

# **AN INSIGHT INTO THE FALLACIES OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM (With an Emphasis Upon Sexuality and Body Perception)**

by Gordon Gill (Revised May 2009)

## Introduction

This document is the product of research precipitated by my negative experience at what I now recognize to be a fundamentalist church parish. (The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines fundamentalism as, "The strict maintenance of orthodox religious beliefs or doctrines, especially belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and literal acceptance of the creeds as fundamentals of Protestant Christianity.") The parish referred to here is located in northern Virginia--in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area--and is affiliated with the national Episcopal Church.

Adherents of Christian fundamentalism firmly cling to early renditions of English-language Scripture, despite modern scholars' findings that sundry passages therein constitute inexact translations of original text. The fundamentalists' resistance in acknowledging enhanced interpretations arising from improved translation proficiency has led to their advocacy of restrictions on the role of sexuality in our society (sociologists estimate 90% of us are heterosexual, so that will be the emphasis here), along with a strident downplaying of the aesthetics of the human body.

The purpose of this paper is to explore these topics, which seem bereft of fresh critical analysis. Thinking people should welcome an opportunity to use the text herein both as a basis for dialogue and for determining whether fundamentalist ideas should be allowed to overshadow their own spiritual lives.

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## **PART I. Observations on Key Fundamentalist Issues**

*NOTE: Discussed in Subparts A & B below are two matters of core concern to persons commonly depicted as "fundamentalists."*

### **A. Sexuality**

#### **1. Sexual Expression and the Bible**

In explaining their perception of sexual engagement suitable for the unmarried, i.e., none at all,<sup>1</sup> fundamentalists often claim to find grounds for such stance in St. Paul's 1st century letters (sometimes referred to in the N.T. as "epistles") to various Christian communities then springing up in the eastern Mediterranean area. Historians know that aged documents believed to be copies of Paul's original Greek text were translated into English by a special staff assembled under the British crown to draft the 1611 *King James Version (KJV)* of the Bible. Scattered verses therein employ the word "fornication," a term defined in modern dictionaries as wilful sex among singles and construed by some to infer illicitness. We shall seek, in the ensuing discussion, to determine whether such 17th century use of "fornication" faithfully reflects Paul's thought processes that predated these translators by more than a millennium and a half.

Professor David Daniell, in his book *The Bible in English* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2003), informs us that (1) the finished *KJV* text included innumerable passages for which the wording was arbitrarily decided after the translators [approximately 50 in number] determined they could not readily reach a consensus, and (2) a coerced obeisance to the monarch imposed significant constraints upon the translators' independence. In his characterization of these limitations, the professor reveals that members of various *KJV* translation panels "engaged in arguments, which were sometimes violent...." (page 440), and--judging from that Bible's fawning dedicatory pages--the translators believed it prudent to placate the royal "sovereign upon whom their welfare, even their lives, might depend." (page 446)

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<sup>1</sup> Here are five samples of fundamentalist writing: (1) *The Other Side of Morality* (G/L Publications, Glendale, 1969; page 121): "Christians are to avoid *any kind* of sexual looseness, *any kind* of fornication, *any kind* of premarital ... sex." [Emphasis in original.] (2) *Our Corinthian Contemporaries* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1971; page 59): "Outside of marriage no one has the right to use his sexual powers...." (3) *Sexual Understanding Before Marriage* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1971; pages 65 & 114): "[N]ecking and petting on social dates are a violation of the general teaching of the Scriptures.... For a person to give of himself sexually out of the bonds of wedlock can only lead him to despair...." (4) *Sex for Christians* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976; page 128): "[I]ntercourse by unmarried people is sin." (5) *True Sexual Morality* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2004; pages 135 & 178): "Individuals not married to each other must never have sex with each other.... Sex outside of marriage is always wrong...."

The text in this subpart--coupled with extensive support provided in Part II, *infra*--will show that the above-quoted exhortations are unpersuasive.

Further, in his book *In the Beginning* (Doubleday, New York, 2001), Professor Alister E. McGrath expounds on some of the issues that presumably prompted the *KJV* translators (despite their possessing a flair for mellifluous language) to adopt a relatively timid approach in dealing with potentially contentious subject matter. For example, pages 141 & 148 indicate James made it quite plain that he expected them to affirm in Scripture the "divine right of kings," a doctrine rejected by his political enemies, the Puritans. James's adamancy on this point doubtless derived from over 400 appearances of the word "tyrant"--applied in the context of royalty--in marginal notes affixed to the so-called Geneva Bible then in use, as we learn from page 58 of Adam Nicholson's book *God's Secretaries* (HarperCollins, New York, 2003).

Moreover, the *KJV* writers could hardly have been unaware in 1611 of the vicious killing just three quarters of a century earlier (i.e., in 1536) of Bible translator William Tyndale, perceived by some as a heretic for adopting a fresh spiritual outlook in his interpretations of ancient Scripture. Accordingly--considering the strong motivation that the 1611 translators would have felt in their quest to avoid becoming similarly embroiled in controversy--it does not seem unreasonable for us to infer that a goodly number of them were willing to engage in self-censorship, i.e., to substitute alternate terminology in lieu of more precise language which they otherwise would have embraced.

Anyhow, if it can be ascertained that--for one reason or another--the 1611 translators made factual errors, overlooked critical subtleties of archaic parlance and idioms, or that English-language word connotations have evolved in such a manner that *KJV*'s nearly 400-year-old verses are proving abstruse to modern generations, that translation must be deemed as wanting. And indeed, as we shall be seeing in the pages ahead, recent scholarly research has enabled the editors of newer Bibles to offer us more accurate understandings of original Scripture.

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One justification for a retreat from *KJV* arises from its translation flaws. Professor Daniell states quite bluntly on page 428 of his book that, "Sometimes the translation is wrong...." Moreover, Dr. Benson Bobrick observes on page 262 of his book *Wide as the Waters* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001) that *KJV* reflects "unwarranted interpolations which view the Hebrew through a Christian lens." And Professor McGrath explains on page 238 of his book that "serious misjudgments" arose from the *KJV* translators having erroneously assumed that "the same vocabulary rules of grammar that applied to the classical period also applied to the New Testament." We should further note here Episcopal Bishop Frank K. Allan's warning (see page 13 of *The Anglican Digest* for Advent 1999) that misleading concepts were introduced into original Scripture by "human beings who had their own prejudices, biases, cultural limitations, and pre-scientific world views...."

Significantly, because no original books of the Bible are known to remain intact, all translators must of necessity rely upon copies. According to page 432 of *The Bible Translator* journal for October 1989, "Before the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, [scribes

copying the Bible by hand] made errors due to tired minds, failure in reading correctly...." Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida say much the same thing on page 53 of their book *From One Language to Another* (Nelson, Nashville, 1986): "In the process of copying a manuscript there is a tendency to make mistakes." And Professor Bart D. Ehrman explains on pages 46 & 52 of his book *Misquoting Jesus* (HarperSan Francisco, 2005) that scribes "inevitably made alterations--changing the words they copied either by accident (via a slip of the pen or other carelessness) or by design (when the scribe intentionally altered the words he copied [e.g., 2nd century maverick Marcion excised whatever ideas conflicted with his personal predilections])."

Furthermore, Dr. Geddes MacGregor advises on page 137 of his book *The Bible in the Making* (University Press, Washington, 1982) of an astounding incident. It seems that Oliver Cromwell--Lord Protector of England in the mid-17th century--"bribed the printers to the tune of one thousand pounds to falsify the text [of a *KJV* reprint]." One must wonder how much other mischief of this nature may have transpired over the years but has yet to be uncovered.

In addition to the translation problems and publishing chicanery discussed above, we need to acknowledge sloppy print-shop practice. On page 135 of *The Learned Men* (Crowell, New York, 1949), Gustavus S. Paine tells of his discovery of "mistakes made by [*KJV*] printers, averaging about one in ten pages." In this connection, see the list of errors (some of them funny) on page 310 of Professor Paul D. Wegner's *The Journey from Texts to Translators* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1999). On page 108 of *The English Bible* (Oxford, New York, 1961), Professor F.F. Bruce calls attention to an especially egregious *KJV* passage which--until it was rectified--read, "Thou shalt commit adultery," obviously missing an adverb that changed its meaning 180 degrees.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Aside from the above-mentioned general defects in *KJV*, here are some of its specific shortcomings: *The Bible Translator* journal for January 2008 itemizes, in an article beginning at page 14, sundry erroneous translations. Examples include Leviticus 13 ("leprosy" used wrongly to describe unhealthy whitening of skin--a symptom not, however, exhibited by lepers but rather one characteristic of an entirely unrelated malady classified by medical professionals as "leucoderma") and 1 Kings 7:50 (door "hinge"--a device historians know was not invented until much later). Helpfully, *NIV* provides such substitutes as "infectious skin disease" and "socket." Moreover, in Acts 12:4, *KJV* wrongly distinguishes a period of time with reference to "Easter," while *NIV* properly uses "Passover." Also, Revelation 8:13 in *KJV* describes an "angel" flying through the sky, whereas *NIV* recognizes the object as an "eagle."

Another bad translation appears in Genesis 43:11, according to religious educator Gary A. Rendsburg. Writing in a 2006 on-line course synopsis, he notes that the underlying Hebrew text described Jacob directing his sons to present a gift to Egyptian trading partners of turpentine resin, most emphatically not--and considerably different from--edible "nuts," as commonly translated in English-language Bibles.

Professor Ehrman tells us on page 9 of his aforementioned book of an original manuscript mistake--carried forward into Bibles today--that was made by a gospel writer himself. That is to say, historical research reveals the high priest referenced in Mark 2:26 could not have been Abiathar, as the biblical scribe indicated; instead, such individual was Ahimelech.

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A second reason for modifying *KJV* text stems from a need to reflect improved translation capability. For example, Professor McGrath observed in his aforementioned book that, "[O]ur understanding of the Hebrew language has developed considerably since 1600 [because a] wealth of knowledge has accumulated on other languages of the ancient Near East ... which cast light on the meaning of a Hebrew root." (page 231) Additionally, in the late 19th century "significant advances were made in understanding the everyday Greek of the eastern Mediterranean world [from] a series of vernacular papyri...." (page 236)

Professor Marcus J. Borg advises on page 240 of his book *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* (HarperSan Francisco, 2001) that the absence of quotation marks in ancient Greek manuscripts--an omission duplicated in *KJV* translations of Paul's epistles--has led to "serious misunderstandings" by naive Bible readers. The professor explains that unsophisticated folks wrongly construe portions of Paul's writings as reflective of his opinion, whereas they really constitute his reiteration of queries directed to him.

An illustration of the professor's point appears at 1 Corinthians 7:1. This passage includes a request by Paul's male correspondents in that Christian community for him to comment upon their speculating that a man should not touch a woman. (Bible translators regard such concept not in a sexual sense, but rather, that a man should not marry a woman.) Since *KJV*'s lack of quotation marks can result in a failure to grasp that verse 1 simply conveys Paul's reiteration of the Corinthians' expressed ruminations (and does not incorporate this apostle's thoughts on the advisability of marriage, a subject to be examined in Subsection 2, *infra*), editors of the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* clarified the meaning of the passage by inserting the omitted punctuation into their Bible.

Solid support for rejecting a theory (commonly held by fundamentalists) that this apostle was rebuking persons engaging in nonwed sex comes from the Rev. Raymond J. Lawrence, Jr.--priest, pastoral counselor, and formerly teaching chaplain at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital (Houston)--who tenders comment on pages 43 and 261-262 of his book *The Poisoning of Eros* (Augustine Moore Press, New York, 1989): "That Paul held to a view of sexual relations strictly limited to the boundaries of monogamy ... is most unlikely.... The popular notion that sexual expression should be limited absolutely to the bounds of a single bonded pair has no unequivocal historical, philosophical, ethical, or theological support."<sup>3</sup>

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In his book *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible* (Viking, London, 1991), Professor Robin Lane Fox notes a number of erroneous assertions. An example (on page 211) involves Gamaliel, who is shown--in Acts 5:34-36--as referring to an uprising that historians know did not occur until after his death.

Also, see footnote 8, *infra*, for an apparent Deuteronomy translation error in connection with a certain prescribed punishment.

<sup>3</sup> Significantly, 1 Corinthians, the primary source upon which fundamentalists rely in attempting to buttress their implacable antisex views, is one of two N.T. books (the other being

And indeed, Paul--raised as a Jew--would have been guided by the thought noted on page 56 of Professor James A. Brundage's book *Laws, Sex, and Christian Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), viz., that "ancient Jewish law viewed voluntary sexual relations, whether commercial or noncommercial, with considerable tolerance," and also by the notation on page 17 of *Novum Testamentum XIV* that, "Pre-betrothed, pre-marital, non-commercial sexual intercourse between men and women is nowhere considered a moral crime in the Torah."

But let it be said that translators are challenged in the technical aspects of their work. For example, introductory pages to the *NRSV* identify a factor inhibiting conversion of original text into comprehensible English, viz., our "lack of a common gender third person singular pronoun." Additionally, the Rev. Raymond F. Collins stresses on page xi of his book *Sexual Ethics and the New Testament* (Crossroad, New York, 2000) that, "Even those who can read the Greek of a Mark or a Paul are hard pressed to capture the precise nuance of the author's words." The tediousness of that task is exemplified on page 151 of *The Bible Translator* journal for July 1962, which explains that the Greek word *katargein* has 17 different connotations in English.

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A third imperative for remedying *KJV* deficiencies springs from changes over the years in English language usage. As stated in the preface to the *New International Version (NIV)*, "Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modifications in sentence structure and constant regard for the contextual meaning of words.... There is a sense in which the work of translators is never wholly finished."

Indeed, Professor Frederick C. Grant observes on page 97 of his book *Translating the Bible* (Seabury, Greenwich, 1961) that, "Of course, Bible translation is an endless process, as languages change, as additional copies of ancient manuscripts continue to turn up, and as scholars come to know and understand the language better." Professor Dewey M. Beegle also explains--on page 56 of his book *God's Word Into English* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1960)--that, "Because of the change in the English language, hundreds of words and phrases in *King James* which were understood by the people in 1611 have become obscure, and pose therefore a real problem for modern readers." And Professor McGrath aptly notes on his page 309, "Like any living language, English changes over the years. Linguistic development is simply a sign of life, in that a language is being used and adapted to a new situation.... The paradox is that those who insist that we retain *King James* as the only English translation of the Bible actually betray the intentions and goals of those who conceived and translated it--namely, to translate the Bible into living English."

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Romans) that Dr. Bruce M. Metzger--former chief translator of the *NRSV*--characterizes on page 77 of his text *The Bible in Translation* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 2001) as the least accurate part of *KJV*.

A famous example of a *KJV* passage subject to misunderstanding today is 2 Corinthians 11:25. Paul wrote (as translated in 1611 from his ancient Greek) that he was "stoned." Some modern readers construe such 17th century wording predicated upon--not surprisingly--20th/21st century vernacular, viz., that he was under the influence of hashish. But in reality, hateful people were throwing rocks at him. The NRSV has led an effort to fix this translation anomaly.<sup>4</sup>

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Giving recognition to the foregoing three-pronged explanation of why we cannot rely upon *KJV*, it is easy to accept that sundry other scholars have shied away from it. Professor Jack P. Lewis observes in his book *The English Bible* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1981) that *KJV* "is a phantom, a figment of an imagination.... (page 40) [T]hose who feel they can escape the problem of [dealing with new] translations by retreating into the citadel of the *King James* have a zeal for God that is not in accord with knowledge." (page 67) Moreover, Professor Stanley E. Porter asserts on page 21 of his book *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects* (Academic, Sheffield, 1999) that contemporary translators "clearly distance themselves from the *KJV*." And Professors Steven M. Sheeley & Robert N. Nash, Jr., note on pages 33-35 of their book *The Bible in English Translation* (Abingdon, Nashville, 1997) that, "[S]ignificant limitations ... about the *KJV* open the door for more modern translations...." Also, Dr. Robert G. Bratcher (senior staff writer of *The Bible Translator* journal) lamented on page 93 of the January 1961 issue that, "One is hard put to understand the reason for the continuing hold the *King James* has upon the average Bible reader...." Finally, Professor Ehrman advises, on his page 209, that *KJV* "is filled with [content derived from Erasmus's 1515 translation] based on a single, twelfth-century manuscript that is one of the worst...."

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Before concluding our discussion of translation inadequacies, let us consider the perils inherent in the fundamentalists' commitment to literal interpretation. Professor Mark L. Strauss observes--on pages 80-82 of his book *Distorting Scripture* (InterVarsity, Downers Grove, 1998)--that a "quest for 'literalness,' though noble in principle, often results in poor translation.... An overly literal approach can contribute to a misunderstanding of the biblical text...." Also, fresh archeological investigation supports Jewish leaders' judgment that, "The notion that the Bible is not literally true is more or less settled and understood among most conservative rabbis," according to *The New York Times* for March 9, 2002, at page 9 of the Arts & Ideas section. (These scholars apparently uphold the pervasive role that allegory and metaphor assume in Bible text.)

