

# Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is the first report to the General Convention of a Standing Commission which was created at the 65th General Convention by combining two existing bodies, the Committee on Religion and Health and the Commission on the Church in Human Affairs. Canon 1.1.2(g) describes the duty of the Commission "to study and concern itself with the theological, ethical and pastoral questions inherent in such aspects of human affairs as human health, sexuality and bioethical problems."

Unfortunately, the Commission has had almost no time to devote to any of the crucial issues in the broad charter of expectations raised by this description. The 65th General Convention assigned to the Commission the special responsibility "to study in depth the matter of the ordination of homosexual persons and report its findings, along with recommendations, to the Church-at-large for study (and especially to the Bishops, Standing Committees, Commissions of the National Church), to the next General Convention. . . ." This task has absorbed almost the entire time and effort of the Commission in this triennium, even though, as the report indicates, the Commission does not judge this matter to be of overwhelming importance in the broad range of human affairs and health.

Nevertheless, the Commission regarded the General Convention reference as a mandate and organized itself to do the best job it could under the obvious limitations which are imposed by infrequent meetings, the desire to contain expenses and the quasi-private nature and the imprecise definition of the subject under consideration. The fact that the whole issue of human sexuality has been so prominent and emotional a part of the national environment may have given the topic an artificial importance which made study easier; but that same public focusing of attention, as is so often the case, makes it more difficult to advance for serious consideration any but simplistic solutions to problems and has reduced the level of trust and patience required for learning in depth. The Commission has been uncomfortably aware of the pressure groups working for the acceptance of single or simple solutions to complex human situations and strongly resists the adoption of any blanket policies which attempt universal application to an infinitude of particular variation.

In carrying out its assigned task, the Commission has felt the necessity to meet more frequently than usual, to seek advice and counsel from a variety of sources and persons, to establish direct and in-person contact with Church leaders as much as possible, and

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to meet in various parts of the country. With the assistance of the Expense Committee of Program, Budget and Finance, and the thoughtful and generous sharing by other Committees and Commissions, additional funds were allocated to permit the Commission to increase its number of scheduled meetings, and to increase as well two-way communication with individuals and with dioceses which have appointed study groups on issues related to human sexuality.

The Commission therefore submits its report against the background of the following activities:

- a. Full three- or four-day meetings in Louisville, Kentucky; Austin, Texas; Berkeley, California; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Cincinnati, Ohio; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Dallas, Texas.
- b. Consultations at most of those meetings with diocesan representatives appointed to the task of aiding Church people in the study of attitudes toward human sexuality. Some advisory service to such persons has been given by the Commission, but this is not considered a normal part of the work of a Standing Commission.
- c. At some meetings an opportunity was provided for a public hearing at which the Commission listened to persons who had particular views to state or offer.
- d. At most meetings the Commission consulted privately with persons invited because they had a viewpoint or expertise the Commission deemed valuable. Such private consultations were with persons of widely-divergent attitudes, positions and prominence.
- e. The provision to each member of the Commission of a full transcript of the discussions in each meeting so that there could be a complete record against which to reach conclusions and consensus. Even members forced to miss particular meetings could be kept advised of direction and detail.
- f. The results of similar studies conducted in other denominations in this same time period were made available to each member of the Commission. (They are recommended reading for all Church members who wish to do informed study on this question.)
- g. The Commission has consistently maintained a policy of completely confidential but absolutely frank discussion and debate, testing the results of its deliberation not once but several times in the effort to reach conclusions in which there has been full participation.

Since the General Convention mandate to the Commission required a report of findings to the Church as well as the Convention, arrangements have been made to distribute this report as widely as possible. The atmosphere which prevails in the Church and the society about homosexuality is probably more important for the resolution of some of the issues confronted than the particular arguments raised in legislative debate at the General Convention. Whether the governing attitude as the question is addressed is one of fear or of confidence will in large part be determined by the kind of thoughtful study in the Church-at-large which has preceded the decisions by the General Convention or by diocesan conventions, committees and commissions.

This report on an extremely narrow band of the subject matter available to this Commission on the Church in Human Affairs and Health is submitted in the hope that the Church-at-large will now duplicate the effort of the Commission's valuable experience of study, debate, discussion and decision, which remains the most helpful method of dealing with matters on which there is divergence of opinion, conviction and conclusion.

*Our* most useful learnings have been in the area of self-discovery, a way by which the grace of God helps us most lovingly to learn about others.

The members of the Commission have received highly-valued staff assistance from persons assigned from the national offices of the Episcopal Church — Dr. Anne Harrison in the early stages of our work, and, during the larger part of our deliberations, the Rev. Alfred Johnson, Public Affairs Officer of the Episcopal Church, whose many-faceted talents greatly facilitated our deliberations.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert R. Spears, Jr.  
Chairman

## HUMAN AFFAIRS AND HEALTH

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### MEMBERSHIP – STANDING COMMISSION ON HUMAN AFFAIRS AND HEALTH

Bishops	Diocese	Province
The Rt. Rev. Robert R. Spears, Jr. (1982) (chrm.)	Rochester	2
The Rt. Rev. Hal R. Gross (1979)	Oregon	8
The Rt. Rev. Willis R. Henton (1982)	Northwest Texas	7
 <b>Presbyters</b>		
The Rev. William A. Spurrier, III (1982)	Connecticut	1
The Rev. Thomas F. Pike (1979)	New York	2
The Very Rev. Gordon T. Charlton (1982)	Texas	7
 <b>Lay Persons</b>		
Ruth T. Barnhouse, M.D. (1982)	Massachusetts	1
J. Campbell Cantrill, M.D. (1979)	Lexington	3
Michelle W. Hawkins (1979)	Pennsylvania	3
Thomas G. P. Guilbert, Esq. (1979) (sec.)	Oregon	8
D. Bruce Merrifield, Ph.D. (1979)	New York	2
Anna H. Grant, Ph.D. (1982)	Atlanta	4

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### Financial Report

Three-year budget approved by Program, Budget, and Finance	\$25,918.00
1977 (actual)	4,667.00
1978 (actual)	15,751.00
1979 (budget)	<u>5,500.00</u>
	\$25,918.00

Meetings	\$ 2,343.25
Travel	11,697.03
Expenses	2,813.45
(typing, tape recording, mail, phone, secretarial, etc.)	

(1979 actual expenses not available as of 4/1/79)

### Recommendation

In accordance with the instructions of the General Convention issued at Minneapolis "to study in depth the matter of the ordination of homosexual persons and report its findings, along with recommendations, to the Church-at-large for study (and especially to the Bishops, Standing Committees, Commissions of the National Church) to the next General Convention," the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health unanimously offers the following:

#### Resolution #A-53

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the following statements represent the mind of the General Convention:

1. There are many human conditions which bear upon a person's suitability for ordination. Some of these are in the area of sexuality.

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2. The various homosexual adaptations result, in some cases, in behavior which most Christians regard as abnormal, immoral, and/or anti-social. Such behavior, as in the case of some expressions of heterosexuality, constitutes a disqualification for ordination.
3. The question, with regard to any ordinand, is whether he or she can and will lead a life which is a wholesome example to Christ's flock. There should be no barrier to the ordination of those homosexual persons who are able and willing to conform their behavior to that which the Church affirms as wholesome. Some homosexual persons can so conform their behavior and have done so, some even as they have acknowledged their homosexuality, while others cannot or will not.
4. Clergy are expected to render compassionate and understanding pastoral care to homosexual individuals, but not to promote or foster a homosexual adaptation as a generally-acceptable alternative for Christians.
5. The General Convention should enact no legislation which singles out a particular human condition and makes of it an absolute barrier to ordination, thus depriving Bishops and Commissions on Ministry of the proper exercise of their discretion in the particular cases for which they are responsible.

### Objectives and Goals 1980-82

#### *Overall Objective*

To assist the Bishops and Deputies of the General Convention by performing the functions assigned to the Commission in Canon I.1.2(h).

#### *1980 Objective*

To organize the Commission into appropriate sub-structure (two or more sub-committees) to begin discussion and preparation of background information on overall topic of "Reclaiming Responsibility in the Family and in the Exercise of Citizenship."

Goal #1 — To organize one sub-committee on the subject of "Reclaiming Responsibility in the Family," and to determine what emphasis of this topic should be further developed and presented.

Goal #2 — To organize one sub-committee on the subject of "Reclaiming Responsibility in the Exercise of Citizenship," and to determine what emphasis of this topic should be further developed and presented.

Goal #3 — To determine what other tasks the Commission can responsibly undertake in this triennium.

Goal #4 — To establish contact with other national and international boards, agencies, foundations, etc., who are working on issues relating to the Commission's interests.

