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A CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION
OF SEX

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
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requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is a sharp discrepancy between profession and practice in the sex life of the American people. It is commonly said that the philosophy of sexual conduct which has been traditionally held up to the public has been strongly determined by Puritanism. Neither Puritanism nor traditional morals are popular any more. Especially the "Puritanism" and the morals connected with sexual behavior.

Christians are wary when the educated and enlightened talk about "false", "unrealistic", or "Puritan" moral standards because they suspect that such labels are usually applied to deprecate moral values as such, and to rationalize moral degradation on the part of "the emancipated" --- the emancipated from God.

But Christian people, too, are beginning to give attention to the phenomenon of Puritanism and the part it has played as a religious and moral force in shaping the ideals of "decency" and "proper sexual behavior" in American life.

Roman Catholic writers, of course, have condemned Puritanism for years, often only because it is a religious impulse which is non-Roman in origin. Nowadays the Protestants, even the theological descendents of the Puritans, have begun to evaluate their tradition critically. The Lutherans are just beginning consciously to refer to "the Puritan influence" as something to be avoided --- not only because of its "Calvinistic legalism," but also because of its anemic estimate of the God-given gifts of the senses.

What part has Puritanism actually played in shaping the American ideology of sex? Mr. John McPartland, in his recent book, Sex In Our Changing World, offers a convincing and vivid answer to the question, although his sketch of sex in American culture only covers the period from 1900 to 1947.

The psychological and sociological assumptions on which McPartland bases his methodology can be summarized briefly as follows: In each human being dwell the "powerful drives of sexual curiosity, sexual ego, and a strange, terrible streak of sexual cruelty."¹ These drives have been regulated by taboo, law, and ethical code for the protection of the family.² Ethical codes vary from one kind of culture to another, Mr. McPartland asserts.

The ethical system predominant in the early history of America --- monogamy --- was the product of a "village culture."³ But the Industrial Revolution altered this "village culture." People flocked to factory and city. Middle-class women, wives of factory officials and owners, were freed from manual labor and became ladies of leisure. Removed from the realities of farm and village life --- which had been characterized by the affirmation of the physical and its joys, and by outspoken speech about the same --- these idle ladies began to be ashamed of sex. The subject became taboo, and the natural curiosity of children was condemned. "For many children the impulses of sex became linked to the toilet and the outhouse, a filthy, dirty subject to

¹John McPartland, Sex In Our Changing World (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1947) p. 4.

²Loc cit.

³Ibid., p. 5.

be whispered about with the unpleasant giggles of nervous irritation.⁴
 Idle urban women enlisted the church and the school in their campaign
 to make sex seem intrinsically unwholesome.⁵

For the rank and file of Christian people sex is still something
 to snigger about. Whether middle class women played the predominant
 role in degrading this wonderful gift of God in the minds of our people
 is unimportant for the purpose of this essay.

Public morals were concerned mostly with the woman. Her breasts
 became a "bust", her legs "limbs", her pregnancies unmentionable, her
 "decency" protected by preposterously hampering clothes. By 1915 al-
 most all the taboos on sex had been codified in statutes and laws.⁶

But at the very time that the Puritan idea of sex became codified
 the power of the laws was nullified by far-reaching changes in the
 status of women. The huge change was brought about by industrialization,
 an industrialization which made it possible for women to become eco-
 nomically independent. Means were found to lengthen the period of
 sexual attractiveness in a woman's life. The mass production and dis-
 semination of contraceptive devices made it possible for sex to be re-
 duced to terms of pleasure. And the development of modern mass enter-
 tainment, which did not exist until these times, afforded an escape
 from reality, an emotional anodyne which made it possible for women to
 be fecund in their emotions and sterile in their bodies.⁷

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

⁶Ibid., p. 8.

⁷Ibid., pp 9-10.

Many of the finer minds in the nation became devoted to the creation of artificial desires by means of modern merchandizing. The American people, emotionally speaking, changed into a hedonistic, sensual people. Sexual manners changed over night. But the code of sexual morals was professedly that of a simple, monogamous people.⁸

Even some of the most churched rural areas had an active illicit sex life behind the scenes. But these aberrations were treated with bland hypocrisy. As McPartland puts it: "In some communities just about everybody had been in everyone else's bed, or more probably in the barn, but the good people appeared as moral as could be."⁹

In big cities like Chicago the public houses of prostitution in the compact red light district were closed. Victorian morality had tolerated prostitution and localized it. But the new Puritanism had by 1915 driven prostitution off the streets into syndicate houses. Prostitution became a secretive big business. Venereal disease rose to startling proportions, in some cities as high as twenty per cent.¹⁰ Since the problem of disease was not recognized, nothing was done about it, and thousands died in fear, ignorance and squalor.

Ignorance and fear of sex made many married people neurotic. A large proportion of the wives lived in constant fear of pregnancy. Abortion mills, operated by quacks, murdered thousands of women and disabled hosts of others for life.¹¹

The situation among the masses of the urban population in the years

⁸Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹Ibid., p. 26.

just before United States entered World War I is described graphically
by McPartland:

It may seem incredible, but the powerful forces of society, the churches, the good people, even the schools, fought any attempt to teach children that their bodies were fine and wonderful things rather than obscenities fit only for sin; fought any attempt to help the women whose marriage beds were places of awful terror, and who crept into the filthy basements of the abortionists; fought any education that might save our people from syphilis and gonorrhoea. When a woman like Margaret Sanger had the courage to fight against this awful slaughter of women and children, it was a court that sent her to jail, the churches that condemned her, and the good women that jeered her.....¹²

The ancient sexual jealousy of the male was important in this mumbo jumbo of secrecy that surrounded the normal functions of love. Sex had become a tender subject to many American men. Their ignorance had made them blundering, unsuccessful lovers, they could not understand the frigidity of their wives, and they were painfully conscious of their failure to find satisfaction themselves even when they were unaware of the attitude of their wives toward their efforts. Too many of our men, back in those times, had gained most of their sexual knowledge from a turgid vomit of filthy jokes, and their first practical experience from a bored whore in a dirty bed. Their own sense of sexual failure made them bitter opponents of any attempt to change the system that had befouled them. An inverted jealousy made them try to force their frustrated women into deeper seclusion, more abject ignorance.¹³

How much did young people know about sex in those days? Again

McPartland:

In that year of 1915 the dean of girls in a small Eastern college interviewed thirty-four girls.... Twenty of these girls - they were 16 to 19 years old - did not know the basis of sexual reproduction. Eight girls refused to talk about the business at all. Six girls had a fair idea of what went on, and of these six, four admitted to sexual experience. Two of these girls believed that kissing a boy in itself was sufficient to start pregnancy. Four girls believed that love-making caused disease. Some of the girls thought that babies began in the navel as a normal part of marriage.... One girl

¹²Ibid., p. 26.

¹³Ibid., p. 27.

had thought pubic hair to be unnatural, and had tried to hide its existence from her mother. All of the girls in this group considered menstruation to be a rather shameful affair.... Of the eight girls refusing to discuss the matter in the private, informal interview with the dean, two became mildly hysterical and one fainted.... That series of interviews is probably a fair sample of the state of sexual understanding in moderately prosperous American families thirty-odd years ago.¹⁴

There was a similar study of young men in a Chicago public high school made in 1916. This revealed an equally disheartening ignorance. More than twenty per cent of the boys thought masturbation caused disease, thirty per cent believed it caused insanity. There was a good reason to believe that over ninety per cent of these boys had experimented with masturbation, a situation that would appear favorable for the incubation of some sturdy guilt complexes and a few psychoses.... About one-sixth of these boys admitted a sexual experience.... As with the girls at the somewhat fancy Eastern college, these boys from a metropolitan high school were somewhat bashful about sex. Some of them would not talk about the subject, they blushed easily, and two of the boys fainted. This business of an apparently healthy adolescent boy fainting when there was public discussion of sex functions was common; physicians in the Chicago schools expected two or three boys to collapse each time such a clinic was held.¹⁵

Why did young people go into a panic when sex was mentioned? They didn't know what to do about this strange force within them. They had been told by their parents to deny its power, but that proved to be impossible.

It is not surprising, then, that when the first World War suddenly removed the restraints from the young people of America they went "hog-wild". Girls worked in factories and had the freedom which up until that time had been granted only to men. McPartland adds:

The women who didn't work participated in a freedom and excitement of war that was similar in its effects to the factory pay checks for the other girls. They joined in Liberty bond drives, entertained soldiers, and generally broke loose from

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 19-20.

the confines of the home girl. The kind of hysteria we knew on V-J Day was spread through almost the entire nineteen months of that other war, and our women enjoyed an emotional binge unequalled since, and certainly not duplicated in World War II.¹⁶

The men went into army camps and overseas, discovered contraceptives, and engaged irresponsibly in sexual activity. Perhaps some of the sexual license of women in the roaring Twenties was a kind of retaliation against the behavior of their men during the War.