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<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, speakers of other modern languages beside English are discovering that early Bible translations do not adequately reflect word usage now observed. According to page D1 of the March 15, 2003, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, French Catholics have petitioned the Vatican to change *gourmandise* (which at one time embraced the sin of "gluttony," but which has since evolved to mean simply enjoyment of nourishing food and wine in congenial company) to *gloutonnerie* (a term preserving the original intent).

A maddening example of the negative consequences flowing from literal interpretation can be traced to Matthew 9:12, where the *KJV* translation recounts Jesus saying healthy people of the day "need not a physician." But slavishly adhering to such medical guidance--dating from an ancient era--clashes with modern disease-preventing measures such as inoculation. That is to say (according to *The Washington Post* for June 10, 2008, at page F5) "all but two states--West Virginia and Mississippi--allow parents to opt out on religious grounds.... Saad B. Omer, a vaccine researcher at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health ... examined rates of pertussis, or whooping cough, [and] found that incidence of the disease was about 50 percent higher in jurisdictions where ... religious exemptions were easy to obtain.... [U]nvaccinated children can spread disease to those who are too young or too medically fragile to be immunized, including those suffering from cancer." So that is the kind of calamitous impact the fundamentalists' proclivity to literalism has upon people who strive to find rational meaning in Scripture.

Moreover, consider the English translations of Luke 14:26, which tell us that Jesus exhorted his followers to "hate" their parents and other family members. In cleaving to the literalist principles they claim guide them, fundamentalists apparently must attempt to do exactly that, dreadful though it sounds. The rest of us, however, are inclined toward Professor Raymond E. Brown's explanation on page 119 of his book *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, New York, 1997), viz., Matthew 10:37 clarifies that believers' obligation is simply to "prefer [God] over family."

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Now let us address the specific *KJV* term that seems to have mesmerized fundamentalists, viz., "fornication." Professor William Graham Cole provides us with valuable insight into the derivation of this English-language word. On pages 247-248 of his book *Sex and Love in the Bible* (Association Press, New York, 1959), he asserts that, "Fornication means to us sex relations between unmarried persons, but its Latin root *fornicare* meant to patronize a brothel, or whoredom. The verb was derived from the noun *fornix*, meaning arch or vault, and as Roman brothels were located in underground vaults, the connection is clear."

Thus, it can be seen that the Latin excluded reference to private sex acts between singles. This omission must be unsettling to fundamentalists, who would prefer to find in old writings an edict supporting their no-sex-for-singles posture. But as a fall-back option, they instead seize and rely upon modern usage of "fornication" (see page 2 herein for the latter-day, dictionary definition).

Nevertheless, we can evaluate instances in which "fornication" appears in the 1611 *KJV* as a translation from the ancient Greek, viz., in connection with two sex-associated acts widely practiced in the N.T. era (but appropriately regarded as contrary to church propriety): (1) pagan ritual copulation, and (2) incest.

Accordingly, consider the proceedings of the 43rd session (August 1994) of Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, a major conference of theologians. Although a presentation to the

delegates included an evaluation of Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 7:2 (a passage containing "fornication" in the 1611 *KJV*), it was confined to such arcane matters as Greek grammatical construction, analysis of prepositional phrases, and the like. But it is clear, both from the text of the presentation and from the reaction thereto, that the theologians deemed the subject activity in Corinth to have constituted pagan ritual copulation. Significantly, these scholars apparently made no claim--in either conference papers or post-conference critiques--that tender interaction between romantic singles is germane to this Pauline passage.

Another example of today's scholars declining to apply the common meaning of "fornication" can be found on page 752 of *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Prentice Hall; Upper Saddle River, New Jersey; 1990). Thus, "fornication" in Acts 15:20--as it appears in the 1611 *KJV*--is specifically seen as a mistranslation of author Luke's original Greek, with the context of such passage most reasonably calling instead for "incestual union." And again, there is no reference to sex between singles.

Plainly--in recognition that it would be improper, as shown above, for (1) the esteemed theologians participating at the religious conference, and (2) the editors of the scholarly commentary, to characterize the acts depicted in the cited 1611 *KJV* passages as "fornication"--the meanings intended by Paul and Luke must fairly be seen as pagan ritual copulation or as incest. So, unless the fundamentalists can manage to prevail in a debate with contemporary translators over the proper interpretation to be accorded the old Greek writings (hardly a likely outcome), their far-reaching, antisexual hypothesis necessarily collapses.

The salient message to be derived from the previous paragraphs on "fornication" is that the context in which the word appears in *KJV* has no relevance to the joyous rewards obtained in the 21st (or any other) century through affectionate sexual bonding between, e.g., warm and caring sweethearts. Suggesting otherwise is a fabrication. For whatever it is worth, 2 Peter 3:16 remarks that "ignorant and unstable people distort ... Scriptures to their own destruction." (*NIV*)

But the foregoing discussion is essentially academic. That is to say, an examination of eight post-1611 *KJV* interpretations reveals that "fornication" has apparently been totally excluded from five of them (viz., *New International Version*, *New Century Version*, *Contemporary English Version*, *New Living Translation*, and *Good News Bible*), and partially omitted from three more (*New American Standard*, *New King James*, and *New Revised Standard Version*). I shall be pleased to furnish anyone who so requests with a chart identifying the verses in which "fornication" appears in (1) the 1611 *KJV*, and (2) the three other named works.

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Moving now to another aspect of the subject, fundamentalists sometimes claim that Genesis 2:24--a passage addressing the mechanisms of marriage--effectively fuses together intercourse and wedlock as if the two are so entwined as to foreclose all avenues for unmarried sex. Such a stance results in de-emphasizing nonreproductive functions of the sex act, to the detriment of enabling men and women to jointly explore the inner depths of their maleness and femaleness. Anyhow, careful examination of the above-cited Genesis passage establishes that it

is silent with respect to sex between unmarried persons. That is, the textual language is directed entirely to men fancying to leave their parents' abode and unite with a wife. There is simply nothing in the passage showing that it bears relevance to the intimate behavior of unmarrieds.

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A *San Francisco Chronicle* front-page article (November 29, 1994) explored the oft-confused perception of sexuality within organized religion. The Rev. Robert Warren Cromey, a local Episcopal priest interviewed for the piece, noted that "a fundamental fear of sex and pleasure"--stemming from the ancient Greeks' speculative differentiation between the spirit (good) and the body (bad)--induced early church fathers to adopt unwarranted negative stances on sexual issues. Professor Cole, identified hereinbefore, has blasted these Greek (or Hellenistic) teachings as not only unbiblical, but antibiblical. Yet, in spite of that, modern fundamentalists have embraced remnants of such flawed ideology in seeking to prop up their religious dogma.

The shaping of disapproving attitudes toward sex in early Christianity can further be traced to the monastic-minded Essenes, members of an old ascetic Jewish sect still functioning into the Common Era. According to volume V, pages 163-168, of *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan, New York, 1987), chroniclers of the period (notably Josephus, Philo, and Pliny the Elder) plus the recently discovered Qumran--or Dead Sea--scrolls, narrated that single and married Essenes (the latter after their procreating years) were drawn to celibacy as an integral facet of that sect's austere lifestyle. Few educated persons nowadays would choose to adhere to the philosophy observed by these simple folk who shunned, among other things, the kinds of commercial transactions comprising a basic (and crucial) cornerstone of our modern economy. In other words, there is no manifest reason for 21st century Christians to bind themselves to Essene theology.

In explaining the historical background of the fundamentalists' forbidding approach to sex, Dr. Karen A. McClintock informs us on page 41 of her book *Sexual Shame* (Fortress, Minneapolis, 2001) that, "The goal was procreation. All other aspects of sexuality were considered sinful. The ghosts of this perspective still haunt us." On page 244 of his book *Sexual Relation in Christian Thought* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1959), Professor Derrick Sherwin Bailey further analyzes the mischief perpetrated by ill-informed churchmen: "[A]dvances in scientific knowledge have rendered untenable a view of physical sexuality which has obsessed the mind of the church for more than fifteen centuries, and has profoundly and adversely influenced the sexual attitudes of the West."

Indeed, shuddering with trepidation that--correct or not, what do you think?--the female sex drive is "insatiable" (see chapter VI of *Witchcraft in Europe* by Professors Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters [University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2001]), cruel medieval inquisitors filed sex transgression charges against women in ecclesiastical courts. Moreover, deluded into concluding that certain individuals ascribed with attributes of devils were engaging in surreptitious "demonic copulation" with sleeping victims, Pope Innocent VIII ordered them placed on trial, too. Modern fundamentalists, who claim their negative sex concepts reflect

religious tradition, likely link such an antisex outlook--consciously or unconsciously--to official church persecution of the hapless souls described above (yet another example of Christianity's bizarre sex tactics).

Professor Vern L. Bullough elaborated in a panel discussion organized by the "Closer to Truth" scholarly group. As shown on the World Wide Web, he stated that "Christianity has been hostile--it's what I would call a sex-negative culture ... the best sex was no sex." Albeit ancient Christian ascetics would necessarily have acknowledged, grudgingly, that copulation is associated with procreation (a truism in perpetuating the human race, obvious even to them), 12th century monk Gratian denounced "unnatural" sex, according to page 54 of Professor Bullough's book *Sexual Attitudes* (Prometheus, New York, 1995). The professor explains (amazingly so to a man or woman of our time accustomed to sexually uninhibited partners) that succeeding generations of fundamentalist clerics construed the monk's language as condemning "intercourse in any position except with the female on her back...."<sup>5</sup>

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Precursors of today's fundamentalists are mentioned by name in *New Testament Studies*, volume 28 at page 130. For example, "Augustine ... *contaminated* the biblical outlook on sexuality." [Emphasis supplied.] Indeed, philosopher and critic Mervyn Levy notes on page 52 of his book *The Moons of Paradise* (Citadel, New York, 1965) that the "conception of sex as fundamentally sinful" arose from idle ponderings of ancient characters like Augustine. Levy appropriately laments (page 74) that "sex in the Christian world is still associated with ... fantasies of sin."

In his book *What Christianity Says About Sex, Love and Marriage* (Association Press, New York, 1957) Professor Roland H. Bainton traces, on pages 28-41, the sorry record of

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<sup>5</sup> Such notion runs counter to a concept consistently recognized by enlightened people today. Thus--as elucidated on page 101 of *Glamour* magazine for July 2006--"most women say [straddling their partner offers] the easiest position for reaching orgasm." Indeed, page 268 of its June 2007 issue quotes 26-year-old Gina as saying, "I'd had orgasms by myself, but couldn't relax enough with a guy [until I started climbing] on top." Further, 24-year-old Meagan confirms, on page 267 of the May 2008 issue, that "lying down on him [offers] more direct clitoral contact--fantastic!" Likewise, 21-year-old Stella, quoted on page 70 of *Jane* magazine for November 2006, extols the efficacy of this technique in her sex relations: "Usually when I'm on top, I can orgasm sans [manual] help." *Cosmopolitan* confirms the same thing on page 95 of its January 2007 issue: "Orgasm ... usually is easiest with woman-on-top." Also, page 164 of the September 2007 issue stresses that, "To increase your chances of climaxing during intercourse ... get on top." And page 108 of its April 2009 issue notes that "Woman-on-top is a definite G-spot winner." Finally, Assistant Professor Laura Berman of Northwestern University's School of Medicine identifies a special bonus on page 150 of her book *Real Sex for Real Women* (DK, New York, 2008), viz., male partners "will be able to caress and stroke your breasts, back, and bottom."

So, it is amply clear from the above excerpts that careful selection of intercourse position can maximize effective stimulation of a woman's sensitive body tissues. Fundamentalists maintaining homage to Gratian and his devotees would deprive women of benefits accruing from ameliorative, alternative positions set forth in modern sex guides.

antisex musings. He points out that Augustine's ruminations blended odd theories propounded by (1) the Manichees--adherents both of occult-infused Gnosticism and of Zoroastrianism, the weird disciples of which placed their dead at high elevations to be devoured by birds--who wildly conjectured that inherent wickedness inevitably permeates the mysteries of sexual expression, and (2) the Pelagians, foolish rebufferers of heavenly grace, who were naively oblivious to the heightened emotional engagement awaiting lovers immersing themselves in the sex act.<sup>6</sup> The professor also notes ecclesiastical leader John Calvin kept this austere mind-set going in his time (mid-16th century), not hesitating to order his antagonists burned at the stake.

In her book *Body, Sex, and Pleasure* (Pilgrim, Cleveland, 1994), Professor Christine E. Gudorf further exposes (page 131) the twisted mentality of Augustine, who gullibly assumed "women were not capable of being real companions or partners of men." [Editor's note: A computerized search reveals disgusting behavior on his part, viz., his having found enjoyment in watching bloody cockfights--a repulsive enterprise illegal throughout most of the U.S.--which indicates diminished judgment and a distorted sense of moral values.] The professor similarly discredits (on page 83) Middle Ages churchman Thomas Aquinas for inexcusably relegating sensual (or concupiscent) pursuit to a "lower animal nature, not part of the higher rational nature [linking] us to the Almighty and which is characteristically human." In addition, she finds Aquinas strangely believed (page 239) that "semen contained whole and complete men, who needed only nurture in the womb. These little men become defective--that is, female--under ... the presence of southerly (moist) winds during pregnancy." Need more be said about this pair?

And there were other confused individuals in early Christianity as well, so prepare yourself for further outrageous notions: Professor Brundage tells us in his aforementioned book that the religious philosopher Tertullian professed--without hint of rationale--that "sexual craving and delight, even in marriage, can have no place in Christian life.... [C]oitus causes spiritual insensitivity; sexual intercourse drives out the Holy Spirit...." (page 64) Origen, another notorious Christian theorist of the period who systematically sought to wipe out sex, shocked even some of his associates by advocating castration as a "method of combating sexual temptation." (pages 86-87)

But in our examination of biblical text, we should not overlook the virtual dearth of scriptural reference to incidences of nonidolatrous and noncommercial sexual coupling of single males and females acting with mutual consent.<sup>7</sup> Of course, there was limited opportunity for sex among singles in those days because Israelite girls were expected to wed--actually, to be sold by their fathers--soon after attaining puberty, resulting in a scarcity of unmarried adult women. (See page 32 of *Sex Sense and Nonsense: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Sex* by James C. Hefley [David C. Cook Publishing Company; Elgin, Illinois; 1971]). Nevertheless, it is

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<sup>6</sup> The Episcopal Church officially holds a dim view of Pelagian theology. See page 869 in the *Book of Common Prayer* where it is stated that, "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk)." [Emphasis supplied.]

<sup>7</sup> A notable exception is the beautiful and moving account of lovers' delight expressed in the O.T. book *Song of Songs*. For an overview of this heartwarming biblical story, see Professor LeBacqz's commentary appearing in Part II (item A13).

pertinent to acknowledge here author Stephen Sapp's analysis on page 33 of his book *Sexuality, the Bible, and Science* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1977) where he observes that, relative to sex acts that did occur in those days among the unattached, typically "no harm was done."

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The sobering experience of Christians in Great Britain can be helpful to us in thinking through these issues. According to *Time* magazine for October 28, 1966, at page 44, the British Council of Churches--disconcerted that common folk were routinely challenging, as lacking in justification, theological condemnation of nonwed sex--appointed a committee of 13 clergy to prepare a statement reinforcing the historic ban. However, the committee balked at endorsing the traditional view; rather, it found intercourse not inappropriate within a "total encounter."

Three years after the above-described British episode, U.S. psychiatrist David R. Reuben, in his book *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex--But Were Afraid to Ask* (McKay, New York, 1969), explored societal constraints on sex (affecting marrieds and unmarrieds alike) extant on this side of the Atlantic. On page 312, Dr. Reuben quoted a female patient of advanced age who had recently perused--for the first time in her life--a respected guide on sexuality that opened a meaningful vista to the rewards (previously unimaginable to her) of fondling her husband's penis: "I was always taught [by her fundamentalist church-going mother?] that no decent woman did that kind of thing.... [But now, I'm also] thinking of trying some of the other [stimulative techniques] I read about in that book." Better late than never, I suppose.

Fundamentalists may react negatively to women touching male sex organs--as did Dr. Reuben's patient until she educated herself--because of startling language in Deuteronomy 25:11-12 which calls for severely penalizing females who do so (notwithstanding that the hypothetical woman alluded to in this passage was seeking to protect her endangered husband by squeezing the testicles of a man fiercely assaulting him).<sup>8</sup> But non-fundamentalists are generally accepting of women lovingly caressing their partners' bodies, particularly in the younger age brackets. See, in this regard, the website of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation of Menlo Park, California,

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Jerome T. Walsh wrote in the Spring 2004 issue of the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, at page 56, that the harsh dismembering penalty seen in English-language Bibles appears to be a mistranslation of the original Hebrew. That is to say, the consequences flowing from this woman's purported transgression seem nothing more severe than a mandated shaving of the hair encircling her vulva.

