). The same adults express a preference for other more reliable sources of sex education for their children: parents, church, school and the family physician. Nevertheless, most youngsters still seem to be dependent upon peers for their information, although school programs are assuming an increasingly prominent function.

In recent years, a widespread movement has developed, involving educators, medical personnel, clergy and parents, to bring effective sex education into the schools and/or into the programs of the churches. The object is not, nor has it ever been, to remove the

responsibility for this aspect of childrearing from the home. It has been, rather, to provide what the home cannot as readily provide: systematic and scientifically accurate information, developmentally geared to the age of the child, audio-visual aids, discussion with peers, and so on. No educational effort can be entirely value-free, no matter how great the effort at objectivity. So, there has been put into the development of sex education materials a conscientious effort to convey attitudes and values toward sex which will have the widest support in the community.

It would be difficult to find a sex education program in which the value scheme is hedonistic—pleasure for its own sake—in spite of the lurid caricatures drawn by the most vocal of the opponents of this movement. The themes of responsibility, fidelity and tenderness typically stand out in the presentation of those parts of sex education which have directly to do with sexual relationship. Incidentally, there is no evidence that sex education undercuts people's values about sexual behavior. On the contrary, it tends to clarify prospective values and reinforce the capacity for responsible sexual behavior.

This is not to say that present-day sex education programs are above all criticism. Appropriate and critical reservations about sex education programs have sometimes been expressed by those with special understanding of developmental psychology. Their reservations are usually directed at the operation of the programs: *i.e.* how to guarantee good teacher training, how to insure that material is presented with due regard for the developing sensitivities of young people, *etc.* These are reservations about the *how* of sex education, not objections to teaching the material itself.

It *is* important that sex education be handled expertly and sensitively, and it *is* important that both developmental realities and affirmative values about sexual behavior be respected in sex education programs. But that is merely to say that when we take on this task, we ought to do it well. It is not to say that the task ought to be avoided or left to be done in a catch-as-catch-can fashion. It is worth emphasizing this point, if only because the question of sex education has become—in some areas at least—the focus of a strident ideological crusade which has tried to identify it as, at worst, a Communist plot or, at best, a platform for conveying permissive, corrupting and libertine values.

As important a public health concern as this must not be politicized. To allow that to happen would be to deny our com-

mitment to the truth as a gift of God intended to be responsibly used, not fearfully evaded.

A recent "pastoral letter" circulated by its General Committee on Family Life to the clergy of the United Methodist Church deals with this question squarely and warns members of that communion about the propaganda against sex education circulated by groups like the John Birch Society, Christian Crusade (the organization of Billie James Hargis), MOTOREDE (Movement to Restore Decency) and others. Such propaganda appeals to fear more than to faith. It is designed to prevent such education from happening, rather than presenting a better alternative for cultivating healthy and appropriate attitudes toward sex among the young. Often, the literature of such groups focuses on the fact of explicitness as proof of immoral interests on the part of those involved in sex education. By that canon, many of the writers of the Bible would have to be faulted for their "immoral interest."

Attached to this report is a list of numerous resources, including books, pamphlets, films and filmstrips designed for use in sex education programs with children, young people and adults. A careful look at selected examples of the material mentioned there will dispel the false equation between sexual explicitness and immorality or permissiveness. The truth about one's sexuality, both the physical and the psychological facts, is delicately and sensitively presented in such literature—as good an illustration as one should need of the legitimate uses of explicit sexual materials.

Artistic Endeavors

Passing mention has already been made of the use of explicit sexual materials in artistic endeavors. We have suggested that this is an area of legitimate use. Yet, history is full of testimony to the conflict that often erupts between the interests of the artist and the prevailing morality of the time in which the artist works. Michelangelo, for example, was unable to use women as models for his female nudes (which may explain why many of them are so muscular). Even his anatomy studies were only possible through the dissection of cadavers surreptitiously obtained.

The tension between the moralist and the artist in society has been legendary. Yet who could condemn as illegitimate or obscene the nude studies of an infinite number of great or unknown artists throughout time? The fact is, of course, that they have often been condemned by shocked contemporaries. It is only when a style

of painting or statuary has become "historical" (i.e. reasonably distant in time, and replaced by another style) that we seem able to value it without becoming upset over the question of sexual explicitness.

A contemporary artistic medium which is causing a great deal of such tension in our society at the moment is photography, both still and motion. The problem is how to develop canons for separating the artistic achievement from the exploitive picture. The merits of a particular picture may evoke heated controversy. Still, we have some capacity to separate the wheat from the chaff in photography, and some critical ability to discern the difference between sexual explicitness that serves a genuine artistic purpose and that which is altogether gratuitous. Aesthetic judgments are notoriously subjective, in spite of the musings of philosophers from ancient Greece to the present. So, controversy over the artistic merits of material which deals with intimate aspects of human experience often ends up in the hands of the magistrates. Not infrequently, the artist is punished as an enemy of public morals. Could it be that artists, like fools, are sometimes considered dangerous because of the truths they tell us about the human condition? In any case, sexual explicitness has its legitimate role to play in art. Our problem is not that proposition, but how to tell what is truly art and what is the effluence of a warped imagination.

ATTEMPTS AT A DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is appropriate, at least poetically, that a discussion of the subjectivity of aesthetics should lead us to the problem of defining some of the terms that are regularly used to describe abusive images of sex: obscenity, pornography, commercialization. (The latter seems, by popular consensus, to be less often the subject of court cases.)

Obscenity

What makes a picture, a gesture, a written piece, or an action "obscene"?

The first part of an answer must be both subjective and communal: "most people find it seriously offensive." An accomplished violinist might find the beginning scratchings on a violin by the neighbor's child "seriously offensive." Or he might find more seriously offensive the jazz violin of Joe Venuti. But he is not "most people." Like it or not, we are forced to deal with prevailing opinion in

a community when we speak of obscenity. We are also forced to deal with subjective rather than objective criteria for a term like "offensive." Subjective criteria do not stand still. They change as tastes and experiences change. Thus, most people now find the very idea of chattel slavery seriously offensive. In historical terms, that is a change, and a recent one. Most people in our culture would now find the exposure of genitalia in public an offensive gesture. The same could be said of performing excretory functions in public. The same could also be said (but it is said far less often) of most acts of violence, if one is to read the reactions of those who have witnessed street violence, or murder, or forcible rape. Officially condoned torture is also patently offensive, which explains why it is kept from view and why, when exposed, it is systematically and officially denied.