Women's dress changed overnight. Girls cut off their long hair, and wore simple, boyish clothes. McPartland summarizes the change thus:

Our women responded to this period of change much more dramatically and drastically than did our men. The business of cutting their hair short and flattening their breasts and hips is significant of their escape from woman-hood. During this time of social change - the fastest in all history - men took nearly two decades to get rid of their ties and suit coats in hot weather, women practically stripped inside of five years.¹⁷

People in the roaring Twenties went sex mad, pleasure mad, gin mad, automobile mad, money mad. And this was the period in which the children of immigrants repudiated the heritage of the old country, and tried to outdo every one else in debauchery just to prove they were "American."¹⁸

The churches, of course, felt their moral universe tottering, but about all the ministers ever got done was to yell "bloody murder" and

¹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

to denounce social innovations, especially in the behavior of the women: smoking, drinking, cosmetics, short skirts, night clubs, dancing the "Charleston", and so on. But denunciatory tactics made little impression on the youth of the Twenties. The ministers didn't catch up with the problem of sex life among young people till the depression years, the years when money, automobiles, and other luxuries were taken away. The old morals had been discarded because young people found that the old folks had been ignorant and superstitious about sex. They began to believe that marriages weren't made in heaven, women weren't pure vessels, money would buy anything.

But when the crash made all the new values of material wealth and pleasure seem empty, there was nothing left but cynicism and bitterness. Sex was now considered a normal part of living, but morals were to be discovered by trial and error. Some of the young people rediscovered the virtues of their ancestors and went back to the security of family life. But many young men and women, either too distrustful or too poor to marry, just "lived together."¹⁹ By the end of the Thirties sex had become more natural, more of a subject to be talked about, and the churches had begun to speak of the problem of morals and religious ideals.

Then the whole social structure of American life received another severe shock: World War II. Families worked in war plants, and their teen-aged children ran wild. The men, fighting a war which didn't stir their enthusiasm or imagination, went overseas and tried to take refuge in sex. The army of occupation, in Germany especially, went sex crazy.²⁰

¹⁹Ibid., p. 55.

²⁰Ibid., p. 77.

And now, in the aftermath of World War II, sociologists and statisticians are trying to assess the changes that have taken place. They are trying to measure the relation of sexual manners to sexual morals. The so-called "Kinsey Report": Sexual Behavior In the Human Male, published in 1948, is the most ambitious study to date of the sexual habits of the men of America. The picture it presents is appalling to a Christian observer no matter how much one may criticize the methods of sampling and interviewing used by Professor Kinsey and his assistants. With all possible allowances for bias and incompleteness in the study, one must still admit that the difference between the official morality and the actual behavior of the American people in sexual matters is so great that for most people sexual morals, as such, have little guiding or regulative value. Officially, Americans still say that the ideal marriage is monogamous, and that young people are to remain virgin until marriage. But if we are to accept the conclusion of Mr. Donald Porter Geddes, the editor of a symposium of the opinions of eleven experts who comment on the significance of the "Kinsey Report", the average American unmarried male is not virgin, and the average American husband is not likely to remain completely faithful to his wife. In fact, Mr. Geddes would put the situation much more strongly:

Our total deviation from what is legal, let alone from what is considered moral, is so great that if all American males who had at one time or another committed a sexual act that was illegal were convicted and sentenced under the law, 95 per cent of them would be in institutions or jails, being guarded by the remaining 5 per cent of the population.... and we should know by now that many human beings cannot cope with the sense of guilt that builds up within their minds as the result of their doing things which they think are unnatural and uncommon.... Between the sexual code laid down by social institutions, and the

Mores of our various groups, there seems to be little similarity, or at least too much deviation to make for respect.²¹

There has been a strong movement in American life to adopt a philosophy of sex which will come closer to practice. The effort to accomplish this objective has unfortunately involved proposals which deprecate the traditional virtues. Certainly some adjustment must be made in American morals. Either old standards must be infused with new life, or new ones must be adopted that will correspond to some degree of reality. The people of the 1950's are looking for a moral code that will give stability to family and social life and order to the individual soul. People want to be able to live with themselves.

The doctrine of free love was tried in the Roaring Twenties and found wanting. The role of the cynical spectator was tried in the Depression Years of the Thirties. But being a spectator is never an answer to any deep question in life. The Second World War was a postponement to facing the problem of rebuilding the moral structure of American life. There are, to be sure, still many artists and intellectuals who are willing to sit back and watch "the battle of the sexes", but the common people, the "home folks", want something stable. Many of them turn to the churches and say: "What shall we believe about sex? What shall we do? What is right? What is possible?"

What sort of messages do the churches have to give to the people? A description of the physical facts of human reproduction? That is not enough. What about the spiritual basis of the sexual life?

The Roman Catholic Church has the same old "law" approach: compliance to a rigid, detailed, moral code and the ideal of fertility

²¹Donald Porter Geddes, About the Kinsey Report (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1948) pp. 24 - 25.

for the increase of the Church by means of the birth rate.

Liberal Protestantism has nothing to say of any value except that young people will no longer tolerate a double standard of morality: one standard for men and another for women. Men who have nothing to give but a description of the psychology, the physiology, and the sociology of sex life cannot contribute to the fulfilment of the deeper spiritual need of people.

The Episcopal Church tends to follow either the lead of Liberalism as described above, or the lead of the Church of England. The latter has just begun to progress beyond writing learnedly about the Levitical laws concerning consanguinity and debating the admissibility of divorce.²²

But how about conservative Protestantism: the Calvinistic sects and the Lutherans? There is still a strong tendency in these church bodies to shirk the task of finding a really spiritual interpretation of sex and absolutize and romanticize the middle class mores of America before the first World War, damning wildly any innovations since that time. This is to deny, in other words, that the industrialization and urbanization of the American scene ever took place.

The typical reaction of "Bible-belt" fundamentalism to the change in sexual manners among young people can be very well represented in a statement made by a young Methodist minister of a large church in a Texas city:

²²Cf. H. D. Evans, A Treatise on the Christian Doctrine of Marriage (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1870). Also A. S. Nash, Education for Christian Marriage (New York: Macmillan, 1939).

The good people will not permit the sinners to destroy our children. It is a battle, on the one hand are the sinners, the Devil's agents, on the other hand are the believers in the Word of God. The sinners are doubly armed, they have nakedness, and whiskey, lewd dancing, the picture theaters, the artful music of the Devil; that is part of their armor, and they have the smart words, the smooth talk, the clever writings to delude and snare the foolish.

It is a sin the way women walk the streets of this town, they walk with pride in their nakedness, and they don't have any shame.... You've got to cleanse with fire. The sinners that walk our streets, shameless adulterers, young and old alike, won't listen to the Word of God. They're too smart for that, they know too much to let anybody tell them they can't profane things the way they do. A good person can't reason with them, they're too full of sin, and the pleasures of sin. So what we're going to do is cleanse our town of people like that, we'll drive them into the wilderness with scourges. My people can't see their young ones growing up in the midst of a lot of sinners and profaners, naked women, drinkers, gamblers, blasphemers. You want to know what I think is going to happen in this country? Well, I won't tell you what I think, I'll tell you what I know. The sinners are going to reform. They're going to reform because the believers will drive them out. You will see a Christian people who will walk humbly in the eyes of God, their bodies covered, and they won't take marriage the way they've been doing around here, marriage will be in the eyes of the Lord, and people will stay put. Young girls will be modest, the way they were intended to be, and any young fellow who tries to get a girl in sin will be treated like the yellow dog he is.²³

The above pronouncement is a terrible distortion of Christian witness to God's will in sexual matters. The minister's attitude is pharisaical: he and his people are white; everyone who disagrees with his moralistic prejudices is black. His diagnosis of sexual sin is extremely shallow and naive, even though the phrases he employs are an echo of the prophetic denunciations of vice in the Old Testament

²³ Quoted by McPartland, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

writings. And what is his remedy? Cleanse society by force, law, and expulsion. He shows no comprehension of the fact that sin is in the heart and that it comes from a wrong relation to God. His utterance is likely to do nothing more than arouse resentment in the hearts of young people. Their probable reaction will be to kick over the traces completely and to ignore the message of the Church.

What have the young people of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod been told about sex sin and sex purity? The highlights of what the young people have been told are well represented in the utterances of two clergymen of the Missouri Synod: Walter A. Maier and O. A. Geiseman. The late Dr. Maier, in addition to his activities as a radio preacher and as a professor of Old Testament studies, was for many years a moving spirit in the Walther League, which is the youth society of the Missouri Synod. The Rev. O. A. Geiseman is pastor of a large and flourishing congregation in River Forest, Illinois. He is a well known preacher and marriage counsellor.

In an article published in the Walther League Messenger in 1930 Dr. Maier deplored reports that the young women of America had begun to disparage the value of chastity, and that men were losing a feeling of chivalry toward women.²⁴ Dr. Maier diagnosed the general situation as follows:

We do say that we are living in the lowest ebb of morality which the world has ever witnessed, for even a general perspective of history would help to disabuse our minds of such pessimism; but we do claim, with a full knowledge of the implications involved, that never in the history of the American nation have

²⁴Walter A. Maier, "A Symposium of Sex Sin." Walther League Messenger (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), XXXIX, 144.

The signs of moral laxity and impurity been as pronounced as they are now; and that correspondingly the American youth has never been confronted by as many and as powerful temptations to sins of sex as in this present decadence.²⁵

After accusing the American clergymen and university professors of being unfaithful to their responsibility of holding up the "God-given ideal of chastity to the young people in their charge," Dr. Maier offers a series of twelve "definite suggestions for the preservation of purity." They include a study of God's Word and the study of "The Almighty Creator's wisdom as it is revealed in my body and its sacred functions." All the other suggestions deal with the avoidance of suggestive magazines, songs, stories and movies. Special mention is made of dance halls, "those grave-yards of purity, where sin and shame stalk unchecked."²⁶

It will be noted that Dr. Maier does not go into the problem of religious motivation in the preservation of purity. He does not explain how a daily study of the Word of God will help in the matter. Two thirds of his suggestions deal with techniques of avoiding temptation. But what help is offered young people in successfully withstanding temptation? Knowledge of "God's Law", the knowledge that God has laid down the standard of sexual purity and wants His children to live up to it, is no answer to the problem.

