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A Comparative Study of Protestant Sex Education Literature past and Present

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF PROTESTANT SEX EDUCATION LITERATURE
PAST AND PRESENT

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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March 1969

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Our Inheritance

Today the church in general is confronted with something of a mushrooming problem as it comes face to face with the various actions and attitudes of Christians with regard to the subject of sex and sexuality. It is the problem of understanding human sexuality from a Christian point of view and the application of that understanding to all areas of the Christian life. The real essence of this problem is reflected in a statement by W. Norman Pittenger in his book, The Christian View of Sexual Behavior, as he points out the significance of the Kinsey reports for Christians. He says,

For the Christian, the Kinsey reports have a particular significance. Not only do they show the plain truth that the moral standards of our fellow Americans and even of our fellow Christians, as of ourselves, are less than the most humanistically minded Christian ethic will allow. . . . they also make it clear that a genuine Christian understanding of the meaning of human sexuality is almost entirely absent from most nominal Christians.

This failure on the part of Christians to understand the real meaning of sex indirectly implies the past failures of the Christian church to view sex and the sexual relationship openly and constructively. Any historical survey of sexual thought in Protestantism bears this out. The traditional attitude of the church has generally been negative and condemnatory, and has without a doubt left its mark upon our

present attitudes. The nature of this heritage and the repercussions of its negative influence on our lives today have prompted this present study of Protestant sex education literature.

Today, as in the past, clerical opinion, ecclesiastical pronouncements, and parental attitudes still betray a certain uneasiness about physical sexuality. One recent author on the subject has attributed this uneasiness on the part of some and a definite repressiveness on the part of others concerning sexual issues to what he calls "the inheritance of anti-sexualism." In writing about the "sexual dilemma" of college students, he feels that the church in general has nothing constructive or positive to say to students about sex largely because of the anti-sexual attitudes that have pervaded its past.² Such criticism as this brings to our attention two simple but important questions. Exactly what has the church taught in the past? What is the church teaching now about sex?

The tension between past traditions and present needs in the area of a Christian view of sex and Christian sex education is an obvious one. Almost all church denominations are confronted with the challenge to clear the air of the many erroneous assumptions and myths which have clouded the true Christian understanding of sexuality. As Martin Wessler, associative executive secretary of schools for the Board of Parish Education of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, has pointed out, "The church needs to speak of the importance of

sex, if for no other reason than to refute any presumption that the church is opposed to sex."³ In recognizing this same need, Harry Goiner, professor of pastoral theology and education at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, writes,

To discuss sex fully and frankly on a secular level and outside the Christian context would mean that we lose Christian contact with a vital area of man's experience and by so much, pervert Christianity itself. It would certainly seem that the challenge to the church is to sound a clear and certain note on the sexual life of man, as it stands in the midst of a world that is teetering between a complete moral breakdown like that of ancient Rome and what could be the most universally⁴ wholesome sex attitudes the world has ever known.

The challenge mentioned by Professor Goiner is in fact the challenge to understand, to overcome, and to correct "the inheritance of anti-sexualism."

Purpose of the Study

The way in which this challenge is being successfully met through the current sex education materials of various Protestant denominations compared with the way in which this challenge was not met in the sex education materials of the past is the focal point of this research project. The main purpose or intent of this thesis is not that it be a critical analysis of those materials which have been published or used for the teaching of sex within the church in the past. Instead, in view of the fact that the more recent sex education materials represent a number of significant departures from and revisions of earlier materials, the purpose of this study is

simply to examine some of the more important changes and shifts in accent in an effort to help clarify much of the confusion which in the past has hindered the Christian understanding of sex and sexuality.

Limitations of the Study

Since a survey of all the attitudes and approaches of various sex education materials belonging to the tradition of Protestantism past and present would be much too general an undertaking for a research project such as this, this study will limit the comparison of available materials to two specific areas or categories. These two criteria for comparison will be: (1) The influence and dominance of moralism; (2) The treatment of the abuse of sex and sexual problems.

In view of the fact that the church in general did not begin to awaken fully to the need for some kind of sex education materials for youth until as late as the end of the nineteenth century, this study will confine its comparisons to the period of time beginning at the turn of the twentieth century and continuing to the present.

Ideally it was intended that the comparisons made in this study be strictly confined to specific sex education materials. However, in view of the present scarcity of the earliest materials, a few resources have been cited which

address themselves to the problems of sex but cannot be classified as specific curricula materials.

Methodology of the Study

Because this study involves a comparison of recent sex education literature with that of an earlier period of time, the method of this study has been an examination of bibliographical materials.

Definition of Terms

The term "sex education" generally has two connotations. In the narrower sense it can mean strictly the teaching of technical terminology and biological facts involving an explanation of the functions and purpose of various organs, glands, and body fluids. In the wider sense it can mean the teaching of biological facts together with some kind of moral or religious code of ethics. It is this latter sense of sex education which is considered in this study. Although some of the earlier materials used by the church were written by men in the medical profession, there is, never-the-less, an attempt on the part of all the authors cited to undergird the biological facts with some kind of admonition or ethic be it moralistic, legalistic, situational, or Christian.

The term "church" as it is used in this study will refer to only Protestantism and the major denominations therein, especially Lutheranism. Such references as "the churches' sex education materials" designate those materials used or

published by the major Protestant denominations. Any other usage of the term "church" will be qualified in the study.

Footnotes, Chapter I

¹W. Norman Pittenger, The Christian View of Sexual Behavior, (Greenwich, Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1954), p.17.

²Richard Hettlinger, Living With Sex: The Student's Dilemma, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966), p. 20.

³Martin Wessler, Christian View of Sex Education, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 39.

⁴H.G. Coiner, "The Church's Concern About Sex", Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 30 (September, 1959), p. 674.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF MORALISM

One distinct difference between the traditional and the more contemporary sex education materials in Protestant circles is the predominance and influence of moralism in the former and a significantly greater influence of the Gospel in the latter.

