

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbrfj.php

By his example, by his caring, understanding and sympathetic attitude, as well as by his relevant teaching and practice of sound scriptural principles, the modern, informed Christian teacher will no doubt seek to show that there is a life which can be lived humbly, joyfully, and positively to the glory of God and to the blessing of his fellow man, by the aid of the indwelling spirit of truth and holiness.

The teaching of the necessity and relevance of sound moral standards, attitudes and values is one of the greatest tasks facing home and school alike today. It is a task which the responsible, Christian teacher knows full well cannot be fulfilled without the understanding and intelligent prayerful backing of a revived Christian Church.

References

- 1 *Times Educational Supplement* 27.9.74 p8
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 A report on *Violence in Schools* published by the National Association of Schoolmasters Dec. 1974
- 4 It is estimated that of the 2m women on the Pill in 1973, 160,000 were between the ages of 16 and 20.
- 5 *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People* M. Schofield. Longmans 1965
- 6 *ibid.* p. 41
- 7 *ibid.* p. 247
- 8 *ibid.* p. 248
- 9 Report of the Committee on the Working of the Abortion Act Vol. 1. Report HMSO £1.75
- 10 *Times Educational Supplement* 1.11.74 p. 23
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 The population in maintained Schools in England and Wales has risen from 7m in 1965 to 9m in 1974 according to a Department of Education and Science (DES) Report on Education (No. 80 Dec. 1974).

P. KIMBER

2: The communication of Christian standards

I was six years old when an urchin first told me the facts of life. Some time earlier I had approached my family on the subject.

'Do you have a chair that is empty one minute, and then the next minute there is a baby in it?' I asked.

'Something like that', I was told.

So when my mentor told me why there were structural differences between boys and girls, I disbelieved him, though he quoted impressive authority in his support.

‘My brother told me, and he is ten years old.’

You can’t argue with that.

That was a long time ago, mind you, and I wonder how many children now reach such mature years without a fairish idea about sex. Any discussion about sex education has to accept things as they are, and we have to accept that if it was once possible for children to grow to adolescence and even adulthood in ignorance of the facts of life, such a thing would nowadays be quite extraordinary. That being so, since children are going to know anyway, the questions to ask are, ‘When’ and ‘How much?’

In my adolescence it was popular to laugh at the ‘Victorian’ prudery which maintained a stony silence on all sexual matters, and it was confidently predicted that since this conspiracy of silence was the cause of frigidity and impotence, perversion and prostitution, the dawn of frankness and permissiveness would bring an end to all these evils. Of course, only a fool or a knave or a propagandist could possibly have believed such a piece of nonsense. If taboos had caused the unhappy side-effects, why had the taboos grown up at all? Before the taboos, there was permissiveness, so what had caused the taboos? And developments since then have tended to show that there are worse things connected with sex than embarrassment and inhibition. You don’t get rid of a neurosis by revealing it; you only exchange one kind of problem for another, and we have certainly created enormous problems by our minute and almost obsessive pre-occupation with the intimacies of sex.

We have to begin with the need for sexual instruction and guidance for our young people, for it is essential that they understand the distinctness of the Christian attitude to sex, since it involves additional difficulties and vastly greater possibilities than a purely secular view. Let’s take the difficulties first.

I suppose Christians will never completely rid themselves of the old Greek ideas about the essential evil of the body, but we have to try. It can be an intolerable burden for boys in particular, perhaps, as they reach adolescence, to feel that their awakening sexual desires are wicked. I knew one young man who was almost crushed with guilt, since Christ had equated lustful thoughts with adultery, and his waking hours were dominated by just those thoughts which Christ seemed to condemn. His great wish was that he had not been brought up in a Christian home, since he presumed that non-Christians lived in a world of delicious pagan freedom and fulfilment. In short, to teach youngsters about sexual sins without giving far greater stress to sexual fulfilment, and teaching about forgiveness and spiritual victory, is to make ‘the latter end worse than the first’. Everything about the Christian view of life must balance the neg-

ativeness of sin by the fulness of life in Christ or we shall produce religious neurotics and not Christians. There is ample evidence that we have indeed shirked our duty to our young people, not by telling them lies, but by teaching them less than the truth.