Goal #5 — To assist in transferring to the appropriate program units of the Church the Commission's contact with and support of diocesan groups responsible for continuing study programs in human sexuality.

#### *Budget for 1980*

3 meetings, Commission and/or sub-committees	\$ 5,400
Travel	8,100
Office	500
Travel, Resource	600
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	\$14,600

#### *1981 Objective*

To continue study and development of two major themes by sub-committees and full Commission meetings.

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Goal #1 — Regular meetings and decision on reports to be presented by sub-committees and/or full Commission.

Goal #2 — Full Commission meeting to establish unification of sub-committee themes and reports.

Goal #3 — Consultation with persons dealing with related themes of family issues, responsible citizenship, human sexuality, violence in the family, etc.

Goal #4 — Advertise among dioceses Commissions' willingness to serve as conduit to General Convention of resolutions related to human affairs and health issues.

### *Budget for 1981*

5 meetings, Commission and/or sub-committees	\$ 9,000
Travel	13,500
Office	500
Travel, Resource	600
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	\$23,600

### *1982 Objective*

To complete study and assembly of information on all themes and prepare report for General Convention.

Goal #1 — Full Commission meeting early in 1982 for final comparison and collation of study projects and reports.

Goal #2 — Executive Committee meeting for completion and submission of Commission's report to General Convention.

### *Budget for 1982*

1 meeting, full Commission	\$1,800
Travel	2,700
Office	250
1 Executive meeting	1,275
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	\$6,045

### **Budget Request**

#### **Resolution #A—54**

*Resolved, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that there be appropriated from the assessment Budget of General Convention for the expenses of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health the sum of \$44,200 for the triennium of 1980-82.*

## **THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE USA COMMISSION ON HUMAN AFFAIRS AND HEALTH BACKGROUND STATEMENT ON HUMAN SEXUALITY APPENDIX "A"**

### **Introduction**

This report needs to be read and understood not as a polished and definitive study but for what its title indicates it is, a background paper on an intricate and sensitive subject. The paper was prepared jointly by the members of the Standing Commission on Human Affairs and Health who had been directly charged to make a report and recommendation to the General Convention on the "matter of the ordination of

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homosexual persons." The members of the Commission brought to this task, and to the long and often painful hours of discussion by which it was attempted, their own experience and expertise, their knowledge and conclusions. They also brought their own prejudice and mistakes. They asked one member, initially, to act as author of a draft document which then became the focus of study, discussion and rewriting at several successive meetings. The uneven style of the final product testifies to the method of its production. But it is a record of the attempt of a group of responsible Christian persons to arrive at a responsible decision about a matter which they came to believe was not to be resolved simply by edict.

In the course of its series of meetings, the Commission consulted with many other persons who seek to make their own responsible decisions about this same matter, and the Commission concluded that the problems are the same almost everywhere; only the difficulties are different. The nature of this subject and the environment for decision-making seem to require that all of us go through a pilgrimage of discovery together if we are to reach agreement with our sisters and brothers in Christ who are joined with us in a precious variety of understanding, experience and vision. That the Commission was able to present a unanimous recommendation is testimony to the value it placed on the diversity of opinion which was discovered among its membership in the course of the honest, forthright discussion by which convictions and conclusions were reached.

We thank the many persons who gave us so generously of their thoughts and time and prayers, and we wish for all those to whom the Church entrusts decisions in this matter similar support, struggle and satisfaction.

Robert H. Spears, Jr.  
Chairman  
Standing Commission on  
Human Affairs and Health

June 1, 1979

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## I. BACKGROUND STATEMENT OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

### A. Abstract

1. The purposes of human sexuality are to contribute to human welfare, pleasure, family procreation, social order and a more abundant quality of life for all. More specifically, sex should be used as a means of achieving such purposes and should be under the guidance and expression of the kind of love taught by Jesus and revealed by God through Christ.
2. If sexual (homosexual or heterosexual) attitudes and concerns become obsessional and dominant, they are wrong (idolatrous) because they then hinder the growth in Christian love.
3. In establishing ethical norms and making moral judgments on specific sexual acts, the same criteria as are used for heterosexuals should be used for

homosexuals. Does an act either hinder or enhance the family, Church, society's quality of life, or human love?

## II. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

### A. Interpretation of the Bible

Often on religious-ethical issues — especially in the area of sexuality — there are mixtures of fact, values, data, belief, partial and conflicting evidence, cherished dogmas vs. prejudices, sincere convictions vs. new discoveries. Here our duty is to sort out as best we can the various elements and see if there is a distinctly Christian viewpoint on some of our complex ethical issues.

#### 1. *Proof Texting*

Because both sex and love are such enormous realities and our words for them so abstract, religious persons have often sought specific definitions, moral rules and theological absolutes. Some Christians have derived particular rules by citing some text or event in the Bible. For example, in making a case against homosexual persons, one line of St. Paul is used, or the Sodom and Gomorrah story is quoted.

We believe there must be more authentic bases for handling specific problems. We find inadequate any attempt to "proof text." If it is valid to pick out a single text, then one has to support texts which say God ordered the killing of several thousand men, women, and children in the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:21) and twelve thousand in the city of Ai (Joshua 8:24). Or, if one selects one event and not another, one must show where the criterion of selection came from. Moreover, many texts and deeds recorded in the Old Testament were repudiated in the New Testament. (Prostitutes were stoned to death in Old Testament times; Jesus forgave the harlot). Thus, the Old Testament has to be evaluated and interpreted in the light of the Gospel of the New Testament.

#### 2. *Imitation of Jesus*

We also reject various views based on the imitation of Jesus; especially those which call for a literal repetition of something our Lord did or did not do. According to these views, if Jesus drank and/or did not drink, we must do likewise. If he did not ordain women, neither should we. If he was not a soldier, neither can we be one, etc. If this approach were carried to its conclusion then all clergy must have a three year ministry, no marriage, and end up crucified — and to complete the true faith — be resurrected.

#### 3. *Principles vs. Rules*

On the other hand, the Bible rightly interpreted, is authoritative for the Church, and there are discernible and continuous principles present. One obvious principle is the constant need for man's experience of obedience to the reality of God. While the means of "practicing the presence of God" may vary, the necessity and reality of God's powers are always the same. Similarly, while many specific moral rules set forth in the Old Testament were set aside by Jesus and the new Testament writers, there are enduring ethical criteria. A good example of this is found in the story of the woman taken in adultery.

According to the Law, the woman should have been stoned to death. But Jesus forgave her, adding, "Go and sin no more." Here the rule that women taken



in adultery should be stoned is suspended, but the principle that adultery is wrong is upheld.

It should be noted here that three other major Christian bodies have produced lengthy documents on human sexuality and problems of homo- and hetero-sexuality. Special attention is called to the documents' detailed analyses and interpretations of the biblical material.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, among others, we do not include in our report a similar lengthy biblical discussion. Instead we offer the following summary of our position:

#### 4. *God in Christ the only Absolute*

As we understand the Gospel, Jesus made it clear that our first concern should not be to formulate specific moral rules. His basic conflict with the Pharisees and the Law was exactly on this problem. Of course, laws and particular moral rules are necessary. But they must be kept relative at all times. It was the absolutizing of the laws which Jesus challenged time and time again.

There is only one absolute and that is God. There cannot be any other absolute. Therefore, *all* laws and morals must be made relative to and serve God who is Love. Conversely, if any law hinders love, that law is bad. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God... and thy neighbor as thyself; on these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets." However, in our present culture, we cannot just stop and summarize the Gospel by saying "Love." As we all know, there are many different meanings to this word.

Almost everyone would say they believe in love; but what kind of love? romantic, friendly, family, or other types which may not be as easy to practice, such as sacrificial and obedient love, or tribal and patriotic love? And is Christian love opposed to or different from these other types of love? To clarify, we must try to spell out, all too briefly, what we mean by Gospel-Christian love.

#### 5. *New Testament Gospel Love Defined*

Christian love is not opposed to most kinds of human love. But there are some basically different characteristics of Gospel love. Love is from God and is a basic part of God's reality. Jesus illustrated the nature of this reality-love by showing that it is sacrificial and forgiving, seeks everyone, is not dependent upon our moral achievements, indeed is especially available to acknowledged sinners, and is everywhere present. One way of experiencing the radical difference between God's love and human love is to try to follow Jesus' example of "turning the other cheek," "praying for those who persecute you," etc. The next time someone offends or hurts us, note that our immediate and natural reaction is to fight back. There is not an easy, natural and spontaneous urge to "forgive your enemies". Who of us thinks of immediately "praying for one who persecutes you," (a mugger, a robber, a warring nation)? So, one basic characteristic of Christian love is its sacrificial outgoing universal caring for people.