A second part of the answer has to do with why certain things are offensive: "they invade the private and degrade the sacred."

The secret and the sacred are related experiences. In both ancient and modern religions, there are secret rites, reserved areas, sacred places to which ordinary folk are not admitted. The secret, the private, and the sacred have in common their root in the human need to protect identity by protecting areas of unchallenged autonomy. Thus, the "holy of holies" is the inner temple where God's utter autonomy is most unmistakably present.

Instinctively, most sexual conduct is carried on "in secret"—that is, in private. Nudity is usually reserved to private moments. Even practicing nudists have strict rules against exposure to those who are not part of the nudist community and who cannot, therefore, be counted on to share the nudist philosophy. There is a limited vogue for group sex on the current scene, but even that is at least modified private behavior. Like nudism, it assumes some ground rules and some common understanding of what is going on.

It is the indiscriminate exposure to public attention of essentially private behavior that first raises the question of obscenity. But we use the phrase "degrade the sacred" in connection with obscenity as well. It is not mere public exposure of private behavior that makes something obscene. Whatever we may think of the methods of the Masters and Johnson research, the conduct of the research subjects would not be called "obscene" in any ordinary use of the term. It was not conduct intended to degrade sex, to attack essential human dignity, or to brutalize people's feelings and sensitivities about sexual relationship. The point of the research was to find out facts, not to attack values.

Obscenity, by contrast, is a term we use when we feel that sacred and fundamental human values are under attack, explicitly or implicitly, by the public exposure of private behavior. One of those values, for Christians and for many others, is the integrity of persons. We want to be valued for our total humanity, not because of our appearance alone, or because of some talent alone, or solely because of some usefulness we may serve in the lives of others. So we label as obscene, for example, magazines which specialize in pictures focusing on genitalia or on the simple performance of sexual acts. We are likely also to label "obscene" the publication or film which uses its story line as a transparent vehicle for displaying sexual parts or sexual conduct, rather than employing sexual material because it truly contributes to the dramatic purpose of the work in question.

If there is a serious fault in our thinking about obscenity, it is probably the fact that we have too narrowly focused on sexual matters. There are other facets of human experience, besides sex, which share the qualities of intimacy and ultimacy, and which are vulnerable to degrading presentations. At earlier times in our history definitions of obscenity have included degrading presentations of birth, death, human suffering and religious practice. By this sort of definition, many other things have come to be considered obscene over time: public hangings and beheadings, the torture of animals for human amusement, and in recent times, the very conduct of war itself.

In a Christian framework, whatever judgments are to be made about obscenity should include the many forms of violence which increasingly confront us and assault our sensitivities in the modern world. Curiously, we have largely accepted the portrayal of violence against humans (and against animals, for that matter) as beyond the reach of censorship or even of serious regulation. For example, the primary focus of the film rating system now in operation is on the sexual content of the production; and, for the most part, only that violence which is expressed sexually is regarded as significant for the rating. The same focus seems to prevail in legislative definitions of obscenity. Had we a broader definition of obscenity, many a news reel of the Vietnam era would have been rated "X" and kept from the television screen. So would a good many of our most popular television series.

Legislative philosophy in our country has more and more identified sex as the only criminal form of obscenity. In 1969, the New Jersey Legislature established a commission to study obscenity and

depravity in the public media, moved by a concern over the dissemination of materials "which debase and defile man's sexual nature and those which exhibit a morbid interest in callous and senseless cruelty, brutality and violence." In spite of that balanced concern, the only obscenity legislation on the books in New Jersey and the only legislation recommended out of this study concerned sex. In like manner, the Supreme Court's 1973 decisions focus on sexual matters. Chief Justice Burger, in the *Miller* decision, mentions only sexual and excretory functions as examples of obscenity.

If obscenity has to do with "invading the private and degrading the sacred," is sex really the only sacred realm for us? If so, that is a sorry commentary on our religious sensitivities and the maturity of our human values.

Pornography

Pornography means, literally, presenting through writing a picture of immoral or commercialized sex. The precise meaning of the Greek word from which it comes (*porneia*) is in dispute among Biblical scholars, but at least we know that it had to do with the misuse of human sexuality, including prostitution, pederasty and other commercialized forms of sexual traffic.

In the present context, we treat pornography separately from obscenity for the reason suggested toward the end of the previous section: *i.e.* there are many things that are obscene which are not pornographic. In speaking of pornography, we imply more than writing, too. In fact, it is fair to speculate that the present level of public concern about pornography has been created more by film than by print. It is the picture magazines (in which writing is usually minimal and abysmal) and the movies that worry us much more than novels, poems and stories. If adult bookstores sold only books, we would probably pay far less attention to them.

It is in dealing with pornography that we come up against some of the most difficult definitional problems. What, precisely, makes a story, a film or a publication pornographic? It cannot be the mere fact of dealing with sexual themes, for that umbrella would cover vast portions of the artistic outpouring of humankind from the earliest beginnings. Nor can it be mere explicitness in dealing with sex. As we have noted, that would cover a great deal of legitimate educational and aesthetic material which we neither can nor would want to label "pornographic."

Most legal definitions of pornography try to identify the material by a specific appeal to "prurient interest." The word "prurient" comes from a root indicating an itch or an irritation, and obviously refers to the pubic sensations associated with sexual arousal. But what is criminal about sexual arousal? Without it none of us would be here! Again, our objection to a prurient interest is rooted in its isolation from relationship. Is it then arousal for its own sake, for the mere sensation of sexual awareness, that we consider contrary to the public interest or immoral in its own right? Few would any longer contend that it is, although the time is not long past when such arousal would have been credited to "lustful and impure thoughts." So, we must go a step further and say that it is not merely the isolation from relationship that creates a legal interest in sexual arousal, but the fact that someone, so aroused, might seek to satisfy the sensation by a criminal act against another.

