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## **The Christian Community and Sexual Morality**

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# The Christian in a Sexual Revolution



by Lewis Smedes

Are we caught today in the whirlpool of a sexual revolution? Or are we lost in a sexual wilderness? Or are we experiencing a sexual renaissance, breaking through the crusts of Victorian hypocrisy into a celebration of nature's sweetest gift?

Albert Ellis thinks American society is completely "muddled, mixed and messed up" in its understanding of what is right and wrong in sexual behavior. He may be right. But what we all know is that traditional Christian sexual morality has been set on its head in our time. The question is whether it means the destruction of spiritual values or the recovery of natural values — or both. Are we being liberated or are we only giving a free license for wickedness? Or, both?

Whatever, we must realize that the sexual revolution is a terribly serious phenomenon. Sexuality is so completely interwoven into our humanity, touches on so many of our social institutions and shapes our life-style so definitely that whenever sexual morals change radically, all of life changes. A sexual revolution is a profound disturbance in the depths of life, individually and socially.

The deepest division within humanity is that between male and female. We cannot locate an abiding and clear distinction between smart people and stupid people, between black people and white people, or good people and bad people. In fact, there is no other permanent division between sectors of mankind. But the polarities of male and female exist in all times and all cultures. As Emil Brunner wrote three decades ago, "this distinction goes into the very roots of our personal existence and penetrates into the deepest metaphysical

grounds of our personality and into our destiny." Given the truth of this observation, Christians have a challenge today to give a hard look at the causes, symptoms and the possibilities for redemption of the sexual shake-up going on around us. The sexual revolution needs more than excited curiosity and moral hysteria; it needs responsible and sensitive Christian awareness.

Can we make the church an authentic community of support for bewildered people in search of sexual identity? Can we buttress the nuclear family or find alternative resources for deep personal intimacy? Can we validate moral law by demonstrating its validity as the expression of a compassionate Lord; can we ourselves add compassion to morality? Can we reach people with the message that sexual morality can go hand in hand with a celebration of sexuality? Can we grow into the life in Christ, not as sex-deniers, but as whole beings who thank God for sexuality in word and in deed? Can we keep sex within meaningful institutional boundaries? Can we help restore to sexual expression meaningful human commitment and deep human companionship? Will the church accept the unavoidable fact of the sexual revolution as a challenge?

We are devoting the pages of this issue to a few facets of sexual morality in our time. We do so in the hope that they may be practically useful to the pastor. We can touch on only a few matters; there are hundreds more we could talk about. The writers share a sense that both law and compassion are vital to the moral and spiritual life of the people of God. We hope the reader will sense their concern, and that some readers will respond with reflections of their own. ■

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## Bedeviled by Sex

by Alice and Kenneth Hamilton

"Nothing is more popular today than singing the praise of sex. . . There is just one difficulty . . . in the happy chorus . . . Sex does not exist."

*There are some elementary things we must get clear in our head. One of these is that sex is an abstraction. Only persons are real, and it is persons who are modified by their sexuality. Kenneth and Alice Hamilton remind us that abstractions easily become false gods; and as deified non-entities they capture silly spirits and turn them into devotees of the cult. The "sexual revolution" is a new mythology which some churchmen have, naively, helped create. Kenneth Hamilton, who was a distinguished guest professor at Fuller in 1969, is Professor of Religious Studies and Alice Hamilton is Professor of English Literature at the University of Winnipeg in Canada.*

Nothing is more popular today than singing the praises of sex. Sex is beautiful. Sex is liberating. Sex is joyous. Sex is the green hope of a gray world. Sex, once hated by life-denying Puritans, has now emerged to be acclaimed as God's wonderful gift to the human race. Sex is to be celebrated everywhere by free spirits who have shed the ghosts of guilt and the shibboleths of shame.

So goes the chorus of praise. There is just one difficulty to prevent a thinking person from joining in the happy chorus. This is the rather formidable difficulty that SEX does not exist. Like RACE, it is one of those ideological abstractions that bedevil our modern world.

The word "sex" exists, of course. It refers to *natural* (as opposed to *grammatical*) gender. It is quite properly used in those questionnaires which ask us to indicate our sex by filling in the letters *M* or *F*. But this is not at all what people mean when they talk about sex education or when they buy books promising to tell them all they have ever wanted to know about sex but were afraid to ask. They are not referring to the plain and highly important fact that human beings come in two sexes. They are referring to an idea in their heads, an idea that is assumed to be quite specific but which is actually very vague.

There is no doubt about the general area of human experience that is indicated by the common (and improper) use of the word "sex." An *Encyclopedia of Sex*, for example, is likely to include such items as: articles on the physiology of the male and female sexual organs; statistics on prostitution; information on laws relating to homosexuality; advice about



overcoming feelings of "sexual inadequacy"; and accounts of the puberty rites practised among Australian aborigines. Certainly it is convenient to lump together anything and everything belonging to — or having some sort of connection with — human sexuality, and then to place it all under one umbrella-word. But trouble arises immediately we conclude that the word "sex," when used in this blurred fashion, stands for anything definite. Pronouncements about the need to free sex from the last vestiges of Victorian prudery and counter-pronouncements about there being too much emphasis upon sex in our permissive society: both of these indicate emotional attitudes, but very little else. It is rather futile to urge that sex is either healing or harmful when the sense in which the word is being used has never been properly clarified.

So long as the word "sex" continues to be used to denote *anything at all* which can be connected with human sexuality, it will continue to mean *nothing in particular*. Divorced from its literal meaning of natural gender, it becomes a bloodless abstraction. The abstraction soon develops the traits of a mystical Power, a Power which can be viewed as being either beneficent or malevolent yet which in any case is imagined to be mighty in its pervasive influence for weal or woe over men's lives. All such abstractions — like all false gods — do have power in the world. They gain their power through the faith that is placed in them. And the most fatal result of their power is that they, though nonexistent, cause men to ignore what does exist and therefore to misinterpret and misuse reality.

There can be no doubt that sex has become a false god for modern man. The nature of this abstract divinity can be seen by looking at how the word "sex" has become severed from its roots in reality and made into a Power.

## II

Sometimes the word "sex" is used simply as a euphemism for copulation, presumably because it is easier to say than "sexual intercourse." There is nothing wrong about this usage, although it seems oddly Victorian to avoid a direct statement of the meaning intended. There is, however, plenty of evidence to suggest that those who voice most loudly their emancipation from Victorian hypocrisy in sexual matters are much less consistent than they think and much less ready to face facts realistically than they claim. Were the word "sex" always understood to be a shortened form of "sexual intercourse" then there would be no need to protest that sex does not exist. Copulation, a basic fact of the animal world, is if anything an even more omnipresent fact of human existence. Because of their biological inheritance, men and women are sexually active for a much longer period of their lifespans than are the rest of the animal creation. Thus Desmond Morris, author of *The Naked Ape*, calls man "the sexiest primate alive."

In *The Naked Ape* Morris draws some interesting conclusions from this starting-point. To begin with, he observes how the face-to-face position in sexual intercourse is readily available to man as it is not to other creatures. It allows the sexual act to become personalized. Then, the slow development of the human child reinforces the tendency of males and females to form permanent relationships, or what Morris calls "pair-bonds." Civilization, says Morris, grows out of biologically-given human nature. Human laws and social structures are not so much imposed upon man's "natural" state as determined by the characteristics of this state.

It is not necessary to share the naturalistic determinism found in *The Naked Ape* to appreciate Morris's realistic approach to human sexuality. While he uses the word "sex" throughout his book, there is no doubt about what he is describing. He sees biology as a base upon which man's social and personal life is built. Yet he never imagines that the

sexuality of the human animal can be abstracted from the totality of human life or that biology gives any justification for making sex into a pseudo-entity and an end in itself.

The point is that naturalism can be realistic about human sexuality because it is concerned with the totality of man's life on earth. It sees sexuality to be mainly a matter of natural gender, of male and female; and it asks how human masculinity and femininity fit into the pattern of human existence. If it believes in any abstract Power working through the universe, it conceives this Power to be the drive behind biological existence itself: Nature or the Evolutionary Process. It tolerates no lesser divinities. Thus sex, in the narrow sense of sexual intercourse, comes to be viewed as being one small (though important) aspect of male and female behavior that takes its place within the larger pattern. Sex is made for men, not man for sex; and the well-being of the human race depends upon how wisely men and women direct their sexuality in relation both to their biological equipment and to the conditions governing the survival of the species.

It is precisely this kind of inclusive vision that is lacking in so much of contemporary sex-talk. Because the word "sex" suggests primarily copulation, people imagine that there is a whole dimension of life having its focus and meaning in the sex-act. Sex is elevated, therefore, into an autonomous activity to be pursued (like art) for its own sake. Each man and woman is supposed to regard sexual fulfilment as a distinct and individual goal. The "sex-life" is considered to be worthy of as much attention as once was the life of faith. Without a satisfying sex-life, so one is constantly assured, it is impossible to be "a full human being."

It would seem, indeed, that the sex-life has taken over the attributes of the religious life, with the difference that a specific religious vocation is taken to be a calling reserved for those individuals who are conscious of having received the call. Sex-life is without discrimination, and no one is exempt from this calling. It is not enough to be a man or a woman and to express one's masculinity or femininity through all the activities of life. It is necessary to prove that one enjoys sexual fulfilment. Having sexuality is of no consequence without having "sex"!