In 1935 Dr. Maier published his most complete pronouncement on Christianity and sex, For Better Not For Worse. The book deals with Christian marriage, but includes a few chapters on premarital behavior. Dr. Maier takes pains to reiterate the Scriptural doctrine of purity.²⁷

²⁵Ibid., p. 145.

²⁶Ibid., p. 181.

²⁷Walter A. Maier, For Better Not For Worse (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), p. 333.

He points out that there are still many fine young people in the country who live purely. He warns that transgression of the sixth commandment will produce pangs of conscience. He paints the horrors of venereal disease. His over-all thesis is this: just because many American people are promiscuous does not give us the right to label Christian morality as a head-in-the-sand ostrich morality.

Earlier in the book Dr. Maier points out the failure of ethical teaching as such:

Our high schools and colleges have stressed ethics; but in contradiction we are forced to admit that there has been little advance in applied ethics. While we develop minds and train intellects, our modern processes of Christless enlightenment have not bridged the gap between the brain and the heart or at best have left our higher impulses untouched.²⁸

How is the gap between the heart and the brain to be bridged?

Dr. Maier says: by Word, Sacrament and prayer. But he does little more than make this general assertion. He does not show a convincing organic connection between Word, Sacrament, prayer and the sexual life. This seems to be characteristic of all of Dr. Maier's utterances on the subject. His testimony that purity is possible is encouraging, but not very helpful. Christian young people want to know the how of purity, not just the what. How does believing in forgiveness of sins through the redemption of Jesus Christ give one the ability to live a new life in sexual matters? What happens, psychologically speaking, in the renovation and sanctification of a Christian's sexual thoughts, attitudes and behavior? Are there any techniques of Christian thinking which are especially useful in learning how to live a sanctified life in sexual matters? Dr. Maier offers little help.

Dr. Geiseman's approach to sexual problems is delineated in his

²⁸Ibid., p. 39.

book, Make Yours A Happy Marriage, published in 1946. The book is a small manual on Christian marriage, written in simple, direct language. It contains a brief summary of the Biblical pronouncements on marriage plus practical advice concerning some of the physical, emotional and spiritual problems of modern marriage.

While Dr. Geiseman's manner of writing is quite evangelistic and kindly, his method of dealing with the subject of sex and married life is conditioned by moralism. He simply lists the Biblical prescriptions about marriage and divorce, and then devotes one paragraph to use of the Word and Sacrament and three paragraphs to the use of prayer as the means by which Christians gain the strength to fulfil God's requirements in marriage.²⁹ No specific formulations or techniques of thinking are given which would help a married couple to see their married life in the light of the Gospel expressed in terms of Word and Sacrament. Prayer is pictured as a means of gaining personal conformity to God's prescriptions concerning marriage and the sexual life. There is no convincing, organic unity to Dr. Geiseman's interpretation. His treatment does not penetrate to the heart of the subject. He tends to be moral, rather than religious and "ontological" when he speaks of the role of sex in the life of a Christian.

In the opinion of this writer, the utterances of Doctor Maier and Doctor Geiseman are representative of the thinking that is being done on the subject of sex in the Missouri Synod. This kind of thinking leads to the kind of teaching and preaching which makes the relation of

²⁹0. A. Geiseman, Make Yours A Happy Marriage, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946) pp. 67 - 69.

sex to the total Christian life seem remote and hazy in the minds of ordinary church people. This is especially the unhappy situation among young people before marriage. For that reason this study will confine itself to the problem of interpreting an integrated, Christian view of sex to young people who want to know how to negotiate those difficult years which lie between puberty and marriage.

Because any effort to interpret the relation of sex to the Christian life ultimately involves consulting the Church's primitive sources of revelation Chapter II of this essay will summarize the Biblical utterances concerning sex and its place in the total life of a human being.

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SEX

The published studies of the scriptural teaching concerning sex are dominated by Professor Otto Piper's The Christian Interpretation of Sex. The virtue of Piper's book is that it attempts to show the ontological character of sex, the primary religious significance of sex, not just the ethical problems which are introduced into human life by the facts of sex. Because Piper's work is so much more thorough and clear than any other work examined in this study it will be quoted frequently in this chapter and in chapter III.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments present the gift of sex as a formative, constructive force in human life, a force which is to be regarded as one of the instruments of God's gracious purpose in the lives of His children.

What, in brief, is God's gracious purpose in the lives of men? Obviously, the salvation of men from sin and death, their restoration to a new life of love, intimacy and fellowship with Him and with one another. All the instincts which God has given men, including the sexual urge are, in a way, "divine calls" to live the live of love according to His will and empowered by His grace. Sexual attraction must never be denied or repressed, but used as an occasion and a vehicle for Christian love.¹

¹Otto Piper, The Christian Interpretation of Sex. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) p. 110.

The most obvious purpose of sex is the propagation of the race. This is a gracious purpose of God on the natural level and is an aspect of His continuous act of creating the human race. God's speech in Genesis 1:28 or 9:1, "Be fruitful and multiply" is not to be understood as an ethical demand. God does not command man to perpetuate the race. Fertilization is not in man's power; it is a mysterious gift of God. "Be fruitful and multiply" is actually a promise.²

It is a widespread custom in the Christian Church to speak of the propagation of children as the primary purpose of sex and therefore of marriage. This was the opinion of the Reformers, for example.³ But the Bible does not make a distinction between "primary" and "secondary" purposes as such. The introduction of these distinctions has brought about several foolish and unnecessary perversions of the Christian teaching concerning sex. For example: to say that the primary purpose of sex is the propagation of children is tantamount to saying that the primary concern of God in the creation of human life is the creation of physical life.

Actually the Bible speaks a great deal more about fellowship as a purpose in sex. Genesis 2:18 states that woman was created because God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Piper goes so far as to say: "The fact that man received a female companion shows that sex character and sex desires are regarded as significant and valuable primarily from the standpoint of fellowship."⁴ It is not necessary,

²Ibid., p. 51.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 47.

however, to wrangle over which purpose is primary and which secondary. The point is that both are God's purposes and both are important.

What does the Bible have to say about the character of the sexual instinct itself? First of all, sex is not to be thought of as representing the "animal" side of man. It pervades the whole person.⁵ The Biblical concepts of "body" and "flesh" are not to be identified. It is the body which is the vehicle of sex and not the flesh.⁶ It is the "flesh" which denotes man's sinful tendency toward egocentricity and rebellion against God. This tendency is both physical and spiritual. The body as such is no more and no less sinful than the whole person. Therefore it is good Biblical doctrine to say that though the body is the vehicle of sex, it is not the source of sexual sin. The whole person, the personality, the "I", is the source of sexual sin.

Piper quotes Jesus' instruction: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off" in order to show that Jesus is not thinking of a sex organ as the origin of sin.⁷ True, the hand and the eye are parts of the body, but the Hebrew mind considers man as a unity and often speaks of the body or its parts as representatives of the whole person, not just the physical aspect of a man's nature. The hand and the eye in this case stand for the sinful acquisitive and lustful desire of the rebellious self. The symbols also call attention to the fact that sinful desires

⁵Ibid., p. 105.

⁶Ibid., p. 34.

⁷Ibid., p. 37.

express themselves in concrete ways, and should suppression be necessary in any case, one must suppress the desires at the point where they pass into overt behavior. This temporary suppression is not a cure of the problem of sin, but is nevertheless necessary in human society.

Piper also attempts to adapt the modern distinction between the unconscious and subconscious self to the Biblical philosophy of sex. He judges that "unconscious sexual excitements are not subject to moral judgment. The subconscious, however, are because they presuppose a preceding stage of consciousness."⁸

It is probable, however, that this distinction is more moralistic than religious. It is based on the assumption that sin is a series of acts, rather than a condition, a wrong personal relation to God. Does not Paul say that man is responsible for all the things "done in the body" when he appears before the judgment seat of Christ? (II Cor. 5:10)

What is the Biblical philosophy of the relation of sex to love? According to Piper, the Biblical writers assume the usual distinction between "sexual love" and "personal love." "Sexual love" is a state of sympathy existing between a man and a woman because of their mutual feeling of physical attraction for one another. "Personal love", on the other hand, is a sympathy based on one person's regard for the other person's individuality, character, talents, likes and dislikes.⁹ Sexual attraction may vary, but personal love is more durable, lasting and

⁸Ibid., p. 38.

⁹Ibid., p. 32.

stable than sexual love. Personal love can exist even in the absence of sexual love, but is not to be thought of as something essentially separate from sexual love. Personal love between a man and woman is an enrichment of sexual love. It provides deeper insight into and deeper appreciation of sexual love. The converse is also true.

The distinctively Christian contribution to the idea of love goes one step beyond the human idea of personal love. The New Testament introduces the concept of spiritually motivated love (agape) as contrasted with all the forms of sympathy that belong to the earthly nature of man. As Piper says, "In the life of faith the other person is treated for what he means to God, not primarily for the natural satisfaction or disappointments, sympathies and idiosyncrasies one experiences in dealing with him. Faith ignores these natural relations as little as it suppresses our natural faculties of sympathy and love. But by means of Christian love the other person is seen in an entirely new light."¹⁰ We shall examine the relation between sex and agape in detail in chapter III.