One key to public objection to pornography must be, then, the assumption that it creates a tendency to criminal action. If that is so, then the burden of proving pornography illegal must lie with the demonstration that there is a causal relationship between the prurient interest appealed to and criminal actions which are likely to follow. If it could be shown that persons who had just seen a particularly arousing film were then more likely to violate the personal dignity or rights of others, we would then have a clear basis for legal restrictions on pornography. Yet, as much as one may feel that such a causal relationship probably exists, all attempts at establishing such a relationship empirically have so far failed. Neither social science nor physical science has yet built the case.

One more dimension of pornography deserves consideration. It is the question of privacy. If what we have said about the relations of the private to the sacred is true, then we need to explore the question whether each of us has a right not to have our values concerning sex publicly flaunted or attacked. For example, if as a Christian I believe that my sexuality is part of my essential dignity as a child of God and my sexual relationships a part of my covenantal relationships with others, then do I have a right not only to hold that view but to have that view protected against inescapable and overwhelming propaganda pressure for another view? Once upon a time, such a right was unlikely to be violated except by direct, interpersonal confrontation like indecent exposure or forcible rape. The marvels of modern technology now make it possible for such a right to be violated in many more subtle ways as well: by magazine rack displays, radio broadcasts, television, film previews, advertising, etc.

Two observations come immediately to mind. First, modern marketing techniques incline to employ any and all communications media. Second, the burden of protecting this right should not be carried alone by the individual. It should be shared by the society. To put it another way, the burden should not be on me to find a place protected from media saturation. It should be shared by the media in the decisions made about the character of the material communicated. If an individual can press his or her right against noise pollution by an airport, or water pollution by a factory, it is not surprising that some individuals claim a corresponding right against obscenity pollution by the media.

One final comment about pornography: there are gradations of immediacy among the different media. These gradations reflect the degree of freedom of choice we retain as individuals. They also reflect the degree to which the medium approximates real life. So, our response tends to be stronger to pictures than to printed words; stronger to moving pictures than to stills; stronger to television than to theater films; stronger to stage or cabaret presentations than to films. If, for example, television programming tends to be more restrained than film making, that is not an irrational accident. It is easier to avoid a theater than it is to avoid a television channel. If we react more strongly to simulated intercourse on stage than in a film, that too is significant, not accidental, for a stage play comes closer to approximating our experience of real life than does the film.

These gradations of immediacy suggest another important fact about pornography: its primary appeal is to our fantasy life. So rich and vigorous is the human imagination that it tends constantly to probe and explore all possible forms of behavior, the acceptable and the unacceptable alike. Most of the behavior we imagine is never undertaken in real life, but it may be important to our mental and spiritual health that we have imagined it. In fact, many psychologists and psychiatrists would hold that a richly active imagination is the best insurance we have against impulsive, unthinking behavior that can harm others and ourselves. If this is so, pornography may have a certain positive function with some, allowing an otherwise forbidden scope to their fantasy life. That is not an argument for open marketing, however, since the imagination plays some games only because they are forbidden.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF SEX

For Christians who are concerned about the quality of the images of sex around us in the 1970s, particular attention must be paid to the commercially inspired abuses of sex. To a charge of "yellow journalism," a publisher once replied: "It sells papers, doesn't it?" That is true, of course. However we may feel about the implicit reflection on human nature and the level of our taste, the fact remains that sex and violence do sell—not only papers but a host of other products as well.

The pornography market is a lucrative one, although the dollar estimates of its size in the United States seem often to be exaggerated. Without arguing the size of the market, we know that it is large enough to cause pressure to be brought on store owners and newsstand operators to carry magazines and papers they consider pornographic and would rather not sell. Tie-in sales are the most common form of this pressure, the vendor being required by his wholesaler to accept a certain proportion of undesirable material as the price of being supplied with the material he wants to display and sell. Practices such as these are certainly objectionable, on grounds both of the quality of the material being peddled and the imposition on the store operator's freedom of choice.

There is, of course, a great deal of "soft" pornography that dealers readily accept because it is very profitable. There are probably few magazine dealers who need to be persuaded to carry *Playboy* magazine on their stands. It sells exceedingly well. "Soft" and "hard-core" pornography are strictly relative terms. For purposes of our discussion, the significant difference between them is not their basically different views of sex but the relative public acceptability of the pornography in question.

Whether "soft-core" or "hard-core" most pornographic material is manufactured to appeal to males, and probably to middle-aged males at that. Thus, the nudes are almost exclusively female, and the activities portrayed are more likely to fill male than female daydreams. In some of the most widely distributed publications, of which *Playboy* would be a representative example, women are a part of the furnishings of the "good life" along with stereo sets, sports cars, and high style clothing. Women become part of the culture of conspicuous consumption, replaceable parts, disposable containers and planned obsolescence. Again our response is based not on the degree of explicitness of the sexual material, but on the image of sex that is purveyed.

A far more pervasive commercial abuse of human sexuality is to be found in the advertising media. The abuse is of two sorts. One sort suggests that the use of a product will make one more sexually attractive. Some of our most odious toothpaste ads fall into this category. The other sort of misuse is in the perpetuation of sex role stereotypes that confine persons to functions. Both men and women fall victim to this kind of stereotyping, but the heavier insult is leveled at the women. An old German proverb says that women are for *kirche, küche und kinder* (the Church, the kitchen and the children). The contemporary advertising stereotypes have only slightly changed the image to *küche, kinder und koffee klatsch*.

The ire of some women's organizations has been aroused by the images of women in advertising. One of them, the National Organization for Women, has produced a systematic study of the question, entitled "Women in the Wasteland Fight Back: A Report on the Image of Women Portrayed in TV Programming." Their effort included monitoring all essential aspects of TV programming, not advertising alone. Although interest was centered on the images of women, it became apparent to the participants in the study that men were also less than humanly portrayed in some of the advertising and programming material. For example, they found that women were presented in family, rather than occupational, roles 78% of the time, while men were presented in their family roles only 5% of the time, a disproportion that presents a false image of the life experience of both men and women.