## III

In an earlier and better-educated age than ours is, the apotheosis of the sex-life would have been readily explained. The phenomenon of people running around chanting the praises of sex would have been interpreted in terms of a revival of the cult of Venus. The popular slogan of a few years back, "Make Love not War," would have been recognized as the invitation given by Venus to Mars — an invitation, incidentally, bringing unhappy results for both god and goddess and doing nothing to improve the vicious nature of Mars, because there was no ultimate, tempering fusion of concupiscence with irascibility. Myth has its own realism, for it embodies the observation and experience of many generations. The charming figure of Venus in classical mythology succeeds much better in making us aware of what is involved in our bemused concentration upon the necessity for sexual fulfilment than does the abstraction which currently goes under the label of "sex." Since Venus is simply one divinity among many, mythology reminds us how illusory is the hope that devotion to her alone will bring peace and happiness to mankind. On the other side, scores of present-day experts are eager to assure us that "sexual liberation" will inevitably usher in Utopia. Of course, if we follow the prescriptions for liberated sex contained in such books as Charles A. Reich's *The Greening of America*, or in Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, or in Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*, we shall end up with totally

different types of Utopias resting upon conflicting views of sexual fulfilment. All that the experts agree upon is that sexual hang-ups are at the root of our problems, and that more and better sex will cure everything.

When we know that what we are supporting is a cult of Venus, at least we are not being self-deceived or hypocritical. Greek prostitutes and procurors took as their patroness *Aphrodite Porne*. Having a trade, they wanted it to prosper. In these days when abstract sex has taken over the worship of the goddess of carnal love, what is frequently overlooked, is that getting people to think about sex (or to contemplate sexual activity at second-hand) is now even more profitable than the trade of prostitution.

How far the highly-publicized "sexual revolution" of the second half of the twentieth century represents an actual change in the sexual habits of contemporary men and women is something hard to gauge. We may not be very wide of the mark in guessing that this "revolution" is to a large extent the product of the publicity announcing it. Moreover, the greatest change it has brought about is probably the social acceptance of the *idea* of sex as promoted by the manufacturers of sex-images. In the commercial exploitation of sex-images, the *idea* is plainly as important as the image. In *Playboy* the appeal of the center-fold Playmate is not left to make its own impression. It is studiously reinforced by continual exposition of the "Playboy philosophy."

Hunting has been called "the image of war without its guilt, and only five-and-twenty per cent of its danger." But the huntsman is at least engaging in something real and concrete. Sex movies, sex-books and girlie magazines provide strictly spectator-sport. Those who join in the watching or the reading can contemplate sexual adventure from which all the danger as well as all the guilt has been removed. They can also share in the illusion of being front-line fighters in the revolutionary war for sexual freedom.

Living up to an image is something else again, because it involves more than an idea. Many people cling to the comfortable prejudice that hypocrisy is to be found only among members of the Christian churches. The gap, between lip-service and sincere worship issuing in lives lived consistently related to the creed professed, is to be found in connection with all religions. It is undoubtedly present in connection with the cult of Venus in its latter-day form. The commercial promoters of the cult praise Venus but, quite blatantly, serve Mammon instead. The professed followers of the cult are loud in their claims concerning the joys that are to be found through sexual liberation. They seldom exhibit the marks of joyous freedom in their personal lives.

Meanwhile our mental hospitals grow ever more crowded, and drugs and alcohol are used increasingly to provide the fulfilment that sex is supposed to give so fully and freely. The satisfactions which Venus bestows upon her worshippers are unique. They are, however, limited and they answer only a fraction of the needs of human personality. When Venus is known only in the guise of the abstraction of sex, her gifts are deprived of their glamor. They are likely to satisfy less and to dissolve more quickly into boredom, disgust and even horror.

## IV

A depressing feature of modern church life is how frequently spokesmen for Christianity, when they do not simply deplore current cultural developments, with equal simplicity applaud them. The pages of the religious press carry many protests against the exposure given to sex and violence by the mass media. But on these same pages there are also to be found protests stating that sex, being God-given, ought not to be paired with violence and called an evil. Both the protests and the counter-protests follow the contemporary superstition

holding sex to be an identifiable entity, a "thing" actually existing. They overlook the real issue, which is that men and women can handle their sexuality in ways that are either constructive or destructive. It is not sex that is good or bad, but the attitudes and behavior of the sexes. If sex be conceived to be an independent Power asserting its claims over mankind, then the result can be nothing else except intellectual and moral confusion.

This confusion is not decreased by the efforts of some Christian apologists to prove that Christianity, while it has seemed to be anti-sex in the past, is actually, when properly understood, enthusiastically pro-sex. Thus we have the phenomenon of one clergyman announcing over the radio the amazing discovery that Jesus, like other men, had a penis; and of another enthusing over the beauty of *Playboy* photographs of nudes with "pubic hair and all." Such efforts to try to reverse the common accusation that the Christian attitude toward sexuality is "negative" and "Puritan" are neither edifying nor convincing. They are not convincing, because they confirm the suspicion of non-Christians that the Christian churches have no principles except to please at any price. So, when sex is socially taboo, churchmen preach purity and abstinence and swear that only Christianity prevents people from lapsing into pagan depravity. As soon as society rebels against centuries of Christian hypocrisy, churchmen conveniently find that the beautiful creativity of sex is what Christianity really has stood for all along.

The unedifying side of the effort by churchmen to celebrate sexual liberation is, however, even more seriously injurious to Christian witness. The effort to disassociate the Christian churches from anything that smells of asceticism or the belittling of the "sex life" is a denial of a permanent and enormously valuable contribution of Christianity to our civilization. Any moral stance is open to excesses and distortions that stultify its virtues. This is true, too, of Christian asceticism. Aberrations are clear enough to us today and should not be denied, even though they are often exaggerated grotesquely by propagandists who wish to prove their points. Most outright condemnations of "Puritanism," for example, are made in complete ignorance of what the Puritans actually thought and practised in relation to sexual matters. The ascetic element in Christianity fulfilled in history a mission. Its importance is almost impossible to over-emphasize. By stressing that the service of God was not only more important than "sexual satisfaction" but that it often demanded the complete sacrifice of a lesser good to a higher one, the Christian teachers of sexual asceticism gave mankind a vision both of Christian life and of civilized existence. These teachers, far from denying human sexuality, actually pointed the way to its most creative possibilities.

Against the ideological glorification of sex as a quasi-divinity, the Christian approach to sexuality should always begin with the fact of the sexes. For Christian faith, the sexes are not merely a biological *given* but the intention of the Creator: "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Against the idolatry of "the sex life," the Christian view should stress the fundamentally personal basis of the union of man and woman. Again, this does not rest simply upon the natural demand for a "pair-bond" arising out of the life-pattern of the human animal. Eve was given by God to Adam, because God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). The abstraction of sex profits nothing. It can give no real satisfaction to living men and women, and it can all too easily turn into a demonic force that destroys their humanity, turning a promised Utopia into a hell upon earth. A supernatural undergirding of all existence alone can sanctify the natural sexuality of human beings and make it a source of real joy and genuine self-fulfilment. ■



# Sexual Morality Within Marriage

**"Sexual morality within marriage is far broader than merely maintaining physical continence outside the marital union."**

*The biblical rule of fidelity within marriage challenges married people to a creative faithfulness to each other's moral and personal growth. Bad sexual theology can sometimes get in the way of creative fidelity. Dr. Donald Tweedie speaks about real problems with sexual morality that married people have even when adultery is not on the horizon. And he points to ways for troubled people to help themselves. Don is professor of Psychology at the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology and a practicing Christian therapist.*

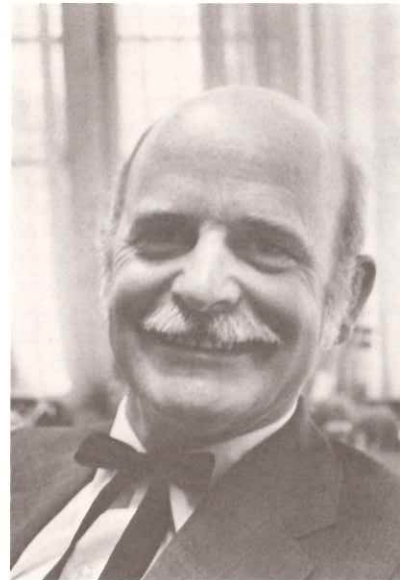
We live in a vulgar and permissive era. Sexual permissiveness and promiscuity has come close to turning our time into a pornographic era. The social situation seems to be blatantly contrary to Christian principles of sexual morality. In the name of constitutional freedom and the Supreme Court's ambivalence concerning the definition of obscenity, the parameters of obscenity in literature and the entertainment media are limited only by the imagination. The leading lady of "Deep Throat" is lionized in sophisticated magazines and sophisticated society, although her only apparent talent is her willingness to let her body be used in a series of explicit, illicit sexual behaviors focusing on fellatio.

Family structures are deteriorating in this new mood so that only a very small percentage of marriages are successful in terms of the most minimal criteria, and nearly half of them are being legally dissolved. Extramarital peccadillos are socially and professionally promoted and even within some segments of the Church there is a support of a "new morality" which is surprisingly like unbridled old immorality. "Alternate life-styles" are now a euphemism for sexual privilege apart from matrimony. These range from old style common law marriage arrangements to the most bizarre modes of sexual license.

Almost no one is unscathed by these changes in America's sexual morality. There is no escaping the fact that bombardment with these social stimuli inevitably desensitizes our sexual moral sensitivity. It becomes then a pertinent question whether there is not a need to review sexual morality within marriage as it may affect Christians within the contemporary society. At least this is a focal area of complaint in a clinical practice catering to Christians. My assumption will be that marital morality is based upon exclusive and mutual sexual privilege between spouses.