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<sup>1</sup>Human Sexuality: A Preliminary Study, United Church of Christ, 1977. For Biblical Discussion see especially: Chapter 2 "Biblical Foundations" pp. 31-86. Blue Book, Part I *The Church and Homosexuality*, United Presbyterian Church, 1977. See Section II "Homosexuality and the Bible" pp. 28-100. For the differences between the United Presbyterian majority and minority interpretations and policy statements, see especially pp. 157-183 and pp. 184-201. *Human Sexuality: New Directions In American Catholic Thought*, produced by a Roman Catholic Commission. Paulist Press, 1977. For the Bible and human sexuality see Chapter I.

Other aspects of Christian love include acts of responsibility and sharing. When one loves, one assumes caring about one's beloved. One does not wait for a law to tell one to help the sick or aid a friend. Indeed, a lover even looks for ways to express that love. There is a kind of inner impulse that wants to help. Similarly, when one is given the gift of love, however small, one wants to share the new level of being. Perhaps it is no accident that Jesus combined the responsibility and sharing of love when he "sent them (the disciples) forth to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." (Luke 9:2). At the same time, Jesus made it clear that Gospel love was not a sentimental "good feeling" which ignored sin and evil in life or assumed that "love can conquer all." As we know, Jesus warned that his love may result in persecution and isolation. And he advised his disciples that if they were not well received to "shake off the dust" and depart.

The other, often over-looked, ingredient of Christian love is that it must be experienced and nurtured in a group relationship. While the individual can have a personal relationship with God, and each person must develop his conscience and make his own decisions, it is also true that this is not enough. My view of God needs to be corrected by your view; my experience of God's love needs to be widened by your experience. Because of our sin, we need each other. Of course, we are talking about the Church here. This means that the Christian ethic is not the simplistic idea that all each individual has to do is use "love" for each "situation" and do the best he can. Nor, on the other hand, can a Church institution assert that it has all the moral answers, thereby implying that it is the duty of the individual to memorize, obey, and observe the rules and keep quiet!

The awareness of our biblical covenant is much needed in our highly individualistic culture, reflecting as it does the long experience of the active relationship of God with both individuals and groups. Therefore, my understanding of God-love is dependent upon my experiences but also upon my commitment to groups of God-loving people. Further, my loyalty and caring are both gift and achievement; I have a responsibility to God and his people. Love requires one to consider the effect of my actions not just on me, but on my neighbor and upon the Body of Christ. Do my actions enhance my ego or the Church? Does my witness disclose my ability or does it reflect something of Christ's spirit and love? Or, more likely, what mixture of sin and love is present in any one of my actions and motives? Still another aspect of Christian love needs emphasis particularly in view of certain opposite cultural views present. There are strong movements in both secular psychology and popular religion which focus almost exclusively on individual happiness, success, and salvation. All that seems to matter is that the individual "gets saved" or achieves happiness or "finds himself", etc. By contrast, biblical love adds to its concern for individuals, the proclamation that God's love has a majesty to it, an impersonal demand for justice, a call for all mankind's well-being, and a declaration that such love will often require much self-sacrifice. Jesus did not tell us to go find ourselves; he told us to "seek the kingdom first" and that such a course was not easily achieved because of our sin. This caring, suffering, sacrificing, outreaching love cannot be achieved solely by the individual, nor can it be captured and limited by rules. Love can only be experienced and performed in a dynamic three-way "covenant" between God, the individual and the Church.

**B. Biblical Views of Human Sexuality**

**1. A Variety of Views**

A careful reading of the whole Bible provides no immutable ethical rules about human sexuality. Of course, in various parts of the Bible one can find specific moral judgments about certain particular actions such as fornication, adultery, prostitution, etc. But such instances must be seen in the full historical and cultural context in which they occurred and were recorded. Thus, one can see many changing verdicts about the same action. An unfaithful wife could be stoned to death lawfully, yet Hosea was ready to forgive his adulterous wife. By the law, a man could divorce his wife for all manner of reasons—some pretty capricious. But Jesus elevated the previous low status of women by asserting that only in an obvious case of adultery could a man divorce his wife. And there are many, many other accounts of various specific deeds—sexual and non-sexual. “Rules are the cultural clothes worn by a principle.” Therefore part of our task is to find the basic principle(s) underneath the historical fashions.

**2. Sex Basically Good**

The major point to be made, however, is that the biblical view of sexuality is that it is a basic part of life, a force that is essentially good—like creation. The problem, as with all gifts, is the use and misuse of sexuality. The Bible provides examples of the good use of sex—as an expression of love, family and friendship; and examples of the misuse of sex—as in infidelity, breaking up family love, regarding people as things as in the case of prostitution, etc. The basic problem of sex, therefore, is not sexual, but ethical and religious.

While the Bible clearly regards sex as basic in human nature, yet sexuality is not of primary concern. Its importance lies in how it is used. In the teachings of Jesus, there is little concern about “a sexual ethic” *per se*. In contrast to some of the later fathers of the Church, we find no major concern by Jesus about sexual problems, no emphatic rules against this or that sexual behavior, no calls for celibacy and abstinence. He was unmarried, yet it is clear that women were attracted to him, and he was criticized for associating with some, as well for “wine-bibbing and feasting” with people of both sexes.

In the letters of St. Paul, there are more specific references to sexuality. Like his Judaic predecessors, he was against promiscuity (*porneia* or  *pornos* in the Greek New Testament Text). He lashed out at other obvious forms of sexual misbehavior, heterosexual and homosexual. Paul recognized the validity of sex and marriage.

Again, taking the Bible as a whole, most scholars agree that the Bible views sexuality and other aspects of personhood as essentially good but in need of control and direction in the interests of the abundant life. But again it must be stressed that “abundant life” does not mean just the individual’s happiness or even a family’s pleasure and growth. Abundant life is at least partly a gift from God and his love is for us all. Therefore, be it sex, reason, morals — all must be directed toward a better life for society, nations, tomorrow’s children — the whole structure of life. From the New Testament Gospel perspective, then, the issue of sexuality is how can it contribute to greater human well-being? In contrast to much of our modern culture which emphasizes only individual good

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or satisfaction, the Gospel-love ethic requires us to expand love to include family, friends, and society as a whole. Our criterion is not does my ego like it and do I feel happy, but rather, do my actions, in relation to others, to my faith, and God enhance or hinder the quality of life? This is why we say the problem of sex is not sexual, but love. The purpose of sex is love in individual lives, not sexual sensations. The purpose of sex for the human race is to enhance the well-being of mankind.

### 3. *Some Changing Rules and Customs*

While there are specific condemnations of homosexuality in the Bible (as noted in the Sodom and Gomorrah story, in Leviticus 18:22, and elsewhere), there is none in the teachings of Jesus, nor in the formal announcements of the Church Councils. It is hard to take specific condemnations of homosexuality found in the Old Testament as authoritative when we do not accord other such specific examples of moral teaching in the Old Testament such dignity. There is a progression in the development of morality through the course of the Old Testament. The low status of women, for example, who were regarded as mere property in Exodus 20:17 is certainly not the view of Jesus or later Old Testament writings.

Similarly, many moral rules were made in order to meet immediate cultural or local conditions. The injunctions against "unclean sex" did not mean that all sex was dirty. Rather, in most cases, it referred to ritual impurity either of men or women related to sexual functions.

### 4. *More Established Positions*

On the other hand, this does not mean that all sexual practices are purely relative and culturally changeable. Adultery, prostitution, and homosexual acts are regarded in the Bible as immoral. But note why such actions are so regarded. They are immoral, often in the Old Testament but especially in the New Testament, not because they are sexual but because such acts violate personhood, family love, and the social quality of life. Likewise, some homosexual persons are regarded as immoral not because of their homosexuality but because some of their actions reflect an idolatrous obsession with sex, or violate another person's freedom, or are seen as deleterious to the family and/or to the structure and quality of society.

The doctrine of Creation is often cited as bearing on this issue. In order to create humankind in his image, God found it appropriate to create both male and female. Also noteworthy is the fact that throughout both the Old and New Testaments the heterosexual covenant is used as a metaphor for the relation of God to his people. Not everyone believes those doctrines have any bearing on contemporary thinking about homosexuality.

### 5. *Wider Social Effects*

There is no formal biblical injunction against premarital sex nor exclusive approval of a nuclear family life-style. This does not mean that there is no guidance in Scripture. As we have noted, the Bible is everywhere against promiscuity (porneia). And the Bible is positive in asserting the desirability of fidelity, loyalty in friendships, commitment to social justice, concern for society. Jesus wept over the coming fate of Jerusalem. The family is seen in the Bible as a basic reality to be nourished, but there is no one form or specific style that is supreme. Yet there are cautions against defying the family

or tribe when they interfere with larger social justice issues, or communal welfare. Here the two basic points need to be stressed. When the Bible proclaims a clear moral position, it is almost always because the specific act violates a basic character. Actions are good or bad not because they are sexual or spiritual, male or female, "gay" or "straight", etc.; actions are good or bad in terms of human well-being and the quality of existence for all.