Christian response to the commercialization of sex in our society, as we have discussed it here, might be based on two concerns: the reduction of erotic experience to a "come-on" for marketing products, and the perpetuation of inadequate and stereotypical notions of what it means to be a man or a woman. Christian faith asks for a higher estimate of the erotic, because it sees that dimension of humanity in the context of (a) the image of God bodied forth in our maleness or femaleness and (b) our corporate nature as persons created in and for covenant relationship with God and our fellow-humanity. It also asks for a broader definition of what it means to be a man or a woman, a definition broad enough to envision men sharing the tasks of householding and child nurture, and women pursuing career interests outside the home. As both men and women are freed from the limits of their traditional roles, both are freer to broaden their own experiences as persons and freer to enter, emphatically at least, into each other's experience as persons.

OBSCENITY, PORNOGRAPHY, AND CENSORSHIP: THE LEGAL TIGHTROPE

Most Christian ethical discussion affirms the balance between rights and responsibilities, between concern for the individual and concern for the community. The reason is simple: we believe two complementary realities: Jesus said, ". . . without your Father's leave, not one (sparrow) can fall to the ground. As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted." Along with God's care for the unique individual, we also affirm our inescapable corporateness. "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it."

As Christians, therefore, we are required to deal intelligently and faithfully with the two sometimes conflicting civil interests of individual freedom and public welfare. Among other things, that will mean taking our responsibilities seriously as citizens of a commonwealth, and responding from our best lights to legislative issues that bear on the exploitation of sex. We cannot, on the one hand, simply declare that our freedom as Christians makes these matters of no interest or consequence for us: nor can we, on the other hand, impose our views on others without regard to the integrity of their interests, even when they may be in conflict with our own.

Frankly speaking, most of us are more likely to err on the latter than the former side. We are more likely to mistake our own tastes for God's will and more likely therefore to support the censorship of what we regard to be obscenity and pornography in the name of public decency. For that reason, because we are as apt as anyone else to create political pressure for making our views the "official" views, we should probably admonish ourselves to have a special regard for the protection of the rights of individuals, and especially of those individuals with whom we would radically disagree.

There is precedent for this in Scripture. In both Old and New Testaments, there is reflected a constant weighting of the argument on the side of the less powerful. In the contest between the individual and the society, the individual is almost always the less powerful. Thus, as frustrating as it may be at times, we are called upon to give special regard to the rights of individuals, even abrasive, aberrant, atypical individuals.

With that in mind, let us turn to some specific court judgments which establish our present norms for the response of the state to the problems of pornography and obscenity. The United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in 1957 (the *Roth* decision) which was intended to provide durable guidance for the definition of legally "obscene" material; that is, material which could not be guaranteed protection under the free speech provisions of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The norm established by this decision was that material could be held obscene if "to the average person applying contemporary community standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest." Later, the Court added a further qualification. In a 1966 decision, it held that "a book cannot be proscribed unless it is found to be *utterly* without redeeming social value" (*Memoirs vs. Massachusetts*). From that time until 1973, the efforts of prosecutors have very often been frustrated by the difficulty of proving something to be "utterly without redeeming social value." Almost anything can be judged worthwhile to some groups of persons in society.

In the period from 1966 to 1973, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of sexually explicit material that is openly marketed and readily purchasable. It is less clear whether the actual amount of pornographic material marketed has also increased, or whether there has simply been a shift from covert to open marketing practices. There is no doubt, however, that publishers' canons of what is acceptable for ordinary distribution have changed. Many magazines now contain material, both printed and pictorial, which would have been considered out of bounds a few years ago.

Along with an increase in open marketing, and a simultaneous increase in the explicitness of commercially distributed films, has come an increased legislative and judicial concern with the problems of regulation. The criteria of the 1957 and 1966 Supreme Court decisions did not operate with much regulatory effectiveness in the judgment of many.

Thus it was that the Supreme Court issued a new set of decisions on obscenity and pornography in June 1973. A number of changes were instituted in these decisions, three of which are especially significant. (1) The phrase, "utterly without redeeming social value" was rejected and replaced with a criterion that reads as follows: "whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." This, of course, puts the burden on the defendant to prove the "serious value" rather than upon the

prosecution to prove the utter worthlessness of the work in question. (2) A second major change is the Court's affirmation that there cannot be *national* standards applied to the question of what is "patently offensive." What is acceptable in one part of the country may be considered legally offensive in another: a sort of local option in morals. These two changes are made in the *Miller* decision. (3) In the *Paris Theatres* decision, the Court also affirms that "though conclusive proof is lacking, the States may reasonably determine that a nexus does or might exist between antisocial behavior and obscene material, just as States have acted on unprovable assumptions in other cases of public control." The fact that no causal connection between exposure to pornographic material and criminal actions can be empirically demonstrated is thus declared to be of no significance for the law. The presumption is as good as the proof.

The decisions in which these new points were made were 5 to 4 decisions, so the dissenting opinions are of some particular interest as well. The dissent focuses on two issues: vagueness and First Amendment guarantees.

The vagueness issue, simply put, is that one should not be held criminally liable for conduct which he could not reasonably be expected to know was illegal. Since so much subjective judgment is involved in the questions of obscenity and pornography, say the dissenters, how can one be held criminally responsible for crossing the fuzzy and uncertain line between permitted and forbidden speech?

The First Amendment question is the question whether the government has the right to suppress *any* form of speech, no matter how offensive the majority may find it to be. To permit exceptions to the guarantee of free speech is to open the door for government suppression of many kinds of speech other than pornographic.

Here, then, is a flat contradiction between the majority and minority positions of the Justices. The majority says that "preventing the unlimited display of obscene material is not thought control." The minority says, "the door barring federal and state intrusion into (the fundamental freedoms of speech and press) cannot be left ajar..."

The arguments raised by this latest set of decisions, and the dissenting opinions that accompanied them, have been loud and vigorous. Can publishers be asked to publish separate editions of books and magazines tailored to the prevailing definitions of "offensiveness" in different parts of the country, or to the vagaries of district attorneys in different jurisdictions? The counter question is

whether publications must be allowed free access to the market everywhere when their content is aimed at the most, rather than the least, permissive criteria of public acceptability. Must Boise, Idaho, permit the sale of everything that is peddled in Times Square, New York?

Another set of arguments is aimed at the question of national standards of criminal law. Regardless of a plurality of cultures and of tastes within one nation, we operate under the working supposition that we have a basically uniform set of criteria by which to judge what is and what is not criminal behavior. If we leave it to the states to set the criteria, are we not opening the possibility for 50 different, subjectively defined, standards to be applied? And might this not seriously jeopardize the concept of "equal justice under the law" which we deem essential to our existence as a working democracy?