The meaning of sexual fidelity within a marriage also depends upon the perceived nature of the marriage relationship and the experience of sexuality within it. There are those who perceive the marriage as a licensing institution largely relevant to the bridling of lust and a legal justification of sexual intercourse. Others see marriage as mostly a matter of relationship. Growth between two persons, and thus fidelity within this relationship, is equally important as is absence of adultery. The commandments from this perspective are not exhausted by "thou shalt not commit adultery," but rather also include a strong injunction to "commit conjugality." Another point of view is that marriage and sexuality is only tertiary to control lust and procreation, is secondarily for opportunities of growth and ecstatic fellowship, but is primarily a divine analogy. That is, marriage as a part of the created order is so that human beings might in the marriage relationship understand something more of the nature of the Good News and the nature of God. In the old covenant the relationship of marriage was illustrated by the relationship of Jehovah God and Israel; under the new covenant it is that between Christ and the Church. This is a mysterious relationship, but it is very focally related to sexual intercourse as a human analogue to divine relationships.

It goes without saying that intention is a very important part of sexual morality within a marriage. In external relationships with members of the opposite sex there are important considerations if one should intend fidelity to his spouse. It seems to me that any heterosexual social matching, one to one, provides a symbolic setting in which eroticism and relationship fantasies may easily be aroused. This is not only from the perspective of the person considering his own sexual morality, but also in providing temptation for the other. Another factor is the limit to which one gives his body to a member of the opposite sex with whom he is not in a marriage



by Donald F. Tweedie, Jr.

relationship. About the only body contact that has not been eroticized in our culture is that in which one takes another's hand, shakes it and gives it back. The most intimate form of sharing one's body, without initial seductive intent, is that of the embrace in dancing. Two important and widely neglected factors in the contemporary culture that relate to fidelity within the marriage union is that of social caring and sharing one's body. My clinical experience has been that persons who have seriously failed in maintaining sexual fidelity in marriage have been precipitated into fantasy and then often in fact through just such neglect.

Mostly we think of sexual morality within marriage in the context of interpersonal transaction between spouses. In counseling persons who report failure in this area, I have encountered three common complaint systems: 1) a feeling of being deprived and/or defrauded of sexual privilege; 2) a demand for what one of the spouses feels to be inappropriate sexual behavior between the spouses; 3) fantasized adulterous experiences as felt failures in personal growth and sexual morality. I will deal with each of these.

Sexual privilege, for the lover, is a warm intimate gesture and not a manipulating power-play. The apostle Paul makes it very clear that sexual opportunity is a *right* within marriage, and there is very little exegetical ground for defending the withholding of sexual privilege as other than a defect in spiritual growth. The irony of persons who believe that their level of spiritual maturity is enhanced by sexual deprivation is only too apparent when we study biblical sexuality.

Female frigidity, a common category of complaint, sometimes seems grounded in fear, sometimes guilt and sometimes personal repulsion. However difficult these emotional sets are to neutralize and overcome, they must never be accepted as signs of superior morality. Male impotence may have the same varied emotional context. Correcting the situation in the latter case is more difficult, however, because, while the frigid woman *can* nonetheless present herself for sexual privilege, the impotent man cannot. In any case, it would seem that some sort of professional help and guidance is needed either in the eradication of theological heresy regarding the meaning of sex and its expression, or psychologically in the redressing of defects of maladaptive personality development.

In this new era of sexual freedom, there are many Christians who now have serious questions and, within marriage, serious conflicts concerning the limits of sexual behavior. The conflict tends to arise when one of the spouses

has a desire for an increased level of nudity behavior or new behaviors in terms of sexual prelude or sexual interaction. In this context the complaints which come to me in marital therapy are those of the inhibited or resistant spouse who believes that the new behaviors are transgressing moral parameters. These complaints generally refer to a resistance to increased orality in breast play or in the behavior known as oral copulation. Occasionally there is a demand for anal stimulation as an erotic focus. While the scriptures are not explicit about the modes of sexual behavior within marriage, intergenital union being presumably assumed, the difficulty lies in the dialectic between "vile affections" and pure abandon in sexual behavior, such as the ways of a man and a maid in the Canticles of Solomon. While I must confess that I have not come to terms emotionally and aesthetically with some of the more "kinky" demands of persons within the area of spousal interaction, it seems likely that an appropriate theological stance would be at least neutral to modes of behavior in erotic arousal which were satisfactory to both of the spouses. In addition, the inhibited spouse should make an effort to become more open in the intimacy of the relationship and the uninhibited spouse should make an equal effort to try to understand empathically the aesthetic and theological resistance of his spouse.

There are other problems within the conjugal relationship that have been reported to me as problems in sexual morality and which may be called vicarious adultery. These arise as fantasies of adultery and are often stimulated by sexually appealing images and descriptions in reading materials and audiovisual entertainment in the home. Imagining a sexual partner other than one's spouse during sexual interaction is very guilt producing in some people. A reevaluation of entertainment media, keeping the lights on and the eyes open while having sex tends to be helpful in this situation.

Sexual morality within marriage is far broader than merely maintaining physical continence outside the marital union. In this peak human experience of sexual ecstasy there is not only possibility of intense personal and inter-personal satisfaction, but also of vital growth in grace. The sexual confusion of contemporary society is clearly effecting Christian couples. Fidelity to the spouse in coital communion, as well as in the wider meaning of marriage, in a context of loving care, is one of the very important task demands of the church. I trust that this brief excursus will stimulate our thinking and living to this end. ■





by Bernard Ramm

# Divorce and the Will of the Lord

**"Divorced people are not all that different. . . . If there is anything they need it is some loving help, some gracious counsel, some redemptive advice that will enable them to live as Christianly as possible. . . ."**

*Every pastor's heart breaks a little when he enters the pain and grief of people on their way towards divorce. They are often caught between sympathy for the couple involved and serious respect for the Lord's apparently inflexible command against divorce. Dr. Bernard Ramm, a neighbor and good friend of Fuller Seminary, takes a hard look at what the Lord really wants of us in this vexing problem. Dr. Ramm is professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, in Covina, California. His sensitive interpretation of the Lord's saying about divorce will be helpful to every pastor who wants to minister to our troubled time in obedience to the Word.*

The very words of our Lord held the place of highest authority in the New Testament and the early Church. These are known as the dominical sayings or logia. We have such a dominical word in Acts 20:35 which is not reported in the Gospels. In one instance Paul says there is no dominical word to settle the argument so he adduces his own opinion which he thinks is inspired (cf. I Cor. 7:25,40). For his authority concerning his opinion about the return of Christ he claims to have a dominical word (I Thess. 4:15).

Our task is to assess how we are to interpret the dominical sayings about marriage, divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18). There are critical problems about the text, but we shall presume the integrity of the texts as they stand before us in our Greek New Testaments.

Does our Lord give us a definitive law about these matters to which the Church is bound to the very letter of the texts? Or, does he give us prescripts ("this is the way it ought to be

but cannot by the nature of things always be so") and ideals ("this is the standard toward which we strive but in reality know that we can only approximate")?

The first position has been ably argued by John Murray in his book on *Divorce* (Philadelphia: The Committee on Christian Education, The Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1953).

In this article we shall argue for the second position. This second position carries with it the implied right for the Church to improvise on its understanding of the problem of divorce. As we shall argue later the Church has and must improvise on many matters and divorce is not unique with regard to this. My reasons for holding the second position are:

## I

Even though dominical statements held the highest position of authority in the early Church they cannot be separated from the rest of biblical revelation. A great motto of the Reformation was that the Scripture interprets Scripture. This means that the context of any verse or passage is the entire Bible. Not just the *logia* about divorce but any passage in Scripture must be correlated with the entirety of Scripture. If this is the case then the Church must contemplate some improvising about its understanding of divorce.

For example Paul says in I Corinthians 7:9 that it is better to marry than to burn. Closely associated with this is our Lord's statement in Matthew 19:10ff. that only those with a special grace can be eunuchs (i.e., sexually restrained) for the sake of the kingdom of God.

However, Paul does not go into other situations where men burn with sexual passion. When a person is divorced he does not turn off his sexual burning as a man tightens up a faucet. If there is the necessity to marry rather than to turn to adultery or fornication to satisfy sexual passion are there not other situations where the church allows remarriage?

Here the Church is forced to choose among evils and not between good and evil. Remarriage by a guilty party may be more redemptive and moral than a denial of remarriage and leaving the person to meet his sexual demands by a life of promiscuity. I know the usual answer is that God gives grace to endure the sexual passion. I make two comments: (i) if that is the case, why did not Paul say that grace could put out burning sexual passion rather than suggesting that the person

marry? (ii) From what I have heard from psychologists and read in psychological literature this restraining grace is a rare commodity. To many who do not remarry promiscuity becomes a way of life, or they defy the Church and marry considering the Church position unrealistic no matter how seriously or authoritatively it is proclaimed.

Can we read the dominical sayings without relating them to the biblical passages about sin and depravity? As sinners we err in many ways. In marriage we marry the wrong people for the wrong reasons. Then to that poor judgment we may well add a second and a third. We try our best to rectify a situation but as sinners we complicate the mess. We intend to be helpful, but as sinners we manage only to hurt.

Sin casts its shadow on *all* marriages. Any marriage counselor will bear witness to the wretched complications in any marriage that is having a hard time. A few simple rules cannot begin to manage the complicated puzzles we make of our marriages because we are sinners.