Our society likely finds such disciplinary measure puzzling, though, because many modern women--desiring sleek-looking external genitals--routinely shave their own pubic hair. (See an in-depth article on this subject in the *New York Times* for September 1, 2005, at page E3.)

Perhaps an explanation of the Deuteronomy passage is that biblical-era females were especially proud to sport a patch of hair down there, so taking it away from them as a form of punishment caused embarrassment when friends noticed it missing; or, alternatively, maybe the intent was that they would suffer from potential itching as the hair grew back (at least, women have told me that's what can happen).

which discloses that 53 percent of males aged 15-19 have "been masturbated by a female....") Anyhow, it is highly significant (and dispositive) that *NIV*--which is not shy in pressing on its readers myriad morality lessons the editors discern in Scripture--apparently sees no behavioral issues arising out of the Deuteronomy passage. That is to say, in omitting commentary thereon, *NIV* evidently has determined that this 3,500-year-old directive does not require adaptation to circumstances prevailing today.

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A study aid used in U.S. Episcopal church-school education to shape the spirituality of adolescents verging on adulthood (viz., the Confirmation manual authored by Lambert and Fender and published by Morehouse-Gorham Company) says nothing whatsoever about the significant role that sexuality commonly plays in human interaction. Its absence indicates that these writers do not regard the subject, albeit important to cultivating young people's social consciousness, as pertinent to a religious curriculum.

But the omission of sexual references from such source need not surprise us. Rachel Moss explains on page 62 of her book *God's Yes to Sexuality* (Collins/Fount, London, 1981) that, "Neither the Old nor the New Testament can be treated as a code book of timeless truths which can be isolated from the situations in which they were uttered.... The Bible does not present a united front with reference to sexual ethics, because it was written from and to different communities, whose circumstances and needs were far from identical. It therefore represents not one tradition but a number of traditions, whose very diversity is evidence that they were living and changing."

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Yet, although confounding to thoughtful people of our time who employ advanced techniques in analyzing Scripture, fundamentalists turn to echoes from the distant past in their quest to justify denunciation of nonwed sex, albeit they talk in vague generalities and never seem to identify references in support thereof. Well, the various antisex interpretations noted hereinbefore--and uniformly found lacking--must be the ones they are falling back on, but won't say so.

Based upon all of the foregoing, it seems compelling that reasonable people--including committed believers--who conscientiously consider the subject matter addressed in this section can scarcely not conclude that the fundamentalists' sex ideas (whether formulated in the early years of the church or reflecting a more recent vintage) are dreamily speculative and deficient in foundational support. This assessment is amply substantiated in Part II, *infra*, by a sizable number of well-known scholars, including respected seminary faculty.

## 2. Biblical Marriage and Sex

As expressed symbolically in Ezekiel 16:7-8, relative to the reported covenant between the Lord God--or Yahweh--and the people of Jerusalem, the girl child portrayed in this passage matured and was ready for a husband: "And when you reached the age of maidenhood, your breasts were full-formed and your pubic hair had grown ... you were old enough for marriage." (*Living Bible*)

Describing King Xerxes's acquisition of a wife in Esther 2:3-4, 17, *NIV* annotations say that "young virgins were taken from their homes [to a] harem. Their sole purpose was to serve the king and to await his call for sexual pleasure.... Esther's presence and beauty pleased the king enough that he crowned her queen...." Whether her eagerness to satisfy arose from beguiling coquetry or out of genuine emotion, she seems to have played her cards right, so to speak.

The practice of polygamy was widely accepted in biblical society. Indeed, *NIV* annotations tell us that "many great Old Testament leaders (such as Abraham, Jacob, and David) had more than one wife," albeit they did not trace such convention to any explicit directive from God. Moreover, men of lesser stature were polygamous, too; see 1 Samuel 1:2. Criticism aimed at Solomon in 1 Kings 11:3-6 for his having accumulated 700 wives was predicated strictly upon their non-Israelite origins. Clearly, by insisting--in furtherance of their anti-homosexual tactics--that marital unions in the biblical tradition can consist only of one man and one woman, fundamentalists inexplicably overlook our polygamy heritage.

Going back to O.T. times, menfolk regarded their various brides not as love interests--as most husbands do nowadays--but instead, as components of their property holdings.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, a virginal bride (like most any other piece of property in so-called "mint condition") was treasured over one previously penetrated by another man.

However (except among fundamentalists, perhaps) the latter notion has generally gone out of favor, as we learn from psychologist and therapist Eleanor Hamilton, Ph.D., who is quoted on page A15 of the *San Francisco Chronicle* for February 24, 1980: "Virginity is about as useful as your appendix. It used to be that a man wanted his wife to be a virgin when they married. These days, I don't know of any young man who would marry one.... Sexuality is a primary

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<sup>9</sup> In *Human Sexuality*--edited by Edward A. Powers (United Church Press, New York & Philadelphia, 1977)--pages 35-36 reveal that, "Where woman does appear in the legal codes [of Israel], she has the role of a dependent and normally an inferior.... Her sexuality was the exclusive property of the male [and her infidelity] merited the death penalty.... The husband's sexual infidelity was not ranked as a crime [and divorce] was an exclusively male prerogative."

Moreover, author Stephen Sapp (identified hereinbefore) notes that, "[T]he woman was, in a fundamental sense, the property of her husband.... Coitus with another man, therefore, was fundamentally an affront to the husband's exclusive possession of his wife.... This 'chattel motif' naturally led to a double standard, by which the wife could sin only against her own marriage whereas the husband could not sin against his marriage but only against that of another man."

function--put it on the shelf ... and you have an 80 percent chance of dysfunction." To put such wisdom in laymen's perspective, it means a sexually experienced woman is commonly preferred over a virgin as wife-material because the former presumably enters into marriage equipped with the requisite know-how for fulfilling the female role; hence, the couple may at the outset be free of the disillusionment sometimes felt by a sexual-neophyte woman and/or her partner.

To aid in establishing whether a bride comes to the marriage bed intact, Deuteronomy 22:13-17 sets forth a chasteness test by which fabric stained with blood seeping from a torn hymen at initial intercourse with her husband signifies likely prior virginity. Although application of this test to a menstruating bride would be inconclusive because of uncertainty as to the blood source, laws prescribed in Leviticus 15:24, 18:19, & 20:18 and Ezekiel 22:10--flatly forbidding intercourse during menstruation--constrain the man to postpone vaginal entry until her flow has dissipated. Presumably, fundamentalist clergy today--obliged by an abiding commitment to scriptural literalism--solemnly warn couples undergoing marriage counseling that (despite alternate kinds of sensual body contact which might possibly be tolerated to some degree in lieu of penile insertion) they are honor-bound to strictly observe the explicit biblical proscription against untimely sex.

Incidentally, 1 Peter 3:7 reveals an intrinsic difference between husbands and wives, viz., the latter are believed "weaker" than the former. And not only that, Leviticus 27:3-7 divulges exactly how much more value Bible-based religion accords males vis-a-vis females. Consider infants, where males are worth five shekels, but females only three; for persons over 60 years of age, the male/female comparison in shekels is 15-to-10; such dissimilarities apply in other age brackets, too. (Hey, don't accuse me of degrading women. I'm just telling you what the Bible says.)

A phenomenon associated with biblical marriage is known as the law of levirate (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Under its terms, the brother of a deceased husband is obligated to copulate with--and impregnate--the widow. When Onan defied such edict by prematurely withdrawing from his sister-in-law Tamar and ejaculating outside of her body, he was put to death (Genesis 38:8-10). In light of their fixation upon scriptural literalism, one would expect today's fundamentalists to apply their brand of faith by routinely complying with the widow-impregnation provision set forth in the above-cited passages. Since, however, we do not hear of such deeds occurring, they are apparently managing to extricate themselves somehow.

Paul speaks to his philosophy of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. Actually, he discouraged it (verse 8) because he believed--wrongly, as we now know--our Lord's return (the Parousia) was imminent (verse 29 and also Romans 13:11); thus, entering into earthly household relationships--which by their nature require attending to long-range needs of a spouse--seemed to him pointless as well an impediment to the performance of ongoing religious obligations (verses 32-35).

But Paul nevertheless acquiesced to the conjugal state (verse 9) as an option for single men and women who might otherwise be sexually frustrated (the modern concept of tender affection being as yet undeveloped). He urged that the body of each be freely offered up to the

other in sexual union (verses 3-4). Nonetheless, he conjectured that widows--plausibly already having satisfied their most intense carnal cravings--would be happier by avoiding remarriage (verse 40). [One feels compelled to ponder here how many women in our time would truly embrace such a premise.]

A term we sometimes encounter in connection with marital discord--viz., adultery--conveyed a very different meaning in the highly patriarchal society of the biblical era. That is to say, whereas to us such word usually elicits visions of emotion-laden, outside coitus by either spouse that diminishes their mutual affection, its use in the Bible consistently refers to infringement upon a male's property right in a woman (a subject discussed hereinabove).

Note also that the spouse-coveting sanction incorporated into the Tenth Commandment (Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21) was intended to forestall men from seeking to expropriate other men's wives; significantly, any coveting by women of other women's husbands was not embodied therein. Furthermore, Jesus's admonition in Matthew 5:28 against lustful glances was limited to the actions of men only.

### 3. Sexual Terminology in the Bible

In correspondence to his Christian brethren, as recorded in Galatians 5:19, Paul addressed categories of assertedly sinful behavior which he connected to sex. The 1611 *KJV* identifies four such categories (adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness) while modern *NIV* translators itemize only three (sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery). We have already examined fornication and adultery, so let us now analyze the other above-listed words.

"Debauchery" and "lasciviousness" refer to sexual relations perceived as callous or insensitive in nature, and hence, unacceptable. (In clarification, no woman who willingly and enthusiastically engages in sexual acts--vaginally or otherwise--would complain, concerning her experience, that she has been debauched by a lascivious man.)

The word "impurity" brings to mind one of Jesus's celebrated teachings from the Sermon on the Mount--as recorded in Matthew 5:8--viz., "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (*NRSV*), a passage obliging believers to coexist in mutual harmony (see 1 Peter 1:22 for amplification). In the context of the discussion here, maintaining purity dictates that each participant in a sexual act proceed with fitting regard for the other's well-being.

The term "sexual immorality" is broad enough to embrace acts seen by virtually everybody as sordid, e.g., pedophilia, coercive exploitation, and incest. (Relative to the latter, though, we can ponder how Adam & Eve and their offspring could have produced a line of descendants in the absence of at least a modicum of early incest. One intriguing mystery in this connection, stemming from Genesis 4:17, is who might have been the parents of son Cain's wife.)

As to "uncleanness," Leviticus 15 explicitly tells us that leakage or spillage of sexual fluids is deemed highly repugnant and unholy. So, pity the hapless fellow sullied by a woman's menstrual blood dribbling onto his body, and do sympathize with his chagrin when semen accidentally splashes across her stomach, thighs, buttocks, etc. Importantly, this Bible chapter specifies that both of the individuals wash such substances off their skin forthwith, and that the couple cleanse any bed or chair having been in contact with their sex fluids. However, whereas the 1611 *KJV* account of Paul's epistle to the people of Galatia brings the uncleanness concept into the N.T., modern translations like *NIV* indicate that Paul did not employ the Greek-equivalent of this word. Its absence may mean that followers of the Lord who randomly discharge fluids are no longer required to tender two doves or pigeons to a priest for sacrifice, as Leviticus solemnly directs. But it would not be unrealistic for us to presume that passionate fundamentalist clergy currently demand adherence to this biblical command (or, if they don't, to ask them why not).

An activity usually seen today as sex in exchange for money--viz., prostitution--is wholly different in nature from the scriptural meaning of such term. Thus, annotations appearing in *The Interpreter's Bible* (volume 10, page 74) characterize biblical prostitution as "intercourse with the [pagan] priestesses of Aphrodite [and] consecration to the goddess," horrific behavior that in effect repudiated God's omnipotence. Such egregious conduct is recorded in Numbers 25:1-3 (where we are told of Israelites engaging in intercourse with heathen Moabite prostitutes as a ceremonial sacrifice to the latter's deities) and in Ezekiel 23:7 (concerning a woman who turned merrymaking with dashing young men into lustful prostitution involving idol worship). Bible annotators further label as prostitution the heinous actions in Hosea 4:10-12 (referring to sex rituals in the temples of the pagan gods Baal and Asherah) and in Micah 1:7 (denouncing conniving women of Samaria who solicited men to dally in sex acts with idols).

#### 4. Conclusion

Among important findings in Sections 1 through 3: (1) erroneous inclusion of "fornication" in early English-language scriptural translation, (2) unwarranted endorsement of certain ancient religious theories, and (3) faulty interpretation of a number of Bible passages.

We also pointed up the fundamentalists' ongoing preoccupation with sex. Significantly in such regard, Episcopalian layman Bruce Bawer relates on page 212 of his book *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalists Betray Christianity* (Three Rivers Press, New York, 1997), that when fundamentalist preachers address male-female interaction, "they almost invariably focus on sexual acts."

A conspicuous example of this is the fundamentalists' proclivity to seeking imposition of restrictions on the rest of us by lobbying legislators to enact or retain criminal statutes designed to thwart certain everyday sexual practices. Consider, for instance, Virginia's so-called Sodomy Law (Title 18.2, §361A) which prescribes up to five years of imprisonment or a fine of \$2,500

for persons engaging in bedroom activities of an inventive nature extending beyond simple intercourse. Virginia fundamentalists love this statute and vigorously oppose periodic efforts to repeal it, as seen in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* for January 14, 2004, at page B3.

Moreover, Tamara Kreinin--president and CEO of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States--stated on pages 6-7 of her organization's 2002 Annual Report that, "The momentum [the religious right] have gained has presented advocates of comprehensive sexuality education and reproductive rights with significant political, social, and economic obstacles. Today's conservative political configuration encourages ideology to trample over sound public health policy and scientific research."<sup>10</sup>

## B. The Bible and Body Perception

Let us now address another phenomenon frequently associated with fundamentalists, viz., their obsession--for which they claim to find support in Scripture--with coercing others to keep their bodies mostly covered, most of the time. They object to persons pursuing (albeit discreetly) recreational activities that do not by nature require a body covering, and they flinch upon beholding undraped human images in the world of art. Following below is a sampling of fundamentalist tactics revealing their mind-set in this regard:

(1) While canvassing residents near his church in East Moss Point, Mississippi, a Baptist preacher--ignoring a "No Trespassing" sign--unfastened the gate protecting a wooded property and proceeded to a clearing where he encountered the owner and his young son, together with his wife and an unidentified man who were relaxing nude. The preacher thereafter filed a criminal complaint against the woman, alleging she had wilfully and lewdly displayed her naked body (albeit she had donned a brassiere, blouse, and shorts before greeting him). Although a

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<sup>10</sup> Southern Baptists--virtually always proponents of fundamentalism--spearheaded beginning in the 1990s so-called virginity pledges, wherein adolescents are entreated to be "sexually abstinent" until they wed (which portends that pledgers not marrying until well into their adulthood will, for many years, be limited in the fulfillment they can realize from interim relationships pursued). But while responsible people might well wish to dissuade emotionally immature juveniles from engaging in intimate physical contact, we should be aware that the Baptists' virginity pledge experiment has largely failed. That is to say, the great majority (88 percent) of pledgers eventually decide to reject fundamentalist teachings by opting to engage in premarital vaginal intercourse, according to a Columbia University study reported on page 5B of the *San Antonio Express-News* for January 21, 2005.

Another thing that should trouble the Baptists is an article in the January 2001 issue of *American Journal of Sociology*, at pages 859-912, which notes it is not uncommon for pledgers still in high school to marry hastily--and, unfortunately, often to an ill-suited partner--in desperate efforts to keep their pledges. Compounding that dilemma, financial responsibilities suddenly thrust upon these young newlyweds may pressure some to drop out of school and enter the job market prematurely. Moreover, persons who break such pledges often act on impulse and are, accordingly, less apt than nonpledgers to have prearranged for needed contraception.

county court fined her \$50 and imposed a 20-day jail sentence (suspended), the state supreme court unanimously reversed the conviction because the requirements specified by the cited statute (i.e., the nudity must be intended to offend in a public place) were not met. You may read the full report of this outrageous prosecution in any reputable law library at *Pendergrass v. State*, 183 So.2d 126 (1966).

(2) *The Washington Post* of October 12, 1982, observed at page B5 that the preacher at a College Park, Maryland, independent church urged the town's council to reject a business's proposal to open a spa site. He complained that a photograph taken in another spa operated by the same owners showed "four people who seemed to be without clothes," and that features customarily found in spas (padded deck, dimmed lights, piped-in music) "promote lust and sexual immorality." [He failed, and the spa opened as planned, according to a February 28, 1983, *Post* article.]

