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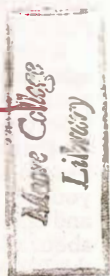
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**LIVING IN AN
X RATED
WORLD**

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DENOMINATIONAL BROADCAST
OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES
OF AUSTRALIA

LIVING IN AN X-RATED WORLD

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Genesis 1:27

The film had been produced by Planned Parenthood, and it had been designed for use in the public schools. The subject was human sexuality, and as I watched it, it was as if something died inside of me. It was obvious from this film that sexuality has become a great scandal and a stumbling block in our society; millions are falling and are being ruined in their fall. And the debris, the wreckage, is everywhere.

It is true, of course, that our age is not the first to corrupt the sexual dimension of human life; no, this perversity has been going on always. But there are elements in the present situation that have brought a new dimension into human sexuality. Contraceptives, certainly; abortion, indeed; and the alleged equality of men and women. Whereas it used to be that sexual license was considered the privilege (so-called) of men, today women claim the same privilege for themselves.

So human sexuality, usually defined in its most elemental and physiological aspects, has become a subject of ordinary conversation, and in the schools it is a subject to be taught... thus the film by Planned Parenthood. Let me describe it for you.

It depicted a group of young people of high school age, sitting around and discussing their sexual experiences with a counselor of some kind. Judging from the picture, I would say the ages of the children, for that is what they were remember, was from fourteen to seventeen, with most of them falling in the younger category. The group was made up of boys and girls. And they talked openly about... well, about all sorts of things. Must I go into them? I don't think I will. You can figure them out for yourself. But all the subjects came up, and the children apparently knew about them all. And many of them had participated in the activity that was being talked about.

For those of us who have grown up in another era,

it was unbelievable that a discussion like this could even occur. There was complete openness, with the boys telling exactly how they felt and the girls doing the same. And there was a total absence of any moral constraint. Everything said, any remark made, was okay. Why yes, of course, you do this and you feel this way, of course of course of course. Who's to say that one thing is wrong and another is right? No one. No one.

Now this film was not an exposé of what is happening in our modern high schools so far as sex is concerned, but it was an educational tool designed to help young people come to grips with their sexuality. It was produced to be shown to high school classes where, I presume, it was supposed to stimulate discussion that would proceed along the same line as that found in the picture. Among other things the film was designed to teach young people to be very careful in the course of their sexual experimentation to make sure that they would not add another child to the growing human family. In connection with this problem the use of contraceptives was emphasized, and if that failed, abortion was presented as a possibility.

I don't know how many school systems used the film I and several others saw—I know some have—but I do know that if I was shocked and saddened by what I observed, I shouldn't have been. (Saddened, perhaps; shocked, no.) For what that film depicted so graphically is the sad state of affairs to which we have come in connection with the sexual aspect of our personality. And while I might be tempted to vent my wrath on the Planned Parenthood organization, I have to admit that that organization represents something very prevalent. To be sure, an organization like this contributes to the way false views of human sexuality are passed around among us, but these views would not even be considered if it were not for the fact that there is a climate for them.

This film, featuring young people's twisted and destructive views of sexuality designed for the use of young people in the schools, is part of a putrid web of smut and filth that has woven itself into the very structure of our society. The lyrics of the songs

young people sing convey a view of sex that is depraved and harsh. Some songs, particularly country and western, have an easygoing, attractive adultery about them. Our children grow up listening to songs that promote ultimate intimacy without suggesting that such behavior becomes beautiful only within marriage.

The songs that are being sung are just part of a vast network of falsehood concerning sexuality that has captured television entertainment, the movie industry, and the publishing world. As people grow up these days they are assailed by outright lies concerning sex, and when they enter their adult years they must cope with problems that arise because of their confusion, and they are without moral equipment to handle them. It seems as if we are living in an X-rated world. Wherever one turns he meets material that is salacious and suggestive. And the sweet song coming at a person is that it is foolish not to join the rest and enjoy the new liberation.