We may also learn something from the *Song of Songs*. I do not understand this book as an allegory or type of the relationship of the Lord with Israel or Christ with his Church. I understand it to be a series of love songs showing the legitimacy of our sexuality and the enjoyment of it. When the church in the Middle Ages sanctioned intercourse only through the slits of the partners' underwear and to reach a climax as quickly as possible, it was countermanding the sanction of sexuality and sexual play as set out in the *Song of Songs* (cf. Joachim Kahl, *The Misery of Christianity*, p. 79).

My contention is simple. Before a Christian can formulate a comprehensive ethic of marriage, divorce and remarriage he must look at all of Scripture which might bear directly and indirectly on the issues. He might then discover that the materials in the dominical sayings is too limited and the Church must do some improvising in order to have a fair, realistic and more comprehensive ethic.

## II

If we take the dominical sayings as precepts and ideals we understand them differently from those who understand them primarily as church law. For example, when Murray finishes his book on divorce he examines a number of cases. His approach is not unlike a member of the Supreme Court writing out his juridical decision and not as a theologian of grace and redemption.

Biblical precepts do not function invariably like scientific laws. In science one law may be related to another law by *necessity* — given A, then B follows by *necessity*. Precepts are general promises which stand in a fluid relationship to the believer's own inner spiritual state and the status of the world around him, such as economics, politics, wars, famines.

Accordingly we may pray for wisdom and yet make a foolish decision. We may commit our ways to the Lord and yet have something fail we thought of supreme importance to the kingdom. God orders the steps of a righteous man, but many righteous men and women have died in a tragic accident. We may pray fervently for the healing of a dear sick friend, but he takes a turn for the worse and dies.

We either have to say these promises and precepts are not true or we understand them the wrong way. If we understand them as the inviolable law of God, they are either false or so mysterious in their operation that they are of no help for Christians. However, if promises, prescripts and ideals are taken as guides, as general but not inviolable rules, as expected ideals but not mechanically operative ideals then the fact that they do not always inviolably operate us does not distress us. Personal relationships and/or spiritual relationships do not have the character of inviolable operation or law.

I interpret the dominical sayings as ideals or prescripts or policies and not as church law. They set out the divine ideal of marriage and the prescripts about marriage for man and woman. No theologian or church has the right to locate the ultimate standard and supreme ideal anywhere else.

On the other hand as sinful human beings we always come short of the ideal. It is unrealistic to think of marriages in terms of two circles: (i) the first circle made up of sound moral marriages; and (ii) the second circle made up of defective or immoral marriages which end up in divorce. From what the psychologists, sociologists and lawyers tell us about divorce, we ought to think in terms of a spectrum of marriages or a continuum of marriages which include all sorts of patterns from the very healthy to the very sick.

This means that the Church has the right to pose possibilities of divorce and remarriage not covered in the dominical sayings. We shall argue this again later on other grounds. In other words, given the enormous variations of marriage patterns the church must improvise. A marriage that is psychologically sick may damage both mates and do serious psychological damage to the children. A marriage may have been based on the desire of one of the mates to be spiteful and hateful to their parents. Our study of Roman Catholic ethics and Protestant ethics shows a similar trend: when the Church has a tough "official" stand on a given moral issue and will make no improvisations, the laity take the matter in their own hands and try to resolve the problem in a manner in keeping with the hard facts of life. Why should not the Church use its wisdom in theology and ethics to be sure these improvisations are healthy ones and not erratic ones?

Whenever the Church counsels in terms of improvisations it must always remind the couple of the ideal of the dominical sayings and that it is our imperfection and our waywardness that prevents us from achieving the ideal. The improvisation is the effort of the Church to be redemptive not punitive, healing not hurting, loving not judgmental.

## III

If the dominical sayings are taken as strict law and mandatory rule we find the blanket too short and too narrow.

Jesus is more correcting current Jewish abuses of divorce (which the Minor Prophets reveal was a serious post-exilic problem in Israel) than he is attempting to set out the definitive, comprehensive rule of divorce in the life of the Church through all the ages. There are many cases the dominical sayings do not have a word about.

What is the status of the marriage of minors or marriage contracted while under the influence of alcohol or drugs? Is a true marriage made if a homosexual marries to mask his activities? What is the status of a marriage if one mate deceives the other mate about a matter absolutely fundamental to a real and happy marriage? Is desertion a just cause for divorce? Is a terrible, hopeless case of alcoholism also a basis for divorce? Is it a true marriage if a son or a daughter marries the kind of person that will punish his or her parents whom he or she thinks have been mean or impossible or destructive? Some states permit a divorce if a mate has a penal sentence of five years or more that is mandatory. Does the Church allow this too? How long must a mate be missing on some long trip or in some war before they are officially dead? What is the situation if one mate is to be found impotent?

Those who see the dominical sayings as mandatory and virtually exhaustive in their stipulations handle such matters three ways: (i) the state may make additional laws about marriage as long as they do not conflict with the dominical sayings. (ii) In some instances no real marriage has been

(Continued on page 20)



## Class Notes

1952

Richard Kroeger (Catherine - X'52) teaches at Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota. He is assisting in the newly formed American Evangelism Association.

Dean Saxton has had two books published by the University of Arizona Press: *Papago and Pima to English and English to Papago and Pima* (dictionary, 1969) and *New Book Legends and Lore of Papago and Pima Indians* (1973).

1953

David Larsen is pastor of the First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

1954

Ellis Deibler, Jr. is on furlough from New Guinea for one year and is writing his Ph.D. dissertation in linguistics at the University of Michigan. He recently translated the New Testament into the Gahuku language (Wycliffe Bible Translators).

Eugene Glassman (X'54) was forced by the Afghan Government to leave his language school work and the country in late March. He is now teaching English at Damavand College, a girl's school in Tehran, Iran. He is also working on language study materials for the middle east area (Urdu, Dari, Farsi).

Donald Reid resigned from his 7-year position as President of Judson Baptist College in Portland, Oregon, to become the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Tigard, Oregon.

1955

Paul Everts is U.S. Navy Chaplain at Orlando Navy Hospital (Florida).

Stanton Sizemore is president of the Virginia Association for State, Municipal & Non-Profit Organizational Employees, Inc.

1957

Robert Warburton was recently appointed Dean of Delta College at College of Du Page, Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

1958

Carroll D. Lindman has been appointed to Field Staff for International Students, Inc. at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

1960

J. Dudley Woodberry serves on the staff of the Christian Study Center in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, under the United Presbyterian Church. He has been invited to become the pastor of the Community Christian Church in Kabul, Afghanistan, in June 1974.

1961

Ladell Bones (MRE'61) has returned to Venezuela to work at the Evangelical Center for children in Betijoque, Trujillo.

1962

John Hestenes (X'62) is a postdoctoral Fellow in bioengineering at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Donald Liebert has left Rutgers University (New Jersey) to join the sociology faculty at Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington.

1963

Eric Schiller (BD'63, ThM'66) received a Ph.D. in mechanics and hydraulics from the University of Iowa last July.

1964

Roger Barrett, associate professor of psychology at Malone College (Ohio), received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Kent State University in August.

1965

Samuel Lo (BD'65, PhD'71) and his wife Helen are the proud parents of a baby girl, Amy Wynne, born last July. Sam is serving at True Light Presbyterian Church, Los Angeles, while also working as a clinical psychologist at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, Downey, and Resthaven Psychiatric Hospital in Los Angeles Chinatown.

Arden Snyder completed a clinical psychology internship at the VA Hospital and University of Oregon Medical School last August.

Rodger Zeller was awarded an M.A. in reading from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan.

1966

Eric Lemmon (BD'66, ThM'68, ThD'70) has assumed the post of assistant professor of theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Ernest G. Marsh is administrative chaplain at Marine Corps Base, Twenty-nine Palms, California.

1967

Hal Holman (X'67) has been appointed Executive Director of the Capital District Travelers Aid Society, Inc., a United Fund agency. He resides in Albany, New York.

1968

Terry Winter (DThP'68) of the Terry Winter Evangelistic Association recently participated with 16 denominations in a joint evangelism project in the city of Saskatoon, Canada.

1969

Patricia Harrison (MDiv'69, ThM'73) is teaching religion at Armidale Teachers' College and Religious Education at the University of New England, both in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. She also works part-time for Theological Education by Extension (TEE).

1970

Roger Hedlund (MAM'70) is assisting Dr. Donald McGavran in the School of World Mission with the research associates from India who are now writing theses.

1971

LaVerne Blowers (ThM'71) is teaching theology and church history at the Free Methodist Seminary, as well as guiding a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program, in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Thurman Rynbrandt (DMin'71) is senior pastor at Bethany Reformed Church, Redlands, California.

Robert Wilson (BD'71, DMin'72) is Minister of Youth at First Baptist Church, Redondo Beach, California.

1972

Larry Acton (X'72) has been elected Moderator of the Cauca Valley Presbytery and Treasurer of the Confederation of Evangelical Churches, Colombia, South America, for 1973-1974.

Stephen Hsu Tien Liang is assistant pastor at Calvary Gospel Church, Newark, New Jersey.

Curtis Peterson serves as a co-pastor with a team of three pastors involved with the development of new churches under the Evangelical Covenant Church in the greater St. Louis (Missouri) area.

1973

Stephen Hoogerbrugge was ordained as a Presbyterian minister on July 1 at the Rancho Bernardo Community Church, San Diego, where he is now assistant pastor.