The Nature of "Religious" Moralism

Moralism concerns itself with the categories of right and wrong, good and bad, yes and no. There is nothing wrong with the ideal of moralism or the achievement of moral goodness. Martin Wessler notes that it is a "high-sounding word that appeals to the best in man."¹ Its specific quality consists in the refusal to seize some immediate and inferior good with a view to the attainment of one that is "remoter but higher." It is the way to live "the most intrinsically, valuable life; the way to avoid the snares and pitfalls of impulse and attain those sweetest goods that come only through effort and the sacrifice of lesser goods."²

When such a view of life is applied to "religion," it seizes upon the Law as the only proper norm and standard. Theologically, moralism generally makes the Christian religion a matter of right living.³ Strict obedience to the "laws" founded in the Bible is demanded. Any disobedience or departure from such norms is not tolerated.

When this "religious" moralism is applied to the matter of sex and the proper attitude toward sexual desires, it represents an approach which starts from an authoritative code and claims to have received a divine revelation that settles all the problems of man's sexual life. If one is to lead a "religious" life, it is above everything else essential that one's basic sex drives be suppressed in accord with the revelation. The tone of much of the churches' earliest sex education materials suggests that the only way to succeed at such a suppression of sex is to strive for the development of the intellect and conscience.

Moralism and the Nature of Man

The moralism that pervades much of the earlier sex education materials presupposes a segmented and limited view of the nature of man.

Owing to the influence of Hellenistic dualism on Christian thought down through the ages, there exists the idea of human nature in which the body is opposed to the mind or the soul, and sexuality is associated with the "flesh" as something carnal which must be subjugated to the rule of the spirit or mind.⁴ Though this view was stronger among the early church Fathers as well as the Reformers, traces of it are still detectable in the sex education literature churches were offering at the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, in the Sex and Self Series on Purity and Truth, Sylvanus Stall in one of his books from this series, What a

Young Man Ought to Know, says,

God made us to live in our higher moral and intellectual nature. It was never intended that the lower nature should rule over the higher. If there is an insurrection in the lower nature, the appeal must be to the higher, to that in us which is kingly and superior.⁵

In his Manual of Sex Education, written as late as 1943, O.F. Derstine points out to parents that life is expressed through three mediums: "the body, the mind, and the spirit."⁶

This dualism or compartmentalization contributes to a very narrow understanding of sex itself. As a matter of fact, sex is never clearly or openly defined. It is only mentioned or described with reference to its being a part of the body. Hence, we find some authors speaking only of the "function" of sex. Derstine opens his book, The Path to Noble Manhood, with the statement:

Fundamentally, sex expresses itself through the body. It is embedded in the physical body and is but one of many functions of the body. Properly controlled and used it ministers to our physical well-being, happiness and usefulness.⁷

Sex is also regarded as a powerful force. It is often referred to as the "sexual instinct." Heirs Together, by Melville Capper and H. Morgan Williams, speaks of "a very strong sex instinct" as "being implanted within us" and warns that a responsible use of the powers brought into play by this instinct is therefore essential.⁸ In another book written for both young and old, Dr. E.W. Marquardt writes at one point in his discussion of human reproduction:

The feeling of hunger which animals and human beings have drives them to seek food. The sex instinct leads

them to create life and continue the race. There exists between men and women a strong attraction. This attraction is often described by the word love. Love is due in large measure to the sex instinct.⁹

Upon reading material such as this, we see how easy it was for Christians to be given the impression that the miracle of sexuality and reproduction on a human level is only a shade more sophisticated than that on the animal level.

The Interrelation of Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Life

In most of the early instructional material on sex, while the sex instinct is viewed as only a part of the body, there is also a heavy emphasis on the relationship of sex to the mind and the soul or spiritual nature. Derstine, for example, makes the blunt statement that, "A sex pervert ultimately damages his soul."¹⁰ In still other materials, moral breakdowns are associated with a neglect of "the inner man."

On the other hand, the relationship of the body to the mind is viewed as equally, if not more important, and emerges as one of the primary considerations of most early sex education material. That the body is and must be subjugated to the mind is indicated by numerous references to the development of a strong will power and the "controllability" of sexual desires. The following illustration used in one book serves as an example of this kind of emphasis.

One Christian young man of fine physique, some twenty-two years of age, with a clean record of which he was justly proud, at times had very severe trials resisting the attacks of sexual passion. While busy at his work he succeeded all right, but when unemployed he experienced

great difficulty, especially at night. So persistent was this feeling on one occasion that for two nights in succession he remained awake, striving to control himself, not once closing his eyes in sleep. He finally conquered without swerving in the least from his decision for clean living.¹¹

The extent to which human strength and human intelligence are viewed as being able to control sexual impulses is demonstrated in this comment by Dr. Stall:

Any man who will enthrone his moral nature and give the sceptre of government to the intellectual powers has taken that precaution which will save him from solitary and social sins; or, if previously brought under the dominion of these wicked practices, the redemption of his body, the recovery of his manhood, and his eventual salvation both for time and eternity may be regarded as reasonably assured.¹²

Another facet of this physical-intellectual-moral relationship can be seen in the traditional motto, "Purity is Power." While most of the early sex education literature stresses the fact that the mind is the controlling, guiding, planning part of man, there is also the corresponding emphasis that any abuse of these "individual" natures contributes to the downfall of all of them. One author claims that if the "sexual system" is healthy, normal, clean, and unabused, the brain will be likewise, with practically unlimited possibilities for development.¹³ Another writes, "If young persons poison their minds with evil thoughts, it is difficult to turn around and still harder to restore physical soundness and soul purity."¹⁴ In this connection there is ^{the} recurring admonition for youth to avoid "impure" thoughts, pictures, and books. Dr. Marquardt goes so far as to say,

If a boy or a man frequently permits himself to look at suggestive pictures, to listen to vulgar stories, and to indulge in lewd thoughts, he brings about a mental condition which may lead him later into a house of prostitution.¹⁵

In a word, the achievement of the purity of body, mind, and soul through disciplined determination is set forth as the key to a well-adjusted and well-rounded life.

The Elevation of Purity and Chastity

The basic assumption that man through the faculty of his reason is able to control his physical emotions and desires accounts for the elevation of sexual purity as a high and lofty ideal obtainable by those who know the facts and really apply themselves. Terms like "self-denial," "self-discipline," "self-control," and "self-preservation" occur frequently. The same is true of such negative terms as "self-abuse," "self-pollution," and "self-destruction."

Lapses from purity and virtue are not accidental. They are viewed as coming about through a lack of the right information. Up until the beginning of the twentieth century it was generally regarded to be true that "Innocence is Ignorance," a popular slogan of that day. However, with the dawn of the twentieth century and the increasing freedom with which sex in the secular world was being manifested, the church began to recognize the importance of giving its youth some information about sex rather than have them come upon the truth through some unfortunate experience because of their ignorance.