Therefore, opponents or proponents of particular types of sexual orientation or action cannot use the Bible to sanctify or condemn persons by classifying certain deeds under general labels. All heterosexuals are not more moral than homosexuals or vice versa. General labels applied to specific external actions are not warranted for moral condemnation of persons by the New Testament Gospel. "Hate the deed, love the sinner!"

Even though we may agree in defining certain obvious deeds as morally wrong (such as sadism, torture, exploitation, etc.) the New Testament reminds us that we must also include in our consideration the motives, health or illness and the condition of the doer of the deed. We cannot fairly judge solely by motives and intentions, neither can we evaluate solely by the external deed. It was this internal and external, humanly personal and lawfully moral, combination which Jesus so uniquely demonstrated.

### C. The Church's Sources of Authority

#### 1. *The Authority of the Bible*

Volumes have been written on the nature of the authority of the Bible. We can only give a summary clue as to our position which perhaps is best condensed into this sentence: "We do not take the Bible literally; we take it seriously." If one regards the Bible literally, one runs into conflicting sentences, ignores primitive historical customs, and goes against Christ's criticism of some of the Pharisees who followed the letter of the Law to the neglect of the spirit of the Law. On the other hand, because of the universal presence of sin, we do not believe any person is qualified to say absolutely "this is what Jesus meant when he said . . ." It seems obvious to us that the Bible is the Word of God, the record of God's mighty acts in the history of Israel and the prophets culminating in God's revelation in Jesus, the Christ. Precisely because the Bible is part of God's revelation, none of us can say that we understand exactly what God is and does, that our interpretation is equal to God's. Humility becomes us all, and that is why we need the scholar, the worshiper, the mystic, the theologian, the worker, the mother, the priest—all of us—under the Holy Spirit to help understand God's reality and to take our Scripture seriously. "O Lord I believe, help my unbelief." (Mark 9:24).

#### 2. *Scripture*

To be sure, the Bible does contain definite norms on sex and the family (as we have noted). But as Christians we are not boxed in or bound to previous descriptions or experiences. We do not deny that many people have had authentic religious experiences, but we also affirm that God continues to act in our lives and often in new ways. His revelation is not limited to ancient times. And even so, our understanding of his mighty works is often enlarged and deepened by new insights and disclosures. For example, even the disciples of Jesus did not always understand some of the more profound meanings behind

his words and deeds. Some in the Jerusalem Church felt that Christ's mission was only to the Jews, while Paul and others insisted that the Gospel was for all people. Wider and newer Christian (Church) experiences have often helped us to see God's deeper truth.

### 3. *Tradition*

Similarly, with regard to natural law and Church Tradition, there are good and bad behavior and policies. We can learn from both Natural Law and Church Tradition yet we are not limited to either. For example, the concept of a just war developed by natural law theorists and Church tradition was a useful moral guide when wars were fought by semiprofessional armies and damage to people and property was relatively small. But now in a nuclear age, maybe the concept is inadequate. In any case, God may be judging us in new ways, or beckoning us to seek peace and justice by other means.

Perhaps it is no accident that part of the Anglican tradition about authority has been to say that the sources of authority for us are: Scripture, tradition and reason, to which we would add the Holy Spirit and the prophets. The point is that there is no one absolute; only God is absolute. So the nearest we can come to understanding and interpreting his will and actions is to use many sources and always be open and sensitive to new disclosures of God's presence. Thus, we have much guidance—ethical, moral, and theological—from Scripture, tradition, and reason, but we are also free to receive new guidance by whatever means the Lord chooses.

### 4. *Reason*

Another area of basic importance but also severe differences is in the role of norms, morals, and values. Christians are familiar with the extremes of individualism. At the opposite pole, are the authoritarian codes which clearly define moral actions, and seem to admit of no exceptions or complexities—be it by the authority of the Church or the literal word of the Bible. And somewhere in the middle between the extremes above is a large number of us who tend to pride ourselves on flexibility and sophistication, but often just bounce back and forth between both extremes. On one issue we will quote Scriptures for our defense, on another we will use the Church's "good order" or "tradition", or if neither can support us, we will claim the authority of the Holy Spirit! At our best, we try to achieve a consistent middle ground position that has a proper balance of rules and flexibility. But there is a continuing and legitimate debate about what is "a proper balance"!

Finally, some may feel that we have not settled the problem of authority, if we end up not with closely defined rules but with relative guides. Such a feeling is natural and human, and it may be useful to remind ourselves that not only the Pharisees but equally devout followers of Jesus often pressed him for unequivocal answers. Jesus refused. Nevertheless, the norms we have noted are norms, and even if not the final answers, they are authoritative, useful and essential. We cannot live normally without them. Perhaps it is our destiny to walk on the ragged edge between uncertainty and certainty. For life is not static; God is not limited to laws, so we thank him that his love also frees us to seek new ways of doing his loving will, acknowledging his just judgments, and being forgiven by his grace.

### D. Interpretations of Church Tradition and Natural Law

#### 1. *Natural Law*

While we believe in the usefulness of a theory of ethics based on natural law, we wish to call attention to two of its basic weaknesses or misuses: (1) it is often assumed that man, being rational, can clearly know what is the rational will of God or divine law. In addition to noting the varieties of differing "rational conclusions" in history, the Christian doctrine of sin teaches us that even our reason can be corrupted by sin. Note how some people on both sides in the ordination of women question argued natural law as their source of authority. Similarly: (2) history is filled with ethical conclusions supposedly determined by natural law but also heavily influenced by cultural values. Thus, during the Vietnam war, two different sets of Roman Catholic bishops argued for the same just war theory but came to opposite conclusions.

On the positive side, natural law ethics is our chief guide in applying general principles to particular problems. For example, everyone believes we should have equal treatment before the law. We also know that nearly every situation seems to be different. Reason and the vast body of natural law help us to define and clarify the exceptions and variables. It helps save us from chaos and capricious decision. There is a proper place and use of natural law theory. Historically, most of our great systems of justice were based upon and derived from this theory. After fascism had destroyed rational justice, Germany, Italy and Japan did not have to start from zero to establish a relatively just system again. They revived and added to the ancient natural law principles, as our founding fathers did in 1776. But as we interpret the Old Testament, we believe the principles of natural law must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament. Indeed, natural law may be deepened or enlarged by reference to Christian love. Thus, rational justice may be satisfied by arriving at a just arbitration between two sides, but the Gospel requires us to go further and seek reconciliation of the two parties.

#### 2. *Church Tradition*

Many Christians, if a problem can't be solved by reference to the Bible, will use the *Tradition of the Church* as the answer. There is a vast reservoir of institutional, religious and ethical experience built up over the ages. While much of it is practical and helpful, some of it was designed more for the organization and for the ease of administration than for the service of the people. And so we still have debates today whether this or that part of the tradition is or is not reflective of the Spirit of Christ. So, here, too, we must advise caution. For example: There are strong statements by some of the Church Fathers (and Popes) not only against homosexuality, but against all sexual activity. Using the same interpretive method, one can make a similar case in favor of slavery. Large parts of the Bible, including St. Paul, plus long years of Church Tradition, once seemed to accept slavery. Other than a few admonitions to be nice to slaves, there is no call to end slavery. Yet from other parts of the Bible, especially from the Gospel of our Lord, one can, and in some cases, we believe, must have a different interpretation. This is why we raise questions such as: Why is sexual immaturity worse than ethical immaturity, e.g. Why is homosexuality or adultery worse than ignoring the poor or hating an enemy? Such questions and problems underline our belief that all issues, along with the disturbing need for

humility in acknowledging that all our interpretations and applications of God's love, are relative. This is why we must work together in community on such issues.

We also need to point out that while many people note only the obvious evils, it will not be adequate to focus on only the good deeds in the history of the Church. As with natural law, so with Church tradition, we interpret and evaluate its "goods" and "evils" from the New Testament criteria. And so it is good to learn from our tradition that many devout people experience "the dark night of the soul" before they come to know the Grace of God. We are not alone in our search and pilgrimage. On the other hand, the Gospel also helps us to see how, in history, religious fanaticism may result in terrible cruelty as in the Inquisitions. Thus we can even learn from those evils what *not* to do!

