

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Reclaiming a Biblical Sexual Ethic: How a Renewed Understanding of the Doctrine of the Image
of God is an Important Response to the Ideas of the Sexual Revolution and the Self-esteem
Movement

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Abstract

Sexual ethics have become a large source of debate in modern America and will continue as American sexual mores become more progressive. The church in America also faces the issue of how to respond to issues caused by changes in American sexual ethics. These changes, however, have not been greatly beneficial to society.

While debates about sexual ethics are not new, the debate has reemerged in modern society, primarily as the result of two movements, the Sexual Revolution and the Self-esteem Movement. Both of these movements shifted belief in human value away from inherent value, as a result of humans being made in the Image of God, to a more anthropocentric understanding of the human value. The Sexual Revolution especially has deep philosophical roots in ideas that stand in stark contrast to the image of God, such as eugenics. Likewise, the Self-esteem movement, with its roots in Objectivist philosophy, makes humans the arbiters of their own self-worth by making it value contingent upon one's own rationalistic understanding.

The rise in of these movements allowed a shift in consciousness away from the traditional sexual ethic with its ties to the doctrine of the image of God to a celebration of sexual liberation. The Sexual Revolution removed traditional societal reservations toward aberrant sexual behavior, and the Self-Esteem Movement caused society to seek new ways to prove their worth and appeal. Sex then allows people the ability to have self-expression and enables them to achieve immediate gratification and the feeling of being desired in the most intimate way possible. Recent polling shows a shift not only in society but in the church as well on issues including divorce, abortion, pornography, and gay marriage. All of these issues, by shifting away from traditional sexual ethics, devalue God's image bearers.

However, because this new sexual liberation is at odds with the Biblical sexual ethic, it is not possible to practice it and be in proper relationship with God. If human beings truly bear His image, then they will never be properly fulfilled unless they relate to Him correctly. For this reason, the Christian sexual ethic with its belief in the doctrine of the image of God is the only way for humans to flourish in the area of sexuality. It is also the only means by which human beings can treat one another with proper dignity and respect. The new sexual ethic allows others to be treated as a means for pleasure and gratification, but the Christian sexual ethic does not allow for this abuse of persons. Instead, it calls human beings to engage with one another in a way that properly represents the love of God to one another in all areas, including sexual behavior.

Introduction¹

The intention of this thesis is to demonstrate the Sexual Revolution, alongside the Self-Esteem Movement, has caused an important shift in cultural thinking in American society, as well as the church in the United States. This shift has moved Americans away from the traditional Christian sexual ethic, and, as a result, the doctrine of the image of God, even within the church, has been devalued. By most of the secular persons discussed in the paper, the doctrine goes unacknowledged; by not taking this doctrine into account, it has been left out of societal debate and has therefore been implicitly devalued. The two movements discussed have taken a society built on the belief that people are intrinsically valuable and have reduced human beings to the value they define for themselves and the temporary benefit that they provide to other people. It is the doctrine of the image of God, and the sexual ethic that results from it, that leads to human flourishing, including in areas of human dignity, marriage, and family. Therefore, a renewed emphasis of this doctrine in the churches of America will lead to greater societal flourishing and happiness.²

This argument will begin by an overview of the rise of the Sexual Revolution in the United States. It will first give a brief overview of the history of contraception in the United States leading to the legalization of abortion. This is essential historically because it was the advent of convenient contraception that made the Sexual Revolution possible. It is also important because the advent of birth control gave women a new autonomy over their bodies, and this desire for sexual autonomy in both men and women was integral to the philosophical ideas that

¹ The information in this thesis is expanded from a previously paper which remains unpublished.

² Douglas R. Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 85-87.

shaped the Sexual Revolution. After this, the section will examine the fundamental ideas of the Sexual Revolution and the backgrounds of its major proponents. This will be done to demonstrate how the views of the movement's proponents contrast with the traditional sexual ethic of America, which was informed by the biblical sexual ethic. It will also demonstrate that the beginnings of the Sexual Revolution were inextricably linked to the Eugenics Movement, which also devalues the doctrine of the image of God.³ In so doing, this section will demonstrate that the ideas of the Sexual Revolution are utterly at odds with the doctrine of the image of God and Christian sexual ethic.⁴

The next section of the paper will focus on the rise of the Self-Esteem Movement in the United States. It will trace a brief overview of the movement and then focus on the ideas of Nathaniel Branden, who popularized the Self-Esteem Movement in American culture.⁵ This section will also discuss the link between the ideas of Branden and Ayn Rand, of whom he was a follower, as he attests that Rand was extremely influential to the development of his idea of Self-Esteem. For this reason, it will be necessary to discuss her philosophy as well as her philosophy's deviations from traditional Christian teachings about the value of human beings to better understand how Branden's ideas caused a cultural shift in America. Both Branden and Rand believed that their ideas should impact the way people understood ideas related to human

³ Benjamin Wiker, *Moral Darwinism: How We All Became Hedonist*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 215-254.

⁴ While Benjamin Wiker is an important source for this section because he has written several influential books on the philosophy of the Sexual Revolution, this section will also report information from other credible sources as well as primary documentation written by the persons discussed. He will also be important to the brief discussion given to Ayn Rand, but his claims will be matched with those of one of her critical contemporaries as well the writings of her follower Nathaniel Branden.

⁵ Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 109.

sexuality.⁶ This link then will be essential to understand how their ideas relate back to the Sexual Revolution. Finally, this section will analyze the effects of the Self-Esteem Movement and will argue, that by making human beings the arbiters of their own self-worth without providing an objective foundation for their having intrinsic value Americans have turned to external forms of validation for their self-esteem.⁷

The next section will analyze four prominent sexual issues in American society today: divorce, abortion, pornography, and gay marriage. This section will begin with a brief argument as to why these issues emerged from the two movements discussed. Then, it will analyze the acceptance of these behaviors within American culture as well as the church. By use of polling data, it will be argued that these behaviors have become accepted by large segments of the population. This then will demonstrate that in practice American society and the church have replaced their sexual ethic with one that is informed by the philosophies of the Sexual Revolution and the Self-Esteem movement as opposed to the doctrine of the Image of God.⁸

The final section will be an apologetic for the importance of the doctrine of the image of God. It will begin by giving an explanation of what the doctrine is, how it has been traditionally understood, and how it relates to sexual ethics. Subsequently, the paper will argue that the doctrine of the image of God, by calling people to be a reflection of the attributes of God, in

6 Benjamin Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read: Plus Four Not to Miss and One Imposter* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery, 2010) 303-308.

7 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem: A New Concept of Man's Psychological Nature* (Los Angeles, CA: Nash Publishing, 1969) 103-130.