(3) Announcing that, "Anything with nudity offends me," a Baptist minister intimidated the Stamps, Arkansas, council into banning--for the entire city population, not merely Baptists--rentals of numerous R-rated films, according to page 13 of the *Houston Chronicle* for April 12, 1985.

(4) After *The Kansas City Times* published a December 12, 1986, front-page story on that city's prestigious Nelson-Atkins museum having acquired for \$2.5 million a prized painting of Persephone (famous maiden in Greek mythology), a Baptist pastor complained in a letter to the newspaper's editor that he "was shocked" by her nudity, visible in the accompanying photograph.

(5) *The Austin American-Statesman* for March 21, 1993, reported on page B10 that, "Baylor University regents, bowing to Baptist pressure ... voted unanimously Friday not to add a nude figure drawing class to the art curriculum." A university spokesman sheepishly acknowledged, "We have clearly heard the voices of Texas Baptists."

(6) According to page G6 of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* for May 14, 1995, notwithstanding an individual's assertion that he and his friends "drive to the road's end and walk several hundred yards" to an isolated beach where they can sunbathe unencumbered by swim attire without likelihood of being observed, a Baptist pastor in Mims, Florida--who had heard about such activity--protested that the group was violating "a public ethic of moral decency...."

(7) As noted on page 3A of the *Madison Capital Times* for December 30, 1999, a pastor and leader of the group Wisconsin Christians United had during the previous summer illegally blocked public access to the state's Mazomanie riverfront park as a protest against visitors using a beach there in the nude. Such

custom, going back a half-century, had governmental knowledge and approval. Although the pastor--who imagines some parallel between bare skin and evil acts said to have occurred in the O.T. communities of Sodom and Gomorrah--was fined \$150 for his criminal deed, the group didn't give up, as seen in an August 7, 2001, account of members circling, and shouting taunts at, a sunbathing woman. Responding to a subsequent legislative proposal to curb nudity in the park (gaining only limited support and opposed by local supervisors), the Madison newspaper editorialized strongly on November 15, 2003, in favor of citizen users: "[T]he supervisors have it right. Leave the beach alone."

The above seven items, confirmable through database searches, are doubtless representative of the kind of thinking on this subject to which fundamentalist clergy typically subscribe.

In his well-researched, 208-page book *Nakedness and the Bible* (available at Box 1978; Ferndale, Washington 98248), author Paul M. Bowman convincingly shows that fundamentalist proponents of a simplistic "anti-nudity theology" (as he appropriately describes it) misunderstand a number of O.T. and N.T. accounts. A highly favorable review by the senior cleric of an Anaheim, California, church applauds Mr. Bowman's text as constituting "his 'magnum opus!' [Relevant scriptural passages therein are examined] with the patience and skill of a neurosurgeon.... This is a must read for every Christian." I believe that my independent analysis of a sampling of these passages (following below) is harmonious with the sound explanations presented in his fine book.

To go about unattired was the custom for Adam and Eve in the tranquility of the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:25](#)). But after disobeying God's instruction to refrain from consuming certain fruit, they feared punishment and endeavored to hide by cloaking their bare bodies in fig-leaf adornment, designed to blend with the natural greenery of the garden and thereby shield their vulnerability to God's wrath; nevertheless, God routed them out and expelled them ([Genesis 3:1-24](#)). By failing to comprehend that nowhere in the cited text is it stated that God ever expected the pair to eschew nakedness (i.e., they covered up solely on their own initiative), fundamentalists mistakenly assume that divine will mandates humans to restrict what others see of their bodies; clearly, Scripture imparts no such message.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> An interesting *Duke Law Journal* article mentions this biblical pair in discussing criminal convictions of women prosecuted in a Rochester, New York, court for going topless at a local public beach (while sunbathing/playing volleyball/picnicking) in purported contravention of a statute outlawing exposure of private or intimate body parts, specifically defined therein to include female breast tissue below the tops of the pigmented areolae surrounding the raised nipples. The trial judge predicated his decision, in part, on a supposition that the statute's dress requirements are justified by the Eden cover-up narrative, which--to quote him--converts the women's partial disrobing into a "catalyst for shame, and for immoral behavior."

However, an appellate court voided the convictions because (1) the basic anatomical likeness of male and female breasts [except for the latter's lactation apparatus] renders the statute's gender classification violative of constitutional equal protection clauses, and (2) societal

God did outfit this banished duo with coats of skin (Genesis 3:21), not for the purpose of maintaining any level of propriety--as fundamentalists assert--but simply to keep them from the thorns and thistles they would encounter on the outside. Such use is consistent with subsequent Bible text that also mentions covering one's person to protect against a harsh environment, while not giving any hint that prudery should dictate the concealment of body parts: Compare Exodus 22:27 (concerning a sleep comforter), Job 24:7 (referring to a need for cold-weather garb), Job 31:19-20 (describing the warming properties of sheep fleece), and James 2:15-16 (pertaining to apparel specially designed for warmth).

Also, fundamentalists misinterpret--as a general command for body covering--the narrative of Noah's sons Shem and Japheth walking backward toward their sleeping father as he lay with his genitalia exposed (Genesis 9:20-23). It is apparent from verses 24-25 that the two sons' reason for looking away from him had nothing to do with any shame of nakedness; rather, their motivation was triggered by Canaan (a grandson through a third son, Ham) having committed a heinous act against the body of their father while the latter was intoxicated and helpless (though not specified in Scripture, such act was deemed by Talmudic authority--see page 128 of Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on the Pentateuch* [Menorah, New York, 1988]--to likely have been incestual sodomy or castration).

Additionally, fundamentalists falsely assume an antinudity message in the story of King David's recovery of the stolen ark of the covenant and subsequent return to Israel, where he cast aside his traveling clothes prior to summoning the community to celebrate (2 Samuel 6); one of his wives--Michal--berated him for appearing naked before the crowd (verse 20). However, the text makes clear that Michal's concern was confined to slave girls seeing him without royal regalia. Importantly, she expressed no problem with the presence of unenslaved women or men, thus establishing that his nakedness, by itself, was not an issue.

Moreover, in citing 1 Timothy 2:9 in an attempt to support their contention that women must not publicly expose more than a modicum of skin, fundamentalists focus upon the first part of such passage (wherein Paul exhorts females to attire themselves in modest dress), while disregarding the last part (modest, to Paul, means simply not accessorizing their ensembles with opulent gold or pearl, or braiding their hair in an ostentatious manner). Indeed, nothing in the passage indicates that Paul's motivation--predicated upon valuing inner beauty over gaudy adornments and fancy coiffures--has anything to do with measuring the extent to which the epidermis is covered.

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outlook has advanced from a cultural psychology centered on simple eroticism to one embracing a natural physiology [which recognizes that neither the breasts of males nor of females involves primary sexual characteristics], thus negating the old notion that a woman's breast is a "private or intimate" [the key statutory words, as shown above] body part.

While such disposition of the case did not require the appellate court to address the trial judge's Genesis commentary, any discussion thereof would likely have focused upon the degree of clarity in the scriptural language (probably too nebulous to ascertain), and upon the propriety of applying religious doctrine in establishing judicial precedent (probably objectionable from a constitutional standpoint). See Bibliography, at Section B5, for legal citations.

Do you recall that back in Subpart A, we discussed early Christianity's misguided endorsement of the antisexual Essenes? Well, according to academician Jonathan Z. Smith--writing in the Winter 1966 issue of the journal *History of Religions*--these same upright Essenes inexplicably compelled men and women patronizing their public baths to drape themselves with loin cloths and robes. (They operated sort of like the egregious Afghan Taliban of our time.)<sup>12</sup>

Further, 3rd century Bishop Cyprian--behaving in an especially authoritarian and dictatorial manner--is recorded as cavalierly ordering the church's highly pious consecrated virgins to cease bathing in mixed-sex settings, despite their patently reasonable protests that "since they did not feel shame, nor did they look immodestly at anyone, they saw no problem" with communal nudity, as we learn on page 28 of Dean Margaret R. Miles's *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Beacon, Boston, 1989). Moreover, devout church nuns nonchalantly bathed naked in public--unconcerned about the presence of men--until this imperious bishop unaccountably ordered them to stop, according to page 325 of Professor John M. Rist's *Augustine* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

In summation, we have addressed a selection of faulty scriptural interpretations upon which fundamentalists rely (with no more justification than their obtuse predecessors, the Essenes and Cyprian) in endeavoring to rationalize their antagonistic stance toward, e.g., beach aficionados who disrobe in secluded locations to enjoy surf and sand, and devotees of the arts who seek to replicate the splendor of the human figure.<sup>13</sup> But let us do acknowledge (as confirmed by multiple standard references) a branch of Christianity--formed in the 2nd century--that glorified the body through liturgical worship in the nude, viz., the Adamites. This group, which promoted innocence in humankind, flourished in various parts of Europe until its theology was subsumed into Martin Luther's emerging movement. (They should not be confused with the religious Doukhobors who immigrated by the thousands into western Canada at the end of the 19th century and became known for piously expressing pacifist ideas through public nudity.)

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The fundamentalists' general approach is akin to a discussion on page 243 of author Michael Sims's book *Adam's Navel* (Viking, New York, 2003) highlighting the aggrieved tone contained in a published letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, commenting upon an earlier article. The newspaper had reported that government space exploration officials planned to affix a drawing of a nude human couple to an intergalactic rocket for the enlightenment of alien creatures encountering it and wondering what we earthlings look like.

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<sup>12</sup> The cited *History of Religions* article reveals that church baptismal procedures once called for candidates to get naked as a symbol of innocence. When a particularly stunning Persian lady stripped for the Christian monk Conon, only a vision of John the Baptist making a sign of the cross above the monk's genitals (i.e., virtual castration) prevented her unleashed pheromones and close proximity of her bare flesh from inducing an erection in him.

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in his book *The Good Life* (HarperSan Francisco, 2002), religious educator Peter J. Gomes asserted on page 135 that "God is not put off by the nudity of his creatures...."

Notwithstanding that the drawing lacked--as a sop to fundamentalist squeamishness--the "vertical slit" (Mr. Sims's words) between the female's labia, the writer of the letter referred to above declared that he deplored "spread[ing] this filth beyond our solar system." Sadly, a person ascribing "filth" to the human form is hardly exercising sound judgment.

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Prominent scholars have written positively on the subject of easygoing nudity in the home:

Dr. Seward Hiltner--professor of pastoral theology of the University of Chicago's Federated Theological Faculty, and visiting professor at the Menninger School of Psychiatry--observed on page 23 of his book *Sex and the Christian Life* (Association Press, New York, 1957) that, "[R]elatively well-educated people seem usually indifferent about having their children glimpse them in the nude...."

Similarly, Professor William Graham Cole--whom we first encountered in Subpart A and will meet again in Part II--praised the innocence of childhood on page 295 of his book *Sex in Christianity and Psychology* (Oxford, New York, 1955): "Pre-school boys and girls accompany one another to the toilet and continue conversation with complete nonchalance while they evacuate bowel and bladder. Children raised in such an atmosphere seldom reveal any morbid curiosity about the anatomy of the opposite sex, or any shame about their own bodies."<sup>14</sup>

And it appears that a more recent explanation by a distinguished professional in this field is consistent with the earlier observations disclosed above. On page 72 of the January 1982 issue of *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, Stuart M. Finch, M.D., psychiatry lecturer at the University of Arizona's College of Medicine, responded to a query posed by a reader relative to whether adolescent girls stand to gain from openly viewing male genitalia. Dr. Finch authoritatively states that, "Observation of anatomic differences should be part of the learning experience and should not be associated with guilt or secrecy."

The gentleman's body-positive response seems entirely fitting in light of psychiatrist Sigmund Freud's old musings on "penis envy" in girls (who theoretically could feel slighted in life for not possessing what they spotted on their brothers, etc.) having been played down by later academic figures. Thus, Professor David G. Myers notes on page 417 of his classic text *Psychology* (Worth, New York, 1986) that Freud's "ideas that women have weak superegos and suffer penis envy are now discounted...."

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<sup>14</sup> To demonstrate that this concept is not simply a manifestation of dreamy academic theorizing, consider the upbeat feature article in *The Washington Post* for August 2, 1983, highlighting two students attending area colleges. Describing matter-of-factly (at page B4) the relaxed atmosphere prevailing in her family home, Cara Lee Macdonald--a 20-year-old prelaw major at the University of Virginia--told the reporter that her father and two brothers "see me naked all the time. I sleep without anything on and when I go to the bathroom, I never bother to put on a robe." She also says her mother, a former model, is nonjudgmental about innocent nudity.

Moreover, a 1988 study by Professors Robin J. Lewis and Louis H. Janda (described in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, volume 17, pages 349-362) confirmed a direct correlation between growing up amidst unremarkable casual nudity and obtaining full sexual satisfaction in adulthood. Conversely, researcher Marie-Louise Booth has found that "individuals with less childhood exposure to parental nudity experienced significantly higher levels of adult sexual anxiety...." See *Dissertation Abstracts International*, volume 53, number 11-B (May 1993), 6055.

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We glean from an article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine--beginning at page 203 of its June 2001 issue--that college students (Brown and Yale universities are specified, but there are other campuses as well) are inviting friends of both genders to social parties where non-sexual nudity prevails. The students look upon group nakedness affirmatively as a means of demystifying normal body parts and their functions.

Such a trend may be emerging now because, with rising educational levels, more young adults are better equipped to think for themselves. That is to say, many are rejecting the notion handed down by rote from past generations that--outside of marriage--bare bodies must not be seen by the opposite sex. Any failure to abide by such approach was traditionally regarded as vulgar and sinful. And, indeed, the latter standard persists today in fundamentalist circles.

The article incorporates the view of Professor Lynn Ponton--member of the psychiatry faculty at the University of California at San Francisco--that because of a commonality between nudity and sex, the college parties provide an indirect way for students so inclined to celebrate their rebuffing of ill-founded sexual restrictions arising out of fundamentalist-induced political conservatism. [Editor's note: As an example, selling vibrators to women for solo-gratification is illegal in "Bible Belt" states like Texas, Louisiana, Alabama. And, unhappily, the May 2008 issue of *Texas Monthly* magazine--in a scathing article titled "Faith, Hope, and Chastity"--reported that the state's Board of Education had directed a school textbook publisher to delete "the clitoris from a drawing of female anatomy...." The Texas political establishment obviously doesn't want its adolescents to learn about this organ, the function of which (as educated people know) is to provide pleasure through stimulation by either its owner or others.]

A number of students attending the college gatherings proudly told the magazine they find them to be a beneficial catalyst for their emotional growth. One woman enthusiastically said the first of many such parties she has attended "was a pivotal point in my acceptance of my body [when another] girl complimented me, and I went home and started looking in the mirror.... I have an athletic build [and] look curvaceous and strong when I'm naked." Describing the impromptu reaction of a different party guest, the article reported "a pretty girl with long blonde hair jumps up and down, her breasts bobbing with her. 'I love this!' she cries to no one in particular."

Doubtless, the fundamentalists are appalled.

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Please allow me to call your attention to a website catering to women comfortable enough with the bodies God gave them to depict themselves publicly on film ([www.ishotmyself.com](http://www.ishotmyself.com)). The creators of this site describe it as "a self-portraiture project, where women from around the world submit a series of digital photographs they have shot of themselves naked. The resulting collection of images is a celebration of the diversity of women--physically, artistically, and psychologically... For some women, contributing to the project is purely a creative endeavor, for others it's a cathartic release of a lifetime of inhibition."

The inhibition referred to most certainly had roots in religious fundamentalist notions foisted upon the unwary during their childhood and adolescence; happily, these women now seem to have liberated themselves. Readers may view the fruits of this innovative art project by logging onto the site and proceeding to the header "Free Tour." Then, click on individual images to expand them to full computer screen size. You might be especially captivated by, e.g., a photo placed (in early 2009 editions) near the bottom-right corner of the third tour page that portrays Bididi serenely reclining in a grassy field while placidly blowing soap bubbles over her naked body. And, who knows, some of my female readers might hanker to join her on the page.

### C. Historical Record/Future Expectations

Fundamentalist-minded clergy have a bad track record vis-a-vis earthly professionals (i.e., scientists, etc.) in comprehending the nature of God's relationship to our world. Indeed, such clergy in Rome persecuted Galileo--a 17th century earthly professional--for affirming the particulars of Copernicus's hypothesis that (contrary to previous belief) the earth revolves around the sun, not vice versa. But, in recognition that the scientific community has long validated the acumen of these pioneering astronomers, it seems highly improbable that even the most fervent 21st century fundamentalist clergy would publicly endorse the pre-Copernicus interpretation.<sup>15</sup>

Yet paradoxically, today's fundamentalists--absorbed in promoting chastity among singles--commonly disregard the meticulous research of modern earthly professionals (specializing in psychiatry and sociology) who routinely find that stability in marriage is fostered through advance, intimate interaction with a suitable number of partners. While believers do accept that God rules supreme over psychiatrists and sociologists, failure to accord the counsel of such professionals due consideration can result in broken and unfulfilling marriages.