Here, too, we must recall that much of the history of the Church shows how difficult it is to accept and live by Christ's command to love. From the disciples on down to the present, we are always trying to hammer God's loving will into our wills. We do not want the insecurity of relative choices; we want authoritative and absolute answers, the dream of all priestly bureaucrats secular and sacred! For the laity and priest alike, it is always easier to manage and decide things if we believe there are definite answers. Yet, it is equally clear in the Gospels, that Jesus steadfastly refused to give *the* answer to any problem. He revealed to us the nature of God which is a just and caring love, and his will for us is to seek that power-love. And the cross and the Resurrection were God's demonstration that this is *the* reality in life. All else must be related to that loving reality.

Since this God of love is absolute, it follows that there is no other absolute, not even a moral law such as "Thou shall not kill." For what happens when this law, no killing, collides with love which says we must rescue the victim from the armed sadist? Or by what criterion does one choose between the life of the baby vs. the life of the mother, or other "life-raft" situations? Thus, it is essential to evaluate Church tradition as carefully as we interpret the Bible and natural law.

### 3. *Church Historical Views of Sexuality*

To summarize 2000 years of Church history even on only one subject, one cannot do justice either to the subject or to Church history. Mindful of the obvious weaknesses of this condensation, we offer the following highlights: At no time in the Church's history were sexual sins regarded as among the chief sins. The first five centuries A.D. were largely concerned with theological issues arising out of the collision of the biblical faith with Greek and Roman culture. The formalizing of the Creeds reflects the primary concern of the Church.

#### a. *The Infection of Dualism*

Nevertheless, when problems of sexuality were brought up, there is no doubt that some of the most influential of the Church fathers tended to regard sex as essentially evil, and not a few also regarded women as partly causes of such evil. There is also no doubt that most of these views were derived not from the biblical faith but from the Greek and Persian dualism of body vs. soul. There is ample documentation to show that in this cultural battle, the Greeks won a major victory, the effects of which infect some of Christendom to this day. The idea that the body and its appetites, especially sexuality,



are basically evil, while the soul, mind and reason are essentially good, is a central Greek view found in Plato and others.

Yet, the Church at its best did not lose the cultural war. For at the height of the Greek influence, the Church rightly asserted the biblical view of the basic unity of the self, and noted bodily virtues and spiritual sins as well as vice versa. The clearest example is seen in the credal affirmation "We believe in the resurrection of the *Body*." No Greek Platonist ever would have said that.

b. *Chastity, Virginity, Marriage*

Nevertheless, the Greek and other influences left their mark and were influential in causing some important developments. One of these was the concept and practice of chastity. Chastity became one of the monastic vows, and was regarded by many as a desirable virtue. Part of the basis for this virtue did indeed stem from the dualistic idea which regarded the body and its appetites, if not evil, at least of a lower moral level. Part of the reason for duality was also mastery of the self, the power to control and direct human vitalities, and a means to concentrate on spiritual growth, meditation, prayer, in order to serve God. Note also that virginity differs from chastity in that it calls for the abstinence from sexual intercourse. Chastity was a broader and longer discipline which included appropriate sexual attitudes between married persons.

For awhile, especially among monastics, chastity was regarded as one of the great virtues. Later on when marriage and the family patterned after Scriptural emphasis were extolled, a seeming paradox appeared. How could the Church encourage marriage and family sex as an ideal while apparently elevating consecrated virginity also as an ideal? We have to be careful, therefore, that we do not say that the only wholesome model of Christian behavior and sex is the family. It is an ideal, but not the only one.

c. *Summary*

Here again we can learn from the tradition of the Church. The ancient Fathers promulgated the ideals and models of both the family and monastic chastity. At times, some theologians seemed to regard sex as at best a necessary evil; at other times, as a valid expression of love in marriage. But however high or difficult their norm may have been, the Church was quite consistent in its generous pastoral administration of these norms. Church authorities, for example, were particularly lenient in their treatment of the lower classes. Even if some of the elite tended to sneer at those below them, they were pastorally compassionate in their professional relationships. On the other hand, we must also admit that some of the more extreme diatribes against all sex were just wrong, however well intentioned. From this period in Church history, then, we learn that sincere devout Christians can and do differ on some very basic ethical principles, that the Church somehow manages to encompass such diversity and at its best, compassion finally appears, albeit not often enough. And on a more informal but perhaps insightful level, it was St. Jerome who declared (1500 years before Freud) "Though I can banish the dancing girls of Rome from my daily thoughts, they re-appear in my nightly dreams."

After the Patristic period, thanks in part to Augustine's writings and a few

others, the Greek dualism prevailed and was modified only in part by Thomas Aquinas. And, of course, the whole tradition of monasticism and some types of mysticism further entrenched a negative view of sexuality. Even so, it must be stressed that in spite of this hostile attitude, sexuality was still not a major concern of the Church, nor was sex regarded as a primary sin.

From St. Thomas of Aquinas and the Protestant reformers, the Church began its slow journey back toward the more biblical view of healthy sexuality. St. Thomas of Aquinas regarded sex in marriage as valid, Martin Luther married Kate; artists began to portray the human body as it really was, and sometimes as it often acted sexually a la Hieronymous Bosch. And so we have arrived at the 20th Century where we now have to report that the Church-at-large includes both the biblical and the Greek views of sexuality. In their extreme forms of expression, these two views are still in conflict with each other and this conflict is one of the basic causes for the sharp and often emotional differences between Christians.

Finally, while fairly clear evidence of the biblical and Greek views is present and discernible within the Church, there are also many Christians who represent some mixture of both. To the logical purists in the extreme camps, this may appear to be confusing. But not a few of us are perfectly willing to admit that we are, indeed, a bit confused on some matters of sexuality and the Church's not-always-clear views of the subject. Augustine himself was a prime example of unclarity. In some writings he certainly seemed to say that sex is a mortal sin but he also said that sex under love was good. So with most great thinkers and profound scholars, contestants can usually find support for opposite arguments.

In the Church today, however, in spite of the varieties strongly present, one senses an increasing number of clergy and lay people who are restless and perhaps confused about the Church's views on sexuality. They also hope that maybe it is possible for the Church to re-assert its biblical faith, along with its better historical moments, and sort out from the volatile, secular, sexual wilderness what "is true and lovely and of good report."

### III. TOWARD A POSITION ON SEXUALITY

#### A. Empirical and Modern Views of Sexuality

##### 1. *Area of Agreement*

About the only agreement found in contemporary views on sexuality is the affirmation that sex is one of the basic drives in human nature. After that, points of view diverge. Nevertheless, there are important and major views which need to be studied and understood.

The next nearest agreement is the conviction that sex is more good than bad, and that it is a volatile and pervasive power that therefore needs control and direction. Differences appear when one begins to deal with specific means of dealing with sex and when one renders value and moral judgments about particular acts of sex. These differences in views do not revolve around whether the authorities are secular or religious. As we all know, there is variety among those of both points of view.

Among professionals and many knowledgeable lay people, there is growing agreement toward the general view that sexuality and sexual acts are good if they contribute toward personal maturity, and/or are expressions of mature love. Conversely, most people believe sexual behavior, whether caused by internal dynamics or external influences, is bad (psychologically and morally) if such behavior hinders mature growth or harms loving relationships. Obviously, controversy rears its volatile head as soon as one discusses specific issues of what constitutes "growth," "maturity," "loving relationship," and which specific sexual acts "help" or "hinder" the common good, social ambience or better life styles.

### 2. *Homosexuality*

Homosexuality seems to be one of those phenomena which is a mixture of both the known and unknown. Indeed the scientific study of human sexuality, let alone homosexuality, is barely 100 years old. So even in the domain of science, there are large areas of obscurity. This is one reason why there is a good deal of tentativeness in professional findings as well as conflicting viewpoints and unresolved issues.

The following are some major problems and unresolved issues: Most professionals assert that there are many possible causes of homosexual orientation. Homosexual persons share among themselves a variety of attitudes about their condition. Some are aware of it and choose to live with it, even develop it, but not many. Most homosexual persons do not choose to be homosexual, and there are a variety of ways of dealing with it from self-affirmation to desperate attempts to hide the condition.

#### a. *Professional Agreements*

In spite of many differences of opinion among professionals, there are certain facts about which there is agreement. Many of these conflict with widespread popular beliefs.

- (1) Homosexuality is not a single entity. There are different forms of this adaptation, only some of which are accompanied by any clear signs of other personal or social disorder.
- (2) Contrary to widespread popular opinion, homosexual persons are at present less likely than heterosexual persons to molest or seduce children and young adolescents.
- (3) There are homosexual persons in all walks of life and in all types of vocations and professions, and many of them are extremely able and have made valuable contributions.
- (4) It is common to suppose that men or women who depart significantly from the model of "masculine" "feminine" behavior accepted in their community may have homosexual tendencies. Such indicators are almost entirely unreliable. Many male homosexual persons conform to the "macho" image, and many female homosexual persons act in a thoroughly "feminine" manner.
- (5) Adolescents all go through a period of sexual identity confusion. This is usually transient and manageable. But it is extremely common, particularly in boys, for there to be homosexual concerns. In some cases not until the twenties or later is the adult sexual orientation settled.