A further argument precipitated by these decisions is expressed in the assertion, made in one dissenting opinion, that "the use of the standard 'offensive' gives authority to government that cuts the very vitals out of the First Amendment." Christians, particularly Presbyterians, ought to remember that their parents in the faith sought asylum on these shores because their religious views were considered legally "offensive" by the authorities in 17th century England. The power to suppress speech and opinion has been linked to the power to persecute in every century, including our own. It is, right now, a vital issue for Soviet Jews, for university students in Chile, for Buddhist pacifists in the Republic of Vietnam, for the Indian population of Uganda, for nationalists in Mozambique . . . the list seems interminable.

If one responds that we must trust government authorities in *our* commonwealth not to misuse such power, the evidence of the past decade is discomfoting, to say the least, for we are only now emerging from a period of serious and systematic suppression of dissent in our own nation.

No court decision in the matter of obscenity can be flawlessly precise. We have cited the subjectivity of judgment, the plurality of lifestyles and canons of taste that are inevitably involved in such decisions. So, the question comes down to a choice between a vague law and no law at all. In spite of the serious questions that have been raised about the Supreme Court decisions of June 1973, and in spite of the forest of difficulties associated with drawing any adequate legislation in this field, we nonetheless conclude that the better

choice would be for a vague law conscientiously and critically applied.

In dealing with legislative matters, Christians have a peculiar obligation to insure that others' freedoms are guaranteed, even when that means the freedom to make choices of which one might personally disapprove. That obligation is nowhere clearer than in the area of obscenity and pornography, where we can see it as a Christian responsibility to be sure the law allows other consenting adults to read, watch or listen to things we might find distasteful at best, disgusting at worst. John Milton's argument against censorship laws proposed to the Parliament in 17th century England is still a good one. He opted for a free market of ideas, tastes and concepts, saying, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue."

For Christians, there are some criteria, born of their faith, which can be brought to bear on the development of workable local and state laws, and on the manner in which they are applied. Here are a few representative, not definitive, examples:

(1) *Minors deserve certain protections.* When Christian parents respond to the questions put to them at the baptism of their children, they promise to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They undertake an obligation, therefore, to influence the spiritual and ethical environment of their children. The first level at which that influence must be exercised is through example, a language children understand more clearly than any other. A second level of influence is by showing approval or disapproval, a powerful and important contribution to the nurture of children, even when they howlingly disagree with their parents' judgments. A third level of influence is through parental action to protect children from untoward and disruptive emotional experiences. While one cannot and should not try to bring up children in cotton batting, there are some aspects of human experience for which children are unprepared at certain ages. Parents are being neither deceptive nor overprotective when they try to protect their children from experiences for which they are developmentally unprepared.

(2) *Do not overestimate what the law can do to protect the moral climate.* The cultivation of healthy attitudes toward all aspects of human experience, the sexual included, in home and church is more significant for that climate than any law. It is worth remembering that what is well done at home cannot be undone at a magazine rack. If children have been taught to enjoy, respect and

understand their own sexuality, and have been taught elemental respect for the privacy and integrity of others, those things will provide them better protection than any law against the potentially destructive influence of obscenity or pornography.

(3) *Respect the rights of other adults.* There are two sides to this criterion: (a) it supports the right to limit public display of all forms of obscenity, the violent as well as the sexual; (b) it also supports the right of consenting adults to have discrete access to publications, films, etc., which, while offensive to some, are enjoyable or even therapeutic to others.

(4) *Remember that law is for protection, not harassment.* In the experience of Christian faith, law is the structure of freedom, not its enemy. St. Paul reminds us that freedom is God's gift in Christ, and that law is meant to serve that gift, not to deny it. We are called upon, therefore, to see to it that laws intended to protect against wanton assault on public sensitivities by material judged obscene or pornographic are not used, in turn, as an instrument to harass those whose sexual proclivities may arouse fear or anger (or even jealousy!) in the majority. Nor should we drop our guard against the law being used to harass teachers through censorship of their curricula by pressure groups in the community.

(5) *Do not trade freedom for security.* The supreme gift of the Gospel is confidence in the love and the power of God. On the basis of this gift, Christians are invited to live out the risks of this life without anxiety. While the Gospel is not a counsel of deliberate imprudence, it is an invitation to live in an open, giving, unafraid and joyous manner of life. Anything that enhances the freedom of all without destroying the rights of any deserves the support of Christians, who furthermore should not trade their essential manner of life for any illusory security offered by the power of the state.

CONCLUSION

In a time like ours, characterized by rapid changes in peoples' views of sex and habits of sexual behavior, it becomes increasingly important that we cultivate and renew a Christian perspective for our response to change. Old values *do* change; many already have. The fact that they are old does not mean that they are outmoded or that they are eternally valid. Venerability proves nothing beyond the fact that something or someone has been venerated. It

does not prove that the veneration ought to continue. In every age, not ours alone, basic human and religious questions have come up for re-examination. What we have tried to do in these pages is to provide some equipment for re-examining the images of sex that now confront us in our culture, and especially in the public media. Candor has become the order of the day. Our purpose is not to reject that candor, nor to turn back to the repressive attitudes toward sexuality which are well left behind. The candor is refreshing and, on balance, a healthy step forward. Because the changes are so rapid and so basic, however, the line between healthy candor and unhealthy pandering is often blurred, and it is not always easy to see which new thing is benign and which is a threat to abiding human values.

Christians are the inheritors of a tradition that has a deep and timeless wisdom about the human drama, and one which by its very timelessness is a source of timely and lively insight into the meaning of the changes we are experiencing. We have it as a gift. We must use it as a responsibility.