Although fundamentalist thinkers are as zealous as ever in attempting to implement their antisex agenda, societal sensibilities have forced them to back off from some past tactics. For

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<sup>15</sup> Genesis 3:16 seems to counsel women in childbirth to decline pain relief because they purportedly are foreordained to suffer at such time. Do you think God truly wants women to take those words to heart, and if not, how do you rationalize some alternate explanation for the passage?

example, antisex crusader Dr. John Harvey Kellogg--staff physician at Battle Creek (Michigan) Sanitarium in the 1890s--promoted application of carbolic acid to the clitoris as a means of deterring girls from masturbating. Ouch!!! I won't get specific about what he did to boys (consider how a length of wire can be used to inflict pain) because the particulars involved in that act of fiendishness are too shocking for civilized discussion. But anyone wanting to learn the frightful details of his abominable techniques may find them on the World Wide Web.

In 1906, a dietary treatment business run by Dr. Kellogg morphed into the Kellogg breakfast cereal company that we know today. I hope the above gruesome information, linked to the modern Kellogg brand, doesn't spoil your appetite at the dining table.

A half-century later, fundamentalist notions on this subject appeared not to have budged. Harold Shryock, a Seventh Day Adventist physician educated at the College of Medical Evangelists, claimed in a 1950's writing (available on the World Wide Web) that, "The practice of masturbation lowers a young woman's regard for her reproductive organs. It causes her to think of them only as a means of physical gratification.... It tends to rob a young woman of her incentive for accomplishment. She loses interest in worthwhile enterprises largely because her supply of nervous energy has been depleted ... [and] she feels constantly let down and fatigued. She adopts an attitude of stupidity simply because she cannot muster sufficient energy to stay alert. Study no longer appeals to her. Thus, her mental development lags." Wow! So that is the kind of sex instruction fundamentalists thrust upon females back then, and likely still do so.

And there is more revulsion attributable to the 19th century fundamentalism. According to page A6 of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for June 16, 2003, specimens of the titan arum flowering plant, noted for its eight foot-long fleshy spike, were brought from their native Sumatra to the West for display in botanical gardens. However, because their Latin name--*Amorphophallus titanum*--translates into English as "big, shapeless male organ," women caught gazing upon them were subjected to reprimand. We must ask ourselves, was that really necessary?

Having devoted considerable effort in various past attempts to impose upon others their ingrained negative attitudes toward nonwed sex and harmless clothing-free activity, fundamentalists--steeped in biblical literalism--may decide at some point to redirect their focus elsewhere. So what might they do? Considering the condemnation in Isaiah 3:16 of "ornaments jingling on [women's] ankles" and the prospect--in verses 18 & 20--that "the Lord will snatch away their ... ankle chains" (*NIV*), it should not be surprising to see them pursue an anti-ankle chain campaign. Or they might target all of the everyday accouterment that Isaiah denounces in verses 18-23, viz., headbands, necklaces, perfume, purses, shawls, etc. (This prophet likely could not in his wildest imagination have foreseen the introduction of navel rings--those sporty baubles popular with many 21st century women and depicted in department store sportswear advertisements as well as making an appearance in the wholesomely regarded Miss America pageant--which otherwise might well have shown up on his master list of forbidden accessories.)

#### D. Summary

How the fundamentalist mind works is difficult to fathom. Whereas ordinary people can oftentimes discern the most plausible message underlying Scripture, fundamentalists are predisposed to contrive meanings or to embrace interpretations commonly rejected by modern Bible scholars.

In his book *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* (HarperCollins, New York, 1991), Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong pointedly notes on pages 3 & 134 that, "Those whose religious security is rooted in a literal Bible do not want that security disturbed. They are not happy when facts challenge their biblical understanding or when nuances in the text are introduced or when they are forced to deal with either contradictions or changing insights.... Fundamentalism is both an expression of and an assisting cause in the terminal sickness that hangs over religious life today."

Moreover, the Rev. Anne McConney--a priest and columnist for *Episcopal Life* monthly--keenly observed in the January 2004 issue at page 19 that, "Fundamentalism has no use for debate and no capacity for dialogue; fundamentalism, by necessity, relies on intimidation.... It is probably the most dangerous movement in our world today. For the danger of fundamentalism is not its narrow world views nor its rulebook belief system nor even its grievous tendency to exclude; its danger lies in its insistence that everyone must be compelled, by law or force if necessary, to hold the 'beliefs of the true believer.' It destroys the creative tension of the community and sets in its place a community based on drab uniformity, where problems cannot be acknowledged.... Fear is the taproot of fundamentalism...."

Further on this sad theme, Episcopal Bishop John Bryson Chane emphasized on page 2 of his Washington Diocese newsletter for November 2007 (in connection with "current religious and cultural revolutions" at home and abroad) that, "God and our understanding of theology are being challenged by [the "evils" of] religious fundamentalism driven by fear, rather than by faith.... Add to that the [deleterious] impact of the religious right on our government's domestic and foreign policy, and efforts [by misguided clergy foolishly clinging to scriptural "inerrancy" and "myopic fundamentalism"] to deconstruct the Anglican Communion and our own Episcopal Church." [All quotes above are those of Bishop Chane.]

An especially scary aspect of the fundamentalists' *modus operandi* lies in their actively promoting political strategies and tactics designed to impose a conservative religious platform upon the general society. Indeed, the late Senator Barry Goldwater--albeit regarded as conservative in his secular stances--was sufficiently alarmed by heightened religious influence in politics that he expressed extreme disappointment in "his own party as he's seen it surrender to a fundamentalist Christian Gestapo," according to *The Arizona Republic* for June 17, 1993, at page A23. And a dozen years later, nothing had changed: Former U.S. Senator and Episcopal priest John Danforth lamented in a *New York Times* op-ed article (March 30, 2005, at page A27) that the same party was continuing to allow its historic political doctrine "to become secondary to the agenda of Christian conservatives."

Also, *The Washington Post* reported (August 16, 1999, at page C2) that H.L. Mencken, a respected 20th century journalist dubbed the "Sage of Baltimore" (although his influence extended throughout the nation), wrote bitingly--in connection with the famous Scopes trial on the teaching of evolution--of "the menace that fundamentalism offers to civilization." [Editor's note: Mencken, incidentally, coined the term "Bible Belt" as a moniker to describe the hotbed of fundamentalist religion found in the South.] Additionally, page 5 of this newspaper's Book World section for October 22, 2006, included a piece by acclaimed author Bryan Burrough, in which he concludes that fundamentalism is a "pathogen" and that "the fundamentalists most dangerous to our future are not Islamic and foreign but Christian and homegrown."

It is one thing for fundamentalists to revel in their own singular views and pseudo-explanations (and I am not seeking here to hinder them from doing so), but quite another to presuppose that we all should follow blindly along without applying principles of reason. Indeed, a 1976 booklet distributed in Episcopal Church parishes--*About Being an Episcopalian*--states on page 5 that "members are encouraged to use *reason* to explore and comprehend God's works...." [Emphasis supplied.] I challenge any fundamentalists reading this analysis to effectively rebut (1) what the numerous scholars quoted herein have tendered for our elucidation, and (2) my separate comments.

## PART II

### Writings Exposing the Fallacies of Fundamentalism

*NOTE: If any readers question the validity of the content of Part I, their doubts should be put to rest by the excerpts below of pertinent writings by 24 learned persons. The points they make, separately and collectively, bolster my various assertions. As can be seen, these individuals are (or were) engaged in a variety of disciplines:*

*6 College faculty  
5 Seminary faculty  
3 Bishops or other high church leaders  
2 Psychiatrists  
2 Psychologists  
2 Lay researchers (joint authors)  
1 College chaplain  
1 Journalist  
1 Federal judge  
1 Unidentified church author*

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#### A. Religious Educators, Ecclesiastical Authorities

A1. Dr. Joseph Fletcher; professor of social ethics, Episcopal Theological School (Cambridge, Massachusetts):

The Christian churches must shoulder much of the blame for the confusion, ignorance, and unhealthy guilt associations which surround sex in Western culture.... [Jesus] said nothing about birth control, large or small families, childlessness, homosexuality, masturbation, fornication or premarital intercourse, sterilization, artificial insemination, abortion, sex play, petting, or courtship.

----*Situation Ethics*, page 139

A2. Dr. David R. Mace, executive leader in the Society of Friends:

[T]he time has come--and more than come--for the church to reverse its negative and punitive attitudes toward sex, and to take a more positive approach.... If Christianity persists in presenting itself as an antisex religion, it will not get a hearing in this generation.

----*Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*, page 126

A3. The Rt. Rev. John Shelby Spong, bishop (Episcopal Diocese of Newark):

[I]n our generation the rules [of sexual conduct] have become so out of touch with reality that they are simply disregarded.... Does [the] status [of mature single people] require sexual abstinence? I think not.

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[C]ompanionship can be on many levels--from a working relationship or a brief social connection to a deep friendship in which time is invested, life is shared, and intimate moments are spent together. Is sex to be ruled out by the guardians of public morality from all of these relationships, because they each fall short of the solitary standard of marriage? ... There are voices that would say yes.... I would like to propose that no is the proper and only moral answer....

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The prohibitions of the past have been abandoned, not because people are evil "secular modernists" but because life has changed and those prohibitions are simply no longer appropriate. To expend ecclesiastical energy clinging to those prohibitions, to pass resolutions recalling people to those prohibitions, to seek to revivify those prohibitions, will prove an exercise in futility. Finally, such activities will so discredit the church that whatever moral authority it has in other areas of life will be dissipated as well.

---*Living in Sin?*; pages 210, 212, & 217

A4. Drs. Rustom and Della Roy, appointees to multiple committees of the National Council of Churches:

Christians should immediately desist from putting so much emphasis on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of premarital coitus as such.... Rightness or wrongness has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with whether or not physical juxtaposition of sex organs has occurred.

---*Honest Sex*, page 87

A5. Professor William Graham Cole, Williams College (later, president of Lake Forest College):

There can be no quarrel with the secular world [with respect to the latter's acceptance of nonmarital sex]. It is right and the church has been wrong.

---*Sex and Love in the Bible*, page 418

A6. A.E. Harvey; lecturer at the University of Oxford and later, Sub-Dean of Westminster:

What we do not find are any specific [biblical] laws or injunctions against casual sexual relationships.

---*Promise or Pretence: A Christian's Guide*, page 63

A7. The Rev. Frederic C. Wood, Jr.; Episcopal Chaplain at Vassar and Goucher colleges:

[T]he church ... often promulgates attitudes which inhibit health and morality in the sexual sphere.... To make intercourse outside the covenant of marriage easier certainly does not mean to remove the moral challenge [but] might even lead to a more wholesome attitude toward sexuality itself.... And the popular belief that greater social acceptance of sex outside the covenant would lead to sexual license and to disregard of all moral considerations is not demonstrable. From counseling and listening to college students involved in premarital affairs, I see no more evidence of sexual irresponsibility and license than I do among my married peers. Indeed, if anything, I see less.

---*Sex and the New Morality*; pages 34, 120-121

A8. Dr. Walter Wink, Professor of Biblical Interpretation; Auburn Theological Seminary, New York City:

No sex act is "ethical" in and of itself, without reference to the rest of a person's life, the patterns of the culture, the special circumstances faced, and the will of God. What we have are simply sexual morals, which change--sometimes with startling rapidity--creating bewildering dilemmas. Just within one lifetime we have witnessed the shift from the ideal of preserving one's virginity until marriage, to couples living together for several years before getting married. The response of many Christians [Editor's note: This means fundamentalists.] is merely to long for the hypocrisies of an earlier era.

---*Sexuality and the Bible*, page 10

A9. From a June 1991 document prepared for the 203rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by its Special Committee on Human Sexuality:

A Christian ethic of sexuality is needed that honors but does not restrict sexual activity to marriage alone.... Similarly, it is wrong to condemn nonmarital sexual activity simply because it falls outside a particular formal institutional arrangement.

---*Keeping Body and Soul Together*, pages 38-39

A10. Professor Christine E. Gudorf; Department of Philosophy & Religion, Florida International University:

The communication of respect and concern between partners within sexual interaction also serves to maximize pleasure in sex, in that it invests each of the physical gestures and actions with additional symbolic meaning. This can be true even within what many persons would call casual sex.... [M]any young persons in America maintain that the function of sexual pleasure is that it helps one to know and appreciate one's body while establishing links with a variety of persons.

---*Body, Sex, and Pleasure*; pages 140-141

A11. The Rev. Dr. L. William Countryman, professor at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Berkeley, California):

At one extreme, one cannot defend the promiscuous person who desires only personal gratification at whatever expense to others. At the other [extreme are] those widowed persons who wish to contract a faithful and giving relationship without benefit of legal marriage.... Between these extremes, there lies a large area of difficult individual desires. People will have to wend their way through such decisions, however, for the gift of celibacy is not given to all....

Some nonmarital liaisons may in fact prove to be preparatory to marriage in the stricter sense. Others may serve to meet legitimate needs in the absence of genuine alternatives. Still others may be abusive and exploitative. Only the last is to be condemned.

---*Dirt, Greed, and Sex*; page 264

A12. Professor Marvin M. Ellison, Bangor Theological Seminary (Portland/Bangor, Maine):

The church's traditional ethic [confining sex to married partners] denies the rich diversity of sexual experiences and relationships that bear moral substance....

---*Christianity and Crisis*; November 12, 1990-page 352

A13. Professor Karen LeBacqz, Pacific School of Religion (Berkeley, California):

The two redeeming purposes of sexuality have always been understood as procreation and union.... Both traditions [i.e., Catholic and Protestant] have moved toward affirming union as primary.... [The essence of such a relationship is defined scripturally in] Song of Songs which displays in glowing detail the immense passion and vulnerability of lovers. [See the end of Part II for further discussion of this O.T. book.] This is not married or "preceremonial" sexuality, nor are [offspring] the justification for the sexual encounter. It is passion pure and simple. And it is graphic sex.... Celibacy in singleness is not the answer [to the quest for a sexual ethic appropriate for unmarried adults].

---*The Christian Century*; May 6, 1987-pages 436, 438

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## B. Academic and Professional Scholars

B1. Responding to a controversy involving Professor Leo F. Koch of the University of Illinois, as summarized in *The Christian Century* (April 27, 1960-page 501), viz., over his "advocating in a student journal that young couples who are so disposed live together [unmarried, with no constraints on sexual relations]":

(#1) Speaking medically, [Professor Koch's] ideas seem sound.... Let me add that typical Christian morality, with guilt overtones, is utterly out of focus with modern concepts of mental health.

----Nathan M. Synloch, M.D.; psychiatrist practicing in Berkeley, California (letter to the editor of *The Christian Century*; May 25, 1960-page 643)

(#2) As a veteran family life educator, marriage counselor, and writer and lecturer on premarital and marital topics, I should like to state flatly that the conventional moral code regarding premarital chastity does a great deal more harm than good in contemporary American society. This code not only leads some young people into firmly fixed pornographic attitudes and prudishly repressive sexual behavior (from which matrimonial ceremonies cannot free them), but it instills guilt feelings in countless other youth who proceed to violate the marital taboos.

Fortunately, however, a growing number of young people have been able to perceive the false, superstitious basis of the outmoded sanctions against premarital coitus and are proceeding maturely, stably, wisely, and happily with wholesome and desirable premarital sexual relations which greatly aid them in their marital sexual adjustments....

---Dr. Robert A. Harper; past president of the American Academy of Psychotherapists and the American Association for Marital and Family Therapy, and fellow of the American Psychological Association (in a statement issued in connection with the controversy surrounding Professor Koch)

B2. Professor Richard Hettlinger, Kenyon College; consulting editor, *Human Sexuality* magazine:

[T]hose who avoid all sexual commitments out of ... an unexamined bondage to rigid parental or religious prohibitions are likely to remain stunted in their growth as persons. There is a danger that ... engaged couple[s who] concentrate their energies on avoiding intercourse [may] never have the opportunity to see each other as nonsexual objects. Concentration of hope and expectation on the blissful pleasure to be enjoyed in the distant future may distract their attention from more mundane factors which affect the desirability of the partner as a lifelong mate.... As a result, a couple may find themselves virtual strangers on the honeymoon.

---*Human Sexuality: A Psychosocial Perspective*, page 68

B3. Stella Resnick, Ph.D.; clinical psychologist specializing in intimacy and sexual enrichment:

[S]exuality has been stunted for hundreds of years ... and there is a thread of repression and shame and negativity that runs through our culture.