### b. *Scientific Professional Disagreements*

About other important matters, there is more dispute in scientific circles.

- (1) Nearly all investigators believe that no one theory of cause can explain all cases of homosexuality. Yet different schools support their theory as being applicable in most instances.

The biological theory holds the origin to be genetic or hormonal. At present there is very little evidence to support this position, but research along these lines is still in progress.

The psychoanalytic theory is based on forty years of extensive research and case reports. The common core of these results is that a settled, adult homosexual adaptation is the result of a disturbance at one or more stages of the usual course of psychosexual maturation. Many different familial and environmental influences have been shown to contribute significantly to an eventual homosexual adaptation. No one of these factors has been found in all cases, but certain family and psychodynamic patterns occur often enough to have both diagnostic and predictive usefulness for the clinician.

Another school of scientific thought believes that homosexuality is merely one of a wide range of naturally occurring forms of human sexual expression to which no particular value one way or the other should be attached. All of the evidences of maladjustment cited by other schools are said to be the result of cultural disapproval and persecution. Without that, it is held that no personal or social pathology would ever occur. Evidence for this view includes serious depression or other neurosis which in particular cases can be traced to such things as homosexual persons losing their jobs or the love and support of their families as a result of their homosexuality becoming known.

- (2) The incidence of homosexuality is difficult to assess accurately. Kinsey stated that about 5% of adult males and about half that many adult females are homosexual. Some groups now claim much higher figures. These are probably inaccurate, unless they include all who have had transient homosexual experience during adolescence.
- (3) The issue of change to a heterosexual adaptation is difficult for members of opposing schools of thought even to discuss. Those professionals who accept the psychoanalytic theory believe that homosexuality is maladaptive and therefore an appropriate object of therapy. The success rate varies according to the particular configuration of homosexuality presented by the subject. Assuming a therapist with special competence in sexual disorders, complete readaptation to heterosexuality is possible in about 30% of cases. At least another 30% can obtain relief from compulsive promiscuity, depression, and other symptoms. The success of treatment rates are comparable to the average of all conditions customarily treated by psychotherapy. As with other conditions, an indispensable prerequisite for success is high motivation on the part of the patient to persist in long term treatment.

Readaptation to heterosexuality has been reported by practitioners of other schools, such as behavior modification and special types of

group therapy. It has also been frequently reported from various kinds of secular self-help systems without intervention of psychological professionals. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there is general agreement that the majority of homosexual persons are at present not changeable.

- (4) There is widespread professional disagreement about whether or not there may be some homosexual inclinations in everyone. The common incidence of homosexual fantasy or experimentation during adolescence is evidence for this view. On the other hand, at least 90% of all adults reach a settled and permanent heterosexual disposition. Still, it is common for fully heterosexual adults to have at least occasional dreams or fantasies with homosexual elements. This is interpreted by some to mean that most people have some "homosexual potential" which they suppress for a variety of reasons. Psychoanalytically oriented experts usually see this differently. They point out that sex, along with money, food, and other universals, is a very powerful symbol with many meanings. This is even more true of the sexual material in dreams and fantasies. To conclude from this type of material that everyone has homosexual tendencies strains the meaning of the term. At the same time, there are a few people who do experience being torn between heterosexual and homosexual adaptations. Leaving out those who are merely toying fashionably with such possibilities, the actual number of persons caught in this kind of conflict is probably quite small.

c. *Additional Unresolved Issues*

(1) *Subjective Attitudes*

When one digs into the private thoughts, motives, fantasies, and dreams of individuals, one discovers a fantastic and complex mixture. Thus, there are strong heterosexual persons who in the act of heterosexual intercourse may, at the same time, have homosexual fantasies. Similarly, many homosexual persons during homosexual genital acts have heterosexual fantasies. Who knows what myriad private thoughts, wishes, motives, and fantasies anyone has at any given time or in any given action sexual or not?

In the gospel Jesus tells how difficult it is to judge motives simply by observing external action. In St. Mark 5:23 our Lord began to educate us with a fairly easy example, e.g. the act of adultery is easy to condemn, but what about interior lust? If it is only lust, that too can be judged if somebody admits it. But what if it isn't lust? Or turn the problem around; what if one does an external good act such as having sexual intercourse with one's marriage partner, but all during the event, one is imagining one is coupling with someone else?

(2) *Fantasy*

The human imaginative faculty is an essential component of all creativity and progress. It is expressed in the form of fantasy, in every sphere of behavior. Since sexuality is such a pervasive element of personality, everyone has sexual fantasies. For example, fantasies are a nearly universal component of "falling in love."

Some fantasy is consciously willed, but much more is spontaneous.

Depending on the content of the fantasy, the subject may respond with any feeling from pleased surprise to horrified revulsion. But one cannot assess any fantasy simply by its contents. For example, if a person is unable to achieve sexual satisfaction without fantasizing about someone other than the marital partner, this could have many different meanings. These might range from a "safe" expression of naturally promiscuous desires, through signs of some psychological disorder (such as fear of real intimacy), to more sinister indications of morbid tendencies. Or there could be combinations of these and many other possibilities.

The hasty passing of moral judgments on oneself or others because of such fantasies is unwarranted, since careful investigation of individual cases is necessary to reach even an approximation of their significance. It should be remembered that the basic capacity for sexual fantasy is a gift, but, like all other gifts, it is subject to distortion and abuse.

No wonder all institutions and policy makers, secular and religious, want to remain in the safety and clarity of objective acts and objective norms. No wonder the ancient Pharisees and the pharisaic tendency in all of us find Jesus so disturbing and threatening. He wanted to bring us into the human and the personal realm. But that is so mystifying and diverse and complicated. Much better, then, to retain our systems and deal with baffling people "pastorally."

### (3) *Deep Friendship*

Because heterosexuality and monogamous marriage have been the two obvious and publicly approved standards of sexual behavior, we have tended to overlook other tendencies and life styles (often present in other cultures) which may not be necessarily immoral, and may indeed be virtuous. For example, deep friendships between members of the same sex are often very enriching and ennobling. The "buddy" phenomenon is a case in point. Sometimes these friendships last for life and grow more deeply than many other relationships. Indeed, many people of the same sex engage in a cherished life-long relationship as best friends.

Having noted some of the complexities above, it should also be noted that there are some discernible differences between a homosexual relationship and a friendship. Such friendships, even when deep, are often with several people, and at different levels of interest. In any case, it should be emphasized that one simply cannot judge interpersonal relationships by outward actions. The critical differences may be entirely internal in motives.

### (4) *Related Factors*

Although technically not identical with those factors, which eventuate in one of the homosexual adaptations, similar failures and distortions of psychosexual development lead to disturbances in heterosexual functioning as well. Such common social and personal ills as spouse abuse, impotence, frigidity, and compulsive promiscuity can often be traced to familial and environmental factors. These conditions have a great deal in common; there is no scientific reason to single out homosexuality from other failures of ideal sexual functioning. To do so is a social

decision, deriving from the value system and not from the scientific evidence.

(5) *Variation of Sex Drives*

There appears to be wide variation in the strength of the sexual drive, at least in terms of it being experienced as a direct need for genital activity. Those persons whose drive is relatively weak, or who find rechanneling of sexual energy relatively easy, are more likely than others to be successful in the choice of religious celibacy, or of some secular vocation with minimal opportunity for sexual expression.

One important result of the vast amount of contemporary research into sexuality has been to make us realize how protean its manifestations actually are. This was harder to determine in times when there was a narrow, publicly approved code of sexual behavior from which people strayed only furtively.

Homosexual persons themselves are not unanimous in their feelings about their condition, precisely because of the wide variety of adaptations which exists. Many people erroneously assume that the activists are speaking for the entire homosexual community. This is far from being the case. In the very nature of things those who choose to remain silent about their condition for whatever reasons do not receive the same public hearing as the activists.

(6) *Adolescence*

Another area of difficulty and confusion is the period of adolescence. Thanks to research from many disciplines, we recognize that the character of adolescence is such that the physical aspects and possibilities of sexuality have not yet been fully integrated into the total personality. Some adolescents are so overcome by the biologic changes in their bodies, and by the sudden emergence into consciousness of the manifestations of sexuality, that they have not yet learned how this force ought to be interwoven with the movements of their emotions and the rest of their selfhood. In short, it is a time when the sexual instinct is likely to be naturally dissociated rather than integrated.