8 Randy C. Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution: Recovering Our Sexual Sanity* (Portland, Or: Multnomah Press, 1985) 15-52.

particular His sacrificial love, leads to human flourishing in various areas of human sexuality⁹ including: the value of the body, the dignity of life, marriage, adoption, and singleness. In doing so, this paper will make the case that only by a renewed understanding of the doctrine of the image of God within the church can there be human flourishing in the areas of sexuality.¹⁰

The Sexual Revolution and Self-Esteem movements, while romanticized in American society, are a breach of the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic of America. While they promise sexual liberation and personal fulfillment to their adherents, they have actually served to damage American society. At the root of these movements are values that are antithetical to a Biblical Worldview. In particular, they stand at odds with the Christian belief that all human beings are made in the image of God and that their value is intrinsic to being His image bearers. It also stands in conflict with the Christian belief that Christ demonstrated the inestimable value that God places upon all human beings when He gave His son for them.¹¹ As a result, human beings can never find fulfillment and value outside of a proper relationship to God, and they cannot find fulfillment in relationships that view other human beings as a disposable means for personal gratification. The doctrine of the image of God is essential for proper human interaction. The diminished attention to this doctrine in the American church has left many people turning to other means of personal fulfillment, which are detrimental to themselves and society. For this

9 A. Chadwick Thornhill, "Three In One and Two Become One: A Christian Theology of Sex" in Jerry L. Walls, Jeremy Neill, and David Baggett, eds. *Venus and Virtue: Celebrating Sex and Seeking Sanctification* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018) 37-67.

10 Pearcey, Nancy, R. *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions About Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018)17-46.

11 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 187-287.

reason, it is necessary to reinstate a proper emphasis of doctrine of the Image of God into the American Church.¹²

The Sexual Revolution: Its History, Major Figures, and Legacy

Paul writes in Romans 1:21-25:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.¹³

This passage is exemplified in the Sexual Revolution, not only in its history but also in its legacy, which continues in America to this day. The Sexual Revolution brought with it a change in the cultural paradigm in America, which had previously viewed sex through the Christian lens and had, through law and the involvement of the church, upheld for over a century and half those restrictions placed upon sexual activity by scripture.¹⁴

A Brief History of Roe v. Wade: From Birth Control to Legalized Abortion

The history of birth control is important to understanding the history of the Sexual Revolution. Understanding this history helps to demonstrate the historical links between the

¹² Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 1 -134.

¹³ All biblical quotations in this thesis will come from the New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

¹⁴ Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 15-52.

Eugenics Movement and the Sexual Revolution. At its conception, the Sexual Revolution did not simply desire that people be allowed to engage in sexual relations with any partner of their choosing, it also had at its heart the underling presupposition that sexual freedom, and especially the privilege to reproduce, was for the elite of society. Margaret Sanger, as will be shown, especially held this belief.¹⁵ While Ayn Rand, who will be discussed in the later chapter on self-esteem, did not advocate for eugenics, she too had expressed an elitism to her sexual ethic.¹⁶ The history of birth control is also significant because it provided the means for the Sexual Revolution to succeed and grow. When *Griswold v. Connecticut* made birth control available to married couples in the United States, it made it possible for people to engage in sex without the consequence of unwanted pregnancies. In so doing, it also opened up to the elite the ability to both encourage control of reproduction amongst those who they deemed unfit for reproduction and made possible sexual liberation for society's elite.¹⁷ The later decision of *Roe v. Wade* further facilitated this ability, by making possible the elimination of unwanted children when birth control failed.¹⁸

Birth control was originally advocated for by the Eugenics Movement, but it did not become popular in the movement until the 1930's. Before this, the movement focused on advocating forced sterilization. Forced sterilization became legal in the United States in 1907 and

¹⁵ Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 215-254.

¹⁶ Benjamin Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read: Plus Four Not to Miss and One Imposter* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery, 2010) 303-308.

¹⁷ William Orville Douglas, and Supreme Court Of The United States. *U.S. Reports: Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479. 1964. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep381479/>.

¹⁸ Harry A Blackmun, and Supreme Court Of The United States. *U.S. Reports: Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113. 1972. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep410113/>.

remained legal in many states until the 1980's.¹⁹ Jutte writes that sterilization was, "At first much lauded as a cheap and effective means of long-term contraception."²⁰ Due to other medical issues as well as the fall of Nazi Germany, sterilization, as a means of birth control, fell out of favor in the Eugenics Movement.²¹ The birth control pill, as it is employed today, was developed to replace sterilization as a more acceptable form of birth control.²² Jutte states, "With the arrival of the 'pill', for the very first time, a method of contraception was available that was both easy and reliable to use. It is often claimed that one consequence of the separation of sex from reproduction was the sexual revolution."²³ On May 9, 1960, the FDA officially approved the birth control pill for use in the United States.²⁴

On June 7, 1965, the Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that married couples were allowed to use birth control.²⁵ On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court legalized abortion.²⁶ Finally, in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* in 1992, the Court, once again, affirmed its

19 Robert Jutte. *Contraception: A History*. Vicky Russell, trans. (Malden, MA: Polity, 2008), 174-177.

20 Jutte, *Contraception: A History*, 183.

21 *Ibid.*, 182-184.

22 *Ibid.*, 185-186.

23 *Ibid.*, 211.

24 Jonathan Eig. *The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 299.

25 William Orville Douglas, and Supreme Court Of The United States. *U.S. Reports: Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479. 1964. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep381479/>.

26 Harry A Blackmun, and Supreme Court Of The United States. *U.S. Reports: Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113. 1972. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep410113/>.

decision that there is a constitutional right to an abortion by refusing to overturn the precedent it set in *Row v. Wade*.²⁷

It is readily evident that the advent of birth control helped to make possible the Sexual Revolution and feminism. In fact, while much of the philosophical groundwork was laid before, the actual start of the Sexual Revolution is traditionally dated to 1960 because it was the year when the first oral contraceptive, Enovid, was approved by the Food and Drug Administration.²⁸ It was the Sexual Revolution and second wave feminism that fostered belief that abortion was necessary. The over-emphasis of sexual pleasure and the under emphasis of the value of other individuals led to a culture that not only accepted abortion but also demanded it.²⁹

The Philosophical Background of the Sexual Revolution

The philosophy behind the Sexual Revolution has deep roots. Many of the issues faced today, such as abortion and homosexuality, were issues faced by the early church. The Greco-Roman culture that surrounded the church was rife with sexual immorality. A revival of these practices took place in American culture in the early half of the twentieth century and flourished dramatically changing the political, religious, and philosophical landscape of America in the second half of the twentieth century.³⁰

27 Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony M Kennedy, David H Souter, and Supreme Court Of The United States. *U.S. Reports: Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833. 1991. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep505833/>.

28 Mona Charen, *Sex Matters: How Modern Feminism Lost Touch with Science, Love, and Common Sense* (New York, NY: Crown Forum, 2018) 28

29 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 215-254.

30 Ibid.

This thesis will focus in on several key individuals in the Sexual Revolution in America, including Margaret Sanger, Alfred Kinsey, and Betty Friedan. It will then discuss a few other minor proponents. Detail will be provided about their roles, as they are regarded as the most influential to the movement. It is first important to recognize some of the philosophy that first impacted them. These philosophical views, briefly outlined, will help the reader better understand the underlying presuppositions of these major proponents of the Sexual Revolution.³¹

Charles Darwin

The significance of Darwin's work philosophically is that it gave scientific support to a system that purported to account for the creation of human beings without need for a creator. As a result, it also gave scientific support for divorcing the existence of human beings and their actions from an objective system of morality. Finally, by simply making human beings another species of animal that randomly occurred by a series of non-guided mutations over time, it produced a scientific system that stood in opposition to the idea that humanity holds an objectively unique place in the created order. Humanity is no longer the intentional final act of an intelligent creator but is merely one species among many produced by random chance that simply happens to have the capacity to be self-aware and contemplate its own existence.³²

Darwin himself recognized the eugenic implications of his work and discussed them at length in his second book, *The Descent of Man*. While *On the Origin of Species* attempts to sever humanity from the Christian idea of the image of God as well as man's unique place in creation, Darwin's second book explains philosophically what that divorce means for those who are

³¹ Wiker, *10 Books that Screwed Up the World*, 127, 195, and 211.

³² Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 35-36.

considered to be genetically inferior. Darwin does not call for direct extermination of those whom he considered inferior. He made clear that charity, resulting from the evolutionary trait of sympathy, resulted in an unnatural preservation of those less fit, who evolution would normally eliminate.³³ Darwin states, “No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of men. It is surprising how soon a want of care, or care wrongly directed, leads to degeneration of a domestic race; but excepting in the case of man himself, hardly any one is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed.”³⁴ This was adopted by many in the Eugenics Movement, including in the United States. Notably, *A Civic Biology* by George William Hunter, the book central to the 1925 Scopes trial, contained passages that promoted limiting the ability of reproduction to those seen as genetically superior.³⁵

Ernst Haeckel

Haeckel was an early proponent of evolution and lived at the same time as Charles Darwin. His diagrams comparing human embryos to the embryos of other animals are still used in science classes today. Significantly, Haeckel understood evolutionary theory to mean that some lives are not as valuable as others. This is important for Christians to understand in light of the doctrine of the image of God.³⁶ Wiker quotes Haeckel as stating,

Though the great differences in the mental life and civilization of the higher and lower races of men are generally known, they are, as a rule, undervalued, and so the value of life at different levels is falsely estimated.... [The] lower races (such as the Veddahs or

33 Benjamin Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World and 5 Others That Didn't Help* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery, 2008) 86-97.

34 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 168.

35 George William Hunter, *a Civic Biology, Presented in Problems* (New York, NY: American Book Company, 1914), 261.

36 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 257- 260.

Australian Negros) are psychologically nearer to the mammals (apes and dogs) than to civilized Europeans; we must, therefore, assign a totally different value to their lives.... The gulf between [the] thoughtful mind of civilized man and the thoughtless animal soul of the savage is enormous--- greater than the gulf that separates the latter from the soul of the dog.³⁷

This view is vital to comprehend, because it is directly at odds with the Christian belief in the image of God.

Furthermore, as a result of his evolutionary beliefs, Haeckel did not believe that human beings possess a soul, and consequently, striving to protect all lives stood in the way of the progress of evolution. He was also a proponent of natural selection being used to benefit society. To this end, he supported eugenics, and he was widely quoted among the Nazis. In particular, he was an advocate of the use of abortion and euthanasia, including forced euthanasia.³⁸ Wiker writes, "Abortion and euthanasia were, then, for Haeckel, logical extensions of eugenics. Abortion, along with infanticide, cleaned up the undesirables at the beginning of life; euthanasia eliminated those who avoided the initial biological cleansing or who developed incurable biological problems later."³⁹ This advocacy helped set the stage for the impetus for legalized abortion in the 1960's and 1970's.

Haeckel did not argue for sexual liberation, but he is still philosophically and scientifically influential to those who later made these arguments. He was important because of his endorsement of eugenics, and he was influential because, by denying the existence of the soul, he influenced people to not worry about their moral actions. If there is no soul and no after-

³⁷ Ibid., 257.

³⁸ Ibid., 259-265.

³⁹ Ibid., 264.

life, then pleasure must be found in this life, and if there is no morality, then those who stand in the way of one's personal pleasures can be eliminated.⁴⁰

Sigmund Freud

Freud was also influenced by Darwin's theories and incorporated them into his psychological theories, especially those involving sex. He emphasized the need for human beings to find pleasure and made it central to their psychological wellbeing. Pearcey writes, "Freud has an enormous influence in persuading the modern world that Sexual liberation is the path to mental and sexual health."⁴¹ He was adamantly against the Christian understanding of marriage.⁴² It is only by liberating sex from Christian morality that Freud believed humans could achieve true mental wellness. He held that for the good of civilization some sexual restraint needed to be demonstrated, but he rejected the Christian sexual ethic. In fact, Freud, in his work, was fiercely opposed to religion.⁴³ He believed that many aspects of religious ceremony actually resulted from unresolved sexual frustration. Freud's theories spread and became popular within the United States. Not only did he place great emphasis on the importance of sex, but he also used his theories about sexual repression to undermine the importance of religion.⁴⁴ For Freud, religion was a "neurosis" that repressed pleasure.⁴⁵

40 Ibid., 257-265.

41 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 131.

42 Ibid.

43 Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 36-37.

44 Donald De Marco, and Benjamin Wiker. *Architects of the Culture of Death* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2004) 207-221.

45 De Marco, and Wiker, *Architects of the Culture of Death*, 211.

The Sexual Revolution's Proponents in the United States

The preceding segment gives a brief overview of the scientific, philosophical, and psychological theories that influenced the major proponents of the Sexual Revolution in the United States. Those proponents will now be discussed in this section. They provided presuppositions about life and its origin and purpose to those who would affect revolutionary change within the culture of United States.⁴⁶ This section will focus on the individuals, who facilitated the Sexual Revolution to take root and flourish in America. While others will be mentioned in passing, this passage will give particular attention to three individuals who are most credited with the progress of America's change in attitudes toward sexual behavior.⁴⁷

Margaret Sanger

Sanger is best known for the organization that she founded known as Planned Parenthood.⁴⁸ Wiker writes, "Planned Parenthood is a multimillion-dollar agent of change Not only is it the largest promoter and provider of abortion, but by its continual educational, legislative and judicial advocacy, it has been at the very core of the sexual and larger moral transformation of the latter half of the twentieth century."⁴⁹ Margaret Sanger was a supporter of a variety of eugenic programs including abortion, birth control, and forced sterilization. This was essential to her later advocacy for birth control. This resulted from her understanding of evolution.⁵⁰ She was concerned over what she saw as the large number of "feeble minded".⁵¹

46 Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 15-52.

47 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 215-254.

48 Ibid., 265.

49 Ibid., 265.

50 Ibid., 264-271.

individuals in the United States. Sanger cited an estimate that one in every two people would qualify as feeble minded and, for this reason, should be prevented from reproducing. Like Darwin, she too viewed charity negatively, feeling that it continued the existence of the feeble minded who were a burden on society.⁵²

It is important to note, as Wiker points out, that while Haeckel had opened the door to immoral sexual behavior, he did not advocate for it. He explained it as an evolutionary deficiency, which could be eliminated, but Margaret Sanger advocated for eugenics in order to make what was once considered immoral culturally acceptable.⁵³ She wrote, “As an advocate of Birth Control, I wish to take advantage of the present opportunity to point out the unbalance between the birth rate of the ‘unfit’ and the ‘fit. . . . the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the overfertility of the mentally and physically defective.”⁵⁴ She became an advocate for birth control and founded *The Birth Control Review*.⁵⁵ Wiker writes, “Sexuality for her was a dynamic biological drive that could take evolution beyond mere survival of the fittest to the development of genius. For this to occur, she thought sexuality had to be released from its

51 Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 129.