Barnette Kinard (MA'73) is Executive Director of Share Time International, a non-profit evangelistic corporation specializing in children's ministries.

## Placement Opportunities

*These churches or organizations have contacted the Seminary for assistance in filling vacancies. If you are interested in any of these positions or other possibilities, please contact Mrs. Gloryanna Hees, Placement Office, Fuller Seminary.*

Minister of Education, Bethany Baptist Church (ABC), Pontiac, Michigan. Membership of 200 families.

Pastor, Belcaro Evangelical Free Church, Denver, Colorado. Membership of 250.

Pastor, Brookside Baptist Church (ABC), Oakland, California.

Pastor, Community Baptist Church (CBA), Manhattan Beach, California. Average morning attendance is 400.

Pastor, Evangelical Free Church, Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Newly organized church, now ready to call a pastor.

Pastor, The First Baptist Church of Flagstaff, Arizona (CBA). Membership is 375 with three staff members.

Youth Minister, First Baptist Church (CBA), Prescott, Arizona. Responsible for junior and senior high and college programs plus directing the bus evangelism program.

Youth Worker/Christian Education Director, The First Baptist Church - Westchester (ABC), Los Angeles, California.

Minister of Youth and Christian Education, First Baptist Church of Willows (ABC), California. To build and maintain effective church youth program and to oversee the total Christian education program. Musical ability would be helpful.

Associate Minister of Business, First Presbyterian Church, Covina, California. Need person with major in church administration to serve as church manager and to assume some of the pastoral work.

## Reprints

The October issue of TN&N on "Management in the Church" has been reprinted in cooperation with MARC.

Copies are available for 50c each with a minimum \$2.00 order. For 100 or more copies, there is a 50% discount.

Write to:

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World Vision, International  
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## Taylor Joins Staff

Mr. Kirby Taylor has joined the Fuller staff as Director of Planned Giving. Mr. Taylor has been actively engaged in the field of estate planning for 25 years. He is licensed by the state of California in specialized areas of real estate, life insurance, annuities and securities, including mutual funds, debentures, tax-exempt bonds and tax-sheltered oil investments.

In addition to his experience as controller and treasurer of several commercial insurance companies, Mr. Taylor has served as advisor to various Christian organizations.

Mr. Taylor is available to conduct will seminars and estate planning seminars in your church or community. Why not invite him to consult with you or members of your congregation who could benefit by his services? Write to:

Mr. Kirby Taylor, Director of Planned Giving

Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland, Pasadena, California 91101.

## Scholarship Goal Set

The Alumni Cabinet launched the campaign for scholarship funds in November. The goal was set for \$50,000 in this academic year with \$25,000 in current giving to scholarships and \$25,000 in endowment.

The Cabinet pledged \$1,060 and \$500 came to the Seminary in the first week of the campaign.

You can help us reach our goal in the following ways:

- \* GIVE to the scholarship fund of the Alumni Association.
- \* SHARE the ministry and outreach of Fuller Seminary with your church and offer them a part.
- \* SUGGEST the names of church members who might welcome an approach from the Seminary to discuss an investment in Fuller.
- \* DESIGNATE honoraria received from funerals and weddings for the scholarship fund.

Progress of the campaign will be reported in succeeding issues of TN&N.

## Alumni Questionnaires

Tabulations are now being received from responses to the questionnaire mailed to all M.Div. students last fall.

A summary of the findings as presented to trustees and faculty will be included in the next issue.

## Clement Elected



Dr. Paul Clement, director of the Child Development Center, Graduate School of Psychology, has been elected president-elect for the California State Psychological Association (CSPA). He will serve this position during 1974, as president during 1975 and as past-president in 1976. He will be one of seven members on the Executive Council of CSPA during this three year term.

CSPA is an affiliate organization of the American Psychological Association which has over 35,000 members. Approximately 4,500 of these psychologists reside in California.

Dr. Clement is the youngest person to be elected president in CSPA's 25-year history.

## Alumni Day, March 5, 1974

Plans are now being made for the annual Alumni Day to be held on the campus Tuesday, March 5, 1974.

All alumni who can be in the Pasadena area that day are invited to return to the campus for sharing and dialogue with the Seminary community.



# The Christian

**"The whole picture of homosexuality can never be properly framed unless those who would paint it submit their sketches to the mind of Christ."**

*Christian attitudes toward homosexuality and homosexual persons are very hard to define. No pastoral problem is tougher than counselling the homosexual person. No personal problem is tougher than the problem a Christian homosexual has in dealing with his own homosexuality. We have chosen to let a Christian who is a homosexual speak in these pages about Christian attitudes toward homosexuality. While not identified here by name, his Christian seriousness is transparent. The article is reprinted from The Reformed Journal, March, 1971, by permission.*

Since my first awareness of my sexual feelings, I have been aware of their direction to certain members of my own sex. This realization did not upset me at first. I had never heard of homosexuality at that age, and I enjoyed my fantasies. Some time later, I came upon a sordid piece of journalism entitled "The True Story of the Third Sex." Naturally, I was curious. I had been reared in an atmosphere where sexual matters were simply not talked about. If inadvertently brought up, they always occasioned an embarrassed, shameful reaction. With the typical adolescent's prurience, I read the article avidly, transfixed by its sensational and horrendous description of the seamy, degenerate existence of some homosexuals. I do not now recall every detail of the piece — a vague nightmarish statistic to the effect that every sixth man on the street is one of these monsters occurs to me — but more important, being extremely sensitive, I fit the shoe on my own foot and from that time on began gradually to despise myself. Eventually I was forced to seek help and "committed" myself to private outpatient psychiatric treatment. After several painful years and several thousand dollars, most of the anxiety was relieved and my feet seemed to come closer to the ground. My sexual feelings did not change, and I still find members of my own sex extremely attractive.

Part of the difficulty many people have in formulating their attitudes towards homosexuals stems from confusion of terms. *Homosexuality* (sometimes called *homosexuality*, or *inversion*) is the state of an individual who, in response to some early and extremely complicated learning process, finds himself or herself attracted more strongly to certain members of his or her own sex than to members of the opposite sex. It has probably existed since the beginning of the human race. No one asked

# Homosexual

for this condition or propensity or preference; therefore, the individual so affected is not culpable. Homosexuality is *morally neutral*. (I shall leave the question of how homosexuality may or may not be related to Original Sin for the theologians to discuss: an excursion into that area of theology at this point would only divert our attention from other, more pertinent questions.)

The *state* or condition of homosexuality, then, is morally neutral. The individual is not responsible for it. Overt homosexual *activity*, on the other hand, like any other activity, implies responsibility. Traditionally, the Christian Church has made no distinction between these two — condition and action. As a result, in my own case, I thought I had no choice but to loathe myself as the worst of sinners simply because I recognized in myself these desires, natural to me, but traditionally condemned by the Church, which did not differentiate them from promiscuity.

Another egregious but prevalent myth is the confusion of homosexuality with sodomy. Sodomy, or anal intercourse, is independent of sexual preference. Many homosexuals never practice it; many heterosexuals do. The point should be obvious. The origin of this false identification of homosexuality and sodomy is obscure, although the word obviously refers to the ancient town of Sodom. The scriptural passages relating to the wickedness of Sodom have been thoroughly examined, and the cause of its divine destruction is now generally believed to have been gross, but inexplicit, immorality. The desire of the townspeople to "know" the strangers (Genesis 19:5) could possibly have no sexual connotations whatever, contrary to the translation of this verse in the New English Bible.

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It has previously been stated that Christianity reacts today to homosexuality with a condemnation differing little from what it said in the Middle Ages. In one of the better books on homosexuality, *Strangers in Our Midst*, Alfred A. Gross describes the medieval rationale for condemning homosexuality:

If he [the homosexual] found himself in an unenviable position, he had only himself to blame. He put himself there through his own perversity. Thus the institution [church] felt that it could afford to disclaim any sort of responsibility for him. It said in effect that homosexuals excommunicated themselves by their conduct, thus cutting themselves off from fellowship with the faithful. This is why some homosexuals seem to regard themselves beyond redemption. Somewhere they had to be taught how to think in that fashion. Even if it is suggested that this feeling comes from an exaggerated sense of guilt on the part of a distorted personality, it must be remembered that guilt and sin are social concepts. To be effective, opinions as to what constitutes sin must necessarily be widely held.

Then Gross asks the critical question:

What is the responsibility of the church for those it has permitted to feel that their sins have cut them off from the life and work of the institution that calls itself the Body of Christ?

I am not going to single out for identification any one writer or any one publication that has given recent voice to the incompetent misinformation and misunderstanding that still surround the subject of homosexuality in the 1970s. The clichés are all too familiar. First of all is the very formulation of the issue: the idea that "homosexuality is a growing problem in today's society." In



general, it does not occur to those who mouth this slogan to look at things from the other side: society is a growing problem to today's homosexual. Whatever the precise causes of homosexuality, and we shall discuss these below, it would seem to me that there is a very real sense in which it can be said that society creates the homosexual. Has society then any right to treat that creation as being worse than excrement, as nothing more than a problem to be disposed of?

A common doctrinaire remark is that "it is obvious that the Bible treats homosexuality — unconditionally and without exception — as a gross sin." Here again is the dreadful confusion between condition and action. Nowhere does the Bible speak of the condition of homosexuality: all the Scripture references customarily cited in an attempt to prove the Bible's unyielding condemnation of homosexuality are concerned with the abuse of sexuality. These condemnations do not bear on the condition itself. As Bailey says, "Naturally enough, the Bible knows nothing of inversion as an inherited trait, or an inherent condition due to psychological or glandular causes, and consequently regards all homosexual practice as evidence of perversion."