How do you react to what's happening nowadays in connection with human sexuality? Are you beginning to ask, "What is really wrong with the new situation?" I could understand it if you were to ask that. Is there anything basically wrong with our X-rated world? Should those of us who have trouble with it get over our negative feelings? Is the problem our problem—a problem with ourselves; do we have a hang-up with ideas that come from another era, an era we should all forget about? Is this really a new and better age?

I am not asking these questions rhetorically—I am very serious about them. The sexual revolution has been going on for some time now, and maybe what some of us must do is simply adjust to it. Is it no more justifiable to become upset about changing sexual habits than it is to be upset about changing eating habits? Sexual activity, nutrition, sports, business—are all these merely various expressions of human behavior that can be set on the same line, as if all are equal to one another? Is the fact that many people are promiscuous these days no different from the fact that more and more people are beginning to enjoy soccer?

Well, given the accepted standards that prevail today, one would have to say that there is no real difference between sexual behavior and eating habits, so far as their ultimate impact on human life is concerned. I say, given the accepted standards. But there are other standards which are not always accepted these days, but which have bearing on the questions that we have raised. There is a viewpoint that declares that what is now happening in the realm of human sexuality is going to have a most devastating impact on the lives of all those who succumb to the current epidemic of sexual illness and upon any society that finally becomes X-rated. Sexual behavior is not on a line with other forms of human behavior. It is a manifestation of human behavior that is so interwoven with the fabric of human personality that if it becomes sick and diseased the deterioration that follows is thoroughly ruinous.

The point of view to which I am referring, as you may have guessed, is that found in the Bible. But before you dismiss me now for bringing up that ancient book, I would like to say that I am not thinking first of all of the various negative things that the Bible says about sexual looseness. You may be familiar with the Bible's prohibition of adultery and of homosexuality and of a host of other perverse activities. Well, I am not thinking of that first of all when I bring up the Bible's viewpoint regarding human sexuality. I am thinking of something more basic and more impressive. The Bible, you see, provides us with data that indicates that the sexual element of our existence is somehow related to our very humanness. I might also say that it relates to our divinity, too.

It is not often that we talk about our divinity as human beings; even so there is in fact a divine dimension of our being. The Bible declares, as you may know, that man was created in the image of God. Now, this is a very profound concept and one that we will never succeed in exhausting no matter how long we discuss it. What we must emphasize, though, is the great seriousness with which the Bible presents this idea—that we are made in the image of God. Our primal forefather, Adam, was the very opposite

of a stupid, stumbling creature on his way to becoming human; he was fully human and in his humanity reflected characteristics that are found in God Himself. In one of the genealogies of Jesus Christ, who is the only begotten Son of God, the point is made that Adam too was a "son of God." Jesus' genealogy, found in Luke's Gospel, concludes with the statement: "... the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (3:38).

When we turn to the first chapter of Genesis where we find the biblical record of man's creation, we learn that man who was created in the image of God was created as a sexual being. The material that is so important in this connection reads:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26,27).

Anyone who tries to understand the being of man must reckon with what we just read from the Bible. The humanity of man, according to this material, is rooted in man's likeness to God. Everything in that statement from the Bible emphasizes how close man is to God. And exactly here, where the relationship of God to man is laid out, the statement is made that man's sexuality is directly related to his being God's image bearer.

Now before we jump to any conclusions about this, it is important to consider exactly what this means. It does not mean that God is a sexual being and that God experiences what we experience in connection with our sexuality. What it means is this: God is a social being.

This is what makes Christianity different from all other religions of the world—the God at its center is not a single simple being, but He is a single complex being. The Bible reveals that God is a Trinity; the one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and these three persons exist eternally in relationships of love

and glory. In 1 John 4:8, we read that God is love, and this means that if there is any single word that can describe the wonder of God's being, it is the word *love*.

We cannot imagine the depths of divine love as this has always been expressed between the three persons of the divine Trinity. Nevertheless it is inexpressibly reassuring to learn that the God who has created all things and who is responsible for our lives is a God of love.