The term feeble minded was considered a scientific designation when Margaret Sanger was writing. It was derived from IQ testing. Those scoring less than 100 were lumped into the category of feeble minded with a score of 0-25 being an “idiot”, 26-50 being an “imbecile”, and 51-70 being labeled “morons”.

52 Ibid., 265.

53 Wiker. *Moral Darwinism*, 264-271.

54 Margaret Sanger, *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger: Volume 1 The Woman Rebel, 1900-1928*. Esther Katz, Cathy Moran Hajo, and Peter C. Engelman, eds. (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003) 320-321.

55 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 257-266.

traditional restraints.”⁵⁶ Sanger dedicated the rest of her life to not only advocating for but also practicing her newfound sexual liberation.⁵⁷

For Sanger then, birth control served two important purposes for the good of civilization. It would help to limit the reproduction of those she considered undesirable, but it would also allow for those of the class who were considered mentally superior to engage in a liberated sexual lifestyle no longer confined by marriage, because the “procreative act” no longer had to be used merely for “procreation”.⁵⁸ She said of birth control in a speech at The First American Birth Control Conference, “Because it is the one need of the people, because this subject belongs to mainly women. It is the first step that women must take to have her real emancipation. It is the first step that we must take to free our children. It is the first, last, and final⁵⁹ step that we all are to take to have real human emancipation.”⁶⁰ Birth control, according to Sanger, was the most pressing need of humanity. It is important to keep in mind that she rejected charity; it is through birth control that humanity would receive its freedom.⁶¹

Because of the Catholic Church’s opposition to birth control, Margret Sanger was particularly opposed to Catholicism. She expressed in speeches that they should have the continued ability to practice their religion, while, at the same time, she accused them of being intolerant of the religious beliefs of others. She characterized her movement as a moral one to

56 Ibid., 268.

57 Ibid.

58 Sanger, *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, 328.

59 This phrase takes on a sort of religious tone. In fact, it can be viewed as standing in contrast to Christ’s description of Himself in Revelation 22:13, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” The great liberation of humanity, according to Sanger, was achieved through birth control.

60 Sanger, *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, 329.

61 Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 128-132.

which the Catholic Church was the principle opposition. She would play on the already established fears in America about the Catholic Church's role in American society. In so doing, she pitted herself against the church and its sexual ethic. In this way, she also, in some cases, pitted Protestants against Catholics, which ultimately was undermining to the church at large, which should have been united in the area of sexual ethics.⁶²

Sanger divorced her first husband and required her second to agree to an open marriage. It was actually her first husband, who had radicalized her views on politics, sex and religion. She had grown up a practicing Christian. Although her father was an atheist, her mother was a Christian. Sanger's husband was a socialist and an atheist. She also blamed her father for her mother's death, which she attributed to her mother's eighteen pregnancies. Sanger had many affairs throughout her life and dedicated herself to making sure that this new liberation was available through the ability to control pregnancy.⁶³ Wiker quotes Mildred Dodge of saying of Sanger, "She was the first person I ever knew who was openly an ardent protagonist for the joys of the flesh."⁶⁴ For these reasons, Sanger was a proponent of both birth control and eugenics. She was pivotal in pushing forward the availability of birth control thus enabling the Sexual Revolution.

62 Nicholas Kaminsky, *Church Control or Birth Control: Margaret Sanger's Propaganda Campaign Against the Catholic Church* (Mankato, MN: Into Your Hands LLC, 2015) 23-52.

63 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 272-273.

64 Ibid., 269.

Alfred Kinsey

Kinsey was able to advance beyond Sanger because his credentials as a scientist gave credence to the theories he espoused in his work, even if his science was less than sound.⁶⁵ His work is presented in a clinical and detached manner, in contrast to the passionate writing of Sanger. Kinsey published two works on male and female sexuality, which went on to be best sellers, and he founded the Institute for Sex Research. Kinsey's work was essential in giving scientific credence to the ideas of the Sexual Revolution. This is significant, because much of Kinsey's data was later challenged. Despite the dispassionate pretense with which it was written, the objectivity of Kinsey's work has been called into question.⁶⁶ Wiker writes, "Kinsey's sexual data, which have been – more than any other source – the scientifically authoritative foundation used by the sexual revolution in the latter half of the twentieth century, were autobiographical in origin and goal, projections of Kinsey's own sexual desires."⁶⁷ In other words, Kinsey's work was a pretext for justifying his own sexual lifestyle.

Kinsey was an avid supporter of eugenics and birth control. Kinsey used his research to push the idea that all sexual activity is normal and that those, who classified certain sexual acts as abnormal or wrong, caused great harm to others. His statistics on homosexuality and other forms of nontraditional sex have been called into question, because many of his surveys record skewed numbers of interviewees from demographic groups prone to those types of behavior.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 132.

⁶⁶ Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 275-277.

⁶⁷ Benjamin Wiker. *Moral Darwinism: How We All Became Hedonists* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 276.

⁶⁸ Judith A. Reisman and Edward W. Eichel. *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud: The Indoctrination of a People, an Investigation into the Human Sexuality Research of Alfred C. Kinsey* (Lafayette, LA: Lochinvar-Huntington House, 1990) 177-198.

For instance, his surveys on homosexuality were disproportionately conducted among male prisoners and sex offenders, approximately twenty-five percent of those interviewed. Those who were not sex offenders were primarily arrested for other forms of sexual crimes such as prostitution. This was attested by Kinsey's colleagues, who helped him conduct the research.⁶⁹ Reisman and Eichel also explain that Kinsey failed to account for the biases of the volunteers of most of his studies, even after being warned. In particular, a colleague who had tried to conduct a study on bestiality, before Kinsey conducted his own research, warned him of this issue, but Kinsey ignored his concerns. Reisman and Eichel also cited the report put out by the American Statistical Association, which criticized the methodology of the *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. This information comes from his own colleagues, who assisted in his research.⁷⁰ It is important to note that Kinsey desired liberation for all forms of sexual expression and sought to make legal this behavior, even pedophilia. Kinsey used the reports of pedophiles in his chapter on pre-adolescent sexual behavior, and one in particular, Mr. X, provided a large quantity of the data. This however, was not necessarily apparent when Kinsey recorded how he received his data.⁷¹ Wiker states,

Kinsey used the 'data' from Mr. X to craft the famous fifth chapter of *The Male Report*, in which he 'established' that human beings were sexual almost from birth. Charts and diagrams, statistical means and medians, and a canopy of scientific-sounding extrapolation all covered the simple truth that Kinsey was using data largely derived from a man who had done physical-sexual violence to hundreds of little children.⁷²

69 Reisman and Eichel. *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, 19-29.

70 Ibid., 177-198.

71 Wiker, *Moral Darwinism*, 277-287.

72 Ibid., 284.

Kinsey believed that the only reason children were traumatized by sexual activity with adults was because society believed it to be wrong.⁷³ The youngest child listed in the chapter is 2 months old.⁷⁴ He was very clinical in explaining where his results came from. He writes, “

Some of these adults are technically trained persons who have kept diaries or other records which have been put at our disposal; and from them we have secured information on 317 pre-adolescent who were either observed in self-masturbation, or who were observed in contacts with other boys or older adults. The record so obtained shows a considerable sexual capacity among these boys.⁷⁵