Again, one often hears that "homosexuality is a disease that needs to be cured." Given present-day moralistic society and its obsession with sexual fears, this is probably a response that is to be expected. Let us look at it more closely. Most scientific studies of homosexuality include a section on the etiology of homosexuality, its causes. An article in *Harper's Magazine*, September 1970, on sexual identity deals with this topic. The author concludes, perplexingly, that

almost anything can lead to homosexuality. If a dominating mother can do it in some instances, in others so can a disregarding one. If a passive father can do it, so can an overpowering one. A physical deficiency can help bring it about, but then so, too, can great physical beauty, which might achieve the same thing through narcissism. Intense rival feelings or no competitive feelings whatever, too large a penis or too small a penis, walking in on one's parents making love or having parents who show no affection for each other — any of these things, or combination of these things, or combination of combinations could, conceivably, trigger off homosexuality.

There are numerous "experts" on the etiology of homosexuality, each trying to sell his own pet theory — and consequently, his own pet "cure." The results inevitably conflict with each other. Most experts do agree that the chances of changing from a homosexual to a heterosexual are very slim. Only, they say, if the individual "really wants to change" is the desired result likely to be achieved. But very few homosexuals "really want to change." This is not sheer perversity on their part. Since homosexual desires develop very naturally within an individual, it is unfair and presumptuous for society to try to impose what it calls "normal orienta-

tion" on that person. He or she will simply not be convinced that the heterosexual alternative is any more desirable. The notion that anything that has been learned can be unlearned is more theoretical than practical. Some attitudes must be unlearned for the sake of a person's sanity. I don't agree that homosexuality is one of them. Attitudes about homosexuality must be changed, both individual and social.

\* \* \* \* \*

As we have seen, although it is futile to regard homosexuality as a disease that requires curing, this is usually what happens, especially in a moralistic "Christian" environment obsessed with sexual fears. Consequently, the sensitive individual so constituted will encounter erroneously grounded hostile attitudes on the part of the majority of the community. As a result, he will enter the limbo of the self-condemned, and his homosexuality will become a disease, which *per se* it would not have to be. Who, then, is really sick? The Originally Sinful individual or the Originally Sinful society? Both, of course. But this rejection of part of itself is hardly a credit to the Christian community.

The difficulty that the average Christian has had with homosexuality has probably been exacerbated in recent years by what he has read about what some homosexuals are saying publicly. These loud protestations and exaggerated descriptions of their misery are typical of an oppressed minority that has suddenly become vocal. Furthermore, many of these people are searching for a messiah-like achiever from among their midst, someone whose name they can drop, and to whom they can look up as one who has come through the fire. The accomplishments of characters like Oscar Wilde, Michelangelo, Tchaikovsky, and André Gide are commonly cited as representative of what homosexuality has achieved. I have always been more embarrassed than convinced by this kind of game: it strikes me as a puerile tactic that ignores completely the agonizing and unenviable personal lives these men led. Everything they accomplished was done in spite of, not as a result of, their homosexuality.

Another facet of the more vocal homosexual scene of recent years is the rise of the "Gay Liberation Movements." ("Gay" is used synonymously with homosexuality, although some homosexuals dislike the term because it suggests a stereotyped, shady subculture.) These have sprung up rather suddenly on nearly every major university campus during the past few years. Some have come to associate with the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and/or other radical groups. Fortunately, the group in which I am involved has so far remained primarily concerned with the specific problems of homosexuals in today's society.

So the image of the homosexual in the common mind is tainted by misconceptions, some of them admittedly

due to the behavior and statements of certain homosexuals. Add to this the befuddled state of legislation in this country about sexual matters in general and homosexuality in particular, with its imperfect recognition of a distinction between public and private morality and its strong remnants of Puritanism, and the breadth of the problem confronting one trying to articulate a Christian approach to homosexuality is clear.

\* \* \* \* \*

The whole picture of homosexuality can never be properly framed unless those who would paint it submit their sketches to the mind of Christ. Nowhere in the Bible does Christ refer to the subject. Since he was certainly aware of the phenomenon, it would seem reasonable to assume that his attitude would be as indiscriminately loving to the person of the homosexual as to that of any other sinner. It is no happy commentary on the social prejudices that have become part of Christian doctrine that such a truism has to be defended. But so pathetically uninformed is the popular notion of the homosexual that the limp-wristed, unctuous-voiced rebellious response of some — certainly not all — homosexuals only serves to reinforce the wretched image in the public eye. And the "Christian" reaction is scarcely more tolerant; in fact, it is often even more bigoted because of a preoccupation with the sinful aspect of homosexuality.

I maintain that a person's homosexuality is a matter of his own conscience and conviction. Guidance for one's conscience is, of course, supplied by the great commandments to love God above all and one's neighbor as one's self. Certainly the aid of psychological and religious counseling should be sought if there are difficulties in adjustment. But it should not be assumed that the root of the distress can be found in homosexuality itself and that the solution is thus simple. Homosexuality is not a disease and cannot be "cured." If the attitudes of the individual and the society in which he lives toward this condition are diseased, both must change their attitudes. But since this is not likely to happen very soon within a very large segment of society, it remains for the individual homosexual to wrestle for his own integrity amid sometimes almost insurmountable odds.

Stereotypes notwithstanding, homosexuals are as varied and diverse as heterosexuals. They are found in all occupations, on all levels of society, and come from all religious or nonreligious backgrounds. There are no black and white differences between homo- and heterosexuals. Sexuality *per se* is undirected until the pressures and suggestions involved in the learning process gradually nudge the individual in one general direction or the

other. Very few people are all homosexual or all heterosexual. But since "Christian" society accepts the latter and abhors the former, even the recognition of homosexual feelings by a predominantly heterosexual person can often be a source of panic. Many homosexuals marry — some successfully, some disastrously. A rigorous self-examination would be wise before taking such a serious step.

The most intimate affection between two members of the same sex recorded in the Bible is that between Christ and John, the beloved disciple. The fact that John leaned his head on Christ's breast at the Last Supper speaks for the acceptance by Christ of physical affection between two males: an expression not readily accepted in today's rigid Western society. I would be the last to contend that this is a rationale for male homosexuality. The nature of Christ's work did not call for sexual expression. Nevertheless, in his humanity he was certainly aware of sexual feelings and temptations: and he did not confuse their expression with public expressions of affection.

Contrary to popular belief, the mature intelligent homosexual is no more preoccupied with lustful conquest than the mature intelligent heterosexual. The homosexual's need for love and affection is perhaps more pronounced because of the legal and social impediments to their expression: there are no legal homosexual marriages, engagements, divorces, and the alternative is a kind of "common-law" understanding, a "free love" without the freedom to love. In spite of the obstacles many such "marriages" exist — and some of long duration.

\* \* \* \* \*

You will notice that I have not touched on the questions of the moral status of private homosexual acts. Not having resolved this conflict myself, who am I to judge? But since we are ultimately to be judged individually according to what we have done in the flesh, it is within our relationship to God that all our actions must be framed. Thank God that this judgment is not dependent on the whims of changing society, including the piebald body of true, but unperfected, believers.

In closing I should like to plead for more recognition of the truth in the conclusion of Phyllis McGinley's poem "The Thunderer" (dealing with St. Jerome):

But he swelled men's minds  
With a Christian leaven  
It takes all kinds  
To make a heaven.



# Why "Get Married"?

by David H. Freeman

**"The Scriptures are not directly concerned with HOW a couple gets married; they deal with what marriage is, and why this relationship is good for people."**

*Traditional marriage is viewed with skepticism today by many young people. What does the pastor say to couples who are "living together" without benefit of license or clergy? What is the moral reason for "getting married" according to the rules of the establishment? Dr. David Freeman speaks biblically and relevantly to this question, showing why "weddings" are, on one hand, not morally imperative, but, on the other, the morally responsible thing to do. Dr. Freeman is professor of philosophy at the University of Rhode Island.*

The people of God are called to minister to every need. Should couples "living together" without a marriage ceremony be regarded as "living in sin"? If sin is being committed, what is the nature of such sin? What attitude should a congregation of God's people show toward such couples? Should there be an immediate expression of disapproval, of condemnation? Are the words of Scripture condemning adultery and fornication necessarily applicable to all such situations?

In what follows we shall try to suggest certain guidelines that may be useful. Guidelines are not rules rigidly to be followed nor prescriptions guaranteed to provide a magic cure. Nevertheless, guidelines, like a map or a compass, may keep us from stumbling, from groping in the dark and, perhaps, from taking a disastrous approach which might turn away the very ones we seek to serve.

Before daring to approach others, we ought to be sure we have the wherewithal: the knowledge of what God's word actually has to say about marriage, that we understand as fully as possible what marriage is, what is essential and what is not. Consider the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Do you find a marriage ceremony? A prescribed ritual? A set of rules stating who should officiate, the minimum age for the bride and groom? Is there a verse that says: get a blood test, then a license, send the invitations, buy a gown, hire a photographer,

buy a cake, reserve the church, don't forget a token gift for the minister and the reception after the service? Oh, yes, and the honeymoon too! Such regulations, such rules, such customs are not prescribed in Scripture nor are they prohibited.

The Scriptures are not directly concerned with *how* a couple gets married; they deal with what marriage is and why this relationship is good for people.