Apparently, then, God chose to create humankind in such a way that love would be expressed among the members of the human race. Therefore God introduced into our race from the moment of our creation the reality of sexuality—"male and female he created them." Human sexuality with all the possibilities and capacities it gives to human beings was apparently the marvelous element of the human character that would introduce the wonder of tender love and affection into the human experience and would bind all human beings together in relationships that at their best would be wholesome and helpful.

Now when we think about this, human sexuality becomes quite different from the way it is usually viewed nowadays. Often the impression is given that in terms of our sexuality we have many similarities with lower forms of life. After all, it is said, sexuality is related to reproduction, and it is simply the way humans reproduce, that's all. Birds do it one way, bees another, and animals still another. Why should we get all excited about the way people behave themselves in this regard? It used to be, when there were no effective means of birth control, that people had to be more careful, and then, too, it was most practical that one man and one woman would be married and live their lives together. Now, when we have liberated sexuality from some of these constraints, we have greater freedoms, and we should enjoy those freedoms. After all, there are unique pleasures that accompany sex, and we should not deprive ourselves of these pleasures if we happen to want them. Gay Talese, who has written the best seller *Thy Neighbor's Wife*, states openly, for example, that he is committed to one woman sexually, his wife, but he

also has extramarital sexual relationships.

But when we read the Bible, we learn that sexuality is not simply a natural element in our makeup, but it is mysteriously tied into our every potential. The very success of the human race depends on the proper handling of sexuality. And the success of an individual person depends on whether or not a person handles his or her sexuality in a positive and proper way. Sexual behavior you see, is entirely different from economic behavior or from behavior we associate with sports or with eating. Sexual behavior is without comparison in terms of the impact it can have on our lives for good or for evil.

And this is the reason why God carefully describes proper sexual behavior and identifies improper sexual behavior. In addition to the usual commandments we associate with this matter, such as "Thou shalt not commit adultery," the Bible contains elaborate prohibitions which cover sexual conduct related to a variety of family relationships. For example, Leviticus 18 absolutely contradicts some of the positive statements that are being made these days about incest. Yes, such statements are now being made; the Bible repudiates them.

Because of the far-reaching impact improper sexual behavior can have, there is a strong emphasis in the Bible on the importance of marriage and on the damaging impact of divorce. This does not mean that the sexual dimension of human life is expressed solely in connection with marriage, but it does mean that intimacies that distinguish the married state cannot be imitated outside marriage without great damage resulting.

And the prohibitions against improper sexual conduct do not exist because God is against people enjoying themselves. These prohibitions exist because human sexuality is so important and because it will yield the fullness of its goodness for people like us only if it is recognized for what it is and is used accordingly. Those who insist on promiscuous relationships and who refuse to honor their sexuality as it must be honored rebel against heaven itself and defy fundamental laws which govern the way humanity really is. And this is the reason the damage that is be-

ing done nowadays to human lives in terms of falsehoods about our sexuality is so exceedingly demoralizing and serious.

I don't know if Rollo May agrees with all of the ideas I have reviewed with you, but I certainly agree with his description of the tremendous impact our sexuality makes upon our lives together. In his book *Love and Will* he says, in connection with certain comments about tragedy, that love brings both joy and destruction. And then he observes that modern man has succeeded in forgetting what mankind has known throughout all history—that "sexual love has the power to propel human beings into situations which can destroy not only themselves but many other people at the same time."

When a society finally becomes X-rated, as ours has practically become, we must not measure the depths to which we have fallen solely in terms of increased abortions, higher rates of illegitimacy, and a growing divorce rate. These are in themselves very serious matters, but even more serious is the fact that they are symptoms of a deep depravity which has gathered its power among us and which now explodes within our individual lives and within our culture. What we see happening is unspeakably hideous.