Appendix I

MEMBERS OF THE STUDY GROUP

- GAIL G. BUCHWALTER
Minister, University and City Ministries
Pittsburgh, Pa.
- MARY S. CALDERONE, M.D.
Executive Director, Sex Information
and Education Council of the U.S.
New York, N.Y.
- RICHARD B. McGLYNN
Attorney-at-Law
Served as Chief Counsel, Commission
to Study Obscenity and Depravity in
Public Media, State of New Jersey
Newark, N.J.
- JUDY MINEAR
Minister, First Presbyterian Church
Rockwood, Tenn.
- JOYCE SLAYTON MITCHELL
Consultant in Education
Wallcott, Vt.
- FAITH POMPONIO
Associate Manager for Media Relations,
Support Agency, UPCUSA
New York, N.Y.
- RICHARD P. UNSWORTH
Chaplain, Smith College
Northampton, Mass.
(Writer of the study document)
- WALTER E. WIEST, Ph.D.
Professor of Philosophy of Religion
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Pittsburgh, Pa.

CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORS

- HARRIET F. PILPEL
Attorney-at-Law
New York, N.Y.
- HERMINIO TRAVIESAS
Vice President, NBC-TV Broadcast
Standards
New York, N.Y.
- CHARLES BRACKBILL, JR.
Consultant in Mass Media Program-
ming
New York, N.Y.
- LOUISE R. ORR
Church Educational Services, Program
Agency, UPCUSA
New York, N.Y.
- DIETER T. HESSEL
Church Educational Services, Program
Agency, UPCUSA
New York, N.Y.

STAFF

- HOWARD C. MAXWELL
Church and Society Unit, Program
Agency, UPCUSA
New York, N.Y.

Appendix II

RESOURCES

BOOKS

CRITICAL ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

R. Athanasiou, J. Zubin, and J. Money; Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973

The author reviews public attitudes toward the topics of premarital sex, sex education, and pornography. Data from several studies are compared, and their points of convergence are noted.

THE INDIVIDUAL, SEX, AND SOCIETY

Carlfred B. Broderick and Jessie Bernard; The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969. A Siecus Handbook for Teachers and Counselors

This comprehensive volume contains a series of papers dealing with the practical and programmatic aspects of sex education, the cultural and value context of sexuality, norms of sexual functioning and special educational problems posed by sexual anomalies and aberrant sexual behavior.

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUAL INADEQUACY

F. Belliveau and L. Richter; Bantam Books, 1970

A series of articles exploring the content and significance of the Masters-Johnson research.

AN ANALYSIS OF HUMAN SEXUAL RESPONSE

Ruth Brecher and E. Brecher; New American Library, 1966

A paperback exploring the earlier Masters-Johnson research through well-done contributed articles.

THE JOY OF SEX: A GOURMET GUIDE TO LOVEMAKING

Alex Comfort, M.D.; Crown Publishers, 1972

A civilized, explicit book, beautifully illustrated, which emphasizes relaxation and enjoyment of the total erotic relationship of a couple.

LOVING FREE

Jackie and Jeff Herrigan; Grosset and Dunlap, 1973

A book that describes, autobiographically and simply, how a couple bogged down in a 6 year marriage freed themselves to become fulfilled in sex, in communication and in love. Valuable for professionals and public alike.

FUNDAMENTALS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Herant A. Katchadourian, and Donald T. Lunde; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972

A college-level text in human sexuality with appeal to a wider audience, this book deals with the impact of the erotic in art, with psychosexual growth, fantasy, masturbation, physiology of orgasm, and sexuality throughout the life cycle.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE HUMAN FEMALE

A. C. Kinsey, W. B. Pomeroy, C. E. Martin and P. H. Gebhard; W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia, 1953.

PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY

James L. Malfetti and Elizabeth M. Eidlitz; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

Contains more than 200 readings drawn primarily from literature which are intended to deepen understanding of concepts in human sexuality.

SEXUAL MYTHS AND FALLACIES

James L. McCary; Van Nostrand Reinhold Books, 1971

This book offers "remedial sex education" by debunking common misconceptions about sex and sexuality. Interesting and scholarly, it is appropriate for lay audiences as well as professionals.

SEXUAL AND MARITAL HEALTH

Clark E. Vincent; McGraw-Hill, 1973

SEX AND SANITY: A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SEXUAL MORALITY

Stuart Barton Babbage; The Westminster Press, 95 pages; paper, \$1.45

Examines present attitudes toward the body, sexuality, love, marriage, divorce, promiscuity, homosexuality and the new morality.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON OBSCENITY AND PORNOGRAPHY

Bantam Books, 1970, \$1.95

ANGER IN LOVE

Samuel Southard; The Westminster Press, 96 pages; paper, \$2.45.

The unfolding story by the therapist of one couple who struggled through psychotherapy to overcome the hostility and anger that was ruining their marriage, this book will help the reader distinguish between justifiable indignation and rage gone astray into selfishness, hostility and violence. Recommended for marrieds, singles, counselors.

OTHER REFERENCES

SEX AND VIOLENCE: WE CAN'T HAVE IT BOTH WAYS

L. Berkowitz, *Psychology Today* 5:14, 1971

The author asks whether research findings "... suggest ... that erotic materials may actually heighten the chances that a few persons will carry out ... bizarre or deviant actions."

PORNOGRAPHY: REVIEW AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC ANNOTATIONS

John Money, Ph.D. and Robert Athanasiou, Ph.D.

Reprint requests: Dr. John Money, Phipps 400, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, MD 21205

A review of 40 studies dealing with pictorial and written erotic material. Reprint from *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

SEXUALITY AND THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

General Assembly UPCUSA, 1970 .75

Public Affairs Committee Pamphlets

Single copies .35. Quantity discounts given

WOMEN'S RIGHTS UNFINISHED BUSINESS, by Eleanor Flexner

WHEN SHOULD ABORTION BE LEGAL?, by Harriet F. Pilpel and Kenneth P. Norwick

SEX AND OUR SOCIETY, by Lester A. Kirkendall with Elizabeth Ogg

MATES AND ROOMMATES: NEW STYLES IN YOUNG MARRIAGES, by Eda J. LeShan

BUILDING MARRIAGE ON TWO ALTARS, by Elizabeth and William Genne

SEXUAL ADJUSTMENT IN MARRIAGE, by Richard H. and Margaret C. Klemmer

SO YOU THINK IT'S LOVE, by Ralph C. Eckert

Information on NOW (National Organization for Women) Media Projects

NOW Says TV Commercials Insult Women

New York Times Magazine, May 28, 1972. This article was based on the monitoring study of WABC-TV carried out by N.Y.-NOW in 1971 and submitted in NOW's petition to deny license renewal filed against WABC-TV on May 1, 1972.

