

Consensus

Volume 21

Issue 1 *Women and Men in Theological Education:
Exploring the Present, Creating the Future*

Article 26

5-1-1995

Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy

Susan Ludwig

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Ludwig, Susan (1995) "Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy," *Consensus*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 1 , Article 26.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol21/iss1/26>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

on preaching. While he does call us to re-shape our practice, more demonstrations of what this looks like in actual sermons would help.

Mike Rattee
Emmanuel Bible College

Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy

Marva J. Dawn

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,
1993

172 pp. \$12.99 U.S.

This is a dangerous book. It is dangerous because there is such a dearth of resource material about sexuality as it pertains to Christianity at a time when many Christians are struggling to integrate their faith and their sexual experience. It highlights all of the old beliefs about sexuality in language that appears to be understanding, tolerant and somehow new.

At first glance this book might appear to be helpful. It espouses a more comprehensive understanding of sexuality than that of the popular media. Some of the author's theories appear to be in keeping with current beliefs about sexuality. Who among us would disagree that sex and sexuality are two different modalities—that the first is a part of the other, and the latter is far more encompassing than the scope of the first?

If we examine the issues, however, we will see that this work is seriously flawed. First, Dawn talks about friendship. What she discusses, however, is what the church does with those of its members who by choice or by chance are not in a couple relationship. She says nothing remarkable about friendship and its role in a sexual ethic but discusses friendship only as opposed to a marriage relationship.

Second, the author discusses homosexuality. This is a brief chapter with frequent references to things "unnatural". While the author says that she does not "join with those who affirm the biblical picture in ways that are hostile to persons of homosexual orientation", her text and conclusions are heterosexist. Her conclusion is that "we... must spend time with (homosexual individuals) gently to encourage their choice of God's will for their sexuality, to stand by them and forgive their rebellion... to resist with them the cultural notion that we are not complete without genital fulfilment".

Divorce is addressed from the perspective of the spouse who is left by an adulterous or alcoholic partner. While she berates the church who taught us that divorce was the "worst sin on the face of the globe", she also admonishes congregations to try to "support couples contemplating second marriages in maintaining friendships" rather than subjecting the children of the original marriages to the ultimate difficulties of blending marriages.

There is one small part of the chapter on Teenagers, Dating and Sex that has some merit. In it the author describes a part of her lectures to teens in which she graphs a progression of physical intimacy beginning at introductions and ending in sexual intercourse. After describing the progression in detail, she invites teens to decide for themselves where to "draw the line". Of course, she makes it clear that premarital (that is nonmarital) intercourse is off limits. She offers no other injunction about the limits. That, she says, is between the Holy Spirit and the individual. While this is good standard sexuality education, it is not unique to this author. Similar models can be seen in secular sexuality education material.

In short, there was little about this book to justify reading it. It tries to appear to offer a new and enlightened view of Christian Sexuality. What it serves to do is to underscore the belief that Christian Sexuality is one of the greatest oxymorons in the English Language.

Susan Ludwig
Sexuality Education Consultant
Newmarket, Ontario

Critical Caring: a Feminist Model for Pastoral Psychology

Valerie DeMarinis

Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993

159 pp. \$22.00

The author writes a very careful introduction in which all the ground-rules for the book are contained. Whenever this happens in a book it is a challenge to the reader to see if all the expectations of the author are indeed fulfilled in the writing.

The author writes for four reasons. 1. "It is important to articulate those struggles and challenges as a natural but never easily experienced part of the work we do." 2. "To offer a working model of Critical Caring for pastoral psychotherapy. This model is not meant as a solution to anything but rather an invitation to those in pastoral psychology and related fields of concern to do their own investigation and articulation of what pastoral psychology is and does." 3. "The time is appropriate for those working in or related to the field to communicate new ideas, theories, methodologies, and questions." and 4. "I want to share the life stories and clinical journeys of persons who have been faced with situations that challenged their ability to care at the deepest levels and who found creative and courageous ways to use their diversified expressions of belief and trust to find realistic strategies for hope and movement."

The author is concerned for understanding and defines terms which will be used in her writing. She wants particularly that the terms "religion", "symbol", and "feminist" be clearly understood. It is in light of