Therefore, effective and sensible programs of sex education should have as their goal the facilitation of the integration process in order to help young persons toward the model of Christian maturity. To be legalistic, merely to propose a list of things they must not do, much less to tell them that sex is "bad" or "dirty" or "forbidden" is to aggravate, perpetuate, sometimes for life, the natural, transient, dissociation of adolescence. Nevertheless, ways must be found to discourage them from engaging in acts of genital intercourse before they are mature enough for this behavior to find its proper context. We also find convincing evidence that at least in some cases, improper handling of adolescent confusion about sexuality may be a precipitating factor in bringing about some forms of the homosexual adaptation.

(7) *A Homosexual Person's Decision: "Open" vs. "Secret"*

Our final section here deals with the popular distinction between "open and avowed" vs. disguised or hidden homosexuals. It is already suspected,

if not numerically known, that the Church has ordained homosexual persons for years. This has led many people to suggest that such a practice is valid so long as the unknown clergy remain unknown "in the closet." Then, this view goes on to assert that no "open and avowed" homosexual persons should be ordained.

Regardless of the variety of positions against such ordination, the problems of hypocrisy, integrity, and suffering remain unsolved. If one adopts the two correlative views above, then one is demanding that homosexual persons live a life of fraud and deception. Since the "cure" rate, at present, is only 30% at best, what happens to the 70%? The answer in our culture is: if you are a homosexual person, you had better disguise it. This cultural message causes enormous anguish to many people who are homosexual and who do not want to be. Their only hope after "failing" to re-orient themselves is then to be a master hypocrite, who lives in constant fear that he or she will be discovered, or will make a mistake, and then be fired from a job. The final irony is that much of this anguish is caused by heterosexual persons.

d. *Other Attitudes Towards Homosexuality*

There are other and more just options. One view is to tell those who, because of the enormous cultural pressure against them, want to struggle on "in the closet," that such a decision can be respected. They should not be exposed. They should be ordained if they are competent and meet the regular standards. A second view concerns those who have suffered long enough and want to "come out of the closet." Their decision should also be respected and they should be welcomed to the body of Christ and to his ministry if they also are competent. A third view is to declare to those who want to go further and "avow" their homosexuality, join the cause, demand "gay" rights and seek the Church's blessing on their "marriage," etc., that we can understand that option, too. However, recognition does not mean approval.

### B. The Commission's Own Views

This last alternative seems to us to indicate an abnormal obsession with homosexuality. Since we all have obsessions, causes, and inferiorities, we would still welcome the "avowed" homosexual persons into the Church. But we believe they are not competent and qualified to be ordained, nor to be seen as an authentic alternative sexual model. Whatever sins homosexual persons have, we do not believe they should be singled out and asked to publicly repent. If the ministry or the sacraments depended on sinless people, we would have neither. Since it is obvious that we are all sinners, it should be equally obvious that therefore we all need to repent at least privately in a variety of ways. But why should any group be singled out as special sinners? On the other hand, we do not see that homosexual persons have or should have any special rights that heterosexual persons do not have. By the same token it should be obvious that we would insist that all civil and legal rights should apply to *all* people.

We wish to conclude by emphasizing that many of the cultural responses for or against homosexuality were based on ignorance and emotional attitudes unsupported by either facts or the Gospel. Similarly, we wish to emphasize with equal fervor that present modern and scientific knowledge has not resolved many of the obscurities of sex. It seems obvious to us that we need the continued full



and mutual support of religion and science to help us deal with human sexuality in all its forms in far better ways than has been true so far.

We have indicated how we evaluated Scripture and tradition. Now we must make clear our basic attitude towards contemporary data, modern scientific views of sexuality and some popular cultural ideas.

The Commission has been addressed by many persons who have attempted to make an analogy between the relationship of homosexual persons to the Church and the relationship of minority racial groups to secular society. The Commission has concluded that that "civil rights" analogy is unhelpful, and often obstructs dialogue. In the past, the General Convention has affirmed the civil rights of homosexual persons in society (G. C. Journal, 1976, C-109). However, the Church must differentiate behavior, even that behavior that stems from psychological conditions which the persons has not willed, from conditions of being. All human beings are equal before God; their actions are not. Regardless of what moral judgment may be passed on homosexuality, we believe that there can be no question that in the sight of God the persecution of homosexual persons is a very serious sin. The Church has much of which to repent in this regard.

### 1. *Evaluation of Scientific and Secular Views*

Our first duty is, of course, to accept truth from whatever source it comes and is established. Much of God's truth may come through scientists, secularists, and agnostics who are not Christians. The cure for cancer may be discovered by an atheist. Some early religious stories said that the earth was the center of the universe. Science proved otherwise. So today, some people believe that any male with a high pitched voice is a homosexual person, or that most cancer is contagious. Both beliefs are untrue.

On the other hand, there are many values, purposes and goals which science cannot determine as right or wrong. Science cannot say that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is beautiful or not, nor can a doctor prove that John loves Mary, and no scientific means nor philosophical words prove or disprove the nature of God. While there are obviously different areas and different types of reality and truth requiring varying methods and language, there are also problems caused by the overlapping of these different areas. A common example is psychosomatic illness and its cure. Another instance comes from the discipline of economics. What may be economically desirable, for instance, imposition of higher taxes during periods of inflation, is often politically unwise or impossible. These examples reflect how we order our priority of values.

### 2. *Our Views of Human Sexuality*

Therefore, we must now show the basis for our priorities, i.e. what are our prime values as derived from our Christian faith? Here are some of our views of human sexuality:

- a. One obvious purpose of sex is procreation and this should be done with the intention of family love, contributing to the welfare of Church and society.
- b. An equally obvious purpose of sexual relations is that it can be and should be an expression of love and thereby is a valid and authentic act quite apart from having children.
- c. Sexual activity is good or bad depending on whether or not it expresses and

contributes to well being and love. This means that lovers may express the pleasure of their devotion sexually as they do in non-sexual ways, e.g. laughter, sharing of food, thought and work, etc. To emphasize the same point—if food, thought, work and sex hinder the relationship of love, then they are bad (morally and psychologically).

- d. As noted above, we believe all norms must be informed and measured by our biblical faith, our Gospel love. Thus, we are against adultery and promiscuity (*porneia* or  *pornos*) even though we know people often engage in such actions from a variety of motives and emotions.

### 3. *Selecting and Using Biblical Norms*

#### a. *Majority vs. Minority*

We believe we are faithful to the biblical traditions in constantly emphasizing the normative values of the family, social responsibility, and life of the Church, even though we know we all fall short of ideal values. Cultural statistics of sexual behavior should not change Christian standards. Because 95% of us have head colds, it is not to be assumed that colds are normally good and that we should give up the effort to find the cure. Similarly, it may be that 90 or 95% of us are heterosexual, but that does not mean that the remaining 10 or 5% are morally wrong homosexuals. Majority views should not necessarily determine our ethics and norms. Adding up numbers of external actions does not tell us much about the quality of the act, or its deeper effects on individuals or society. Quality and effects lead us inevitably to values and norms.

#### b. *“Lifeboat” Exceptions*

One other key point to be made here is that in the use of ethical norms, one should not interpret the exceptions as a new standard. The various dramatic “lifeboat” scenarios that are often used to show the relativity of all norms are often turned into an argument for a new moral approval. To put it simply: One may have to tell a lie in order to save a life, but that does not mean that dishonesty now becomes a virtue. It is still a lie; it is still wrong. It is a classic case of two norms, two virtues colliding. It is good to save a life; it is good to tell the truth. But if the two “goods” collide, then one has to choose and that brings us back to the old basic problem of: what is the criterion of selection. And as we stated earlier, the criterion for us is: God is the one and only absolute, that we know he is love, and that a life has a higher value to him than a verbal untruth. That is how we decide that saving a life is greater than telling a particular truth. Love of neighbor takes greater precedence over private virtue. Even so, it is important for us to acknowledge that though we loved and saved a life, we did also lie. So we cannot preen our moral feathers and have an easy conscience about the deed.

#### c. *Norms and Flexibility*

We believe in the use of norms, in noting exceptions, and in dealing pastorally when we fall short. The problems become more complex in instances where hidden assumptions determine the norms. Thus, for example, the rule that there can be no expression, even for adults, of physical sexuality outside the legal bonds of matrimony appears to be excessively strict. But the task of discerning what the exceptions to this time-honored rule

may be calls for a greater degree of consciousness and responsible reflection than most people are accustomed to exercise. We suggest that those relationships in which persons are seriously testing their readiness to enter the matrimonial covenant probably constitute a category of extra-marital sexual involvement which should not always evoke Christian censure.