WOMEN IN THE WASTELAND FIGHT BACK: A Study of the Image of Women Portrayed in TV Programming. A 200-page report submitted in the petition to deny license renewal filed against WRC-TV, Wash., D.C. on August 31, 1972. Said to be the most thorough and comprehensive monitoring report ever submitted in a petition to deny. Available from WRC-Women's Coalition, c/o National Capital Area NOW, \$3.50.

OTHER ARTICLES

THE AMERICAN WOMAN-- Special issue of *TIME Magazine*, March 20, 1972.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS LAW AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS: Women in the Wasteland Fight Back, by Nancy E. Stanley; *Hastings Law Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1 Nov. 1971.

WHAT'S TELEVISION DOING FOR 51... OF THE POPULATION? By Caroline Bird, *TV Guide*, February 27, 1971

SHE BEMOANS THE TV WOMEN

An interview with Midge Kovacs, chairperson, N.Y.-NOW Image Committee, *N.Y. Post*, August 6, 1972

WOMEN'S WASTELAND, By Barbara Howar, *Washington Post*, February 21, 1971

WOMEN: Correcting the Myths, by Midge Kovacs, *N. Y. Times*

IS THAT REALLY ME? By Ann Tolstoi Foster. Today's woman has a tough time recognizing herself in those TV commercials, *T.V. Guide*, June 19, 1971

HE'LL THINK YOU BAKED ALL DAY, by B. J. Siegel, *MORE*, May 1972.

WOMEN SHOW HOW WOMEN DON'T SHOW

Report on the original NOW monitoring in Wash. D.C. *Spokeswoman*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1, 1971.

THE IMAGE OF WOMEN IN NETWORK TV COMMERCIALS, *Journal of Broadcasting*, Summer, 1972, Vol. XVI, No. 3

WOMEN IN TELEVISION NETWORK NEWS

Unpublished report by Kay Hickox, Warren Elly, and Eleanor Grass for Dr. Muriel Cantor, Dept. of Sociology, American University, Wash., D.C. Spring, 1972

Unpublished memo on the image of females in children's programming, by Robin Dorr, National Correspondent for Teacher Rights, National Educational Association, Wash. D.C., November 18, 1970.

George Gerbner, article on violence in children's programming, which includes data on the portrayal of females, *Television and Social Behavior*, Vol. 1, Ed. by Comstock and Rubinstein, Report to the Surgeon General on Violence in Children's Programming, Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

IMAGE OF WOMEN IN THE MASS MEDIA, by Jean Faust, Asst. to Cong. W. F. Ryan Hearings on "Women's Role in Contemporary American Society," New York City Commission on Human Rights, Sept. 25, 1970.

AD LIB, by John Beaufort, *Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1971.

Resources from Know, Inc.

Add 15% of price for postage on regular material and
25 postage and handling on starred item.

- THE LEGAL BASIS OF THE SEXUAL CAST SYSTEM**, Jo Freeman, .45
- SESAME STREET AND SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING**, Jo Ann Evans Gardner, .05
- SESAME STREET AND SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING**, Updated with suggestions for eliminating objectionable features, Susan Vogel, Inge Broverman. Jo Ann Evans Gardner, .10.
- JESUS WAS A FEMINIST**, Leonard Swidler, .20.
- VIOLENCE AND THE MASCULINE MYSTIQUE**, Lucy Komisar, .25.
- POLITICS OF TOUCH**, Nancy Henley, .20.
- A WOMAN'S PLACE**: An analysis of the roles portrayed by women in magazine advertisements, Alice E. Courtney and Sarah Wernick Likeretz, .10.
- ON PLAYBOY**, Una Stannard, .05.
- PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WOMEN'S AND MEN'S EMANCIPATION**, Judith J. Fabian, .10.
- SEXISM IN AWARD WINNING PICTURE BOOKS**, Suzanne M. Czaplinski, \$1.75 *
- Many good general articles on sexual attitudes and behavior appear in journals like:
- MEDICAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY**
 - PSYCHOLOGY TODAY**
 - SEXOLOGY**

16mm FILMS

- JOURNEY INTO LOVE**, Produced by London Weekend Television (1972) 43 min., color. Rental \$30.00 from Mass Media.
- A reverent and wistful tribute to love created via excellent music, poetry and pictures from celebrated authors and artists. Sexuality is featured, as well as humanistic love. This beautifully arranged material is recommended for worship of meditation settings and for sex education.
- MR GREY**, Created by William Dear and Robert Dyke (1969), 10 min., color. Rental \$15.00 from Mass Media.
- The consciousness-raising of a male suburbanite caught in the daily trap of traveling to a city job where he is bought and sold in the marketplace through commitment to an organization that cares very little for him as a person. The only dialogue is a one-word "NO-O-O-O" at the end when Mr. Grey sees his existence for the prison it is and rejects it.
- MODERN WOMEN: THE UNEASY LIFE**, Produced and directed by Dan Klugherz for National Educational Television (1955), 55 min., B & W. Rental \$12.50 from Mass Media.
- This splendid NET production thoroughly examines three totally distinct aggregates of women who now face the modern dilemma of wanting to achieve fulfillment as wives and mothers, as well as the intellectual stimulation that comes from a career. Aggregates include: married women in their thirties, college coeds, and career women—many of whom never marry. Climaxed by an interesting discussion among a diversified group of husbands who either approve or disapprove of working wives.

PHOEBE, Produced by the National Film Board of Canada (1964), 27 min., B & W. Rental \$8.00 from Mass Media.

The daylong agony of a frightened and worried teenage girl has been turned into a highly-recommended work of enormous dramatic quality.

Phoebe has just discovered that she is pregnant out of wedlock by her boyfriend Paul. She is a bundle of mixed emotions as her overactive imagination ponders what discovery will now mean to her life. Old and young alike will find this film deeply moving.

THE GAME, Produced by John Kemeny for the National Film Board of Canada (1966), 25 min., B & W. Rental \$10.00 from Mass Media.

Strongly implied is the truth that sexual morality cannot be presold—it must drive from self-discovery, from the practice of behavior that is creative, not destructive. Superbly done through the story of Peter, a conceited teenage boy, who boasts about sexual conquests he has never made until he finally is dared into consummating one. Out of guilt feelings and struggles with his own conscience emerges a reshaping of his whole way of thinking about himself and the opposite sex.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND, Produced by the National Film Board of Canada (1966), 22 min., B & W. Rental \$10.00 from Mass Media.