Another prominent aspect of sex according to Scripture is the idea of the union between man and woman in sexual intercourse. This union is called "one flesh". The unity of the "flesh" is a unity which brings the entire natural life of the two persons concerned into a state of mutual dependence, yet without their losing their individuality.¹¹

Out of this unity of the sexual relationship is born a mutual knowledge of the mystery of life; a knowledge which can be gained in no

¹⁰Ibid., p. 70.

¹¹Ibid., p. 43.

other way. The Bible does not say that a person gets to know himself by sexual intercourse, but that he gets to know the other party. Piper says: "In sexual intercourse there is a mutual self-disclosure by means of which both persons are put into the condition of mutual intuitive knowledge."¹² But in addition to this personal knowledge of the other person there is the knowledge of another something, the "inner secret" of life. According to Piper the "inner secret" is to be understood as a mystery in the Biblical sense: as

a state of things the constituent elements of which are natural, but which serves a special purpose of God. Thus its factuality and even its transcendent character can be noticed by everybody, but its meaning remains obscure to all but a few privileged persons to whom an adequate understanding has been granted by God.¹³

What is the general content of this knowledge? Piper says that it is an answer to the enigma of the unity of humanity expressed in the differentiation of sex.¹⁴ "Why am I a man instead of a woman?"

"Why am I a woman instead of a man?" Each person carries this question about with him until he solves the riddle in his experience of sexual union with a person of the opposite sex. "The mystery," says Piper

consists in the fact that as a male (or female) I can be nothing by myself. It is only by union of two persons of different sex that their physical existence is made meaningful. Thus the unity of the flesh consists in the fact that the two persons have mutually revealed to each other the inner secret of their bodily being, and that by means of this knowledge they are now permanently and inseparably bound together. They interpret each other.¹⁵ By sexual contact I learn that by myself I am, and I always must be, a fragment; only my partner enables me to gain my own completeness.¹⁶

¹²Ibid., p. 55.

¹³Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 61.

Man and woman play a different part in contributing to their state of unity. The woman is lover, companion and child-bearer. The man is the one who honors the woman; he is her guide and guard.¹⁷

Sex honor, the honor due to the "inner secret", is thought to inhere in the woman. Paul calls the woman the honor of the man (I Cor. 11:7) Man does not have his own honor as a physical possession. It is something he gains by a respectful treatment of the woman he loves.¹⁸

A woman preserves her honor for her husband.

Piper claims that "sex honor" lies at the base of feminine modesty and feminine pride. A "modest" woman regulates her sexual contacts in such a way as to guard both her own honor and her husband's.

A woman who has no wish to be honored because she is a woman, who regards a man only as one who brings her pleasure, destroys for herself the significance of sex intercourse. Feminine pride is pride at being able to love a husband in such a way that he is compelled to show her honor.¹⁹

Furthermore, man's function of leadership in the sexual union (I Cor. 11:3) is not an ethical or a social differentiation, but a sexual one.²⁰ Logically speaking, the leadership must rest in either the man or the woman, and it is sexually natural that in case of disagreement the decision should be made by the man. The responsibility for the life and well-being of the wife and children is assigned to the man. The woman's viewpoint is often so determined by her sexual functions

¹⁷Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 63.

²⁰Loc. cit.

of conception, child-bearing and child-nourishment that she does not have a stable grasp of social factors other than sexual. A man who is much less affected by sexual factors has a more stable view of social life.²¹ This is, at any rate, Piper's way of explaining St. Paul's dictum that the man is the "head" of the woman.

The all-pervasiveness of sex in woman's life makes her especially subject to domination by a "daemon" of sexuality. As Piper interprets Paul, this is what is meant in Ephesians 5:23, where the man is described as the "savior of the body." Sex may gain such power over the woman that all her conduct is unavoidably conditioned by it.

This is not true of the man, Piper thinks.²²

The idea of daemonic possession was no doubt in Paul's mind when he required that women should be veiled 'because of the angels' (I Cor. 11:10). The woman requires greater protection because she is in greater danger than the man; therefore she does well if she does not set herself out unnecessarily to attract men's glances. For here we have one of the most characteristic differences between the two sexes; whereas a man's desire is awakened by the mere aspect of any part of the woman's body and often by her mere physical presence or her scent left in a room, the sight of the masculine body makes no similar impression upon a woman. What arouses her are rather the enticing, desiring, promising glances of men. In order not to call them forth, in the apostle's opinion, she must be veiled. This is not a one-sided idea approached from the standpoint of the man's superiority. It is rather that here again the mutual demeanor of the sexes find expression. The veiling is not only for the sake of the woman, but equally for that of the man. The admonition given in I Timothy 2:9, that women should not unduly adorn themselves rests upon similar considerations.²³

²¹Ibid., p. 65.

²²Ibid., p. 73.

²³Ibid., pp. 73 - - 74.

Lest too much be made of the pervasiveness of sex in the woman, it is well to point out that it is far-reaching in the man too, so that Paul can speak of sexual intercourse as "sanctifying the body."²⁴ That is, if sexual intercourse can be carried on in a God-oriented manner, then all other activities of the body will tend to be influenced in a wholesome direction.

Sexual intercourse may be understood as a "divine call" in two different ways: (1) The sexual relation compels the individual to overcome his personal isolation in which he was incapable of fulfilling his place in God's creation. (2) By virtue of sex the Christian believer has the possibility of sanctifying his own body and that of his partner.²⁵

These are the spiritual blessings of the Christian married estate. The blessings are accompanied by obligations, however. True married love requires that a lover be physically present with his beloved. No matter how many and great are his duties he owes his partner in marriage affectionate companionship and constant nearness.²⁶ Paul points out that one spouse should not "defraud" the other of the sexual relationship.²⁷

True love implies that both parties feel a sense of responsibility for one another.²⁸ This responsibility, even the readiness to sacrifice one's self for the other person, is not to be understood as a denial of self-hood, however. Piper:

²⁴Ibid., p. 97. (This is Piper's interpretation of I Cor. 7:14)

²⁵Ibid., p. 101.

²⁶Ibid., p. 124.

²⁷ I Cor. 7:5.

²⁸ I Cor. 7:4.

It makes a great deal of difference whether we are always and completely at the disposal of the other, or lose ourselves in one another. The latter attitude ... is really infatuation for one's own boundless need of love.²⁹

In the same way, a Christian spouse does not love the other person for some idealized value which he does not possess. The other person must be loved for what he is. Only then can he be loved in such a way that he will grow toward the stature of Christ.

What is the general estimate of the institution of marriage in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? According to Piper's judgment, the Old Testament seems to regard sex as the highest physical enjoyment. This attitude is pre-eminent in the Song of Songs. But the New Testament seems to view sex less from the viewpoint of the individual and more "as an organic part of the message of redemption."³⁰ It is not clear what Piper has in mind here. But he does say that the New Testament tends to look upon the dark side of sexual association:

God placed a heavy burden on man in sex ... (according to) the Pauline epistles and the Book of Revelation. Paul says expressly that it is good for a man to remain unmarried. (I Cor. 7: 1)³¹

Paul seems to be especially conscious that marriage divides a person's allegiance between the marriage partner and God.

Sexual relationships have only to do with the present life according to Christ's statement: "In the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven." The masculine -

²⁹Piper, op. cit., p. 125.

³⁰Ibid., p. 94.

³¹Loc. cit.

feminine principle is a human principle for this life and not a principle inherent in the structure of the universe in time and in eternity. Therefore marriage is binding in this life only. It is true that Jesus presents marriage as indissoluble, and divorce as a frustration of God's purpose in marriage. But divorce is not presented as a violation of a metaphysical masculine-feminine principle, but as a "putting asunder" of the flesh joined together by God.³²

Before summarizing the points made in this chapter, there is one question which ought still to be considered: Did Christ leave behind a sexual ethic for the guidance of His followers? If the term "sexual ethic" is to be understood as a list of moral prescriptions concerning the sexual life, then the answer is No. Christ did, as shown above, condemn divorce and adultery because they are perversions of God's purpose in the lives of His children. But one has a feeling that the Savior's discussion of moral questions, is always subordinated to His specifically religious purpose: that of bringing home to the hearts of His hearers the actual Presence and Life of the Kingdom of God. Christ is content to list several "don'ts" about sex life, but He does not offer a sexual ethic.

To sum up what the Bible has to say about sex, then: Sex is a gift of God, an instinct which is good in itself. The impulse of sex in a person is to be a vehicle of God's gracious activity in the lives of His people. The impulse of sex may be understood as a divine call to carry out God's will in the propagation of children and in the deepening of fellowship between a man and a woman.

The ultimate in sexual fellowship is the divine institution of marriage, in which one man and one woman experience the completion of

³²Mark 10: 6-12.

their personal sexual significance in the unity of the "one flesh." The ontological character of sexual union prompts a man and a woman to pursue different functions in the marriage relation because of the natural differentiation between the masculine and the feminine nature. The virtues of modesty, chivalry, purity, and honor are primarily sexual in origin and not the result of social conditioning.

The sexual life is not an end in itself, but is to be subordinated to the Life of the Kingdom. It's function in God's plan is to compel the individual to overcome his personal isolation, attain a state of wholesome physical union with a member of the opposite sex, and in the marriage fellowship to sanctify his own body and that of his partner. Marriage is instituted by God, is to endure during this life only, but is not to be dissolved by human agency. Jesus did not speak of sexual life in terms of an ethical system, but as an organic part of a person's life and growth in the Kingdom of God.