Marriage is a relationship between man and woman, intended by God to be a monogamous relationship; intended to be a permanent bond in which many needs are satisfied — the need to love and be loved, the need for deep friendship, for sharing, for companionship, for sexual satisfaction, for children, the need to escape loneliness. Marriage ought to be a bond of love, mirroring the love Christ has for his people, a bond of sacrificial love, where husband and wife have become one, one flesh, a unity. No one else can make two people one; it is their own love and commitment that unites. In this sense two people marry each other; no one does it for them. The young and not so young are right; they don't need a piece of paper, a license or a public ceremony for this.

The minister who would counsel people "living together" without benefit of clergy ought not to assume that such a couple are not already married, at least in the sense that they have exchanged their own vows, and permanently united in a bond of love, fully intending to live together until death parts. It may, of course, be that this is not the case. The arrangements may be only a matter of convenience, a mutual sharing of interests, saving on the cost of rent, satisfying each other's desires for sexual pleasures, without any commitment or even intention of permanence. Such a relationship certainly is forbidden by Scripture. Because God loves man, he wants the best for man; what a man needs is a wife, a permanent companion, not a "mistress"; what a woman needs is a husband, not a "lover."

Now if we allow for the *possibility* that people "living together" are already "married" in the essential sense of marriage, does this mean we ought to approve of such an arrangement? Not at all! Our objections may be serious even though they are not based on the seventh commandment's prohibition of adultery.

It is the mark of a Christian that his or her life not be the cause of any one's stumbling, that it be a witness to everyone, a light that radiates the love of Christ, that it should avoid the very appearance of evil. A Christian couple, "living together" in present day America, amidst the moral breakdown and collapse of sexual and moral standards, can hardly be distinguished "in appearance" from those to whom sex has become a drug, an escape from boredom, an escape from love, a form of violence, openly displayed on stage, screen and in public. Love, marriage and the family are under attack. A Christian ought never support what is seeking to destroy one of the last vestiges of Christianity, namely, the ideal of a monogamous marriage as a permanent love bond reflecting God's love manifest in Christ Jesus.

What mature and rational reason can a couple who has entered such a state possibly have for not wishing everyone to know that they have entered into such a joyous relationship?

The breakdown in government, the long and bitter fighting of what many regard as an unjust war have caused many young people to have little or no respect for civil authority or the laws of the state.

Part of their contempt for what they call the establishment is shown by disregarding the "license"; who needs a piece of paper? To the Christian couple, the answer is simple: "You do!" Not because it will insure that your love will mature more quickly, not because the license or the ceremony will insure the permanence of your love, but because the Christian is under obligation to obey laws that insure the well-being of their neighbor, laws insuring fairness and the fulfillment of contractual obligations.

Our society is complex. We are related to others by many crisscrossing, interlocking relationships. The relationship between two people in real love, while personal and intimate, is not solely private; it is a public affair. Two people shipwrecked on a deserted island would hardly need a license nor a minister to marry; their relationship would undoubtedly be private, with God alone as a witness. But the rest of us live in a community, belong to a family, are citizens of a state, and are dependent upon numerous individuals and organizations for our very survival.

There would be no need of a "piece of paper" in a community where every one knew each other, were in fact held together by a tribal tie, but our world is not like that. Marriage brings with it property taxes, income taxes, inheritance taxes, joint bank accounts, life insurance, mortgages, installment purchases, children, educational expenses, medical expenses, tuition plans, burial plans, health insurance plans, scholarships, loans and social security. It is really terribly complicated. No wonder some want to drop out, to forget about the complexities of "living together," to escape the responsibilities. However, a mature love, genuinely desirous of another's well being, realistically recognizes the risks, foresees the dangers and accepts the total responsibility, including the material well-being of the other. Much written into our laws is for the benefit of "legally married" people: social security payments to a widow with minor children, income tax exemptions and health insurance plans, to mention a few. The state alone can insure that the rights and interests of the children are safeguarded, if for some reason, something goes wrong, either through the physical death of the parents or the spiritual death of their love.

A Christian ought to obey a just law; so should every one else. It is in everyone's interest to see that justice is preserved, that there is harmony, rather than strife. No society is perfectly just, but, fortunately, we need not choose between a state of anarchy and a state of injustice. A Christian works for perfect justice, realizing that along the way partial justice can

only be attained. To Caesar he renders his due, his contribution. The Christian, as does every wise man, Christian or otherwise, embraces what is good for people.

It may well be that the couple will not be moved by the claims of Scripture. Nevertheless, Scripture's teaching is applicable to all men. The Scriptures recognize and enjoin upon man to do what is beneficial to man; they condemn and forbid what is harmful.

There is something "odd" about a couple, professing to have entered into a married state, and not wishing to avail themselves of every possible means of insuring the well-being of their union, including the legal protection afforded by the state and the approval of others. There may be a lack of maturity, a sense of insecurity, a desire to shock, to get even, to be individuals, behind such ventures. But the minister ought not to assume that he knows the motive. The reason or reasons may be something entirely different. He may never find out. The couple may not really know themselves; they may have first acted spontaneously and thought about their reasons afterwards. In dealing with people we ought always to avoid stereotyping.

The lack of interest shown in the marriage ceremony should also make us wonder whether the usual wedding ritual has lost its significance. It is natural to wish to share one's happiness and sorrows, to note major events in the all too brief period that makes up our lives. Certain events are marked by festivity, as well as, ceremony. We mark birthdays, national holidays, graduations, anniversaries, funerals and weddings with some degree of form and ritual. When such ritual loses its meaning it degenerates into a mere form, a hollow shell. For some the traditional wedding ceremony may have lost its significance in crass commercialism and in the "we must do this because everyone does." A variety of marriage ceremonies should be offered within the church so that the couple involved can plan their own wedding, doing what they want, not what others, including parents and relatives, expect them to do. It may also be desirable to separate the legal requirements, the role of civil government, from the role of God's people. In some instances it might be well to let the legal aspect be handled by a justice of the peace, and let God's people and the minister gather to rejoice, to celebrate, to pray for the continuation of the couple's mutual love, to express thanksgiving and to ask God's blessing.

While it is true that the Scriptures are not concerned directly with the *how*, with the varying customs surrounding marriage, the Scriptures are concerned that a couple be married if they are living together. In the true sense, the moral sense, the couple's love and commitment constitutes the marriage; the state's role is to record and recognize what has already taken place; the people of God's role is to express joy and thanksgiving and to ask God's blessing.

God's people cannot approve when one of their number gives the appearance of evil and constitutes a stumbling block, nor can they approve the breaking of a law that seeks to preserve a biblical view of marriage. There must be a recognition that simply "living together" is to choose what ought not to be chosen. The wrong that is being committed may not be fornication, but nowhere does Scripture indicate that other wrongs are less pleasing to God. But while the people of God ought to recognize what is wrong, they should show nothing but love to those who may not see that their relationship is wrong, who see only the beauty of their new love. Extreme caution ought to be exercised; a careless word spoken in pharisaical self-righteousness may be all that is needed to alienate young people from the gathering of God's people, to keep them from joining in common worship and enjoying the counsel, guidance and community of the saints. ■



# Book Reviews

John Bunyan, *Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology*, 2, by Richard L. Greaves (Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1969, 176 pp., \$5.50), is reviewed by Robert B. Ives, B.D. '62.

Almost everyone has read *Pilgrim's Progress*; far fewer would have come across *The Holy War* or *Grace Abounding*, while the remaining works of John Bunyan, the tinker of Bedfordshire, are not often available today. But even those who have not read Bunyan know the name, not to be confused with Paul Bunyan of American folklore. If, beyond reading the works, one wanted to know something about John Bunyan, his life and thought, little is available — some studies of his literature, a biography or two. Greaves' work fills a gap then, for it is an attempt to assess the theological stamp of Bunyan. Unfortunately, for those who maintain the kind of technical interest to pursue such a study, it is not a terribly good work.

Mr. Greaves makes various attempts to classify Bunyan as a Calvinist of some stripe or to indicate his debt to Luther, but he is not really well read in 16th century doctrine and his judgments seem to go awry. Bullinger and Musculus had more effect on the British church scene than Luther or Calvin and the attempt to analyze Bunyan's theology in terms of "the harshness of Calvin's predestinarian doctrine" or of the Luther whose conversion experience seemed parallel to that of Bunyan, fall wide of what theological influences were felt in 17th century England. The attempt by Greaves to indicate that theological dependence is at best a tenuous exercise by quoting Bunyan as saying he is not indebted to theologians but to the Scriptures is surely naive. The Scriptures are always interpreted in light of prevailing theological winds.

The hints of Luther dependence come in a wrath-grace dichotomy, an emphasis on soteriology, with a works-justification struggle and a law-grace motif. But the evidence to support this as uniquely learned from Luther is weak. For example, in a number of places Greaves speaks about Bunyan's soteriological view (pp. 49, 114, 157 etc.). Does Bunyan assert the process of salvation, with sanctification elevated, or does he stress the act of justification? Greaves' data is conflicting, and one certainly cannot say that Luther did not think about sanctification, for even in Galatians he stresses the importance of good works for Christian men. Another hint of the ambiguity in Greaves may be found on page 118 where an attempt to demonstrate, rather unconvincingly, Luther's influence in a law-grace struggle is heavily qualified, perhaps only striking Bunyan at the motivation level, a rather tenuous place at which to rest theological dependence.

*General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture*, by Charles Augustus Briggs (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1970 — from the 1900 edition — 688 pp., plus preface, \$8.95), is reviewed by Robert B. Ives, B.D. '62.