To take one more example of our failure in giving the right instruction about sex, I was speaking to a church elder recently who had had a sad case in their church of a young couple whose desires had exceeded their discipline. The elders suddenly woke up to the fact that they did not know what to do about it. Whose responsibility was it to give guidance to the couple in their distress? What was the right course of action for them to follow? How could the situation have been avoided? As a church, as a body, what was the answer? Amputation? Or were they as a body going to accept their responsibilities and put them right? He was sufficiently humble and gracious to realise that it is not just young people who need guidance in such matters, but their elders as well. One book I have found immensely helpful is *I Married You*, by Walter Trobisch, (IVP), for he points out that the Bible does not just suggest that we hustle young people through the temptations of adolescence into the haven of marriage, but that the gospel permeates every part of our relationship with the opposite sex. It is for that reason that we have to integrate our teaching about sex with the whole of what the Scriptures teach. The Bible has as much to say about the way elders treat their wives, or bachelors cope with their singleness as about the lusts of youth.

It is worth thinking about what Paul told the Corinthians. They, like us, lived in a society which worshipped sex, and Christians had carried their pagan attitudes into the church. Paul's attitude was to be very frank about their sins, but to develop his remarks into a paean, a triumphant hymn in honour of love. That is what the gospel does. It doesn't shy away from embarrassments; it glorifies them as everything about our bodies will one day be glorified. After all, the whole history of the church is going to end in a marriage one day, so it would be pretty silly to fight shy of the subject.

If, then, we are to give sex-instruction to our young people, whose job is it to do it? I am in two minds about this. On the one hand I think it is most happily done at home. Children need to grow up with the knowledge that they are the product of their parents' love. On the other hand, because sex is so big, powerful and complicated, so set about with subtle modesties and urgent drives, it is perhaps better to stand apart from our families and be objective. Certainly in adolescence everyone needs a confidant outside the home, and if the right person is available, a wise youth leader or a sensitive elder, then perhaps the responsibility should be theirs.

Finally, when should sex instruction start? There is considerable discussion about this, but my own feeling is that fore-warned is fore-armed. A prurient interest in sex is a universal characteristic, and at a very early age children will learn about sex, whatever their parents may wish. For that reason I am in favour of parents answering questions as they arise, encouraging their children to ask them about the things that bother them, thus giving an opportunity to put them in their right context. You can't just talk about the facts of life, as you can about servicing a car. Sex is inextricably bound up with moral and spiritual attitudes and we separate it at our peril. Conversely we separate spiritual things from the rest of life with the same risk.

PETER WEBB

3: Premarital intercourse

It is almost impossible to examine interpersonal sexual relationships without preconceived ideas clouding our minds. But such consideration is important since there are a number of factors in contemporary society which are indicative of a rapid change in sexual behaviour. Firstly there is the advent of women's lib, which has for one of its goals the 'liberation' of women socially and sexually. Secondly there are improved contraceptive measures which are freely available. Thirdly there is a greater awareness of and sympathy for the sexual deviant. Fourthly there is a greater openness and willingness to discuss sexual matters previously rarely discussed even between husband and wife and almost certainly not in the church situation. Within this climate of change and re-examination of attitudes it is thus doubly important to base our ideas and actions firmly on Scripture: too often in the past other arguments have been put forward to enforce ideas about relationships between the sexes. One such was the unwanted pregnancy or fear of pregnancy. A number of well-meaning christian pastors used this as a back up argument with such force that it became the main argument against premarital sexual intercourse. Now that contraceptive advice and help is free for the most part and abortion more easily obtainable legally this argument loses most of its force. Thus I believe a stand needs to be taken on clear scriptural principles.

From the outset of Genesis the Bible views the sexual relationship as naturally occurring and not necessarily associated with sin or guilt. Gen. 1: 27f. states that God created male and female, blessed them and exhorted them to "be fruitful and multiply". Later, v. 31,