Chapter III will discuss the relative merits of Biblical devices for relating concepts of sex to concepts of the Gospel.

In Chapter IV an attempt will be made to relate the Biblical interpretation of the Gospel in terms of the sexual metaphor to specific sexual problems of young people.

CHAPTER III

THE GOSPEL IN TERMS OF METAPHOR

How can sex be interpreted to young people as an organic part of the Christian life? How can the virtues of purity, chivalry and honor be religiously motivated for young people who are in that stage of life which lies between puberty and marriage? How can young people be given an attitude of mind and heart which subordinates the sexual drive to the agape, the mutual unselfish concern of one child of God for another in the Christian community? If the Church is to present a workable philosophy of sex to young people, the sexual virtues of purity, chivalry and honor must be convincingly presented as natural correlaries of the Christian Gospel as phrased in terms of God's work of creation, redemption, regeneration, and sanctification.

Such a formulation of Christian teaching concerning the sexual life must have several characteristics in order to be effective in communicating God's will to young people. It must be comprehensive; it must be organic; it must be simple. It must be comprehensive enough to relate the sexual life to the whole complex of Christian teaching. The closer the correlation between the doctrine of sexual purity and other doctrines the more important it will loom in the thinking of people. The formulation must be organic; that is, it must have a real connection with Christian doctrine. It must not seem to be a loosely related adjunct to the central teachings of Christianity. It must not impress one as a doctrinal mustard-plaster. Then, finally, the formulation of sexual attitudes and behavior in terms of the Gospel must be simple.

If it is not easy to grasp, young people will have little patience with it. For example, telling young people that they should be pure "out of gratitude to Jesus" is not a simple formulation, though it is a simple sentence. There are several implicit logical steps involved in it: What has Jesus done for me? What ought I to do for Jesus? Does the fact that I ought to do something for Him make me able to do it? By the time one has gone through this train of thought in order to explain and qualify this formulation of motivated sexual behavior the whole idea is discarded as being too complicated and far-fetched.

What is the heart of the Christian Gospel to which formulations concerning the sexual life must be related? The heart of the Gospel, the center and pivot of the story of salvation, is the redemptive work of Jesus, through which God restores Himself again to sinful man.

A formulation of the redemptive life, death and resurrection of Christ must, if it is faithful to the New Testament record, contain four basic elements. In saving mankind:

1. Jesus carried out a task for the Father.
2. This task was of great cost both to the Father and to Jesus Christ Himself.
3. Jesus took the sinner's place in the mind of God.
4. Jesus, by virtue of the task which He performed restores life to every sinner who accepts Him in faith.

It is this last feature of the story of salvation which is so neglected by Christians, perhaps because it reminds them of their lack of the new life. It is so easy to talk about the theory of salvation, and so hard to talk about the living reality of God as He manifests Himself in the life of a "saved" person.

This instinct to avoid the crux of the Christian message, the

pragmatic, personal test of its validity, has led the Lutheran Church to utilize formulations of thought which strive to clarify justification at the expense of sanctification. This is a serious blunder. For it is an attempt on the intellectual level to rationalize the failure of people to face the presence or absence of the "New Life" as the ultimate, pragmatic, existential criterion of their success or failure to be in the proper relation to God.

As Professor Richard R. Caemmerer has shown,¹ Lutherans, especially under the influence of Philip Melancthon, have tended to summarize Biblical theology in terms of the first three chapters of Paul's Epistle to the Romans; in other words, in that part of the Epistle which deals almost exclusively with the concept of "justification by faith." "Sanctification by faith," which is discussed in later chapters of the Epistle, is neglected. Thus, Lutherans tend to spend a great deal of time and thought on the means to a new life without much considering the new life itself.

It is customary to summarize Romans in terms of chapter three, verse twenty-eight: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law." Perhaps the addition of Romans 8:11-14 would round out the summary:

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

An even more succinct and balanced summary of the Gospel proclamation is II Corinthians 5:15:

¹Cf. Richard R. Caemmerer. "The Melancthonian Blight." Concordia Theological Monthly. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), XVIII, 321 - 338.

He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.....
 If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

As these passages exemplify, a balanced summary of the Gospel of salvation will stress sanctification as much as justification.

The true relation of justification and sanctification to salvation is always in danger of becoming perverted. The distinction between the two concepts, both in the writings of St. Paul and in the writings of Luther, is made in order to avoid a religion of "work righteousness." The new life which a Christian leads must never be thought of as a "contributing cause" to a man's salvation. Salvation is due solely to God's initiative. (sola gratia)

In order to maintain the idea of God's primacy in the work of salvation Lutherans have fastened on the sola fide as the center of their religious thinking. But if one maintains the primacy of God's action seriously, one must realize that faith is not a contributing cause of salvation either, from the human point of view. Faith is just as much God's work as is sanctification. Lutherans, however, lose sight of this in their personal thinking. They tend to think that "the Gospel" creates faith. The Gospel is not thought of really as the "power of God," but as a message, a proposition about God. Faith is assent to this proposition. And this "faith" supplies power and direction for a life of "works" in some hazy way.

Since the new life cannot come to pass except by "faith" the main problem of religious thinking is: "Where do I get the content and the impulse of faith? Where do I get the Gospel?" A naive, basic, answer

would be: "From God." But this answer is not precise enough. The answer must be more specific: "I get faith from Scripture." Not from man, not from the people around me, but from "The Book." In popular piety it is not even said: "I get faith from the Word." That concept is not concrete enough. No, "I get faith from Scripture." Therefore as a corollary to sola gratia and sola fide Lutherans have coined the phrase, sola scriptura, not solo verbo. The actual content of sola gratia then is sola fide, in the sense of assent to a proposition about God and sola scriptura, understood as the book which contains a list of the correct propositions about God. This characterization is not meant to do justice to the theology of Luther or to the theology of the Lutheran Church. This watered-down description of Christianity in terms of the three sola's misapplied, is thought by this writer to be the least common denominator, the practical core of the American Lutheran ideology to which one must appeal in trying to get Lutheran young people to think about sex as God wants them to think.

Is this picture too pessimistic? The writer does not think so. In his opinion not all of the pastors and not many of the laymen of the Missouri Synod rise above this ideology in their religious thinking. It represents that part of this highly intellectual dogmatic formulation which the average person can understand. The situation is probably the same in other Lutheran bodies.

Sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura: Where is the new life in all this? "Oh, it follows out of faith," is the usual answer. But how? The informant squirms uncomfortably and answers with another cliché: "Good works just naturally spring out of faith."

By this is meant either:

1. That God-pleasing acts flow naturally from God-pleasing thoughts.
2. Or, that when a person knows what God has done for him he will feel grateful, and his gratitude will prompt him to do those good things in practice which he has always more or less known how to do in theory.

In this framework sanctification becomes pretty hazy. To say that good works spring naturally out of faith is actually to say: "I don't know the first thing about the new life; so I don't think about it." Surely a formulation of Christian teaching which can so precisely relate the primacy of God to faith and to the Gospel, by means of which God creates that faith, ought to be able to relate the primacy of God just as precisely to the new life, which is after all, the whole point, the end and aim, of the work of salvation. Surely the cluster of sola's, sola gratia, sola fide and sola scriptura, should be correlated to the all inclusive concepts, salvatio and vita. But care must be taken never to subordinate the concepts of life and salvation to the concepts of grace and faith. Salvation is the key concept. The term vita represents the "what" of salvation; and the formulation of the three sola's represent the "how" of salvation.

The Gospel is the proclamation of the story of salvation. Salvation is the experience of new life. This new life is realized partially on this side and fully on the other side of the grave. The new life is made possible by grace alone, not by man's efforts. The new life, made possible by God's initiative in the redemptive work of Christ, is a certain intimate relation between man and God which is apprehended by faith. This faith is created by God through the Word of Christ. The Word of Christ is conveyed through the Scriptures.

The above outline of concepts is, as a formulation of the Gospel,

an improvement upon the constructions of popular piety. It is an improvement because it offers a more faithful account of how God restores Himself to men who are without Him. But it is so intellectual a formulation, and presents so many logical difficulties that effort to improve the formulation of the Gospel in its terms is of little practical use. Let the theologians debate the kinds of causal relation between faith, grace, life, Word, Scripture, and Gospel. Such theoretical knowledge has little relevance to what goes on in the heart and mind of an ordinary Christian person, especially a young person.

No formulation of Christianity is of much practical use which requires a person to make logical deductions and inferences in applying it to his own life. Logic and inference play little part in human behavior. These mental techniques are employed to describe behavior, to rationalize behavior, but not to produce the actual, spontaneous, living fact of human conduct. Reason and logical inference are so small a part of one's conscious life, and one's conscious reflection of what one is doing is so small a reflection of what one is actually doing, that reason and logic seem very puny devices for living.

Modern Christians have tended to follow this train of thought: God makes Himself known to men through the Word. The essence of the Word for a man is the idea, the realization of the fact that God was and is in Christ reconciling men to Himself. The modern Protestant tends to think of the Gospel as an idea expressed in word symbols only. He tends to forget that an idea can also be expressed on different levels of human consciousness which lie closer to the well-springs of motivation and spontaneity in living. On these levels of consciousness

ideas are not expressed in terms of the logic of words. Actually there is no system of logic in rational discourse which can relate the main Christian words or concepts to one another so that they become a simple, manageable unit. There is a logic other than that of reason which can accomplish this feat. And that logic is the logic of the metaphor: the logic by which men live. The logic which informs the parables of Christ and the finest constructive utterances of St. Paul and St. John. The logic by which the practical value of all formulation of Christianity is to be measured.