Out of the pages of yesteryear come some intriguing stuff — sometimes. It all depends upon what the stuff is and how much it is going to cost to obtain it. Baker Book House has put us in its debt by issuing a series of valuable reprints of works done in the last 50-80 years, reasonably priced, about 1.3 cents per page, in a market where books usually cost 5-8 cents per page. One of the most intriguing of these reprints is a work by Charles Augustus Briggs.

Briggs is no stranger to seminary people. He is one third of Brown, Driver and Briggs, the still to be replaced (may that day hasten) Hebrew lexicon, undoubtedly Isuldur's Bane and, with the same Driver and A.S. Plummer, editor of the ICC, some of whose volumes are still valuable, although Briggs' work on the Psalms has seen many recent commentaries replace it. He is known to Presbyterians because he was tried for heresy and suspended from the church in 1893 because of his views on the Scriptures and the way he blatantly stated them at times. This book, *Study of Holy Scripture*, presents his mature thinking from his post at Union Theological Seminary in New York on biblical languages, higher criticism, the canon, textual criticism, hermeneutics, biblical theology and the usefulness of Scripture. Some of the critical ideas no longer appear tenable over 70 years later, nor perhaps so liberal as Presbyterians of 1893 thought.

There has been a great deal of interest recently in American 19th century thought. That was a century in which theology was strongly influenced by evangelicals and from such a vantage point we might learn some lessons from a man in whom one finds a mixture of piety and scholarship, lessons which will have interest for more than historical reasons. This will be, therefore, a handy book to have on one's shelf, a useful reference in a time when the doctrine of the Scriptures is so terribly important to evangelicals.

*Uncertain Resurrection: The Poor People's Washington Campaign*, by Charles Fager (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969, 142 pp., paper, \$2.45), is reviewed by H. Jeffrey Silliman, B.D. '69, pastor of the Community Presbyterian Church in Richfield, Utah.

Have you ever wondered just what happened to the Poor People's Washington Campaign? You remember: that was a plan to gather the poor from all over America into Washington, D.C. under the leadership of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Such a gathering was supposed to lay the plight of the poor bare before the conscience of the nation as a whole and particularly before the conscience of the Congress. And this was to be not just a move to get a sympathetic hearing. It was to be a force which would bring about concrete legislative and executive action on behalf of the poor in America. If you have ever wondered just what happened to this Campaign, then read this little book.

Beginning with the reasons why Dr. Martin Luther King decided upon this particular form of action, Charles Fager, in an excellent job of

interpretive reporting, lays out the Campaign for the reader's examination. He shows how the assassination of Dr. King dealt the SCLC leadership team such a blow on the eve of the Campaign that it never really recovered. Through Fager's discerning eyes the reader sees Resurrection City, the shantytown for the poor, begin in hope, halt in confusion and then end in despair. One also sees demonstrations hobble along, shackled by the lack of careful planning and coordination. One can feel the sense of futility that builds as the weeks go by and the Campaign never really gains the energy even to begin to carry out its purposes. And finally, one sees the Campaign silently fade into nonexistence.

In this book, Fager does not try to give an extensive sociological or political analysis of the Campaign. He makes no attempt rigorously to evaluate it from a theological perspective, although observations which are theologically pregnant appear from time to time. He simply attempts to give a reporter's eye view of the Campaign from start to finish. All this does not mean that Fager has failed in what he set out to do. On the contrary, he has succeeded in an admirable fashion. This book could be valuable to those who are concerned about the means by which lasting social change can be brought about in this country within the system.

*Icon and Pulpit, the Protestant-Orthodox Encounter*, by Carnegie Samuel Calian (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1968, 220 pp.), is reviewed by Charles C. Twombly, S.T.B. '68.

The author of this book is an ordained Presbyterian minister and is presently Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. Though baptized into the Orthodox Church, he was raised a Protestant and therefore has a great deal of personal interest in the theme of this book. What is presented is not so much a comparative study of Protestant and Orthodox theologies, or even an historical survey of the encounter between these two traditions, as it is an introduction to Orthodoxy for Protestants. As such, I think there are better ones available such as Timothy Ware's *The Orthodox Church* (Oxford, 1963) and Paul Verghese's *The Joy of Freedom* (John Knox, 1967). Calian's book is a little overloaded with quotations and often lets a quote stand in place of some needed discussion or explanation.

I commend the author's attempt at bringing an understanding of Orthodoxy to Protestants, however, because I think the issue is of greater importance than most Christians are aware. The Orthodox Church provides living access into the mind of the early Church Fathers, a world of thought and piety which is often startlingly different from ours but which in many ways may be closer (and not only in time) to the world of the New Testament Church. The issues are not simple, but I would recommend this book along with the ones mentioned above to anyone willing to reconsider the Faith from a "new" perspective, that of the Eastern tradition.

*The New Bible Commentary*, ed. by D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1970, 1310 pp., \$12.95) and *A New Testament Commentary*, ed. by G.D.C. Howley (Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1969, 666 pp., \$7.95), are reviewed by George E. Ladd, professor of New Testament theology and exegesis.

When I was a pastor, the only one-volume commentaries were the ancient works by Jamison, Fausset and Brown, and the "liberal" Peake and Abingdon Commentaries. The revival in scholarship among evangelicals produced an excellent one-volume commentary, *The New Bible Commentary* (1953), written largely by British scholars. This work has had a wide ministry in America as well as Great Britain.

Now the work has been revised and will undoubtedly fulfill an even larger ministry than the first edition. It contains twelve general articles as against ten in the first edition. Three articles have been dropped and replaced by five new articles; e.g., O.T. Theology; Moses and the Pentateuch; Between the Testaments. Other essays have been revised and rewritten to a greater or less degree, some by new authors. Professor Bromiley's essay on "The Authority of Scripture" is retained. As for the Commentary itself, some books have been slightly revised, others have been rewritten, some by new authors. Some dozen new names appear in the work. One striking feature: several American scholars are included, including Fuller's William S. LaSor, as well as Gleason Archer of Trinity and Meredith Kline of Gordon. Our Dr. Ralph Martin writes on Romans and Ephesians. G.R. Beasley-Murray does a good job on The Revelation.

Here is the work to recommend to laymen and especially church school teachers who need a trustworthy exposition from the evangelical point of view.

*The New Testament Commentary* is a work of about the same scope as *The New Bible Commentary*, but is written by a circle of British Brethren, most of whom will be unknown in America. This circle of Brethren is not characterized by the Dispensational Theology for which many American Brethren are noted; F.F. Bruce writes on The Revelation. The fourteen General Articles cover a broader range than does *The New Bible Commentary*, since they are all devoted to the New Testament and include essays on the text and canon, language, archaeology, religious background — both Jewish and pagan. F.F. Bruce writes the article on the four-fold Gospel for both commentaries. If a layman owns *The New Bible Commentary*, he probably will not need this one.



## DIVORCE . . .

(Continued from page 9)

contracted so there is only an annulment. (iii) A couple may resolve their problem by "separation of bed and board."

First, these three concessions are virtual admissions that the dominical sayings simply are not sufficient for a Christian ethic of divorce that is adequate for all cases. Second, it might defy the Supreme Court to determine if a law of the state contradicted the dominical sayings or not. Third, any person who has studied Roman Catholic divorce ethics where divorce is not permitted and annulment is known how purely arbitrary this distinction can be or how difficult to determine if a given case is a matter of divorce or annulment.

Separation of bed and board seems an easy out, but is it? Such an arrangement may be financially impossible or it may be damaging to the children or it may be impossible for one of the mates to be sexually continent.

Equally vexing is the matter of "the guilty party." If a tyrannical mother forces her daughter into a marriage which ends in divorce is not the mother really "the guilty party"? Who is the guilty party if the truly innocent mate volunteers to be caught in adultery to meet the technicality of the law for divorce? Who is the guilty party if one mate is so warped in his views of sexuality he drives the other mate beyond her powers of sexual continence? I cannot generalize from my experience but I can report it. Most marriages which verge on divorce or end in divorce are such complicated problems that the concept of "the guilty party" has almost become a meaningless term.

Divorced people are not all that different from the rest of the population. For the most part they are confused people, perplexed people, hurting people. If there is anything they need it is some loving help, some gracious counsel, some redemptive advice that will enable them to live as Christianly as possible the amount of life that does remain to them.

## IV

The New Testament does not intend to contain an exhaustive ethic on any matter. It is a partial, limited but sufficient revelation of the mind of God, and not an exhaustive revelation. The center of the New Testament is the gospel. Divorce is a tertiary matter at best in the New Testament. The burden of the New Testament is to set out the great salvation of God. Therefore, many topics are treated only in passing. This I believe to be the matter about divorce and about the dominical sayings.

Laymen often have no idea how much the Church improvises. There is not a line in the New Testament about a marriage ceremony or a funeral, yet we participate in these rituals as if they were lifted out of the New Testament. It is all improvisation! The materials about ordination in the New Testament are slim so any ordination service is largely improvised. Specifics about the administration of baptism and communion are not given in the New Testament and here again we improvise. In the territory of ethics where many new practices have come into existence since biblical times the Church speaks with an authoritative "no" as in the use of narcotics or reckless driving, etc. Where the Church is responsible to speak or act and the New Testament is silent, it can do none else but improvise.

We work with the spirit of revelation as well as the letter. Whenever we improvise we attempt to postulate what the New Testament would say if it were to speak on the subject. We would want to improvise in harmony with that which is specifically revealed. We would therefore not sanction any improvisation but that which seems in keeping with the whole tenor of the original, divine revelation. ■

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