There is general agreement among the early authors of sex education materials that it is the responsibility of the parents to break the traditional silence on sex and to present the children with the facts of reproduction and the dangers of sexual indulgence when they are old enough to understand. In the opening chapter of his book, Why Was I Not Told?, which is titled, "Whence So Much Sorrow and Grief?", Dr. Marquardt notes: "If the adolescent youth have been enlightened regarding social diseases, sex control, and procreation, then if they get into trouble, it is a misfortune of their own creation."¹⁶ Concerning the nature of this "enlightening," he goes on to say,

I think it is advisable and would be helpful to both students and parents to have sex instruction given to students in high school and college in a wholesome manner as part of their education. The boys should of course hear lectures separately from the girls.¹⁷

A much more conservative and closely guarded approach is demonstrated in another one of Dr. Stall's books, What a Young Boy Ought to Know," addressed especially to little, "unsuspecting" boys. The content of his book is framed in little chapter-lessons in which the setting is one of the author coming into the room of a small boy in the evening and warning him about the sex sins that, if practiced, could seriously ruin his normal sexual development. One catches the "big-brother" atmosphere of these bed-side chats in such remarks as this:

The old saying may be very common, but it is very, very true, "Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Go to bed early. Go to bed to sleep. Don't worry. Keep your conscience clear,

and the night will contribute as much to your growth, strength, and vigor as the day.¹⁸

It is the conviction of most of these early authors, especially Dr. Stall, that sex sins and sex problems are due to ignorance, and that if given the simple facts in the context of stern admonitions and harsh denunciations, children will make sure that they do not blight their lives and ruin their prospects for happiness. This is the kind of "informed" and "enforced" morality which has been handed down to us. It is the source of much of our present frustration, anxiety, and guilt with respect to sexual issues. It has become this because so many moderns have simply failed to take account of the terrible reality of man's humanly sinful predicament and have assumed, all too lightly, that there is nothing the matter with man that education and inspiration cannot cure.¹⁹

A Positive Definition of Sex and Sexuality

More current sex education materials indicate that the repressive tone of traditional moralism has shifted to one of acceptance and affirmation in the light of the Biblical view of sex. This affirmation begins with a positive definition of sex as something good and beautiful rather than evil and shameful.

Because of the exaggerated emphasis in our society today on the physical aspects of sex, it has happened that the Christian meaning of the word has largely been lost. Oscar Feucht, editor of Sex and the Church, notes that much of the

confusion in and outside the church regarding sex is directly traceable to the fact that sex as God's design is not fully accepted.²⁰ Therefore, the first thing that needs to be recognized is that sex is of God. Sex is God's idea and not man's. Erwin Kolb, author of Parents Guide to Christian Conversation About Sex, notes in the opening chapter of his book: "The unique physical structure with the organic and functional characteristics making a person male or female are part of God's design for human beings."²¹ David R. Mace's positive comment on the 'Biblical' account of man's creation is concise.

The Bible has no hesitation in declaring that the sexual nature of man was deliberately created as a part of the divine purpose. The hand of the creator did not falter or stop at this point. The Hebrews accepted this view of sex whole-heartedly. For them the sexual union of husband and wife was a blessing bestowed by God for man's enjoyment and use.²²

This Biblical interpretation of sex as an integral part of God's creation also affirms the nature of man as a sexual being in "unitive" terms. His nature is not compartmentalized as in earlier materials. The English author, Hugh Warner, makes this clear when he says,

For all who study sex, therefore, those parts of the body most immediately relevant to its subject matter-- the endocrine glands, ovaries, spermatozoa, uterus, and related organs--are parts of the "whole" human nature through which the Christian revelation came.²³

From the Christian point of view sex is intended to occupy a positive and significant place in the life of mankind. It is to be received with thanksgiving and respected as a gift which in many respects is more mysterious and wondrous than

other gifts because it includes the gift of life itself.²⁴

In those materials where sex education begins in the early years, the naturalness and goodness of male and female characteristics are repeatedly emphasized as belonging to God's creation. Both parents and teachers are urged to seek to develop natural and positive attitudes appropriate to the age level of the children and are warned against the damaging effects of negative admonitions and punishments.

In addition to this emphasis on the essential goodness and beauty of sex as a gift of God, there is also an equally important stress laid on the acceptance of sexuality as embracing the totality of human existence. Nowhere in any of the current materials is sexuality identified narrowly in instinctual or genital terms. Otto Piper points out that it is not flesh, that is, the sexual organs or genitals, which have desires, but the self.²⁵ This in itself represents a significant departure from the traditional presentation of sex as something strictly biological. Contemporary authors view sex as something we are, not something we do. It relates to being rather than function. According to Seward Hiltner, any view that confines sex to one or another aspect of man's being, "as if it were hermetically sealed off from other aspects and dimensions, is an implicit contradiction or foreshortening of the Christian view!"²⁶ Elmer Witt, author of Life Can Be Sexual, says to seniors in high school that sexuality means going "beyond the physical-emotional process" to discover what sex means in the total life of a person and

society. Sexuality emphasizes "the every-day-ness and every-place-ness of sex."²⁷

Sex and Human Relationships

This positive treatment of sexuality not only represents a unitive approach to the nature of man, but it also views man's sexuality as an expression of the whole person through human relationships. Richard Hettlinger, for example, refers to sexuality as "the whole wonderful richness of the relationship between men and women and not merely the physical or venereal pleasure which is only a part of that relationship."²⁸ The same idea is more fully developed in the thinking of Dr. Sherwin Bailey who writes,

Man was created, not simply as a species sexually differentiated like others for the purpose of reproduction but as a "dual being" comprizing two separate distinct personal components, man and women, each as an individual completely and independently human, yet both naturally oriented towards one another and existing in a state of mutual belongingness which they are continually impelled to express in manifold kinds of relation.²⁹

The effect of such thinking as this on sex education materials today is especially evident in the various discussions of the nature of marriage. Almost all of them agree in teaching that the sexual relationship is not the only or the most important relationship in marriage.