---*Chicago Tribune* (November 7, 1993-page 1)

B4. Professor Alfred C. Kinsey; behavioral researcher, Indiana University:

[T]he *church*, the home, and the school are the chief sources of the sexual inhibitions, the distaste for all aspects of sex, the fears of the physical difficulties that may be involved in a sexual relationship, and the feelings of guilt which many females carry with them into their marriages.... [Emphasis supplied.] The failure of a female to reach orgasm in her marital coitus may be a considerable source of marital discord.... Premarital petting experience provides an opportunity for the female to learn to adjust emotionally to various types of males. Thus, she may acquire some wisdom in choosing the particular male with whom she hopes to make a permanent, life-long adjustment.

---*Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, pages 264-266

B5. Judge Richard A. Posner, United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit:

With nonmarital sex so utterly commonplace, the word *fornication*, with its strong pejorative connotation, has virtually passed out of the language.

---*Sex and Reason*, page 55

B6. Lawrence Lipton; novelist, essayist, poet, lecturer/instructor at University of Southern California and University of California:

[R]eligious teachings ... are still under the dead hand of [colonial-era witchcraft accuser] Cotton Mather.... Meanwhile, the outstanding fact of life in our time is the increase in unmarried sex, not as a preparation for marriage but as an end in itself. In effect it does, of course, prepare [young men and women] for a more successful sex life in marriage, but only if they succeed before marriage in wriggling out of the [fundamentalist] straitjacket of guilt....

----*The Erotic Revolution*, page 187

B7. Christopher Jencks, contributing editor and book reviewer:

The [young adult] who cannot find [sexual] intimacy strikes me as far more likely to end up in serious trouble than [one] who finds it and fails to foresee all the consequences. If college presidents were to devote more thought to the miseries of the deprived, and less to those who may or may not suffer from sexual surfeit, they might seem less offensive to the young and less absurd to some of the rest of us.

----*New Republic*; April 4, 1964-page 18

B8. Judy Kuriansky, Ph.D.; therapist, fellow of the American Psychological Association, adjunct professor at Columbia University Teacher's College, radio host, and guest on multiple nationwide television programs:

In the midst of repression in today's society, it's crucial to have outlets for healthy self-expression about sex. Sex aids in releasing stress-reducing chemicals, exercising muscles, lowering blood pressure, and eliminating pain. Psychologically, sex helps relieve depression. Socially, it contributes to satisfying relationships and increased enthusiasm in the work environment.

----Dr. Kuriansky's basic message presented in various print media

B9. Gordon G. Gallup, Jr., Ph.D., on the psychology faculty at State University of New York-Albany and lead author of a 2002 study examining the beneficial properties of semen deposited in the vaginas of college women [who, ideally, employ non-condom birth control and confine their intimate activity to physically sound partners-Editorial comment]:

[T]he vagina absorbs a number of [mental health-fostering] components of semen.... Females who engaged in sexual intercourse but did not use condoms ... evidenced significantly lower levels of depression symptoms than those who used condoms....

---Archives of Sexual Behavior, volume 31, pages 289-93

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### **Corroboration That SONG OF SONGS Reveals a Desire For Sexual Union, Not For a Marital Commitment**

*NOTE: Fundamentalists--who typically denounce sexual intimacy outside of wedlock--tend to deny Professor LeBacqz's assertion (Part II, item A13) that the intense ardor manifested by both of the lovers portrayed in this O.T. book reflects the joy surrounding their sexual union in singlehood,<sup>16</sup> rather than a broader commitment extending to marriage. My research, culminating in the 10 quotes below, indicates that sundry religious scholars corroborate the professor's interpretation.*

1. In *The Erotic Word* (Oxford, New York, 2003), Professor David M. Carr noted on page 119 that, "These lovers belong to each other, but they do not appear to be married."

2. In a compilation of essays published by Sheffield Academic Press (Sheffield, England; 2000), J. Cheryl Exum noted on page 24 that, "[T]here is no indication that the couple ... we meet in the Song are married, yet they are clearly lovers...."

3. In *New International Biblical Commentary: ... Song of Songs* (Henderson Publishers; Peabody, Massachusetts; 1999), Roland E. Murphy and Elizabeth Huwiler noted on page 243 that, "According to many [interpreters], the central couple is not married. This view is supported by the fact that the lovers must part in the morning.... Also, most of the couple's love-making apparently takes place out of doors, in the wilds, and in gardens.... [Overall, the text] does not seem to insist that the appropriate expression of sexuality is necessarily limited to marriage."

4. In *People of Passion: What the Church Teaches About Sex* (Mobray, London, 1997), Elizabeth Stuart and Adrian Thatcher noted on page 204 that, "[F]ertility [an essential for

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<sup>16</sup> Citing studies that Bible scholar Samuel Noah Kramer has made of Song of Songs, Marvin H. Pope informs us on page 499 of *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, New York, 1977) that references in several of its passages to the woman's garden--expressed by both the man and the woman--seem "a euphemism for the vulva."

marriage among early Jews] is not a concern of the Song; instead it revolves around desire and the quest for its fulfillment.... The Song shudders with passionate imagery, glows in the beauty of the body, and the glory is mutual." [Editor's note: Ms. Stuart is a co-editor of the British journal *Theology and Sexuality*.]

5. In *The Intercourse of Knowledge* (Koninklijke Brill; Leiden, Netherlands; 1997), Athalya Brenner remarked on page 88 that, "Quite a number of the plants repeatedly mentioned have been used as female contraceptives throughout the Mediterranean world for, quite literally, ages." Such concern with pregnancy prevention indicates that a shared pursuit of orgasmic euphoria--rather than procreation aspirations associated with the married--was a prime motivating factor underlying the pair's amorous coupling.

6. In their volume *Song of Songs* (Random House, New York, 1995), Ariel and Chana Bloch noted on page 14 that, "[The] theme is the wonder of a woman with a man--an unmarried woman, with no concern about perpetuating the family line and no motive but pleasure."

7. A document commissioned by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church (*Continuing the Dialogue*, published by Forward Movement, Cincinnati, 1995) stated on page 45 that the passages in this biblical story are "in praise of sexual love, celebrating youthful passion, with no reference to God or to marriage.... It affirms that sexual love is in itself good and beneficial."

8. In *Sexual Paradox: Creative Tensions in Our Lives and in Our Congregations* (Pilgrim, New York, 1991), Celia Allison Hahn noted on page 192 that, "The story is clearly not about marriage or procreation ... but about the delights of erotic love."

9. In *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1978), Phyllis Trible stated on page 162 that, "[T]o the issues of marriage and procreation the Song does not speak."

10. In an article titled "The Interpretation of the Song of Songs," published in the October 1937 issue of *The Journal of Theological Studies*, H.H. Rowley stated on page 358 that, "I am not persuaded that ... the Songs had anything to do with a wedding occasion. They appear rather to be a series of poems in which a lover enshrined the love he gave and the love he received."

### **PART III. Recommendations For a Proposed Course of Action**

The analysis herein of baseless fundamentalist notions is buttressed--as shown in the Bibliography--by supportive excerpts from 69 scholarly books, articles published in 28 professional journals or miscellaneous magazines and reviews, newspaper accounts appearing in 19 metropolitan dailies and two nationally circulated papers, recognized biblical commentaries, and various legal documents. There are also assorted World Wide Web sites.

Accordingly, in view of the multiplicity of respected sources, it is clear that the fundamentalists need to reevaluate their overall position. If after doing so, they wish to continue maintaining a disapproving stance on matters sexual, etc., they should be willing to identify any underlying support they think they can gather. Merely expressing bland assertions--without responding to the points raised in this paper--contributes nothing to scholarly discourse.

Episcopalians ought to be mindful of Bishop John Shelby Spong's sage (and foreboding) observation--as it appears in Part II, item A3--that "clinging to [archaic sexual] prohibitions will ... so discredit the church that whatever moral authority it has in other areas of life will be dissipated...." In this connection, note that although restrictive language calling for "sexual chastity" of unmarrieds was submitted for debate as recently as 1979 (see General Convention resolution A053), by 2000 a relaxed standard of conduct had been approved (in resolution D039): "[T]hose on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives...."

Nor should we overlook the ensuing potential for a desirable slowing of societal secularization if people see the church forsaking unwarranted constraints on natural human interaction. Further, we can respond to Bishop Spong's wise counsel by actively identifying and evaluating factors underlying the wide gulf extant on sexual issues between fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists. In so doing, the national Episcopal Church can steer truth-seeking members away from ideas not grounded in trustworthy theology.

The chatter that Episcopalians constantly hear these days of a fundamentalist schism (or something close to it) over the question of homosexuality is disquieting and intimidating.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Although it is not the purpose of this paper to explore issues of homosexuality (which, after all, covers only about 10% of the population), fundamentalists face a major conundrum with respect thereto that may merit our attention. While fervently pointing in *KJV* to Leviticus 18:22 (condemning male/male activity as an "abomination") and Romans 1:26 (decrying lesbian caresses\*\* as "vile affections ... against nature"), they utter not a peep about the breathtaking command in Leviticus 20:13 that the males be put to death. Fundamentalists must know that genteel society would balk at implementing such judgment. So, in an apparent gambit to avert being written off as irresponsible, they proceed as if the death directive is nonexistent. The fundamentalists' failure to acknowledge this relevant passage--and deal with it somehow--exposes the superficiality of their approach.

Ideally, responsible Episcopal communicants of all stripes acknowledge that maintaining the church's organizational structure intact is of monumental import to our denomination, from the presiding bishop in New York on down. So hopefully, there will be a lid on the number of fundamentalists--oblivious or not to the harm their actions inflict upon Christian unity--who conclude they must depart. But at least those of us who wish to remain can then return to our *raison d'être* (which seems to have been largely shoved aside lately, as sex matters have been allowed to dominate dialogue), viz., celebrating the miracle of the Resurrection.

Numerous pressing needs facing our church cannot be adequately addressed because of our now having to expend time and energy in dealing with the fundamentalists' sex positions. We could be focusing better upon such things as helping couples at the onset of potentially serious relationships learn to safeguard themselves against imbalances in shared affection, where the tenderness expressed by one gets way ahead of the sensitivity felt by the other. The deep emotional hurt and devastating consequences arising from such mismatches appear not to be receiving the attention they deserve.

There is something, however, that the fundamentalists who stay with us (and even those who don't) might wisely spend their time doing. That is to say, they could join with national church leaders and others--assuming we can find a way to do so without opening ourselves to an accusation of irresponsible meddling in politics--to secure repeal of the onerous federal marriage tax that now tends to discourage loving--but unmarried--couples who live together (with both

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Oddly, while fundamentalists obsess over homosexuality, they elect to remain silent on numerous other actions condemned in Scripture, e.g., Leviticus 19:19, which forbids farmers from cross-breeding cattle and planting hybrid seeds. The probable explanation for this distinction is that the latter passage doesn't involve the subject of the fundamentalists' overriding fixation, i.e., sex.

But anyhow, recognizing that translation anomalies are extant in English-language Scripture (note, e.g., the extended discussion in footnote 2, *supra*), scrutiny by present-day scholars of the Hebrew and Greek etymology underlying the tiny sprinkling of biblical passages touching upon same-sex relations could well give rise to more precise versions. Certainly, it would seem unwise to freeze existing O.T. terms if scholars can validate the not-unreasonable proposition that underlying oral traditions--handed down for countless generations before finally being reduced to writing--are likely to have been substantially altered by passing through multiple mouths over a long period of time. And 20 centuries after Paul composed his meager quantity of N.T. homosexuality references (fewer than those involving slavery, which--most shocking to our sensibilities--he generally regarded as benign), the normal progression of civilization and our enhanced understanding of the human psyche call for a reevaluation in outlook. This can be done without breaching our subservient relationship with God.

\*\* A *Washington Post* lifestyle feature (December 9, 2008, at page C7) observed that "seemingly every college woman with a MySpace page has kissed another girl for the camera." Significantly however, this phenomenon is not a manifestation of lesbian sexuality, but rather, a demonstration of innate sensuousness by females employing a novel method of drawing the attention of men, according to a *St. Petersburg Times* article (August 7, 2005, at page 1E). Thus, Dr. Elizabeth Armstrong, assistant professor of sociology at Indiana University, told the reporter that such women can exuberantly "engage in ... girl-girl activity without threatening their heterosexual identity."

earning income) from entering into holy matrimony. Contrasted with fretting about various sex acts, that would be a positive and constructive endeavor for them to pursue.

In the meantime, we can strive to relate with compassion--in a spirit of loving grace, as God surely wants--to those pondering schism. Such an approach is consonant with Paul's guidance dispensed in Galatians 6:1 (i.e., prod as necessary, but gently so) for remedying improvident behavior exhibited by wayward fellow believers.

## **PART IV - Miscellaneous Vignettes Portraying Real People**

*NOTE: The following excerpts from well known periodicals document (for the benefit of homebody types in the larger church who may be unaware) the nature of interpersonal behavior reflective of mainstream society, which--by definition--includes countless believers. The latter generally know, intuitively or through examining the precepts presented in Parts I, II, and III, herein, that they are not acting outside the bounds of scriptural direction; such believers resist becoming captive to fundamentalist dictates.*

*Many of us would be pleased if we were to learn that all of the individuals mentioned have embraced a spiritual commitment. Yet, tragically, there is the possibility--as Dr. Mace has ominously pointed out (see Part II, item A2)--that some who otherwise were prepared to dedicate themselves to the church have been, and continue to be, frightened away by the fundamentalists' sexual negativism.*

*Except for a very few accounts for which the title and date of a publication were not preserved, sources are identified. Readers (at least, non-fundamentalist ones) may detect an especially touching element of sweetness in vignettes 1 through 5, seen either in the obvious warm feelings of love for a very precious person already found, or in the expectation of realizing mutual devotion with the future love of one's life.*

### **1. Two Women Pondering their Formative Years**

Celeste: "I married my husband when I was 34. I fully intend for him to be the last man I ever sleep with. I'm sure glad he wasn't the first. If I hadn't had any experience before him, I would never have known what a great lover and all-around good guy I have. I tell my daughter to sow plenty of wild oats before she settles down...." Ashley: "I have had some great relationships and a few horrendous affairs. And may I just say I don't regret being with a single one, because at the time I was with each, it meant something, whether it was a soulfully emotional experience or just great sex."

----*Chicago Tribune* (August 17, 2005-section 5, page 6)

### **2. Quite Pleased in Retrospect**

"The Sexual Revolution allowed me to enjoy a lot of loving with a lot of men with no regrets. Now I'm savoring a strictly monogamous affair with a very special guy, a relationship that wouldn't have been possible without the lessons learned from previous lovers."

----Cindy Lindner; Tempe, Arizona (in letter to editor of magazine-title and date unavailable)

### 3. Being Honest with One's Self

"[N]ow that I'm married fidelity is important. My [premarital sexual] affairs just reinforced my feelings toward my husband, and I'm glad I got it all out of my system before marriage. Now I can settle down."

----Magazine article (title and date unavailable)

### 4. Contemplative Young Adults Analyzing their Values

"My roommate and I are 18 years of age, coeds at Tufts in Boston.... [W]e do not hop in bed with every guy who comes along, but we believe it is useful for a girl to have a variety of sexual experiences so she will know when the right guy comes along."

----*Boston Globe* (April 17, 1978-Living section, page 22)

### 5. Fruits of a Joyous Relationship

"I'm not saying girls should run out and get it over with, but when you're ready, there's nothing wrong with sex. I was ready. I really cared about the guy I was with, and I'm glad I did it, because it's just one more thing I can enjoy about life and my relationships, and there's nothing bad or wrong or regrettable about that."

----Marisa, 19 (*Seventeen* magazine, July 2003-page 62)

### 6. Now the Norm in Higher Education?

"University of Virginia graduate Phalana Tiller remembers friends saying that the biggest thing about college relationships was 'being able to have sex and not be afraid of getting caught in the act.... In the dorms you were inundated with the knowledge that people around you were having sex. You could be sitting and reading at 10 in the morning and this banging would start on a wall.... In one dorm there was a girl always screaming out during sex.' A friend ... told me that his daughter's roommate at Loyola College of Baltimore would have sexual intercourse with her boyfriend almost every night...."

----Patrick Welsh, teacher at T.C. Williams High School; Alexandria, Virginia; in a *Washington Post* op-ed article (April 28, 1996-page C2)

### 7. Social Routines in College

A male Ohio State senior explains, "We've discarded the idea that the loss of virginity is related to degeneracy. Premarital sex doesn't mean the downfall of society...." And describing how she and her classmates arrange for intercourse with their boyfriends, a 20-year-old Radcliffe student remarks, "My generation knows that any time of day is a good time and that all you need is fifteen minutes." A Bennington junior asserts, "If a girl reaches 20 and is still a virgin, she begins to wonder whether there is anything wrong with her as a woman."