A formulation about life in terms of rational logic is by its very nature limited. But a formulation which is phrased in terms of picture-logic is much more comprehensive. It says more in less space. It crosses the borders of human knowledge and shades off into mystery. And better still, a proper metaphorical conception of Christianity can produce Christian motivation and Christian behavior without the tortuous process of logical inference or deduction. Of course, the selection of the metaphor is important. The Gospel ought to be clothed in terms of a metaphor which is already imbedded in the depths of a person's conscious and sub-conscious life. In that way the deepest springs of personal motivation are tapped.

For this reason, as mentioned above, every doctrinal formulation can be evaluated according to the yard stick of those metaphors which are relevant to the actual living of the persons to whom the doctrinal formulations are addressed. The metaphors for the Gospel which seem to get across to the rank-and-file of Lutheran people in America are as follows: The will of God is expressed in terms of His Law. His law is summarized in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are a set of

moral prescriptions. Sinful man cannot follow out these prescriptions until he accepts Christ's redemption. The concepts of redemption and regeneration are phrased in terms of the metaphor of cleansing through blood sacrifice. "there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."²

However difficult it may be to explain the Gospel to people in terms of the metaphor of blood sacrifice, it is still more difficult to relate the new life of sanctification to the blood redemption in terms of the metaphor of God's law, which in practice, means moral prescriptions handed down by the parents and the Church. While the metaphors of blood and law are Biblical, they are not, in the opinion of this writer, well suited to the task of interpreting the Gospel to modern Americans. People have found the popular conception of God's will phrased in the traditional moral prescriptions to be lacking in realism. They are sure that a contemplation of a set of moral precepts has very little to do with real life. For they see that so many talk about monogamy, chastity and purity, but few actually live up to these ideals.

Christian people do not wish to contemplate a set of moral precepts. They want to contemplate God Himself. In order to make their moral life a positive, living, creative reality they want to come into intimate contact with God, who is The Positive, Living, Creative Reality. They want a simple metaphorical formulation of Christianity which will make it possible for them to surrender themselves to God, so that God pulses

²The Lutheran Hymnal, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941)
Hymn No. 157.

through their conscious and subconscious spiritual life just as organically and as intimately and as "nourishingly" as their physical blood pulses through their veins and arteries.

Which Christian metaphor fills this requirement? Which is the metaphor that can most intimately relate the Gospel to the new life in terms of sexual behavior for people today?

One does not have to operate with legal images. One may, as Scripture does, tell the story of salvation in terms of commerce; warfare; man's relation to a king, a prince or an employer; a pilgrimage along the Way of Life; the relation of sheep to shepherd, or of a vine to its branches. But why use political and social metaphors when the Old and New Testaments bristle with a sexual metaphor which is basic to every major concept of spiritual life? Why not talk about a Christian's sexual life in terms of the sexual metaphor? It would seem to be the most natural thing in the world, and yet, to the writer's knowledge, it has never been done in modern times, at least on a popular level.

If sex is as deep as life itself why talk about sexual behavior in terms of "good works", "sanctification," "sin," "virtues", "debt," "responsibility" etc? Why not talk about sex in terms of the sexual life: "intimacy," "stimulation," "impregnation," "birth," "nourishment," "growth," "begetting," etc? Perhaps the relation of God to Christ, Christ to men, and men to one another can be summarized simply and meaningfully in terms of the sexual metaphor. How would it work out?

The metaphor would be valuable if it could be shown to be effective in indicating the proper relation of the life of sex to the activity of God's Kingdom in the hearts of His people. The following situation

would be a fair test case:

Speaking from the masculine point of view: boy meets girl. She is sexually attractive to him. Ordinarily his prior impulse would be that of a desire for physical intimacy with her, an intimacy which in the natural course of events would result in his impregnating her with the seed of physical life, which would bring into being new physical life in embryo. But if the boy lives under the rule of God's Spirit his primary impulse will be toward spiritual intimacy with the girl, which will ultimately result in her impregnation with the seed of spiritual life, the Word of God in its broadest and most radical sense. Their relation would bring into being a new and transformed spiritual life in both boy and girl. The physical reflections of this process would be secondary and might or might not be manifested in their outward behavior, depending on the relation of sex to the higher need of the Kingdom.

Therefore if the sexual metaphor could be shown as a means of expressing the Gospel in the Biblical record and if it could be shown to be a plausible method of speaking to the religious and ethical problems which grow out of the relation of the sexes among young people, this fact would warrant an extensive experiment in the education of young people.

First of all, does the sexual metaphor, as used in Scripture, cover the whole field of Christian teaching? Does it cover the relation of God to Christ? Does it cover the relation of God and Christ to men? Does it, above all, cover the relation of man to man? The answer to all these questions is a resounding Yes.

What is the sexual picture for the relation of God to Jesus Christ? That of a loving Father to His Only Son, of course. The Prologue of the

Gospel of John reads: "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only Son of God, full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1:14)

How did this Divine Sonship come about? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was begotten by God. That is, God was made flesh, God was incarnated, through the device of the Virgin Birth: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," said the angel to Mary. (Luke 1:35)

"Fear not to take unto thee, Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost," said the angel to Joseph. (Matt. 1:20)

"Thou art my Beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased," said the voice from heaven when Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan. (Mk. 1:11)

What did Jesus Himself say about His origin and about His relation to the Father? What did it mean, what was it like, to be the Son of God?

"I and the Father are one." (Jn. 10:30)

"He who hath seen me hath seen the Father." (Jn. 16:15)

"All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." (Jn. 5:23)

"The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." (Jn. 16:27-28)

What about the value of the sexual metaphor in describing the relation of God and Christ to believing people? Again, the New Testament uses it profusely. Because God incarnated Himself as the Son, and because the Son lay down His life for His brethren after the flesh, God becomes incarnate in all who believe on the name of His Son.

John represents the purpose of redemption thus: "It is expedient for

you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you." (Jn. 16:7)

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (Jn. 10:10)

The purpose of life in the Kingdom is "that ye may be the children of light." (Jn. 12:36)

Christ continually insisted that His followers must be as trusting children of the Father. The Kingdom of God, the nourishing, guiding, Life of God, must be accepted with the unaffected trust and simplicity of a child. (Matt. 18: 3,4; 19:14; Mark 10:14,15; Luke 18:16,17) Christ often addressed His disciples as "my little children." (Jn. 13:33).

How do sinful men become the children of God? Not by ceasing to sin, for that is impossible to them. They become children of God by being "born again," (Jn. 3:3 and 5:7) Jesus tells Nicodemus. Jesus insists that unless a man be born again, of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. One who is born again is not born of flesh: "that which is born of flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Jn. 3:5-7). One who receives Christ is born not of blood, but of God. (Jn. 1:13). Peter describes it as "being born again, not of corruptible seed." (1 Peter 1:23). Earlier in this same chapter St. Peter links the new life of the Christian with Christ's new life in the resurrection.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3).

This rebirth is brought about by faith:

Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God and every one who loves him that begot loves also him that is begotten of him. (1 Jn. 5:1).

That which produces the new life of faith is the Gospel, the "Word of Truth": "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (James 1:18).

What are the benefits of being a child of God? What is "new" about the "New Life"? "He that is born of God overcometh the world." (1 Jn. 5:4). "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 Jn. 5:18). To be born of God means to be in an intimate relation to God. "Ye have known God, or rather are known by Him." (Gal. 4:9).

Those who are born of a different spirit besides "The Spirit" are children of hell (Mt. 23:15); children of the devil (Acts 13:10); children of wrath (Eph. 2:3); "cursed children, having eyes full of adultery" (2 Peter 2:14); children of this world. (2 Peter 20:34). God's children are children of light (Eph. 5:8); children of day (1 Th. 5:5); obedient children (1 Peter 1:14). These children are free, because they have been set free by the Son. (Matt. 17:26). That does not mean, however, that they are free from correction and chastening. (Hebrew 12:5).

What does Scripture have to say about the relation of one child of God to another?

Both St. Paul and St. John often speak of the people whom they have converted through the Gospel as their "children." This in itself is a sexual metaphor. St. Paul says to the Corinthians "I have begotten you through the Gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). To the Galatians he says: "I am in travail for you until Christ be born in you." (Gal. 4:19). St. Paul speaks of Philemon as one "whom I have begotten in my bonds." (Philemon v. 10).

But not all relations between the people of God are that of father to child. There is also the relation of an older, more mature person to an infant, or the relation of the older brother to the younger brother. Paul pleads with the Corinthians "I speak as to children; widen your hearts also." (2 Cor. 6:13). He tells the Thessalonians:

But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own Kingdom and glory. (1 Thess. 2: 7-11).

But in general Christian people are brothers and sisters to one another. They are brothers and sisters, not by ties of blood, but by ties of Spirit. Because Jesus Christ became incarnate, laid down His life for them, took His life up again in the resurrection and then went away from His people physically so that He (and the Holy Spirit) might come and dwell in them; they are all one with one another because Jesus Christ Himself has been born in them. Paul makes this image a collective one: the Church is the "body of Christ." That is, Christians are related to one another and to their Lord within the living context of the Church which is the body of Christ.