In all of the current Lutheran sex education materials, the nature of these relationships, be they sexual in marriage or purely of a social nature, is always presented in the context of the Gospel proclamation. Because of the love of

God manifested in Jesus Christ, The Christian by virtue of his baptism into Christ is a new man or a new woman. For Christians this means that the sexual life is not only created and given by God, it is also redeemed and sanctified by Him. For the married who have consummated themselves in the ultimate "one flesh" relationship instituted by God, this understanding of sex helps to free one from the restraints that sometimes frustrate the enjoyment of sexual relations.³⁰

Seward Hiltner says that as new beings in Christ we must recognize the "possibilities for mutuality that are inherent in the full dimension of sex life."³¹ Perhaps the best delineation of sexuality and human relationships in Christian application is presented in the Concordia Sex Education Series' text for senior highs, Life Can Be Sexual:

(1) As Christians we see our sexuality as a God-given and God-redeeming way of relating to people. (2) As Christians our understanding begins with the value we place on ourselves as persons for whom Christ died and in whom God lives. (3) As Christians we recognize the sexual dimension of all our relationships with others and work at seeing all persons in God's perspective. As Christians we affirm the spontaneity of our sexuality To love means to be free to respond. (5) As Christians we take seriously God's particular concerns, directions, limitations for expressing our sexuality. (6) As Christians we affirm the joy of God's forgiveness for our misuse of sexuality. (7) As Christians we recognize God as the source of practical, personal power to guide and control our sexuality.³²

Understanding our sexuality in the light of the Gospel proclamation deepens our appreciation of every area of our lives. It is the key to accepting ourselves as well as a guide for loving and sharing with someone else. It is an understanding born and bred through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Sex Education and Christian Ethics

Current sex education materials aim at the establishment of Christian principles, and not the issuing of Biblical rules, as guides for sexual behavior. The traditional legalistic and moralistic applications and mandates have all but disappeared.

The ultimate end of this positive approach is personal confrontation and decision making and not merely the teaching of biological and medical facts. Martin Wessler underscores this point by saying, first of all, that the real purpose of sex education is not "a brash, blunt dispensing of heretofore classified information, nor is it something to be advertized in bright red letters on church bulletin boards." Rather, as he goes on to say,

With dignity and accuracy and in proper language the children will learn essential facts, appreciations and skills to help them not only understand and care for themselves but also understand and respect other people, be they male or female, brother or sister, mother or father.³³

In each unit of the Concordia Sex Education Series in the "Editor's Foreword," W.J. Fields makes it very clear that each of these manuals is concerned with "imparting proper attitudes toward this knowledge."³⁴ A.J. Buelmann writes to junior high students:

Knowledge about sex and its functions is important but it is not enough. Knowledge does not control the emotions or build attitudes or limit desires in any way. For the proper attitude toward sex and the proper use of it you need inside of you the power of the living Christ

to do what a mind does for the body, to direct what you do, say, or think. You need an appreciation of the high standards God has set for his children.³⁵

This accent on developing a positive "Christ-centered" attitude provides the proper background for a Christian view of the "controllability" of sex. Most of the more recent materials still recognize the need for some discipline and self-control. Sex is viewed not only as a constructive power through which God makes possible satisfying relationships and personal happiness but also as a destructive power that can lead to the abuse and misuse of God's intended purpose and design for sex. As Elmer Witt puts it:

The sexual struggle takes place in warm flesh and blood. It happens every day for most people. It can be subtle. It can be obvious. It varies in degree of intensity. It has many forms.³⁶

While we shall look at this struggle in detail in the next chapter under the subject of sex-abuses, it is sufficient to point out here that the motivation and the means for prevailing in this continuing struggle is not to be found in the setting down of certain inflexible prescriptions. Instead, it is found in the Gospel and in the application of faith and forgiveness.

Christian morality grows out of one's relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The quality of this relationship is love.³⁷ The victory we must seek again and again is our Lord's.

Summary

Compared with sex education materials of the past, current literature from the church on sex is clearly and emphatically sex-affirming. The influence of moralism with its segmented and superficial view of the nature of man has given way to the Christian view of sex with its positive accent on the totality of human sexual living under the blessing of God.

In the past, sex information was closely guarded and dealt largely with the misuses of sex. Today one of the more important contributions to our present attitudes on sex that the current literature has made is the casualness and frankness with which human sexuality is discussed in the context of a Christian life.

Sex is admittedly one of the basic human drives, yet it is but one of many facets of the Christian life. A look at the past and the present in the field of sex education indicates that the church cannot address itself to the sexual life of its members without speaking to their total persons and needs. The Christian's view of sex ultimately rests upon a Christian view of life. To use the words of Martin Wessler: "A right view of sex begins with a right view of life, and a right view of life includes its sexual aspects."³⁸

Footnotes, Chapter II

- ¹Martin Wessler, Christian View of Sex Education, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 47.
- ²Durrant Drake, Problems of Conduct, (Middletown, Conn.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), p. 111.
- ³Oscar E. Feucht, ed., Sex and the Church, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 117.
- ⁴Derrick S. Bailey, Sexual Relation in Christian Thought, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1959), p. 233.
- ⁵Sylvanus Stall, What a Young Man Ought to Know, (Philadelphia: The Vir Publishing Co., 1897), p. 26.
- ⁶C.F. Derstine, Manual of Sex Education, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1943), p. 83.
- ⁷C.F. Derstine, The Path to Noble Manhood, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1944), p. 13.
- ⁸Melville Capper and H. Morgan Williams, Heirs Together, (Chicago: The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, 1949), p. 44.
- ⁹E. W. Marquardt, Why Was I Not Told?, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), p. 81.
- ¹⁰Derstine, The Path to Noble Manhood, p. 20.
- ¹¹Will H. Brown, The Sex Life of Boys and Young Men, (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1912), p. 46.
- ¹²Stall, What a Young Man Ought to Know, p. 28.
- ¹³Brown, The Sex Life of Boys and Young Men, p. 63.
- ¹⁴Derstine, The Path to Noble Manhood, p. 38.
- ¹⁵Marquardt, Why Was I Not Told?, p. 70.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 15.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 16.
- ¹⁸Sylvanus Stall, What a Young Boy Ought to Know, (Chicago: The John C. Winston Co., 1936), p. 146.
- ¹⁹W.N. Pittenger, The Christian View of Sexual Behavior, (Connecticut: The Seabury Press, 1954), p. 57.
- ²⁰Feucht, Sex and the Church, p. 215.