---*Newsweek* magazine (April 6, 1964-pages 52-54)

### 8. Introspective Analysis

"Women frequently deny themselves the right to enjoy sex because we've been socialized to believe [that intercourse among unmarrieds] is dirty and evil. Some research suggests that centuries of this thought have dimmed our ability to climax as easily as men do. If abstinence is for you, great. However, don't condemn the women in this world who engage in sex."

----Melissa Combs; Ann Arbor, Michigan (*USA Today*; August 23, 2005-page 11A)

### 9. Better Late Than Never

Shelley Lessin Stockwell--a former flight attendant and later a motivational workshop organizer--in an interview on radio station KFOX-FM in Redondo Beach, California: "[My parents] very clearly brought home that my job in life was to remain a virgin [until marriage]." But after eventually making love anyhow with her then-boyfriend, she "felt cheated that I had wasted all that time when I could have been intimate [but for] that obscure rule that didn't make any sense to me."

---*Los Angeles Times* (May 31, 1990-page 11)

### 10. A Practical Approach to Dating Philosophy

"I can't expect to fall in love with every guy I go to bed with; that's just silly. But there's no reason why you can't have an intimate relationship."

---Newspaper article (title and date unavailable)

### 11. Balancing Interim Companionship Against Long-Term Career Goals

It appears not uncommon for single college students to maintain formal lists of their sex partners. A recent female graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who did so says, "More and more of us are admitting that it is not something to be ashamed of.... I don't want to forget the names on my list, whether they're good or bad. I like to ... learn from them." Asserts a Boston College coed, "You're seeing a group of girls whose mothers raised them to accept that they have sexual needs and desires [but] that they need to use protection." Facing advanced study abroad after she graduates from Brown University, a senior with multiple sex partners contends, "It doesn't make sense to start a serious relationship in college."

Moreover, many unmarried women think that counting their bed companions is not essentially different from tracking their hours slept, calories consumed, or miles jogged. A national education group estimates that, on average, a woman whose first intercourse occurs during her freshman year of college will have four more such partners before she graduates. But a Georgetown University alumna knows former classmates who initially planned to limit their sexual coupling to 10 men, only to readily revise that figure upward when number 11 came along.

----*Washington Post* (May 22, 2004-page C1)

### 12. Achieving Fulfillment Through Interaction with Fellow Singles

Anna, a 22-year-old female graduate student, enthusiastically remarked, "I think sex is cool and people should have a lot of it."

----*New York Times* (January 11, 2004-section 9, page 1)

### 13. The "Post-Feminist" Woman

A 24-year-old graduate student taking public policy courses thoughtfully observed, "If you want to have unattached, unemotional sex, that's fine...." Interviewer: "What is an acceptable motive for [doing so]?" Her response: "Pleasure."

----*Washington Post* (August 15, 2004-Sunday magazine, page 25)

### 14. Seeking the Ultimate in Stimulation

"[S]leek young women test-drive sexual partners, a pressure-packed examination that is said to have some men resorting prematurely to Viagra."

----*Houston Chronicle* (September 12, 2004-Book Reviews, page 18)

### 15. A Look at the Action on Two Campuses

Darlene Mininni, staff health coordinator at the University of California at Los Angeles, provides students with the standard information on prevention of pregnancy and STDs. But to fully educate her charges, she also tenders personal answers to questions like, "How does a woman have an orgasm?" Moreover, UCLA students can download tips from campus computer sites, e.g., "Is it better to have sex before you compete athletically, or should you conserve your energy?" and "Is there a G-spot, and if so, where is it?"

Eileen Wallace, a 19-year-old student interviewed at the University of Wisconsin, spoke candidly of her bedroom tryst with a male friend and another girl: "It was awesome.... How much more opportunity am I going to have to do this type of thing? This is your chance. You're young now, it's your time." Cassandra Lomasney and her boyfriend (also Wisconsin students) relate that heterosexual women on campus tell close lesbian acquaintances, "OK, I'll try [a same-sex fling]." Cassandra estimates that half her female friends have had intimate physical contact with other women. But eventually, many free-spirited college students decide to settle down. Amanda, a Wisconsin junior who has had upwards of 30 sex partners, reports that she is "looking for a relationship now."

----*Rolling Stone* (March 23, 1995-page 80)

### 16. Enhancing the Quality of Dorm Life

Amherst College administrators--sensing that single freshmen would benefit from easing gently into social interaction with their peers, rather than jumping from the outset into a routine of sexual intercourse--began distributing a booklet specifying practices designed to provide a scaled-down, yet still satisfying, alternative. Accordingly, a suggested sequence of "massage," "erotic videos," and "mutual masturbation" is offered for their consideration.

Although the college president emphasizes that students using coed bathrooms tend to behave nonchalantly like siblings--and Dean of Students Ben Lieber muses that the downsides of such sharing (one male student complained about "long hairs in the shower") may blunt sexual tension--such facilities are nevertheless equipped with condom dispensers.

----*Washington Post* (October 1, 1999-page C4)

### 17. Summing It Up Succinctly

"If you could boil it down to a simple credo,' said Kurt Rust, an earnest, serious-looking University of California freshman ... 'the only ethical requirements for any sexual act should be: Do I want to do it? Does it hurt anyone else?'"

----*San Francisco Chronicle* (March 1, 1966-page 10)

### 18. Critical in Shaping One's Sexual Development

Tosha Michel, a 20-year-old Santa Monica College student stresses that, "Healthy sexual experimentation means, first, to always have safe sex, and second ... we need to figure out what we like and don't like...."

----*Los Angeles Times* (August 20, 2002-page E2)

### 19. Growing into Mature Adulthood

In differentiating between those for whom sexual expression is ill-advised and those for whom it essentially falls within the bounds of acceptability, perceptive society recognizes "the distinction between premarital sex at 14 or 15 and premarital sex at 21 or 22."

----*Washington Post* (May 4, 2008-Sunday magazine, page 28)

### 20. Making the Right Decision for Themselves

Ashlyn Howell, currently a 25-year-old conference manager in Richmond, Virginia, disclosed to a reporter writing a story on male/female relationships that she first had sexual intercourse as an 18-year-old during the summer before her freshman year in college. Explaining that it was time to lose her virginity and wishing it to happen with someone she liked and trusted, she welcomed as a partner her best friend since sixth grade. Looking in the bathroom mirror while brushing her teeth beforehand, she resolutely primed herself, "I'm getting ready to have sex. Okay, cool, whatever." Seven years after that encounter--which occurred in a beach house's white wicker bed--she reflects upon her decision as a deliberate one which she does not regret.

While not all instances of first intercourse in ongoing dating relationships go smoothly, here are two that did: Margo DeSantis, now a real estate agent in Pelham, New York, and a mother of two, fondly recalls having done it with her steady boyfriend on her parents' living room floor: "I remember thinking this is what our bodies were made for." Danielle Dunbar, a graduate of Wittenberg University and presently employed by National Public Radio, happily reminisces that the whole experience with her caring boyfriend (thrice that day, including in her car) was "picture-perfect adorable."

----*Washington Post* (July 22, 2006-page C8)

### 21. Recognizing their Inner Needs

"This week is V-week on campuses across the country, the V standing for valentine and vagina.... 'Love Your Body' days are common; during one such celebration last fall at Washington University in St. Louis, a talk called 'Good Vibrations: Women and Orgasms,' given by a lecturer in women's studies, drew so many students that the speaker had to repeat it immediately afterward. Heffalumps, a sex-toy store that sponsored a sales booth, ran out of merchandise."

---*Washington Post* (February 14, 2004-page C2)

### 22. Relevant to Fundamentalist Issues

"[I]t's ridiculous that society sexualizes [female] breasts to the point that people think small children will be scarred for life if they see a nipple after their first birthday."

---*Jane* magazine (June/July 2005-page 178)

### 23. Luxuriating in Freedom

As blissfully related by a vacationer in the waterfront resort of Pentwater, Michigan, "The secret to happiness is ... visiting the beach with a gaggle of friends on a starry July night when the moon is almost full to bursting [and] throwing off your sweatshirt and then everything else and sprinting across the beach into Lake Michigan--a giggling blur of tan lines."

---*Washington Post* (November 25, 2001-page E1)

### 24. Relishing Nature's Benevolent Elements

A newspaper reporter assigned to write a story on the nude beach scene traveled to the southwestern tip of Martha's Vineyard--an island reachable by a short ferry ride from the Massachusetts mainland--where sunbathers congregate in the nude. [Editor's note: This is a long-standing practice here, the lawfulness of which was favored by a number of local selectmen and formally approved in a 1991 citizen vote.] One naked woman cheerfully told the reporter, "It's a liberating feeling, it feels healthy to be out in the sun and wind and water without anything like clothes restricting you.... We use sunblock like anybody else, just more of it."

---*Boston Globe* (June 30, 1989-page 70)

## 25. Dropping Inhibitions Across the Nation

"Rosemary Murphy, 31, an intensive care nurse standing surfside on Lighthouse Beach [a short distance from New York's Robert Moses State Park, wore] only an ankle bracelet and tattoo.... 'Why not? It's not like the Puritans are about to pull ashore on a boat.' If they did, they might be startled to see 3,000 nude people ... playing volleyball or Frisbee or testing the water.... In what some see as a sign that Americans' cultural mores may be shifting along with their tan lines, this scene is being repeated at hundreds of public beaches throughout the country.... Late last year, officials of Cape Canaveral National Seashore in Volusia County, Florida, agreed to set aside part of Apollo Beach as a clothes-free zone.... In June, California [similarly established] Grey Whale Cove, a 20-minute drive south of San Francisco...."

----*New York Times* (September 2, 2001-section 9, page 1)

## 26. Acknowledging the Majority's Preferred Lifestyle

"At Harvard's Adams House, nude co-ed swimming has become so popular that special hours had to be set aside for students who prefer to wear bathing suits."

----*Wall Street Journal* (October 9, 1973-page 26)

## 27. Making Perfect Sense to Her--and to Countless Others

A 23-year-old woman attending an anniversary celebration of the famous 1969 music festival in upstate New York strode the grounds wearing nothing but flip-flops and glittery eye shadow. "Why not? The body is beautiful," she said. "I've always wanted to walk around in public nude. At Woodstock it's a tradition, so I feel like it's okay."

----*Washington Post* (July 24, 1999-page C5)

## 28. A Respected Journalist with a Penchant for Using Choice Words

"Skinny-dipping, as you know, is the simple, time-honored sport of going swimming in the altogether.... Ah, the sudden sense of freedom! Of abandon! How untrammelled you feel. How joyous. How pure and innocent. Once again, you are one with Mother Nature, unfettered with the complexities of our civilization. And how terribly, terribly you pity those who go through life laced, buttoned, zippered and hooked by the restrictions of our prudish society."

----Arthur Hoppe, op-ed columnist, in connection with mixed-sex nude bathing in San Francisco Bay; *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 25, 1965-page 41)

### 29. Fun on the High Seas

"As the Carnival cruise ship *Jubilee* barrels through the Gulf of Mexico back to the port of Tampa, most of the 1,490 nudists on board have packed the [Lido] deck, kicking back in lounge chairs ... or splashing in the pool. A steady procession of naked people moves toward a soft-serve ice cream machine. Waiters and waitresses, easily identifiable because of their clothing, seem unaffected by the display of naked flesh as they deliver drinks.... The rules are a little different on a nude cruise. There's no need to segregate the men's and women's saunas.... [After] the sun goes down ... couples stroll hand-in-hand on the Verandah deck ... no one has gotten dressed."

---[Portland] *Oregonian* (September 8, 2002-page T1)

### 30. An American Travel Writer at a Jamaican Resort

"The palms dance over the beach in necklaces of bougainvillea and hibiscus.... Every vine is lush, every breeze a caress, every bloom a new waft of tropical perfume.... But it turns out that nudity loves company, and after a few minutes I'm able to mingle more or less casually along the waterline, where people wearing nothing at all are busy staking out the best beach chairs.... Around the adjacent pool, almost every chaise longue is occupied by a bare bottom.... Steve, a mortgage broker from Washington state ... and his wife Laura have been here for a week, and they haven't left the resort once. Valerie, a 22-year-old waitress from California [says] 'So far, I haven't done anything I can't tell my boyfriend about,' [while volunteering that her activities included playing] topless volleyball [and letting] a guy lick beer off her naked body to the whoops of the poolside crowd."

---Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* (January 6, 2002-page D14)

### 31. University Students Taking a Study Break

Reflecting upon the past at the oldest co-op residence at the University of California-Berkeley (built 1933) shortly before it closed due to structural deterioration, senior music major John Trevor Benson described a recent house activity that fit right in with its long tradition: "We put mattresses on the floor and everybody laid around totally naked and fed each other grapes." Suzanne Lester elucidated that life there "wasn't an orgy. It was just friends."

---San Francisco *Chronicle* (April 9, 1990-page B3)

### 32. Beautiful To Watch, Delightful to Experience

For yoga sessions held at the One Taste Urban Retreat Center on Folsom Street in San Francisco, the term "'bare essentials' means just that: Men and women are completely nude during the 90-minute class [where they experience] accepting--and even revering--one's own body.... On a recent Sunday morning, yoga instructor Meredith Medland, 33, as naked as any of the rest of the class, [explained to her group of five women and four men that] 'We're honoring the preciousness, the sacredness, the delicateness of the body.' ... [S]kylights sent soft shafts of white onto the students's bodies, highlighting the curves of their forms as if they were museum statues come to life, moving deliberately and slowly from pose to pose."

Afterward, a 36-year-old male participant exulted, "I like the sheer vulnerability of having no clothing...." Similarly, a 34-year-old female delightedly mused, "Not having anything on is so freeing."

----*San Francisco Chronicle* (May 24, 2005-page E1)

### 33. Dance in its Purest Form

A. "[T]he dancers of Ann Halprin's Dancers' Workshops in San Francisco create nude ballets designed to help liberate their emotions and conquer the audience's fear of the human body.... Says Mrs. Halprin, 'Nudity is just part of a new way of being able to express feelings.'"

----*Newsweek* magazine (November 13, 1967-page 76)

B. A New York City Opera performance of *Orfeo ed Euridice* included "one extended scene involving fully nude dancers [portraying] heros and heroines in all their naked splendor...."

----*New York Times* (October 8, 1998-section E, page 5)

C. Presented at the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. (an ultra-prestigious performance hall having, as honorary trustees, the current and all living former first ladies), the choreograph masterpiece *Vienna Lusthaus* evokes images of pre-World War I Europe. It was rendered with full male and female nudity, deemed effective in integrating the "artistic and intellectual ferment" of the period, with a setting depicting "a dreamy state of mind where reality and fantasy collide."

----*Washington Post* (January 17, 2003-Weekend section, page 24)

D. A public presentation by the acclaimed Toronto Dance Theatre features nude performers of both sexes. Its director describes the nudity as "both playful and serious."

----*New York Times* (February 13, 2005-section 2, page 7)

*NOTE: The foregoing numbered items--culled from a variety of respected publications--have acquainted us with folk in diverse walks of life. Their actions appear compatible with behavioral standards derived from an intelligent reading of Scripture. Now let us examine pertinent offerings of academic researchers and other critical thinkers who provide further helpful insight.*

## **EROTIC FANTASIES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING COITUS**

(Source: *Journal of Sex Research*; Year 1979, pp. 299-305)

EXPLANATION: 421 students (209 male, 212 female) at a midwestern U.S. university were confidentially polled for their virginity status. Of these 421 students more than half, i.e., 230 (114 male, 116 female), reported they were nonvirgins; the overwhelming majority of these nonvirgins (93%) were single. The following scenarios, describing various gratifying sexual fantasies during coitus, were posed to the 230 nonvirgins. Their responses (converted into percentages by gender) are shown below:

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1. Having sex with a former lover	43%	41%
2. Having sex with an imaginary lover	44	24
3. Engaging in oral-genital sex	61	51
4. Participating in same-room group sex	19	14
5. Being forced or overpowered during sex	21	36
6. Others observe you having sex	15	20
7. Others find you sexually irresistible	55	53
8. Being sexually abused	11	13
9. Forcing others to have sex with you	24	16
10. Others submit to sex after first resisting	37	24
11. Observing others engaging in sex	18	13
12. Having sex with person of same gender	3	9
13. Having sex with an animal	1	4

[Editorial Comment: Interestingly, three of the above 13 categories (or just under a fourth of them, with all three in double digits for both males and females) concern students fantasizing about acts comprising more than two persons. This fantasy concept can--and does--transfer into reality, as we saw from vignette number 15 (hereinbefore) involving imaginative University of Wisconsin students.]

## PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF FEMALE TOPLESS BEHAVIOR

(Source: *Journal of Sex Research*; Year 1994, pp. 133-142)

EXPLANATION: 116 female, first-year Australian college students were confidentially polled relative to their views on full breast exposure by women on public beaches where toplessness is legal. Results were presented to the 1993 meeting of the World Congress of Sexology, convened at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The tables below show--for three categories--the responses in terms of percentages of students agreeing with various statements, separated between those who have gone topless and those who have not:

### Percent Agreeing Topless   Non-topless

#### A. Topless Attitude Scale

1. Women should have the right to go topless	98%	77%
2. Toplessness has nothing to do with sex	71	50
3. Toplessness offers a sense of freedom	82	64
4. Topless women are exhibitionists	11	43
5. Going topless reflects decaying morals	2	27
6. Topless women may arouse males	60	64
7. Going topless confers feelings of liberation	73	66
8. Topless women are more subject to assault	18	45

#### B. Sexual Attitude Scale

1. Men should not wear G-strings	19	48
2. Nudity should not be allowed on television	11	30
3. Prostitution should be legal	57	38
4. Intercourse is acceptable in a relationship	96	64
5. Intercourse is acceptable on a first date	45	13

#### C. Perception that Significant Others Disapprove of Toplessness

1. Female friend	5	34
2. Male partner	11	54
3. Mother	34	70
4. Father	53	73

[Editorial Comment: Some *non-topless* women--other than those shamed into covering up by fundamentalist clergy--may have placed themselves in that category because they have large breasts which need support to prevent uncomfortable jiggling during beach volleyball games.

Two percent of the *topless* women likely doff their bras reluctantly because they would be embarrassed if friends were to realize--upon their declining outright to freely expose their

nipples, etc.--that they bond with fundamentalist beliefs (i.e., 100% of all topless women minus 98% in line A1 who think they have a right to bare their breasts on a beach = 2% who think they have no such right, but do so anyhow). Presumably, these are the same two percent shown in line A5 who conjecture that toplessness somehow reflects decaying morals.]

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## CONFIRMATION OF WHAT IS HAPPENING OUT THERE IN DATING LAND

Despite the fundamentalists' campaign to steer unmarrieds from all things sexual, single adults nowadays are typically receptive to opportunities for enriching their lives through meaningful and rewarding intimacy with various partners:

In his book *Sexual Behavior of American Nurses* (Lancer, New York, 1963), W.D. Sprague, Ph.D., notes on page 157 that a 1961 Psychological Assistance Foundation survey of 3,510 female nurses revealed 70 percent of all ages and 64 percent of those 20-24 years had engaged in coitus while single. Ninety-five percent and 92 percent, respectively, reported petting to orgasm. Page 159 indicates that 16 percent of all heterosexual nurses in the survey group--98 percent of the total--had experimented sexually with other women, an activity Dr. Sprague describes on page 146 as, "mutual masturbation, tribadism, [and] oral intercourse."

Two-plus decades later, 75 percent of "Never Married" women in the 20-24 age bracket had had sexual relations (60 percent within the three-month period immediately preceding such study), according to page 208 of the September/October 1990 issue of *Family Planning Perspectives*, published by the New York City-based Alan Guttmacher Institute. And college women seem to be reaching an even higher level: The *New England Journal of Medicine* for March 20, 1990, disclosed on pages 822-823 a faculty finding that 87 percent of Brown University female students recounted having intercourse (with the wise and prudent adoption of precautionary measures for safeguarding health quadrupling since a comparable study 15 years earlier).

Data covering oral sex show a similar upward progression. The *Journal of Sex Research* reported on pages 331 & 334 of its November 1983 issue that two-thirds of a group of 250 female college students had participated in oral-genital stimulation, active or passive or both. (Tellingly, those women in the survey admitting to low self-esteem were concentrated overwhelmingly in the one-third not having oral sex.) Just a few years later, City University of New York psychologist Dr. Lillian B. Rubin determined that 75 percent of 600 college students returning questionnaires from eight campuses--and fully 100 percent of 300 other adults interviewed--practice oral sex, according to page 120 of her book *Erotic Wars* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York; 1990). About a decade after that, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* noted on page 277 of its January 20, 1999, issue that as many as 82 percent of female students surveyed at a major Midwestern university had oral sex experience.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dr. David Reuben noted on pages 52-53 of his aforementioned book that early- and mid-20th century folk not uncommonly either (1) resisted the urge to engage in oral sex, or (2) did

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## **NO GENDER GAP IN SEXUAL AROUSAL**

A McGill University (Montreal, Canada) research study of sexual arousal time was reviewed in the January 2007 issue of the *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. University staff found that healthy young adults watching explicit, sex-action films with thermographic devices attached to their genitals began to become sexually aroused within 30 seconds; on average, the male subjects reached full erection in 665 seconds, and the females attained optimum lubrication in 743 seconds. The difference between these figures was seen as not statistically meaningful.

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## **SEXUAL INTIMACY IN CLOSE FRIENDSHIP CIRCUMSTANCES**

In a behavioral research article appearing in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (May 1992 issue), Professor Michael Monsour of the University of Colorado at Denver discussed friendship-based--i.e., non-romantic--physical intimacy. He reported on a survey of 164 students (median age, 24 years) which revealed that 16 percent of the males and eight percent of the females had shared tender sexual moments with opposite-sex buddies.

A typical explanation therefor was proffered by a female respondent: "[W]e have intimate sexual relations, yet we are not dating. It is hard to explain, but we are such good friends that neither of us wants to risk the chance of losing each other as a friend by committing ourselves to one another." Isn't that a sweet thing to say?

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engage but suffered guilt pangs afterward. He explains that, curiously, "puritanical parents or advisers" surmised that men or women using their lips and tongue to stimulate their partner's sex organs "is dirty, perverted, and abnormal."

This fundamentalism-inspired attitude can be detected in some old court decisions. Thus, a Louisiana judge in 1914 (*State v. Murry*, 66 So. 963, 965) labeled oral sex a "perversion," as did a Utah judge in 1929 (*State v. Besares*, 283 P. 738), while an Ohio judge in 1944 (*State v. Forquer*, 58 N.E.2d 696) classified it as "disgusting." [What do you think? Did these judges witlessly allow themselves to be swayed by quixotic sentiments floating around in their day?]

## COLLEGE LIFE TODAY

A summer 2007 booklet distributed at George Mason University--main campus in Fairfax, Virginia--included a tutorial apprising incoming freshmen of dorm sex etiquette. [Editor's note: I suspect similar information is issued at dozens of U.S. colleges.] In addition to offering sensible ideas for STD avoidance, the piece tenders practical suggestions for amorous students wishing not to disturb roommates needing quiet ambience for studying. As an example, the document advises that "if you feel a need to scream, try biting down on a pillow instead." [Editor's note: Although such counsel is gender-neutral, it may affect mostly women; see vignette number 6 (earlier in this part) reporting one female student's loud shrieks of ecstasy heard periodically through the dorm.]

Further GMU advice for the sexually active: "You can get condoms free at Student Health Services.... You can also get prescriptions for oral contraception...." Plainly, this school strives to make campus life easier for its typically busy students.

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## SATISFIED WITH THEIR SEX LIVES

The organization Vulva Velvet surveys women regarding sexual matters. In 2006, it directed a 26-question inquiry to 100 women--both single and married--to document their feelings on various aspects of their sex lives. The questions covered (1) comfortableness with their bodies, (2) frequency and methods of masturbation, (3) orgasm experience with male partners, (4) extent of intimate breast or genital contact with other females, and (5) miscellaneous topics.

The questions, together with a large number of highly perceptive and insightful responses, appear on the organization's website ([www.vulvavelvet.org](http://www.vulvavelvet.org)). My review indicates these women generally delight in demonstrating sexual deftness; indeed, their answers to the questions posed reveal that most of them employ creative and resourceful ideas in efforts to please partners and themselves.

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## SEX LITERACY IN EUROPE AS A BENCHMARK FOR COMPARISON WITH U.S.

The juin (June, in English) 2006 issue of *Lolie*--a popular French magazine edited for teen-age girls and dealing with "cultural, political, scientific, and economic issues," according to its website--contained an article on pages 30-31 titled, "*La Première Fois*" (or, "The First Time") which addresses questions young women face in preparing for their upcoming initial experience with intercourse. For instance, some wish to know, "*Est-ce que ça fait forcément mal?*" (essentially, "Will it hurt?").

Thoughtful and helpful responses to this and other questions refer variously to a girl's *intimité*, *ami*, or *copain*, with each of these words connoting "boyfriend." Nowhere does the article mention *mari* (husband); it is generally a given in France that engaging in sex is the norm upon reaching maturity. Typical French girls would laugh if you were to suggest they wait until marriage. And--significantly--France is a predominantly Christian nation.

Similarly, the *Seattle Times* for September 13, 2006, noted at page A9 that the widely read German magazine *Bravo* counsels that country's "teenagers through the everyday angst of young life, piercings, broken friendships and yes, sex." The article provided input by Dr. Laura Carpenter (U.S. sociology professor at Vanderbilt University) clarifying the less-than-rigid attitude toward premarital sex prevailing throughout much of Europe, viz., "older teenagers are going to have sex, it's part of life, it's a healthy aspect of growing up and you need to have info about it--the more the better."

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Gordon Gill, a graduate of the University of Maryland, was admitted to the bar of the Interstate Commerce Commission. While employed in the railroad industry, his duties included analyzing capital investments and testifying before state and federal regulatory agencies regarding the reasonableness of freight and passenger rates. He has also served on the ICC's professional staff and worked as a associate with management consulting firms having transportation-industry clients. Together with his wife, he resides in Annandale, Fairfax County, Virginia. His e-address: [gordong01@hotmail.com](mailto:gordong01@hotmail.com)

**APPENDIX - Letter to My Former Parish Explaining My Discontent**

*NOTE: This letter facilitates a greater understanding of my past difficulty. (It is edited here to streamline content and to omit extraneous matter included in the original.) So as to emphasize the message, rather than the people involved, I have x'ed out portions naming the parish and its clergy. Nevertheless, because nothing herein exposes secrets, I am willing to disclose their identities to anyone asking.*

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November 6, 1998

The Reverend xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
Associate Rector, xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx  
xxxxxxxxxxxxx, Virginia 2xxxx

Dear Mr. xxxxxxxx:

Feeling a need to communicate with someone in authority, I selected you for the reason that we meet from time to time when you preside at the Wednesday Noon Eucharist. I don't recall whether I previously informed you that my wife is heavily involved in parish work at another Episcopal church, thus creating a scheduling difficulty which led in 1997 to my attending this parish (preferred largely because the midday timing of the service best suited my needs). While my year 1998 financial pledge was not extraordinary, it was not insignificant either.

Over the past year, I have gradually become aware of a facet of this parish which disturbs me greatly. This would be the rector's seeming fixation upon matters sexual. On the attachment, I have identified seven leading instances in which the subject has arisen, directly or indirectly. These occurrences have impacted negatively upon my fidelity to the parish.

During my lifetime, I have been affiliated with Episcopal congregations elsewhere in Virginia and also Maryland, District of Columbia, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, and California. In none of these, however, have I ever been exposed to such repeated allusions to parishioners' sex lives. Indeed, neither my wife nor I can recall ever hearing a sermon in any Episcopal parish--other than this one--that discussed approved (versus disapproved) sex practices. Additionally, the confirmation-preparation workbook I once used never touched upon sex at all.

Most educated people, including mainstream clergy, would likely not shy away from pondering scriptural nuances that may be advanced by antisex crusaders. However, the rector has not set forth a case amenable to debate. Basically, all he offers are shallow platitudes unaccompanied by scholarly reasoning sufficient to constitute even prima facie underpinning for his views. An example of this is the rector's article in *The Episcopalian* for May 1987. The proposition appearing therein--viz., that sex before marriage is sequentially faulty, like

communion before baptism--needs sorely to be reevaluated in light of my extensive and fully documented research.

That is to say, my memorandum prepared in conjunction with this year's study classes (excerpts attached hereto) reflected reasoned research into relevant issues of this nature. I tendered explanatory interpretations of biblical passages of the kind typically seized upon by our fundamentalist brethren in their attempts to foist their notions upon the rest of us through manipulation of the political process. Indeed, that granddaddy of all conservatives Barry Goldwater lamented shortly before his death that fundamentalists had infiltrated the Republican Party and were displacing its traditional values.

If the rector truly desires to effect widespread acceptance of the massive and far-reaching behavior modification program implicit in his pronouncements, one would expect to see him support his hypothesis by offering a point-by-point rebuttal of those theologians whose position he apparently finds so distasteful. Strangely, he does not seem to do so. Had I had engaged in shoddy documentation of my conclusions while writing research analyses for my employer, I would have been fired in short order.

Actually, responsible scholars in the psychological and sociological professions have studied sexuality extensively. There are reliable findings that marital stability is fostered by intimate interaction with others beforehand. The rector's fixation on preserving chastity until marriage is in direct conflict.

You can say, of course, that God rules supreme over the views of these earthly professionals. But if the rector's version were to prevail, the result would most certainly be more divorces and/or unfulfilling marriages arising out of basic incompatibility, perceived only after it is too late to recognize the peril. Perhaps that is a price church-going people should be willing to pay, but if so, we should consider this inevitable result in advance, rather than leap headlong--like the storied lemmings--in the direction the rector would take us. As far as I know, he ignores the adverse collateral ramifications that would ensue. (He probably has never even thought about this.)

Undoubtedly, the relations between the sexes have a moral element and, as such, may be appropriate for theological counsel. But at this parish, other concerns necessarily get short shrift when so much emphasis--virtually all negative--is placed upon sex.

Curiously, of the three church presentations by the rector to which my wife accompanied me, sex warnings came up in two of them. (I guess fitting sex into a Christmas Eve message might be a bit difficult.) Incidentally, the rector says that he deplores the recent "feminization of society," whatever that means; maybe he favors repeal of the women's suffrage amendment.

In closing, let me say I acknowledge that God's message can reach us through Scripture (recognizing, of course, that the various biblical writers expressed outlooks reflecting their particular life experiences). A problem for modern Christians is understanding the meanings of biblical text originally written in ancient languages. I expended some effort on this subject in the

aforementioned study class memorandum, specifically concluding that I doubt God would have us literally hate our parents (a sickening thought) as the English translation directs us to do in Luke 14:26.

I further believe that God encourages us to grow and benefit from the cumulative wisdom gleaned from our study of this world, thereby empowering each generation to improve its understanding of the Gospels by applying newly found knowledge to the circumstances then prevailing. Notwithstanding that the grace of God is eternal, we can strive to expand our insights into the greater scheme.

The collective result of the foregoing is that I have decided my future spiritual enrichment must lie in another parish of the Diocese. (Will you kindly see that my name is removed from current records.) I guess I've wasted a year and a half of my life while figuring all this out.

Respectfully,  
/signature/

## ATTACHMENT TO LETTER - Examples of Antisex Expression

1. In the leaflet entitled *Distinctives of xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx*, a passage reads, "... single persons [are to govern themselves] by abstinence from sexual activity." Why does the rector not similarly admonish us against such acts as murder, which I am under the impression Episcopalians are expected to refrain from?
2. During the January meeting of the Men's Ministry, the rector articulated that we should eschew "pornography," a word excluded from my personal lexicon because I have learned it means different things to different people. (I have to guess what the rector meant by his use of the term; he never disclosed his definition.)
3. At the same men's meeting, it was apparent that a goodly number of attendees had visited with considerable enthusiasm the then-recent mass gathering of Promisekeepers. My understanding of this organization is that although its publicly stated goals appear laudable, the underlying motivations of its sponsors--slanted toward the fundamentalists' agenda--are inimical to my beliefs.
4. Enrolled with me in this year's study group was a couple, the husband of which is on the professional staff of an extreme right-wing political organization characterized in part by antisex dogma. While the chances of leader Gary Bauer's achieving his objective of winning the presidency of the United States are deemed slim, I believe the strategy which the group pursues--involving suppression of political freedom for others--is dangerous for the country. That this couple resides in the District of Columbia (where there is a plethora of Episcopal churches) but comes all the way out to this rector's parish is eye-opening. They apparently are finding something considerably different from that which I am seeking.
5. The rector's Easter sermon claimed that the young stars of the movie *Titanic* foolishly lost themselves in an episode of wanton sex, rather than defer their carnal gratification until achieving a wedded state. People I know who saw this movie regard the sex as constituting only a fractional aspect of the woman's realization that the world offered more than the sheltered life with which she was familiar. The sex scene likely overwhelmed the rector to the point of precluding his ability to grasp the main message.
6. At the spring banquet, the rector in his remarks brought up sex in some negative context, the specifics of which I don't remember. I do, however, recall feeling it coming. Sure enough, it came.
7. In his September newsletter column reporting on the Lambeth conference, the rector seized upon the third world bishops' denouncing of homosexuality as an opening for yet another condemnation of nonmarital heterosexual acts. Sadly--but not surprisingly--the column is totally silent on everything else that occurred at Lambeth, as if nothing matters but sex!