This is important to consider, because it reveals Kinsey’s views, which were based on suspect scientific data. Kinsey’s works demonstrated that Kinsey believed that humans were not inherently valuable but were simply to be used for personal pleasure. Kinsey, by using data that was disproportionately skewed, made aberrant sexual practices seem more common than they actually were, in order to evidence that his subjects would be viewed as normal if not for the taboos placed upon them by society. The importance of Kinsey’s work is that it made it appear to the general public, unaware of his methodology that sexual practices outside of the accepted monogamous and heterosexual norm were not uncommon. Kinsey also participated in a wide variety of aberrant sexual practices that he engaged in both with his wife as well as his male colleagues. Kinsey was a supporter of both birth control and eugenics.⁷⁶

73 Ibid.

74 Alfred Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders Company, 1965) 176.

75 Kinsey, Pomeroy, and. Martin. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, 177.

76 Wiker. *Moral Darwinism*, 275-288.

Betty Friedan

Betty Friedan is important, because, unlike the previous two persons discussed, she was not focused on eugenics but feminism. She is considered the woman who launched what has been called the second wave feminism with the release of her book *The Feminine Mystique*. Birth control and abortion were a means to an end for her feminism. She is important for her opposition to the traditional family as well as her support of abortion. She was one of the two founders of NARAL, which continues to advocate for abortion. She also helped to found the National Organization for Women.⁷⁷

Friedan's emphasis was on attacking the traditional family as well as traditional marital and societal roles for women.⁷⁸ She wrote,

In fact, there is an uncanny, uncomfortable insight into why a woman can so easily lose her sense of self as a housewife in certain psychological observations made of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. In these settings, purposely contrived for the dehumanization of man, the prisoners literally became 'walking corpses'. Those who 'adjusted' to the conditions of the camps surrendered their human identity and went almost indifferently to their deaths. Strangely enough, the conditions, which destroyed the human identity of so many prisoners, were not the torture and brutality, but conditions similar to those, which destroy the identity of the American housewife.⁷⁹ She did not write this statement to be hyperbolic, as the rest on the chapter makes clear.

Friedan viewed motherhood, especially when the woman stayed in the home, as a crushing loss of identity to women. Her work is a reflection of her unhappy childhood and later unhappy marriage, more than a shared sentiment of women at the time. Mona Charen explains that Friedan's conclusion has also resulted in many women feeling as though being a stay at home mother is not an option, because it was considered less respectable than a career outside the

⁷⁷ Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 211 and 224.

⁷⁸ Charen, *Sex Matters*, 12-16.

⁷⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963) 305-306.

home. Rather than presenting women with more options, Friedan has limited the options for women, many of whom desire more time with their children.⁸⁰

Friedan was an atheist and believed that human beings were responsible for their personal fulfillment. She was heavily influenced by Alfred Kinsey and Sigmund Freud. She also was heavily influenced by Marxism, and was an activist in her youth. She believed fulfillment could not be acquired from the family or roles within the home; it had to come from outside the family, from work and sex. It should be noted that she rejected homosexuality.⁸¹ If sex is an important means to personal fulfillment, it is then easy to see why, for Friedan, a means of controlling unwanted pregnancy was necessary.⁸² Vertefeuille writes of second wave feminism, “Christianity is especially seen as a bulwark of misogyny because through centuries of teachings on marriage . . . , It has relegated women to such ‘meaningless’ labors as childbearing, the nurturing of children, and homemaking.”⁸³ What this means is that children, and especially babies, are the means of subjugating women and confining them to the home.⁸⁴ Betty Friedan did irreparable damage to the way Americans viewed marriage and children. Marriage was no longer viewed as an institution where a couple loved and supported one another, but instead, it led to the loss of the individual; the individual self could only be rediscovered through activities

80 Charen, *Sex Matters*, 12-22.

81 *Ibid.*, 21-24.

82 Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 218-224.

83 John Vertefeuille. *Sexual Chaos: The Personal and Social Consequences of the Sexual Revolution* (Westchester, IL, Crossway Books, 1998), 48.

84 Vertefeuille, *Sexual Chaos*, 48.

outside the home. In other words, the best marriages, according to Friedan, are those where the marriage and family are second to the desires, hobbies, and careers of the individual.⁸⁵

Other Notable Persons in the Sexual Revolution

Wilhelm Reich was a psychologist, who, like Freud, held negative views about religion, in particular, Christianity. He found Christianity to be repressive in its sexual beliefs.⁸⁶ Pearcey quotes Reich as describing orgasm as “man’s only salvation, leading to the kingdom of Heaven on earth.”⁸⁷ It is Reich, who invented the term, “Sexual Revolution”.⁸⁸ Robert Rimmer helped spread Reich’s ideas. He, like Reich, viewed sex in religious terms. He is best known for bringing about coed dorms on college campuses. They both found prominence in the 1960’s.⁸⁹

Margaret Mead also needs to be briefly discussed. She, like Kinsey, purported to give scientific credence to the Sexual Revolution. Mead did so through her book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, an anthropological work. Her argument, having traveled to America Samoa, was that the inhabitants were closer to primitive human beings, and, as a result, they were freer sexually than human beings in developed societies. As a result, they would demonstrate man in his natural state.⁹⁰ Wiker points out the flaw in this logic, “even if a ‘primitive people’ are care free and libidinous, one cannot infer that simply because they appear more primitive that they are

⁸⁵ Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 218-224.

⁸⁶ Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 133.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Wiker, *10 Books That Screwed Up the World*, 177-179.

somehow closer to what is natural and good, and can therefore provide a corrective to our own way of life.”⁹¹ Her work has recently come under considerable criticism for its methodology. She argued that primitive man, as represented by the Samoan people, did not recognize a right or wrong way to engage in sexual behavior. Sex was liberated from this constraint, and it could be seen especially in their lack of distinction between heterosexual and homosexual activity. She argued that they demonstrated that monogamous heterosexual relationships were not the only normal sexual behavior. The idea that monogamy was normal to human relationships was an imposition of Christian religious beliefs upon society. She also advocated the widespread use of birth control and the repeal of all laws limiting access to abortion. Since her publication, her claims have been demonstrated to be mostly false, primarily by Derek Freedmen, who spent over fifty years studying the Samoan culture, as opposed to the nine months spent by Mead. The Samoans were very zealous religiously. They were ardent polytheists until the arrival of Christian missionaries. After the arrival the missionaries, most of the people in American Samoa became devout Christians. In fact, the Samoans venerated virginity to a great extent. This contradictory evidence did not become widely known until the 1980’s, and, by that time, Mead’s book had already been instrumental in changing the way American society viewed sexual norms.⁹²

Conclusion: The Legacy of the Sexual Revolution

The Sexual Revolution changed fundamental ideas on which American society was based. Despite evidence that most of its claims have been disproved, its ideas are still practiced

91 Ibid., 179.

92 Ibid., 177-194.

today. The perceived necessity of sexual liberation has become the accepted presupposition of American culture as evidenced in books, movies, and TV shows. This change has led to a greater secularization of American culture and has also led to a fundamental change in the way human beings view and relate to one another. Sex has primarily become a means of exacting a pleasurable experience from another person, rather than being the consummation of a loving, permanent, monogamous marriage designed to reflect God's relationship to His people. The legacy of the Sexual Revolution is, at its core, a shift in how human beings identify themselves. They think of themselves, first and foremost, as independent sexual beings, even from a very young age. As a result, other human beings are a means for better understanding and determining the value of one's own sexual identity.