Footnotes, Chapter II (continued)

- ²¹Erwin Kolb, Parents Guide to Christian Conversation About Sex, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 12.
- ²²David R. Mace, Whom God Hath Joined, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 38.
- ²³Hugh Warner, Puzzled Parents, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 4-5.
- ²⁴Feucht, Sex and the Church, p. 215.
- ²⁵Otto Piper, The Christian Interpretation of Sex, (New York: Conn.: The Seabury Press, 1954), p. 35.
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- ²⁷Elmer Witt, Life Can Be Sexual, (St. Louis; Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 15.
- ²⁸Richard Hettlinger, Living With Sex: The Student's Dilemma, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966) p. 1.
- ²⁹D. Sherwin Bailey, Sexual Ethics, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1962) p. 73.
- ³⁰Kolb, Parents Guide to Christian Conversation About Sex, p. 14.
- ³¹Hiltner, Sex and the Christian Life, p. 77.
- ³²Witt, Life Can Be Sexual, pp. 21-23.
- ³³Wessler, Christian View of Sex Education, p. 55.
- ³⁴A.J. Bueltmann, Take The High Road, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967) p. 5.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 78.
- ³⁶Witt, Life Can Be Sexual, p. 42.
- ³⁷William Hulme, Youth Considers Sex, (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965), p. 18.
- ³⁸Wessler, p. 33.

CHAPTER III

THE TREATMENT OF SEXUAL PROBLEMS

Closely associated with the influence of moralism in the churches' earlier sex education materials and the Christian influence in contemporary materials is the basic approach to the student's confrontations with sexual issues. What kind of approach is used in the traditional materials and how does it compare with the approach of more recent Christian sex education literature?

Inasmuch as the sex education literature at the turn of this century was permeated with a legalistic and moralistic authoritarianism, this chapter sets out to demonstrate how the treatment of sex abuses and sexual problems is generally suppressive, preventive, and indicative of a marked obsession with autoeroticism in comparison to more recent approaches to the subject.

The Suppression of Sexuality

Formerly, sex was considered to be only a part of the body with only a single function or purpose, that being procreation. Any expression of sex or sexuality beyond this purpose is generally warned against and even condemned.

One noticeable emphasis in the earlier materials is that the "sex instinct" is not to be aroused at all. Young boys, for example, are cautioned against the dangers of

climbing trees, riding horses, climbing over fences, and wearing clothes that are too tight. Dr. Stall in his obsequious, "big-brother-like" manner has this to say to little boys:

Some boys by riding on horse-back, and some because of uncleanness of the reproductive member have experienced an itching of these parts, and when relief has been partly sought by chafing or rubbing, the child has been unconsciously introduced to the habit of self-pollution. Sometimes constipation . . . , which often proves very injurious, and, for causes that I need not now stop to explain, produces a tendency to local sensitiveness and leads to self-pollution.¹

Dr. Stall's remark implies that proper care of the body and the avoidance of any accidental or deliberate contact with the "sexual member" are essential for a happy, well-developed, successful life. In line with this idea there are many references in these early materials to extensive bathing in the morning when first getting up and in the evening before retiring for the night. Dr. Marquardt goes so far as to say, "If the young man keeps his body in good condition and lives a clean life, his descendants will in all probability be vigorous and useful citizens."² This kind of a statement reflects the traditional belief that sexual indulgence of any type not only ruins a person physically, mentally, and morally, but it also has an adverse effect on his offspring.

Children are also warned that there are many areas of youth activity that should be avoided because the sex instinct is aroused when it ought to remain suppressed. Obvious examples of this kind of warning are the many condemnatory

ecclesiastical pronouncements on the subject of dancing. Two notable examples can be cited from the writings of two men who belong to the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Theodore Graebner writes in the fourth edition of his book, The BorderLand of Right and Wrong,

Sometimes this creative instinct or sex hunger which comes with adolescence is termed a sleeping giant in our system. However, if we begin to play with it and tease it, especially if we do so in the dark, it springs at us sometimes quite unawares. This is the real danger of petting or dancing. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and surely it would not be right to run directly into the jaws of this temptation by teasing this greatest of all instincts The dance itself is a form of sexual indulgence; it is not only the cause of the craving for satisfaction but in itself is a satisfaction of the impulse of sex.³

The second statement, which parallels Dr. Graebner's moralistic pronouncement, is from an article in the Concordia Theological Monthly titled, "Biblical Ethics Concerning Young People," written by Dr. P.E. Kretzmann, in which he states,

Keeping in mind how terrible it is to sin with one's eyes, a real danger to a sober and virtuous attitude, how much more will it be true when members of either sex seek, and when young women yield themselves to a physical contact, to a more or less intimate embrace whether this be in the so-called petting, or in sitting in a man's lap in autos, canoes, or any other conveyance, or whether this proximity be practiced in the dance. Any physical contact, in fact, any form of communication by word, or glance, or picture, or gesture, or posture which is apt to arouse or strengthen carnal desires is sinful.⁴

Both of these statements call for the preservation of physical purity by stressing the avoidance of any physical contact. The concern in both examples is with only the what of such purity and not the how. Neither statement goes into the

problem of religious motivation except to condemn such contact as a sin and go on to say in the context that it is helpful to read the Bible and to pray to God for strength to overcome such temptations.

In much of the early sex education materials that churches were using, the relation of sex to the total Christian way of life is ignored, if not totally misconstrued.

The Exploitation of Conscience and Imagination

To help assure the suppression of sex in the lives of children, there is a noticeable exploitation of a child's conscience and imagination in many of the earlier materials. This exploitation comes about mainly through the pronouncement of divine judgment and the motif of fear or dread. One author refers to this approach as, "the morality of consequences."⁵ In one book, Christian young people are warned that they must realize that the purpose of the sex instinct may not be violated without inviting upon themselves "God's wrath and displeasure and the penalties of moral impurity."⁶ Any kind of abuse of the sex organs is a serious sin and one that cannot but "call down the wrath of God upon the offender." Any youth who is guilty is encouraged to go to God in penitent confession and pray God to give him strength "to break the spell of this evil habit."⁷ Dr. Stall intimidates children by citing 1 Corinthians 3:19, "If any man defile the temple of God, him God shall destroy," and then saying to his young

readers, "I am sure that you do not desire to be banished from the presence of God."⁸

The classical example of the use of divine wrath as a curb to any misuse of sex is the churches' traditional comments on the sin of Onan recorded in Genesis 38:9,10. There the incident is told of how Onan was required to take the place of his dead brother Er, and to raise up children in his place through intercourse with his widow. This he refused to do: "so when he went to his brother's wife he spilled the semen on the ground lest he should give offspring to his brother. And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, and he slew him also." (RSV) The way in which this passage was used to terrify young men and women is illustrated by this excerpt from the Pulpit Commentary on Genesis.