The large problem of pre-marital sex raises similar problems regarding norms, hidden biases, and flexible application of principles. There are few references in the Bible to pre-marital sex, as such. Yet in Church history one sees a growing tradition of negative restrictions against it. It is perhaps useful to note that the biblical word  *pornos*  or  *porneia* , was used to denote whoredom, promiscuous sex, etc. The passages where this word is used are often cited as an argument against all sex before or outside of marriage. It is not only a case where a biblical word is misused, but also one where a particular and cultural norm is broadened to the neglect of other norms which may be equally applicable. For example, most arguments in favor of the norm of no pre-marital genital sex are based on the assumption of the immaturity of adolescents and, in earlier times, on the great danger of pregnancy. Since adolescents are still immature, that reason for the norm still applies. But does it apply generally now that contraception is available? And does it or should it apply to consenting adults whose friendship is deep and growing? Isn't sex within marriage, in cases where it is little more than sex by one married partner upon the other, even more than  *pornos*  or  *porneia* ?

But we need to know which norms we should use, which one(s) take priority, and how we make both the selection and application of norms. This, of course, is always an on-going task.

### APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

#### Basic Readings:

Arno Karlen, *Sexuality and Homosexuality*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971.

The book is the result of five years of detailed study of every conceivable aspect of the topic, historical, cultural and scientific. It does not sacrifice scholarly standards, and yet is written to be fully available to the general reader. The excellent critical bibliography includes both general and technical references. In addition, there are many transcripts of taped interviews, both with various research workers and with homosexuals themselves. It is an indispensable basic text and reference work for anyone who wants or needs to know more about homosexuality than can be learned either from activists or from specialists in one facet or another of this disposition.

Stephen Sapp, *Sexuality, the Bible, and Science*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.

An excellent concise review of the Biblical view of sexuality, accompanied by a clear presentation of the latest scientific information. This is for background, as homosexuality is not specifically considered.

Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, *Homosexuality: A Symbolic Confusion*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1977.

Considers Homosexuality both from the scientific and theological perspectives, these two modes being seen as, in the last analysis, inseparable. Presents the point of view that homosexuality is not just an alternate life style, but a developmental failure.

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John J. McNeill, S. J., *The Church and the Homosexual*. Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1976.

A careful review of homosexuality both from the theological and scientific perspectives. The best presentation of the homosexual liberation point of view. Includes excellent references and critical bibliography.

Norman Pittenger, *Time for Consent*. London: SCM Press, 1970.

A theological presentation of homosexuality as an acceptable part of the created order, not to be dismissed as sin.

Richard F. Lovelace, *The Homosexual and the Church*. New Jersey: F. H. Revell, 1978.

A careful and detailed presentation of the conservative point of view by an Evangelical theologian.

### Additional Readings:

Derrick S. Bailey, *Common Sense about Sexual Ethics: A Christian View*. New York: MacMillan Co., 1962.

Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes, III, *Male and Female*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1976.

20 essays, including 4 on homosexuality, varying views.

Alan P. Bell and Martin S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women*. New York: Simon and Schuster

Latest Kinsey Institute report. Liberal assumptions and conclusions.

William Cole, *Sex in Christianity and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Lawrence J. Hatterer, *Changing Homosexuality in the Male*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970.

Clinton R. Jones, *Helping Homosexuals, Families and Friends*.

Assumes that homosexuals and families need help accepting the condition.

Anthony Kosnick et al. *Human Sexuality. New Directions in American Catholic Thought*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

Result of R. C. Study Commission.

Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

A plea, biblically based, for an end to discrimination against homosexuals.

Samuel McCracken, "Are Homosexuals Gay?" *Commentary*, Vol. 67, No. 1, Jan. 1979.

A review of Bell and Weinberg's book along with other recent secular books accepting homosexuality.

James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.

Irving Singer, *The Goals of Human Sexuality*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973.

An informative view by a professor of philosophy at MIT.

Bett Schonauer, Brick Bradford, Rev. William P. Showalter, Leonard E. LeSourd,

Catherine Jackson, Rev. Robert C. Whitaker, *Healing for the Homosexual*. Oklahoma City: Presbyterian Charismatic Communion, Inc., 1978

Assumes that homosexuality can and should be overcome.

Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex*. Harper & Row, 1975.

A moderate position, thoroughly explained.

United Church Press, *Human Sexuality: A Preliminary Study*. New York, 1977.

Surveys different views and aspects.

## APPENDIX C CONSULTATIONS WITH DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

### I. Background

The Commission was given a mandate by the General Convention meeting in Minneapolis - 1976, to study the subject of homosexuality and to recommend a position on the ordination of homosexual persons. In addition, the General Convention passed a resolution calling on all Dioceses to study the subject during this triennium.

### II. Process

- A. The Commission met in Louisville, Kentucky in June, 1977. It became clear in this initial meeting that there was not only a diversity of positions on this subject within the Commission but in the Church at large. The Commission decided to take a listening posture and to initiate means whereby individuals and dioceses might communicate with the Commission and each other. The first step in this process was to design, disseminate and correlate the results of a survey to all Dioceses within the United States. This survey took place in October, 1977. It was sent to 93 Dioceses and 80 responded. Out of the 80, 65 indicated that some method of study was planned, in process or completed.
- B. The preliminary results of the survey was reported to the next Commission meeting in Austin, Texas, in November, 1977. The overwhelming response of dioceses and their willingness to share their study with the Commission confirmed the need for meetings with Diocesan Representatives from all parts of the country. The Commission concluded that throughout 1978 it would meet in widespread geographical areas and invite Diocesan Representatives to come and to discuss the subject, with the Commission and each other. As a result, the Commission met in Berkeley, California, April, 1978 (7 dioceses represented); Sioux Falls, South Dakota, July, 1978: (5 dioceses represented); Cambridge, Massachusetts, Sept., 1978: (9 dioceses represented); Erlanger, Ky. (Cincinnati) Dec., 1978: (10 dioceses represented). (The costs of travel had to be provided by dioceses and may have prevented some from sending representatives.)

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### III. Conclusions

The Commission is able to draw the following conclusions as a result of the Survey, the Meetings with Diocesan Representatives and subsequent correspondence with them:

- A. There is a variety of approach to the subject. This ranges from the compilation and dissemination of bibliographies, diocesan study commissions, education programs for parishes, resolutions to diocesan conventions, instructions to and from diocesan commissions on ministry, to memorials to General Convention in Denver.
- B. Of the responding dioceses 13 say that the subject of human sexuality and/or homosexuality is not a matter under active discussion in their diocese and therefore do not plan any study on the subject. Many of these dioceses have said that the House of Bishops' statement from Port St. Lucie sufficiently represents their position.
- C. There is no one position that has emerged. Rather there is a diversity of opinion, particularly on the ordination of homosexual persons. There is no consensus of position in one part of the country as opposed to another. There is no consensus in urban dioceses as opposed to rural dioceses. The one recognizable trend is that in dioceses where study has taken place on a broad base and in depth some consensus has been reached within the individual diocese.
- D. The Church at large has and is taking a serious and thoughtful approach to the subject. General Convention delegates on the whole will have had the benefit of studies and discussions within their dioceses.

### IV. Results for the Commission

The Commission learned a great deal from the various means of communication with dioceses. We are grateful for their cooperation and willingness to discuss diocesan positions and studies in depth. The resulting insights have made a major contribution to the final form of the Commission's report and recommendation.

### ADDENDUM

As detailed more fully previously, the specific instructions of the General Convention to the Commission, requiring it to consider problems related to human sexuality, precluded it from giving attention to other areas included in the Commission's Charter.

The Commission decided it would act as a channel for resolutions proposed by any groups which otherwise might have been able to have their concerns more fully considered by the Commission.

The following resolution is thus submitted by the Commission without endorsement.

#### Resolution #A—124

#### On Marriage Encounter

*Whereas*, the Eleventh Lambeth Conference (1978) took note of the need of programs to promote the study and foster the ideals of Christian marriage and family life; and

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*Whereas*, the National Conference on Family Life held by the Episcopal Church in 1978 elicited a policy statement from the Executive Council that our ministry to families shall be strengthened; and

*Whereas*, Episcopal Marriage Encounter has become a viable and creative force in the deepening of marital relationships and of the life and witness of couples and priests in the Church and in the world; and

*Whereas*, the recognition of Episcopal Marriage Encounter by this Convention will encourage more married couples and priests to participate in the programs offered by this organization; be it therefore

***Resolved***, The House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 66th Convention of the Episcopal Church commends Episcopal Marriage Encounter for its work in strengthening marriages and improving the quality of family life; and be it further

***Resolved***, That each Diocese of the Episcopal Church is urged to assist and promote the activities of Episcopal Marriage Encounter through its Department of Social Concerns or other appropriate agency.