The Rise of the Self-Esteem Movement

The Beginnings of the Self- Esteem Movement

The term "self -esteem" is generally credited to Nathaniel Branden beginning with his book, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*.⁹³ The ideas of "self-love" and "healthy narcissism" were considered before Branden made this contribution, but they did not become part of the popular conscience in the way "self-esteem" did.⁹⁴ Narcissism had a primarily negative connotation, and the idea of a healthy form did not become popularized until the 1980's after the rise of self-esteem. Lunbeck states that in one poll taken in the 1990's eighty-nine percent of those polled said that self-esteem was very important for success.⁹⁵ It should be recognized that the term

93 Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) 109.

94 Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism*, 83 and 108.

95 Ibid., 83-112.

“self-love” was coined and promoted by Havelock Ellis.⁹⁶ He also worked to promote the ideas of the Sexual Revolution, in particular, the normalization of homosexuality.⁹⁷ Lunbeck explains that his idea of self-love was heavily influenced by Freud’s psychological views, including his ones involving sexuality. The two movements, then, share some philosophical proponents.⁹⁸ It will also be demonstrated that Branden too had a lax sexual ethic, which was essential to the philosophical system on which he based his movement.⁹⁹ It is then self-esteem, as Branden proposed it, that will be the focus of this paper, as he presented the version that became popular in American society.¹⁰⁰

Nathaniel Branden and Ayn Rand

In order to understand the most significant figure of the Self-Esteem Movement, it is helpful to understand his philosophical background. Nathaniel Branden was, at one point in his life, a follower of Ayn Rand. She is best known for her most famous work, *Atlas Shrugged*. It, like all of her novels, depicted the outworking of her philosophical framework that she called Objectivism. While she and Branden eventually had a falling out, he did not reject her philosophical system.¹⁰¹ He writes in *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*,

Some of the material in this book originally appeared in *The Objectivist* (Formerly *The Objectivist Newsletter*), a journal of ideas of which I was co-founder with Ayn Rand, One Chapter originally appeared in my book *Who Is Ayn Rand?* Although I am no longer

96 Ibid., 83.

97 Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 37-38.

98 Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism*, 83-107.

99 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 303-308.

100 Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism*, 109.

101 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 303-308.

associated with Miss Rand, I welcome this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution, which her work as a philosopher has made to my own thinking in the field of psychology. I indicate throughout the text, specific concepts and theories of Miss Rand's philosophy, Objectivism, which are crucially important to my own ideas. The Objectivist epistemology, metaphysics and ethics are the philosophical frame of reference in which I write as a psychologist.¹⁰²

This quote is important for understanding the depths to which Branden's concept of self-esteem was influenced by Ayn Rand's ideas. Her philosophical system, which had as its chief virtue, selfishness, is one that at its core rejects the doctrine of the image of God. Not only this, but she held her views to be in direct contradiction to belief in any form of religion, especially Christianity. This being the case, then any set of ideas, which have Objectivist philosophy as their foundation, are in fundamental opposition to the basic tenets of Christianity. Nowhere, however, is this more obvious than in the two system's diametrically opposite beliefs about the value of human life.¹⁰³

Ayn Rand left the Soviet Union and came to America after her own family had been victimized by the Soviet government. As a result, she came to America with a deep hatred of communism. It is her championing of capitalism for which she is most well-known. However, as Wiker explains, it is a distinct form of capitalism that is generally associated with American conservatism.¹⁰⁴ He states, "her defense of the free market was based on the idea of a few heroic Nietzschean figures satisfying their creative and pecuniary impulses; it was not based on the conservative understanding of the free market as primarily about freedom for families and communities to provide for themselves in their own way, unhindered by government

102 Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, ix.

103 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 291-328.

104 Ibid., 291-302.

interference.”¹⁰⁵ She held herself in opposition to American conservatives, and especially those who also held religious views. Perhaps most notably, she had a long running feud with William F. Buckley and his organization, *National Review*.¹⁰⁶ Whittaker Chambers was a former communist and friend of Buckley.¹⁰⁷ He urged conservatives not to align with Rand simply out of a rejection of communism. He too noted the philosophical resemblance her ideas had to those of Nietzsche.¹⁰⁸ He states,

Miss Rand acknowledges a grudging debt to one, and only one, earlier philosopher: Aristotle. I submit that she is indebted, and much more heavily, to Nietzsche. Just as her operative businessmen are, in fact, Nietzschean supermen, so her ulcerous leftists are Nietzsche’s “last men,” both deformed in a way to sicken the fastidious recluse of Sils Maria. And much else comes, consciously or not, from the same source.¹⁰⁹

This is significant because her philosophy does not recognize an inherent value in the human person; rather, value only comes from material and intellectual success. Those who succeed are important to society, and those who do not are simply a burden to the successful. It is the responsibility the individual to determine their value to society. The more superior a person was intellectually, the more rights they should be given.¹¹⁰

Not only did she reject faith, she thought it was harmful to mankind. She held that it was possible for people to become perfect, but according to religion, especially Christianity, God alone is perfect. Humans, then, can never attain the same perfection and importance as God.

105 Ibid., 292.

106 Ibid., 291.

107 William F. Buckley, “Witness and Friend: Remembering Whittaker Chambers” in Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Regnery Publishing, 2014) ix.

108 Whittaker Chambers, *Ghosts on the Roof: Selected Journalism of Whittaker Chambers 1931-1959*. Ed. Terry Teachout. (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1989) 216-318.

109 Chambers, *Ghosts on the Roof*, 316.

110 Ibid., 313-315.

They will always be lower than Him. This, she felt, was an unacceptable belief that led to the degradation of humanity.¹¹¹ Ironically, Whittaker Chambers wrote of communism,

It is, in fact, man's second oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: "Ye shall be as gods." It is the great alternative faith of mankind. . . . The Communist vision is the vision of Man without God. It is the vision of man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world. It is the vision of man's liberated mind, by the sole force of its rational intelligence, redirecting man's destiny and reorganizing man's life and the world. It is the vision of man, once more the central figure of the Creation, not because God made man in His image, but because man's mind makes him the most intelligent of the animals.¹¹²

In his review of *Atlas Shrugged*, he informed his readers that Rand's philosophy was not wholly different from communism of the USSR. Her vision, like theirs, was one built primarily on a materialist philosophy.¹¹³ He wrote, "Like any consistent materialism, this one begins by rejecting God, religion, original sin, etc. etc Thus, Randian Man, like Marxian Man, is made the center of a godless world."¹¹⁴ This foundation of materialism then is the one Branden also based his movement on and is the foundation for his concept of self-esteem.¹¹⁵

Ayn Rand's theory also had a defined view of sexual relations as a result of her philosophical system. For her, physical relationships were justified by intellect, and, for this reason, her system was completely reconciled to the idea of affairs and premarital sex. If a person met someone, who was better intellectually than their previous partner, then it was perfectly acceptable to engage in relations with them. Ayn Rand did not consider objective morals in her philosophical system. It only had one value, that of rationality. If an action could be rationally justified, it was acceptable. This can be seen in her books as well. The heroines

111 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 299.

112 Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*. (New York: Regnery Publishing, 2014) xxxix.

113 Chambers, *Ghosts on the Roof*, 315-316.

114 *Ibid.*, 116.