The tendency of all sin is ruinous both for body, soul and spirit. Whether as a natural result of indulgence in vice, or as a direct punitive visitation from God, Er and Onan were consigned to premature graves; and this it should be noted by young persons of both sexes, is the almost inevitable consequence of indulgence in secret vice, and in particular of the practice of which Onan was guilty. Yielded to, it debilitates the physical constitution by a wasting of physical powers, it impairs mental faculties, it corrupts the moral nature, it sears and petrifies conscience, and finally, what might have been a fair specimen of noble virtuous manhood and womanhood it covers up, a wasted, shivering skeleton beneath the clods of the valley, causing it to lie down among the sins of its youth.

Today, however, it is almost universally agreed by Protestant scholars that Onan's "sin" consisted in his failure to fulfill his responsibility to the Jewish levirate marriage, a custom of the ancient Jews by which a dead man's brother was obligated to marry the widow if there were no sons. (Deut. 25:5-10)

The act referred to, the spilling of his semen, was probably not an act of masturbation, but an act whereby Onan performed "coitus interruptus."¹⁰

The fear of God is only one of a variety of ways used to frighten young people and corrupt their attitude toward their sexuality. The use of another effective approach is indicated in this remark of Dr. Stall addressed to little boys:

The terrible and helpless condition of those upon whom this habit has permanently fastened itself, you may be able to judge from the fact that in order to prevent the repetition of the act of masturbation, and if possible to permanently cure the victims of this vice, some boys have had to be put in a "straitjacket" their hands fastened behind their backs, or their hands tied to the posts of the bed, or fastened by ropes or chains to rings in the wall and various other extreme measures have had to be resorted to in the effort to save the person from total and physical self-destruction.¹¹

There are also grave warnings about certain "social sins" and their sad consequences. These sins are often described as leading "to diseases which are ineradicable, which invade the tissues and organs of the body, and which are as loathsome and as contagious as leprosy itself."¹² Concerning these sins Dr. Stall writes,

When we sum up the total of these possibilities and probabilities and add to the pain the financial expense, the personal degradation, the possible humiliation because of exposure in this world and of eventual exposure and divine punishment in the world to come, we are willing to leave the intelligent reader to judge whether a pleasing sensation which lasts for a moment is an adequate return for what not a few, but thousands upon thousands, are this moment suffering both as to the immediate and subsequent results, some for a temporal period, and others for an unending eternity.¹³

Today modern medical science has done much to correct many

of these wrongly conceived views that any indulgence in sexual desires in some way leads to such terrible consequences. Yet such medical advances have not helped that much in eliminating much of the suspicion and the anxiety which still confuse our present understanding of sexuality. Teaching how to avoid problems and resolve conflicts, while it should be a part of sex education, need not be the major concern. As has already been pointed out, the most important element of such education should be the development of a positive appreciation of human life and all that it involves!¹⁴

The Obsession with Autoeroticism

In the consideration of specific sexual problems, the earlier sex education materials show a marked obsession with autoeroticism, that is, self-generated sexual pleasure. Most of these early manuals specifically refer to this practice as an act of "self-pollution," insofar as it was believed that the entire being of one who indulged in this act was debased and polluted.

In a few of these manuals, attention is called to the human hand and its uses. Dr. Stall goes into some detail about the blessing and the curse of the hand. "Man is the only animal to whom God has given a perfect hand." Whether or not the hand is used as a blessing or a curse depends upon one's "wisdom, moral sense, and conscience." Finally, Dr. Stall comes around to saying,

Man is possibly the only animal which persistently pollutes and degrades his own body and this would not have been easily possible to him if God had not given him hands, which He designed should prove useful and a means of great help and blessing to him in his life upon earth.¹⁵

The hand like the "sexual organ" is only a part of the body and is not to be regarded lightly. No doubt this caused some boys a certain sense of guilt or shame whenever they looked at their hands. There is even one instance in which one author underscores the "evilness" of the hand when it is used to abuse the self by citing our Lord's words in Matthew 18:8 as being very applicable: "If a hand or foot causes a person to stumble, it should be cut off and cast away."¹⁶ E.B. Lowry warns mothers to be on the alert for small boys who put their hands to the genital organs frequently, pointing out that, "children who have acquired the habit of self-abuse usually sleep badly, become thin, haggard-looking, peevish, nervous, and excitable."¹⁷

This practice of self-pollution is also said to be the cause of spasmodic convulsions and fits:

The pleasurable emotion with which the beginning is attended culminates in a spasm of the nerves, terminating for the time all pleasure, and leaving the nerves as wasted and depleted as the body of a person whose entire physical system has been brought under the influence of a spasm, or fit as it is called. Such repeated shocks to these special nerves are communicated to the nerves throughout the body, and if such shocks are long continued, the entire nervous system will eventually become shattered and ruined beyond all hope of complete recovery.¹⁸

Another reason why continued self-pollution is to be avoided at all costs is that it causes a disruption of the

balance of the body fluids, specifically the semen and sexual hormones. It is stated by some doctors in this early sex education material that if the semen is allowed to remain in the body it is absorbed by the system and promotes its normal growth. Dr. Marquardt suggests, for example, that, "the first function of the sex or reproductive organs is to develop the boy into a vigorous man."¹⁹

There is some recognition of the fact that seminal emissions are a kind of built in "safety valve," but it is also stressed that they shouldn't occur but once in a "ten to fourteen day period." The safe limit is generally stated to lie within a range of "from two to six weeks."²⁰ The ideal is held out to young men that the highest and best development of their physical and intellectual powers involves the retention of all sexual fluid, and hence, "the avoidance of all emissions even those in lawful sexual intercourse."²¹ Nowhere in these early materials is the matter of seminal emissions treated as a natural phenomenon without attaching some form of censure to it.