Has it ever occurred to you that one of the reasons your own life is so chaotic and stressful, so unsatisfactory and depressing, is that you have mishandled your own sexuality? I am speaking to those who have chosen to go a direction other than that described in the Bible. Given the ideas concerning sexuality that are floating around in our X-rated world (think of the teachings of Planned Parenthood and the book by Gay Talese), it is entirely possible that you have been misled and have fallen into forms of sexual behavior that are now having their natural devastating impact on your life. In a bookstore the other day I saw two books which describe a sexual way that is destructive; one of them was *The Joy of Lesbian Sex*, the other *The Joy of Gay Sex*. There is no joy in either of these forms of behavior. I say that on the basis of the Bible. I do not deny that individuals involved in these activities may well have

concluded that their lives are joyfilled, but this very conclusion illustrates the corrupting impact such behavior has on the people who engage in it. Likewise, one-night stands and marital infidelity are damaging to one's psychological and spiritual well-being.

Because of the intricate relationship of human sexuality to every element of the human personality, improper behavior in this realm automatically brings about its own punishment. It is true, we must remember, that violation of God's mandates for us results in punishment, and this is especially true when His mandate so perfectly relates to the mystery of human personality. One cannot tamper with this element of human life without reaping a terrifying harvest of distress and damage any more than one can tamper with a computer and expect it to come up with the right answers.

If you have been taken in by the falsehoods being circulated about human sexuality in our X-rated world, what you need to do is just this: You must repent of your sin (for sin this is), and you must turn to God for your deliverance. Now if this suggestion insults and offends you, please understand that the fact that it does is a clear proof that your present behavior is actually a form of unbelief. That is, those who persist in following the false ideas of human sexuality that have become so prevalent and who reject the Bible's viewpoint are actually rejecting God. They are rejecting His Son Jesus, who offers forgiveness to those who believe in Him and equipment that will enable them to turn from their mistaken ways and begin to create a new life for themselves.

That is why I conclude today by calling you to faith—faith in the Bible with its rich and helpful insights into who we really are and with its fully helpful instructions about the way we should live. And I call you to faith in Jesus. He died on the cross so that misguided and misled people might be freed from the bondage they perhaps unwittingly have thrown around their own lives, and He gives them His Spirit so that they can start over and begin to live clean and pure. Jesus, you see, had a hand in creation itself. Jesus knows the glorious and loving commu-

nion that characterizes the Godhead itself (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and Jesus participated in making the grand design that would enable human beings to reflect the image of God as they express love to one another. As a result of this, Jesus is not simply someone who offers us aid that is fundamentally unrelated to our problem, but He offers us help that at every point is in phase with the problem.

What I have said here, I do not say to be critical, but only to point out what is happening. We are living in an X-rated world, and far too many of us are living X-rated lives. God created us for something better than this. God created us male and female so that we could live together in wholesome and pure relationships that would reflect the love of God Himself.

For some reading this, the damage done in their lives has reached a magnitude so large there seems to be no hope of change. There seems to be no hope. But I say to you, "Struggle back. . . struggle back to God. . ." You may have to break long ingrained habits which are by now totally integrated with what you have become. But you must begin to turn away from this X-rated world and from your X-rated life, and you must flee to Christ.

Those who reject the biblical message of human sexuality and who adopt a life-style that is rebellion against the Almighty will break themselves to pieces. But those who repent and turn to Christ will experience forgiveness, renewal, and joy. Yes, joy; if you want to talk about joy, find what it means to live in the light of God's great revelation of who we really are. We are God's image bearers, and our sexuality is part of that supreme reality.

PRAYER

Father of all humankind, we are grateful that we could be informed today about the true nature of our sexuality. We confess that we tend to forget that you have created us as you have so that we could be your image bearers.

Invade the lives of many who have been misled into ways of life that are destructive. Help them disentangle themselves from those who encourage them to continue in their demoralizing activity and help them, too, to gather the inner resources that will enable them to turn in new directions—to turn to you, the living God.

Grant us all the experience of forgiveness, for when it comes to our sexuality none of us is without sin. Enter our lives with the power of your Spirit, sent from your Son—your Son, who gave Himself on the cross so that we could be free from every form of bondage, the bondage too of our X-rated world. Amen.



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