115 Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, ix.

change romantic partners when someone intellectually superior comes along.¹¹⁶ The best example is *Atlas Shrugged*. Chambers notes, however, that her books failed to account for the real-world ramifications of frequent sexual relations with multiple partners.¹¹⁷ He writes, “Yet from the impromptu and surprisingly gymnastic matings of the heroine and three of the heroes, no children – it suddenly strikes you – ever result. The possibility is never entertained. And, indeed, the strenuously sterile world of *Atlas Shrugged* is scarcely a place for children. You speculate that, in life, children probably irk the author and may make her uneasy.”¹¹⁸ She and Branden had a long affair, even though they were both married at the time. Her falling out with Branden resulted when he had an affair with another woman; after that, she disowned him. Subsequently, he maintained the values of Objectivism.¹¹⁹

How Nathaniel Branden Envisioned Self-Esteem and How it would Impact Relationship

At its core, self-esteem entails the individual’s understanding his own self-worth and value. Having done away with any external objective standards on the value of human beings, individuals must now become the arbiters of their own self-worth.¹²⁰ Branden writes, “There is no value-judgment more important to man- no factor more decisive in his psychological development and motivation-than the estimate he passes on himself.”¹²¹ Branden, following Rand, believed that this judgement would be based on rational grounds. The more intelligent and

116 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 303-309.

117 Chambers, *Ghosts on the Roof*, 113-114.

118 Ibid., 114.

119 Wiker, *10 Books That Every Conservative Must Read*, 303-309.

120 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 103-130.

121 Ibid., 103.

rational a person is, the higher their self-esteem because they will rationally know their own self-worth and, as a result, will be more successful than those who are less rationally inclined.¹²² Human beings set their own individual standard for self-worth and then judge whether or not they succeed at reaching that standard. He also states, “Pleasure, for man, is not a luxury, but a profound psychological need.”¹²³ He goes on to say, “There are broadly, five (interconnected) areas that allow man to experience the enjoyment of life: productive work, human relationships, recreation, art, and sex.”¹²⁴ He assumes that all people will find fulfillment in these areas rationally, and the more rationally they engage in them, the higher their self-esteem will be. These five areas do not convey self-esteem, but a high level of rationality will allow the individual to engage in them more successfully than a non-rational person.¹²⁵ The issue with this is that for most people it is difficult for them to rationalize themselves to a sense of self-worth without external indicators to verify their beliefs. This is indicated by studies of what factors affect American self-esteem¹²⁶ If their worth is not based on something intrinsically objective to their humanity, it becomes difficult for them to come to a belief in their own self-worth based on rationality alone.¹²⁷

122 Ibid., 103-117.

123 Ibid., 125

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., 124-130.

126 Joseph Carroll, “Health, Age, and Income Factor Into Americans' Self-Image.” Gallup News. Last updated 2003. Accessed September 6, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/9037/health-age-income-factor-into-americans-selfimage.aspx>

127 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 103-130.

Branden also wrote a book dedicated to how self-esteem affects romantic relationships.¹²⁸ He begins his book by suggesting that romantic love evolved over time.¹²⁹ He devotes a segment to Christianity, in which he conflates the earliest views of Christianity with those of the church in middle ages.¹³⁰ He writes, “The central thrust of this new Religion was a profound asceticism, an intense hostility to human sexuality, and a fanatical scorn of earthly life. Hostility pleasure – above all, to sexual pleasure – was not merely one tenet among many of this new religion; it was central and basic.”¹³¹ He also expresses a dislike for Christianity’s rejection of masturbation. This, he says, was because masturbation is purely selfish because there is not a second partner who benefits from the action. He believed this rejection of sexual pleasure, which he associated with religion, also led the church to be anti-woman.¹³² He concludes “On the deepest level Christianity has always been a fierce opponent of romantic love.”¹³³ He believed that all religious rules regarding sexuality were, in fact, an attempt to control pleasure, which he saw as essential to human life and wellbeing.¹³⁴

Branden believed that pleasure helped to make people aware of the value of life, and, in particular, sexual pleasure is essential for life’s value.¹³⁵ He writes,

In sex, one’s own person becomes a direct, immediate source, vehicle, and embodiment of pleasure. Sex offers a direct, sensory conformation of the fact that happiness is possible. In sex, more than in any other activity, one experiences the fact that one is *an*

128 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Romantic Love: What Love is, Why Love is Born, Why it Sometimes Grows, Why it Sometimes Dies* (New York, Ny: Bantam, 1981).

129 Branden, *The Psychology of Romantic Love*, 9.

130 Ibid., 18-21.

131 Ibid., 18.

132 Ibid., 21.

133 Ibid., 22.

134 Ibid., 21-22.

135 Ibid., 85-88.

end in oneself. Even if the motives that lead a person to a particular sexual encounter are immature and conflicted, and even if, afterward, one is tortured by shame or guilt—so long as and to the extent that one is able to enjoy the sex act, life and one's right to the enjoyment of that life are asserting themselves within one's own being. Sex is the ultimate act of self-assertion.¹³⁶

For Branden, although he concedes that romantic love involves the valuing of the other person, the main good is self-awareness.¹³⁷ It is a “self-celebration.”¹³⁸ This understanding, he believes, is integral because proper self-esteem is essential for a proper romantic relationship.¹³⁹

The issue is separate from rationally understanding that a person is valuable; he provides no objective grounds for self-esteem. He explains again that lacking it is detrimental to relationships. Furthermore, he believes that most people end up with someone who has an equivalent amount of self-esteem. He asserts, as well, that everyone has a right to be happy, but this is dependent on self-esteem.¹⁴⁰ He writes, “The source of approval resides within the self. It is not at the mercy of every encounter with an individual.”¹⁴¹ In this section of the book, he is emphasizing the importance of autonomy in relationships. Through these sections, the issue with his idea becomes evident. He has removed the foundation for self-worth without replacing it, and, as a result, he never helps his reader acquire self-esteem, he simply believes if they are rational and intelligent, it will come naturally.¹⁴²

136 Ibid.,87-88.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid., 87.

139 Ibid., 124-135.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid., 137.

142 Ibid., 136-138.

He also rejects the idea that romantic love is selfless. Rather, love comes from recognizing one's self in the other person.¹⁴³ He writes, "It would hardly be a compliment to tell a person we love that his or her well-being and happiness are not of selfish interest to us. To love is to see myself in you and wish to celebrate myself with you; this is hardly unselfish. Yet it is the very essence of love."¹⁴⁴ This seems to be a problematic view. The individual is not loved for their self, but only for the parts of them that are reflected in their lover. Partners only spend time with one another when it gives them a sense of pleasure in the activity, and that pleasure comes from seeing one's self reflected in the other person. Branden rejects the idea of spending time with a partner only for the sake of their partner's enjoyment. For instance, if a husband watches a movie with his wife, because he knows that she enjoys the movie, even though he does not feel like watching a movie at the time, this selfless act is, according to Branden, an insult to the wife.¹⁴⁵

Finally, Branden explains that, while studies show marriage typically leads to more happiness in the area of romantic love, it is not essential if people do not deem it necessary. In addition, it does not necessitate an unbreakable commitment. He feels that there should be room for growth, and couples, even when married, should acknowledge the possibility of outgrowing one another. He believes that a proper self-esteem will help someone to accept divorce or a partner's infidelity. He explains that people are not required to be happy about a partner's infidelity, but that self-esteem will help them to understand and accept it. He also explains the earlier a couple gets married, the more likely and natural it is that they will eventually outgrow