The effects of self-pollution on the moral nature are also spelled out in detail:

This, my dear boy, is an important fact, and if you were ever to fall a victim to this vice, you would find that even with the first sense of guilt there would come a spirit of rebellion against God and against your parents. You would soon begin to call into question the wisdom and goodness of God. Your pleasure in good books, in religious instruction, in the Sunday School, the Bible, the Church, and all holy things would rapidly diminish. You would begin to lose faith in all that is good, and as you persisted in your sin, you would grow

less and less like Jesus and more and more like Satan.²²

Dr. Stall disregards any hope of salvation for children who cannot control their emotions or sexual desires. He presumes to judge the helpless child and condemns his actions as unforgivable and satanical. One wonders how a child, in view of this harsh judgment, could ever bring himself to come before God in prayer seeking forgiveness and feel accepted?

Because of the seriousness of this sin of masturbation, the authors of these early materials are inclined to discuss certain remedies and "techniques" for the prevention of this evil practice. According to Dr. Stall, the most fruitful source of self-pollution is ignorance.²³ Where a boy has masturbated, "inflicting weakness upon himself by a course of sexual defilement and physical debasement," his only security is in its immediate and complete abandonment and this calls for "a thorough and overmastering determination to bring his lower nature into subjection to his higher intellectual and moral natures."²⁴

The impression is given in the earliest sex education literature that one can really overcome such sexual desires if certain precautions and safeguards are taken. Dr. Lowry and Dr. Lambert in their book, Himself, encourage sleeping on a hard bed with "light covering since warmth tends to stimulate the erotic desires."²⁵ Dr. Stall advises against sleeping on feathers since "Feathers are too heating and are apt to press against the spinal column which always tends to

and does produce physical and sexual weakness."²⁶ At another place in his book for young men he points out that a single bed is always preferable for both the married and the unmarried, the reason being, "where two sleep in the same bed, the one who has the stronger vital power is likely to absorb the vital forces of the weaker one."²⁷ The most classic technique for the suppression of sexual desire involves the application of cold water to the sexual organs. Dr. Brown writes,

Cold sponge baths should be taken every day, and at any time when the desire to masturbate becomes very strong, a cloth wrung out of cold water should be applied to the parts and renewed until the desire passed.²⁸

Dr. Stall, on the same subject, writes,

Where emissions occur at too frequent intervals, it will be found very beneficial to stand a bowl upon the floor, and then with the body placed in sitting position over it, cold water should be dashed freely over the sexual organs each morning, and if necessary, each evening.²⁹

In many instances the endeavors of youth to employ these techniques and their subsequent failures to succeed in stilling their sexual impulses no doubt served only to increase their frustration and heighten their feelings of guilt and despair.

Current View on Masturbation

Current sex education materials discuss the problem of masturbation openly and honestly. They do not assign it any major priority in their presentations, but view it only in the context of a broader, Christian understanding of sexuality.

It is not defined or referred to as self-pollution but generally described as "the handling of the sex organs until there is sexual climax." One author notes that while it is commonly practiced among youth, "this does not make it right nor the desirable thing to do."³⁰ To parents its practice by young children is described in terms of "genital curiosity" and is recognized as natural and harmless. Erwin Kolb writes,

Out of fear or lack of understanding, parents are sometimes too severe in their discipline, with the result that the masturbator comes to look on himself as an especially dirty sinner and inferior to his brothers and sisters, playmates and school mates. All of us have need for confession of the sin of selfishness, and the masturbator should not be singled out as a special sinner.³¹

General practice at the youth levels, especially among males, is acknowledged in several sex education units for youth. A.J. Bueltmann writes to those in junior high,

Masturbation may indicate that the person is not mature emotionally. He is continuing an infantile habit. It is common for babies to explore their bodies by fingering toes, touching their sex organs and sucking their thumbs. All this is natural at the baby stage. For a growing child to go on sucking his thumb, amusing himself with his toes, or playing with his sex organs is out of place. The teenagers should be outgrowing such habits as pleasure giving as they may be.³²

William Hulme, a professor of pastoral theology and pastoral counseling, has noted in his book, God, Sex, and Youth, that masturbation can be divided into two types: "Masturbation as an occasional exploratory venture on the part of the teenager. . . . Masturbation as a compulsive and regular release from emotional tensions."³³ A more recent book by the same author speaks of masturbation in terms of the absence of "emotionally

satisfying relationships" and as "sex turned inward on ourselves." The loneliness that sex was meant to alleviate remains unalleviated. It is "a turning inward of that which was meant to turn us outward."³⁴

The Current Approach to Correction

The approach to masturbation is far from one of condemnation as is indicated by the above references to it. Persistence in it should be handled with practical correction and never with negative admonitions and punishment.

The approach to correction in much of the current sex education literature of the church is mainly through references to undesirable motives. There is, for example, the occurrence of such comments as, "masturbation is self-enjoyment in solitude," "self-centered," "an escape when the going gets tough," "a bad habit," and there are also appeals to maturity and control for the sake of developing a capacity for later "sexual communication."³⁵

Youth are encouraged to face their problem realistically and honestly if it persists, and most materials recognize that it is not always so easily controlled. Elmer Witt offers three concrete suggestions:

Tackle the cause as well as the symptom. . . . The cause is normally deeper and often more difficult to face. It may be lack of confidence, a feeling of rejection, or fear of failure, real or imagined.

Don't be afraid to admit where things have gone wrong. But at the same time, hang on to Him who makes things right

The most practical help is the most difficult: finding someone with whom to talk about the problem. God still works effectively through people. It's not always easy to find someone who knows how tough the power struggle is and who is willing to share in an open and trusting relationship.³⁶

Hulme, especially, stresses the importance of these interpersonal relationships, especially with peers, parents, and even the pastor. He says,

By confessing the way you feel about yourself to a tangible counselor, you will find it easier to do the same with the intangible God. This will help you to break guilt's power that binds you to your rut.³⁷

To this remark by Hulme we can add the fact that while God is intangible, He is also a very personal God who desires very much to enter into our lives through the creative and sustaining power of His Holy Spirit and reign in our hearts. Speaking about the abuse of sex in general Otto Piper points out that to live by the grace of God's forgiveness means that "we are prepared to believe, in spite of our guilt, that God will still do what is right with our misused sexuality, and that it is entirely a matter for God to determine the purpose He will give to our guilt-burdened life."³⁸ The person who by his masturbation is rejecting himself as a normal person needs to be made aware of the love that forgives and accepts the unacceptable.