Christ's intimate union with His Church may be understood as the culmination of God's relation to His bride, Israel, as described in Hosea. In Piper's opinion the metaphor of Christ's marriage to His Bride, the Church, is a development of the Old Testament metaphor.³

³Otto Piper, *The Christian Interpretation of Sex*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) p. 12.

Furthermore, the Virgin Mary has been considered as a symbol for the marriage between Christ and the Church.⁴ Just as in the Old Testament apostasy from Jehovah was called "adultery", in terms of the sexual metaphor, so Christ denounced his impious contemporaries as an "adulterous generation." (Mark 8:30)⁵

The locus classicus for the sexual metaphor as a description of Christ's relation to the Church is, of course, Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, in which Christian marriage and Christ's relation to the Church are placed parallel to one another; so much so, that it is difficult to tell the one from the other in the sequence of the paragraph. (Eph. 5:21-33)

In Piper's opinion⁶ the New Testament use of the metaphor of sex to describe Christ's love for the Church reveals four characteristics of this all-important relation:

1. The unity between Christ and the Church is indissoluble. Christ will never forsake Her.
2. Christ's love cannot be set aside by human sin.
3. The mutual knowledge of God of a mature spiritual person, referred to in 1 Cor. 13:12, corresponds to the mutuality of sex knowledge in marriage. The Church receives the seed of the Word and the gifts of grace from Christ, the Bridegroom, just as a wife receives the seed of new life from her husband.
4. Christ and the Church must not be thought of separately.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁵Ibid., p. 82.

⁶Ibid., pp. 82-83.

The relation of the members of the Body of Christ to one another can be described in terms of the lives of individuals without losing sight of the organic unity of the whole Body. Believers in Christ who have been born anew are in various stages of growing toward the stature of Christ, the perfect Incarnation of God in human flesh. The children of God love one another in such a way that they see Christ in one another and act as Christ's to one another. Perhaps this is one reason why Jesus said in the parable of the Last Judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. 25:40)

And how does one person beget or nourish another child of God? By the "Word" of God's love, the Gospel of Christ. One might call the Word the "seed" of Christ, the seed whereby Christ is born in a person. How can one person plant that seed in another's heart and life? In the last resort, only by being the incarnation of Christ's self-giving, self-sacrificing love. To give the Word of Life to another person does not mean merely to give him "words" about Life. One must have shown one's self to contain Christ the Word of Life in the heart. To give the Christ to some one else, one must give one's self. This again carries out another refinement of the sexual metaphor. Paul's remarks about marriage indicate that it is a fine training ground for learning the self-giving love that Christ has shown to His people.

There is one further refinement to consider; because the Christian has become a new creation, because the Lord of Life lives in him he himself partakes of His Lord's power and dominion over all creation. He himself becomes, so to speak, a lord of Life. Paul says: "All things are yours; ... the world ... life ... death ... things present ... things to

come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3: 22-23). All things belong to Christ's people, but for a purpose. Creative sensitivity, talents, nature, beauty, joys of the body, friendships, sexual love, all gifts are given for a purpose; the creation and nourishment of New Life among people in the Kingdom of God. The spiritually creative living of the children of God is a part of God's work of creation; for God still creates anew every day.

This should be enough to show that the use of the sexual metaphor to describe the possible relations between God, Christ and men is quite Biblical. It will also be seen that the metaphor contains within itself a spontaneous kind of logic which makes it possible for one to connect regeneration, redemption, justification and sanctification without any syllogisms. One can take any feature of the story of salvation, clothe it in terms of the sexual metaphor, and find that it expresses in microcosm the makrocosm of the whole story. One can take, for example, the redemption and see it, not as an end in itself, but as a means used by God to give life to men. Any other aspect of the story of salvation when examined in terms of the sexual metaphor falls into its proper place in God's purpose so naturally that any child can understand it. This is especially true when one applies the analogy of the mystery of natural birth and the spontaneity of natural filial love to their corresponding supernatural realities. The Gospel can be expressed very well in terms of the sexual metaphor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOSPEL AND SEX IN COURTSHIP

Is the Gospel expressed in terms of sexual metaphor a helpful guide to young people who wish to subordinate their natural sexual impulses to the agape, the love which manifests the Life of the Kingdom within them? This chapter will suggest ways in which young people can apply the Gospel to specific problems of courtship in such a way that Eros (sexual love) is subordinated to and conditioned by agape, (Christian love).

As has been shown in Chapter II, the sexual impulse which one feels toward a person of the opposite sex may be understood as a vocation. The sexual instinct is God's instrument for calling a man into a creative and constructive spiritual fellowship with a woman. This fellowship may be understood as a reflection of God's work of the creation and preservation of the world and all of life. Just as God creates and preserves the universe and all creatures therein with the Word of His power and His love, so those who have been spiritually reborn as children of God create and preserve spiritual life in one another. This spiritual life is the new creation, the life of Christ in people.

A person who knows how to answer the call of sex creatively is really an artist in Christian living. Because he is united by faith to Christ in His redemptive life, death and resurrection, he himself has died to sin and has risen again to new life. Because Christ dwells in him he is sensitive to God's purposes which are being carried out in his own life and in the lives of the people around him. Because of Christ

he loves every person he meets for two reasons:

1. Because he wants to help the other person to gain the full blessings which Christ has won for him.
2. Because the other person is mystically united to Christ, and loving him is, in a sense, loving Christ.

God has placed the resources of the universe, the events of history and the joys of the body, mind and spirit at the disposal of a truly Christian person in order that he may become the instrument of God's creative work in the lives of His children.

God's general purpose in the sexual lives of young people is that they grow toward that kind of sexual fellowship which will result in the unity of the flesh: the marriage union between man and woman in which the mystery of sex points to the mystery of Christ's relation to the Church and to the individual soul. A relationship in which one's experience of Christ and the Church casts a reflected light upon the sexual union between a Christian married couple. In this interaction of deepening insights the Christian faith of the two people concerned grows from grace to grace.

The process of growth toward a realization of the ultimate mystery of the spiritual and the physical life begins in the sexual curiosity of young people. Young people crave to know the mystery of sex. This longing cannot be satisfied by giving them information about the physical details of the reproductive apparatus. The lure of sex is, according to Piper, also responsible for the profound metaphysical questions which adolescents ask while they are still in the process of adjusting to their maturing sexual drives.¹ They want to know the "why" of everything.

¹Otto Piper, The Christian Interpretation of Sex (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) p. 59.

especially of themselves. They feel a sense of incompleteness and loneliness which is almost overpowering, and which lies at the root of much of their mental and spiritual instability during the "difficult years."

But young people must be denied the only means of solving the sexual mystery: sexual intercourse. Economic and social factors, as well as spiritual immaturity make it necessary that young people refrain from sexual intercourse during those very years when self-control comes the hardest. When the virtues of purity, honor, chivalry and modesty have been sufficiently developed, then young people are led by God to marriage. How can young people learn to think about one another so that God's gracious purpose in their lives will not be frustrated? How does the Gospel apply to the situations of courtship?

Boy meets girl. The two may feel a sexual attraction for one another which may vary from a hazy, general sense of pleasure and excitement to a conscious desire for physical union. The latter feeling is unwarranted by a truly Christian approach to a casual meeting between boy and girl. But how does a sexual interpretation of the Gospel help to produce the first feeling rather than the second?

What should go on in the minds of young people when they meet? Certainly when a Christian boy looks at a beautiful girl he enjoys looking at her. But he does not look at her as a potential gratification of his own selfish appetites. He does not see in her a "juicy morsel;" he does not look upon her in the same way he would look at a ham sandwich. She is a person; a person for whom Christ died, and in whom Christ either wishes to live or is already living. She is not a potential "guinea pig" for his sexual experiments. She is a person toward whom he spontaneously

feels a sense of chivalry; he honors her because she is a vessel of the mystery of sexual and personal fellowship. It is God's will that Christ be born and grow in her so that she may someday be capable of entering into a marriage relation which will point to the spiritual realities of Christ's birth in the flesh, Christ's self-giving love to His Bride, the Church. Because he sees this potential value in her he looks upon her as some one he would like to help and protect.

In a similar way a Christian girl does not look at a boy as a potential social trophy or as a potential flunky. He is a potential guide and guard, just as Christ is Guide and Guard of the Church. It is God's purpose that the boy grow toward the kind of spiritual maturity in which he can enter the marriage relation and penetrate the inner mystery of his sexual nature. He will learn to behave toward his wife, to give himself for his wife, as Christ gave Himself for the Church. Because she does not wish to inflame his physical desire she behaves modestly in his presence. She does not want the physical to frustrate God's program for the boy's spiritual growth. He must not be drawn toward a physical experience for which he is not ready.

Needless to say, these are the spiritual considerations which prompt Christian young people to control and redirect their thinking and attitudes about sex. The physical reason that prompts restraint is that physical passion may become unrestrained and result in the propagation of a child for whom neither the boy or the girl is able to provide care and guidance.

Boy meets girl. Boy likes girl. Boy asks girl for a date. In all probability the first date will be a very casual experiment, and it may be the only date these two people will ever have together. Therefore the impression they make on one another is decisive. This one date will be

either constructive or destructive for the two people concerned. Therefore when a boy and girl prepare for a date they must remember that their date is a date with God, not just with one another. God wants them to engage in the creative process of making one another more deeply aware of the spiritual implications of their sexual characteristics.