The third film in the trilogy (with PHOEBE and THE GAME) dealing with teenagers and sex. Best suited for the adult who influences the youngster's superego, it shows how conflicting expert opinion is confusing to the younger generation, plus the vast difference between what is said or written and the continuing search by tempted teens for a satisfying sense of fulfillment at their particular life stage. Since no solution to the problem is offered, users of the film are left to follow up its implications on their own. In no way harmful for teens to see, but more profitable for adults.

WEEKEND PASS, Produced by Paul Von Shreiber. 35 min., B & W. Rental \$20.00 from the Creative Film Society.

A young sailor's weekend of neon lights, posters, burlesque shows, bars, cheap hotels and night people proves very disillusioning. The first young girl he meets turns out to be schizophrenic; the second, a prostitute. Has this been reality or illusion? A sensitive film of a young man's awakening to the harder realities of life. Highly recommended for mature senior highs through adults.

ESTHER, Produced by Robert Johnson. 3 min., color. Rental \$3.00 from Fishtail Sky Films

A beautiful short cinematic poem that follows two young lovers through a park. "The End of the World" is the accompanying theme song. Recommended for discussion (about life, love, people), meditation and in worship services with junior and senior highs.

FEMINISM IN THE CHURCH, Documentary on women ministries produced by CBS. 30 min., B & W or color. Rent at \$10 B & W or \$15 color, from Broadcasting and Film Commission.

INCLUDED OUT, Two minute color film on the language experience of women in worship. Rental \$6.00 from TRAV.

FILMSTRIPS

LIFE, LOVE, SEX . . . AND YOU SERIES, Produced by Thomas S. Klise Co. (1969). Eight filmstrips (9-10 min. each), color, guides, four records. Rent from religious filmstrip libraries.

Sexuality is seen as part of the total person. Sexual growth is related to total growth. Biological and physiological facts are presented within the context of the total female and male person in society. Filmstrip titles: "Love Makes the World Go Round," "Love Gives Life," "It's Great to Be a Boy," "Getting to Be a Man," "It's Great To Be a Girl," "Becoming a Woman," "Your Heredity, Your Environment and You," "Your Life Today Determines Your Future."

IMAGES OF LOVE SERIES, Produced by Thomas S. Klise Co. (1969). Eight filmstrips (9-10 min. each), color, guides, four records with automatic audible signals. Rent from religious filmstrip libraries.

Presents various situations in life from which love flows—family, friendship, marriage. Viewers identify meanings of love out of their own experiences by discussing the situations treated. One recurrent theme is the outward thrust of love which results from a person's response to the inward thrust of an outside reality. Filmstrip titles: "The Human Situation," "Blessed Is Today's Family," "Friendship Is Bread," "Love and Law," "Freedom Is To Run With," "Marriage," "Community," "Love's Yes/No."

A BASIS FOR SEX MORALITY, by Rev. Cannon Bryon Green. Six color filmstrips (approx. 17 min. each), seven study guides and three recordings. Complete set rental, \$17.50 for six weeks, from Mass Media.

Highly recommended for discussion, instruction and motivation with mature senior highs through young adults. Filmstrip titles: "Love, Friendship and Marriage," "The Man-Woman Relationship," "Guidelines for Sexual Behavior," "Pre-Marital Relationship," "Rationalizing Sex Behavior," "The Nature of Sex."

THE SILENCED MAJORITY, Produced by Media Plus, Inc. Five color filmstrips/cassettes narrated by Znele Francis, plus multi-media guide, poster and stickers for use by men and women. Rental \$15 from TRAV.

The women's movement in five parts: "Liberation Now," "Women, Jobs and the Law," "Women in Education," "This Ad Insults Women," and "Rapping with the Feminists."

RECORDS

DAYDREAM, Produced by Kama Sutra. 33-1/3, 12" record, stereo. Artists: The Lovin' Spoonful. Distributed by MGM Records and religious art and book stores. \$4.79.

This album of pop songs has many themes that can be starting points for discussion about the meaning of life and love. Some of the songs like "It's Not Time Now," "Warm Baby," and "Butchie's Time" could be used in worship services and liturgies for added meaning and timeliness. Recommended for discussion and possible use in worship with junior and senior highs.

FREE TO BE YOU AND ME, by Marlo Thomas and Friends. This delightful record is one of the initial attempts to work with children today (and their parents and teachers) to affirm their choices without regard to narrow sex-limited behavior and roles. Useful for all age groups in consciousness-raising sessions or audio-visual exhibitions. Available in local music stores for about \$4.50.

Appendix III

ADDRESSES FOR ORDERING

- BROADCASTING AND FILM COMMISSION
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10027
- FISHTAIL SKY FILMS
311 Laurel Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960
- THOMAS S. KLISE CO., INC.
P.O. Box 3418
Peoria, IL 61414
- KNOW, INC.
P.O. Box 86031
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
- MASS MEDIA MINISTRIES
2116 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
1720 Choteau Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63103
and
1714 Stockton Street
San Francisco, CA 94133
- Dr. John Money
Phipps 400
Johns Hopkins Hospital
Baltimore, MD 22105
- NET FILM SERVICE
National Education Television
Audio-Visual Center
Bloomington, IN 47401
- NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR
WOMEN (NOW) New York
28 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022
- OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10027
- PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
Carmel Valley Road
Del Mar, CA 92014
- PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, INC.
381 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
- SEX INFORMATION AND EDUCATION
COUNCIL IN THE U.S. (SIECUS)
1855 Broadway
New York, NY 10023
- TRAV
341 Ponde De Leon Avenue, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30308
- THE WESTMINSTER PRESS
Witherspoon Building
Philadelphia, PA 19107
- WRC-WOMEN'S COALITION c/o
NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA NOW
1736 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Price: \$1.00

Additional copies available from:

PRESBYTERIAN DISTRIBUTION SERVICE
225 Varick Street
New York, New York 10014

Printed in the United States of America, May, 1974

Copyright © 1974 by the Advisory Council on Church and Society
of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America