In addition to this positive accent on the power that is available through faith in Jesus Christ, youth are encouraged to involve themselves in constructive activities and to develop interests and hobbies. Hulme suggests that

even after the cause for masturbating has been successfully removed there is the possibility that the symptom may still remain. This being the case, he calls students and youth to examine their "sincerity" to see just how determined they are to overcome the habit.³⁹ In this respect, interest activities and interpersonal relationships need to be "worked at."

Summary

Today there is a definite consensus that masturbation is not as damaging as it was once thought to be. More recent materials have taken the "scare approach" out of masturbation and replaced it with a positive concern for proper personality development and faith in the providence and power of a personal, redeeming God.

More current materials are not as preoccupied with the problem of masturbation as previous materials. Most of the present material seeks to eliminate many of the false notions generally associated with this practice and views the act itself, if it becomes compulsive, as being contrary to the will and purpose of God.

Footnotes, Chapter III

- ¹ Stall, What A Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 95.
- ² Marquardt, Why Was I Not Told?, p. 74.
- ³ Theodore Graebner, Borderland of Right and Wrong, (4th ed. St. Louis; Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 105, 110.
- ⁴ P.E. Kretzmann, "Biblical Ethics Concerning Young People," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol, 4 (September, 1933), p. 652.
- ⁵ Richard Cabot, Christianity and Sex, (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p. 8.
- ⁶ Carl Harman and E.W. Marquardt, Vital Facts of Life, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 4
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 22.
- ⁸ Stall, What a Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 102.
- ⁹ Canon Spence, ed., The Pulpit Commentary: Genesis, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., undated), p. 444.
- ¹⁰ Hettlinger, Living With Sex: The Students Dilemma, p. 90.
- ¹¹ Stall, What A Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 115.
- ¹² Stall, What A Young Man Ought to Know, p. 94.
- ¹³ Ibid., pp. 105, 106.
- ¹⁴ Supra, p. 20
- ¹⁵ Stall, What A Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 92.
- ¹⁶ Brown, The Sex Life of Boys and Young Men, p. 13.
- ¹⁷ E.B. Lowry and Richard Lambert, Himself, (Chicago: Forbes and Company, 1916), pp. 64, 65.
- ¹⁸ Stall, What A Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 111.
- ¹⁹ Marquardt, Why Was I Not Told:, p. 70.
- ²⁰ Stall, What A Young Man Ought to Know, p. 73.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 73.
- ²² Stall, What A Young Boy Ought to Know, p. 108.

Footnotes, Chapter III (continued)

- ²³Stall, What A Young Man Ought to Know, p. 55.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 68.
- ²⁵Lowry and Lambert, Himself, p. 67.
- ²⁶Stall, p. 53.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 54.
- ²⁸Brown, p. 67.
- ²⁹Stall, p. 82.
- ³⁰Reuben Behlmer, From Teens to Marriage, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 35.
- ³¹Kolb, Parents Guide to Christian Conversation About Sex, p. 71.
- ³²Bueltmann, Take The High Road, p. 71.
- ³³Hulme, God, Sex, and Youth, (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 74.
- ³⁴Hulme, Youth Considers Sex, p. 42.
- ³⁵John Phillips, Sex Education In Major Protestant Denominations, (New York: Council Press, 1968), p. 9.
- ³⁶Witt, p. 45.
- ³⁷Hulme, p. 49.
- ³⁸Piper, p. 199.
- ³⁹Hulme, p. 49.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Summary

The challenge to understand and to accept sex and sexuality from a Christian point of view is a very real and a very necessary one. This comparison of the church's sex education materials past and present reveals that in the past the negative side of sex has been emphasized to the neglect of the positive side; the wrong use of sex has been treated almost to the exclusion of the right use, and moralistic and legalistic pronouncements have overshadowed the goodness and beauty of sex as God's gift of creation. This has left the impression that all sex acts are sinful.

Many of the sex education manuals published or used by Protestant bodies at the turn of this century are basically "anti-sexual" in their scope and content. Professing to give information that will be helpful to boys and young men, many of these books are written by those who are themselves obsessed with the abuses of sex. The information imparted is generally false, the influence perverting, and the design of the authors is to work on the imagination of their readers to scare them and to coerce them into the preservation of "sexual purity."

The content and approach of the early material is also based on a compartmentalization of the nature of man which

presupposes that sex can be controlled by the higher intellectual nature. In comparison to more recent approaches, the danger of this presupposition is that the achievement of purity is strictly dependent upon human efforts. In reality, however, as current sex education materials show, purity is not something attainable by man, it is something God gives. These current materials view purity and sexual morality in the context of an appeal to accept the forgiveness of sins offered in Christ as the only thing which gives a pure heart. In this same connection, recent materials emphasize that the Christian life is not really a life of keeping rules. It is more a process, a continuing process of living up to what God has made us and what He wants us to be.

Finally, this comparative ^{study of} ~~of~~ sex education materials indicates that there is an impressive awakening in Protestant denominations to both their responsibilities and opportunities in sex education. In fact, a major break-through is taking place in an area where taboos have largely ruled the churches for generations. In this respect, the greatest gain has been in the rediscovery of the Christian understanding of sexuality and its affirmation as a positive aspect of man's nature and life.

Implications

The lesson that the church can learn from a study of

"its inheritance of anti-sexualism" is twofold. On the one hand it has come to realize that great danger there is in trying to establish definite rules for right and wrong sexual behavior. Whereas in the past Christians came to identify this rather legalistic and suppressive approach with the "Christian faith," today we realize that this was just a cultural expression of that faith and culture is now changing. Where fear and guilt once ruled, there is now confusion and uncertainty, and in the midst of this uncertainty Protestant churches must offer guidance and direction.

The second lesson that the church can learn from its tradition on matters of sex is that it is not an agency of reform. Instead, it possesses transforming power and its business has to do with transformation. Whatever and wherever the church speaks on sex, it must do so in the context of its primary and essential message, with an awareness that it is teaching and speaking a dynamic word that has transforming power.

Whatever the future may hold in store for the church with regard to the matter of sex and sexuality, one thing is certain; the formulation of its message and the guidance and direction it offers will involve a definite awareness and understanding of its "inheritance of anti-sexualism."

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