Young people are not likely to contribute to this constructive process if their first date is a movie date. Spending two or three hours being bombarded with the usual Hollywood mixture of sex, murder, false romanticism, a false picture of marriage and a cynical deprecation of chivalry, honor and modesty is going to drug them into a depersonalized attitude toward one another. Two people cannot talk during a movie. So they hold hands. After the movie they talk about the movie and while they talk dream air castles which have nothing to do with reality, and nothing to do with the fact that they are two people meeting one another for the first time. At the end of the first date comes, as often as not, the conventional good-night kiss at the door of the girl's home. The good-night kiss is part of the American dating pattern and is often quite perfunctory and impersonal. It may not always be as promiscuous as it appears to be on the surface.

If it means nothing more casual than a hand-shake to both parties then it may not be harmful. If it is a declaration of respect on the part of the boy and gratitude and appreciation on the part of the girl then it may even be constructive. But if the kiss arouses passion and inflames the imagination it offsets all the personal spiritual gains made during the date. The final impression of the first meeting between the boy and girl will not be a constructive one.

Suppose that the boy finds that the girl has little in common with

him outside of physical attraction. Suppose, too, that he realizes that her interest in him is neither spiritual, constructive, or very personal. Perhaps the girl, through past experiences of inconsiderate treatment at the hands of other boys, has been a slave to her sexual impulses.

Still, the boy finds himself very much attracted to her physically, and he persuades himself that by dating her for a length of time he can "rescue" her from her pre-occupation with sex and the gratification of her own selfish desires. Very often a girl will in a similar way try to justify to herself a policy of dating a boy to whom she is sexually attracted, but who is personally a little repulsive toward her because of his slavery to passion. Boys and girls tend to form these "second-best" companionships because of their failure to find true love with the kind of person they would like to marry.

In any case, the kind of dating which is based on the idea of a reform project is risky. Because the boy or girl who is a slave to sexual passion will not stop wanting physical carresses just because the other party is trying to be a reformer. Sooner or later the would-be reformer persuades himself that by his carresses the balance and wholesomeness of his character will communicate itself in some mysterious way to the other person. As shown above, this "sanctification" of the appetites may take place in the ideal sexual union in Christian marriage, but it will certainly not be brought about by "necking" on a date.

If a boy wants to help a girl toward a more wholesome emotional life he must lead her out of her preoccupation with herself. His goal in his relation with her is to lead her into a proper relation to God. Through faith in Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, she may become an

incarnate child of God. As God's child she will become preoccupied with the processes of spiritual generation, rather than the physical.

But in most cases the achievement of this goal will require that the boy send his girl friend to an older person, who, in dealing with her and in advising her spiritually, will be able convincingly to transcend sexuality in the counselling relationship. It may be difficult for a boy to overcome his desire to act as guide to the girl. His curiosity and his pride may prompt him to conceal from himself his selfish sexual motivation. But if the danger does exist that the girl will misunderstand or confuse his intentions, then he will send her to an older counsellor.

If, however, he has a firm desire to help her and a consistently chivalrous attitude toward her, perhaps he has approached close enough to the stature of the Lord Jesus Christ that he can emulate Him in His behavior toward women. Christ was able to chat freely with the adulterous woman at the well of Samaria without arousing any misunderstanding on her part. Fallen women were cleansed by His respect for their womanhood, even though their sinfulness was obvious. Just as Christ's love for His Bride, the Church, cannot be set aside by the ugliness of Her sin, so His love for an adulterous woman could not be set aside, adulterated or misunderstood. Just as the Church receives the gifts of forgiveness and strength from Christ so a woman ought to receive spiritual strength and protection from a man in whom Christ lives.

But a boy must know himself well enough before he undertakes to reform a girl who attracts him sexually. Is he a mature child of God? Has Christ, the Incarnate Word, become incarnate in him? Knowing the words about Christ's redemption will not be a sufficient guarantee.

For Christ was the Incarnate Son of God. Every aspect of the will and life of God was so incarnate in Him that every word that passed His lips was a reflection of God. He was truly the Incarnate Word. If a Christian young man is to communicate the life of God to a young woman his life, attitudes and words must also be a reflection of God. Christ, The Incarnate Word, must dwell in him so that he becomes an incarnate Word of God. It is only in this deepest, ontological sense that the barrier of the egocentric, sin-perverted sexual instinct can be broken through in the relation between the sexes.

Then he can give himself in friendship to the girl just as Christ gave Himself to the women He met. But he must always remember that all self-giving must be patterned after and dependent on Christ's self-giving for the Church and to the Church. If he fails to achieve unity of being and purpose with Christ his reform project will fail miserably.

He must give himself to the girl in a Christ-like way if new spiritual life is to be brought into being; just as he would have to give himself to her physically in the right way before new physical life could be brought into being through them. Whatever has been said here about proper attitudes of a boy toward a girl can also be said of a girl's attitude toward a boy.

Both boys and girls should be extremely honest in their friendships with the opposite sex because disillusionment breeds cynicism. The current cynical estimate of the virtue of purity among young people may stem very largely from disillusionment in such friendships. The concept of purity has been so watered-down and denatured in the minds of young people that it has a purely negative connotation: abstention from orgasm. But purity is, as shown, a positive, constructive,

manifestation of the Life of Christ in a person. The virtues of chivalry and modesty are likewise manifestations of the Life of Christ, not just surface, conventional patterns of human behavior.

Because young people do not understand the fundamentally religious character of the sexual virtues they find the virtues impossible of achievement. If virtues are impossible then a selfish and predatory attitude between the sexes is permissible, and chaos reigns. Young people strain after the ideal of romantic love and are bitterly disappointed.

But a Christian young person who has become a child of God does not strain after a mate. He knows that God will send him a mate when he is spiritually ready to receive one. All his casual friendships with the opposite sex are a training ground for the day when his greatest and most meaningful friendship will begin.

When that time comes, when boy meets the girl, another problem arises. As the two young people grow toward union with one another how can the growth of their physical intimacy be kept co-ordinated with the growth of their spiritual intimacy?

Two people who are "going steady" or who are engaged to be married tend to spend more and more of their time together. This often involves dropping out of group activities in school and Church. When two people so isolate themselves from their friends and associates and concentrate almost exclusively on one another their physical desire for one another will present a real problem in self-control. This is so even for two Christian young people if they persist in making a caricature out of their relationship. If they are married some day they will not isolate themselves from their friends and from their fellow Christians in the

Church. They will need to associate with their friends and fellow Christians in order to gain help and encouragement in fulfilling the responsibilities of married life. They will found a home and take their place in congregational and community life. If this is their aim, then why do they suddenly remove themselves from circulation? Why do they tear themselves out of the context of the social life in which they have grown up? This is a tragic mistake.

For the kind of love on which a Christian marriage must be built is the kind of love that Christ shows for His Church. This love is reflected in the lives of the members of the Church. Out of the womb of the Church is born the kind of love which can come into the lives of individuals and into the life of a religious community; for Christ, the Incarnate Word, has been born in the hearts of the people concerned. When a boy and a girl center their attention on their life together in the Church their love can keep growing and will not turn back on itself and cause frustration.

It is in a live, active church group that young people can be brought to realize the unreality of ideal love and happiness as pictured in movies, plays, magazines and radio programs. They may also be convinced by comparing their experiences with those of other Christians their own age that drinking, dancing, and "necking" on dates may be inimical to their growth in Christ-like love for one another.

But it is to be hoped that their pastor will not pronounce a blanket judgment against all drinking, dancing and kissing as such. The late Dr. Maier was of the opinion that young people ought not to kiss until formal engagement.² This recommendation is highly unrealistic, to say the least.

²Walter A. Maier, For Better Not For Worse. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946) p. 333.

It is based on the false assumption that in moral conduct "if you say 'A' you will have to say 'B', and if you say 'B' you'll soon want to say 'C', etc." A person who has been born of God, however, does not live according to the alphabet of the flesh. He lives according to the alphabet of the Spirit. A normal healthy boy or girl possesses a certain amount of sexual curiosity. The satisfaction of this curiosity will occasionally take the form of kissing. As long as the kissing is the expression of regard for the other person and commensurate with Christian love, the kissing is good. Why forbid it?

Dancing too usually involves a degree of personal and sexual intimacy. Coupled with drinking it can be dangerous to purity. But pastors ought to realize that young people have to find this out for themselves. If any generalizations are to be made about particular forms of behavior in courtship it would be much more wholesome if the generalizations came out of discussions by the young people themselves. If young people are encouraged by the Church to compare their spiritual and physical experiences in the realm of courtship they will trust their pastor and the members of their congregation. Remaining active in the Church, their courtship will be conditioned by the Life of Christ as He lives in His Church. And the impulse of sex serves as a call to a boy or girl to overcome personal isolation, to love and be loved. This kind of courtship leads ultimately to marriage and the initiation into the inner secret of the mystery of life. The wrong kind of courtship may lead to marriage, but the two people concerned may already have ruined their chances of penetrating to the heart of the mystery of life. If they have they will be disappointed. If, however, they have seen the sexual instinct as a call to spiritual life as well as to physical life the unity of the flesh

will reveal new joys, new experiences of the grace of God.

These are only some of the aspects of the life of courtship which can be illuminated by the light of the Gospel as expressed in terms of the sexual metaphor. It is the hope of this writer that other Christians will some day devote themselves to exploring the potentialities of applying the Gospel to the sexual life in sexual terms.

No mention has been made in this essay of the problems of marriage; or of the problems which confront pastors in counselling young people who are troubled by sexual sin or sexual perversion. These problems are also amenable to solution through the message of the Gospel as outlined above.

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