143 Ibid., 169-171.

144 Ibid., 169.

145 Ibid., 169-171.

one another and move on to other partners.¹⁴⁶ He also devotes a section to the negative effects of children for romantic love.¹⁴⁷ He explains that, while he does not have the right to tell people not to have children, children can be “a disaster” for romantic love.¹⁴⁸ He writes, “Studies clearly indicate that contrary to the popular myth, children do not help marriage but tend to make it harder for the marriage to proceed happily.”¹⁴⁹ He believes that women feel that they must have children in order to be feminine and that a large percentage of mothers later come to regret having children. Finally, children prevent couples from accepting many opportunities, and this results in parents being unable to grow together and as individuals.¹⁵⁰

The Legacy of Self-Esteem

The question then is, how has the Self-Esteem Movement affected society? According to Lunbeck, it has led to a rise in narcissism in American society with many individuals having an inflated sense of self-worth.¹⁵¹ Not only did it cause a rise in narcissism but also in vanity and an insistence on self-gratification.¹⁵² In a recent Gallop poll, most Americans rated themselves as having either good or excellent self-esteem. At issue are the factors that result in this score. Contrary to Branden’s idea that self-worth comes from internal rationality, the majority, who answered the survey, based their answer on external factors. For instance, twenty-eight percent of adults, who were overweight, rated their self-esteem as excellent. The numbers also went

146 Ibid., 183-197.

147 Ibid., 203-206.

148 Ibid., 203.

149 Ibid., 206.

150 Ibid., 204-207.

151 Lunbeck, *The Americanization of Narcissism*, 83-112.

152 Ibid., 165-201.

down for adults with lower incomes and poorer health. No one, who had lost weight in the preceding five years, ranked their self-esteem as poor. Excellent self-esteem also went down with age. Most people in general fell in the category of “Good” self-esteem.¹⁵³ In a comparison study between adolescents in South Korea and the United States, body image, while important to both cultures, impacted American adolescents’ sense of self-esteem more than those of Korean adolescents.¹⁵⁴ These studies seem to indicate that, despite Branden’s belief that people could rationalize themselves to high levels of self-esteem, they have actually become dependent on outside factors for self-validation.¹⁵⁵

Modern American Sexual Issues: Divorce, Abortion, Pornography, and Same Sex Marriage

These four issues were chosen not because they represent the totality of moral issues in American society but because they are some of the most prominent issues in society and they represent the broader categories into which other moral issues fall. This will give the reader a broad sense of the sexual issues that have impacted American society. They are being discussed in the order they first became legal in the United States.

153 Caroll, “Health, Age, and Income Factor Into Americans' Self-Image.”

154 Choi, Eunsoo, and Injae Choi. “The Associations Between Body Dissatisfaction, Body Figure, Self-esteem, and Depressed Mood in Adolescents in the United States and Korea: A Moderated Mediation Analysis”. *Journal of Adolescence* 53: 249, 2016.

155 Caroll, “Health, Age, and Income Factor Into Americans' Self-Image.”

The Relationship Between the Sexual Revolution, the Self-Esteem Movement, and Modern Sexual Issues

The rise of the Sexual Revolution gave philosophical and scientific legitimacy to the idea of the necessity of sexual liberation. The ideas that it promulgated caused a shift in the way Americans viewed sexual issues. In so doing, it removed the reservations of many people toward sexual practices that were once considered unacceptable both morally and ethically. The new availability of the birth control pill made it possible for people to experiment with new forms of sexual expression without consequence of pregnancy.¹⁵⁶ The Self-Esteem Movement shifted the value of human beings from the objective standard of being made in the image of God, to a more subjective standard of value and worth determined by a person's rational understanding of their own self-worth.¹⁵⁷ This also was a rejection of the Christian understanding of the effects of original sin. If human beings have been corrupted by sin, and if it has distorted their view of God and His creation, then it is logical that they would not be able to assess their objective worth based on their own corrupted rationality.¹⁵⁸ They would need an objective standard outside their own rationality, so they did not inflate their worth to the point of narcissism or demean it to the point where they no longer recognize their true value. Christians believe that this standard comes from scripture. Those with a secular worldview, however, have to find other external standards to determine their value.¹⁵⁹

For these reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that these movements played an important role in the rise of these modern sexual issues. Self-esteem makes a person the arbiter of their own

156 Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, 15-52.

157 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 103-130

158 Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 87-90.

159 Caroll, "Health, Age, and Income Factor Into Americans' Self-Image."

worth and prioritizes pleasure as essential to human existence.¹⁶⁰ However, if a person is not able to internally rationalize their self to a correct understanding of their own worth, then it is understandable that they would look to external factors in order to bolster their self-esteem. Not only does intercourse give a person immediate self-gratification in the form of pleasure, but it also demonstrates to a person that they are desirable in the most intimate way possible. The removal of traditional sexual mores as a result of the Sexual Revolution has provided people greater freedom to explore alternate ways to express themselves and find validation through sexual interactions.¹⁶¹

Divorce¹⁶²

For most of American history, there were limited legal grounds for which married couples could appeal for divorce. Until no fault divorce laws were passed, it was required that couples showed proof of adultery, cruelty, or other extenuating circumstance why they could no longer remain married. However, in the 1960's a new idea about marriage was introduced in America; it became particularly prominent in California. The arguments for sexual liberation and experimentation had already begun to influence attitudes. Another argument introduced was that no-fault divorce would lead to greater happiness and subsequently allow the possibility of more stable and happy marriages for the members of previously married couples in the future. Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee, explain that other beliefs that led to the push for no fault divorce were the idea that children would be happier and well-adjusted if their parents were

160 Nathaniel Branden, *The Psychology of Self-Esteem*, 103-130

161 Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 87-90.

162 This section will focus on the prevalence and public opinion with regard to no-fault divorce laws.

happy. This meant that a divorce rather than an unhappy marriage would be better for children.¹⁶³ They explain that another issue that factored into this logic was the belief “children are not considered separately from their parents; their needs, and even their thoughts, are subsumed under the adult agenda.”¹⁶⁴ For these reasons, the idea of no-fault divorce grew in popularity.

California put together a final task force led by Herma Kay that proposed similar argumentation about the benefits to couples and children. This was not just popular in the political sphere of California but also to those in the field of mental health as well as many in the legal system. Ronald Reagan, who was governor of California, signed the first no-fault divorce law in 1969. By 1985, forty-nine states had passed laws allowing no-fault divorce.¹⁶⁵

Statistics Regarding Divorce in the United States

The divorce rate is notoriously difficult to calculate because it varies greatly depending on the methodology used. For instance, the standard calculation was based on the number of divorces in a year, but other sources used a methodology based on how many couples married in a given decade, reached certain anniversaries. Having studied the various methodologies for calculating divorce, Bella DePaluo estimates the divorce rate between forty-two and forty five percent.¹⁶⁶ Premarital cohabitation has also become popular as a means to eliminate the

163 Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2001) xxi- xxv.

164 Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*, xxiii

165 Ibid., xxii.

166 Bella DePaulo, “What is the Divorce Rate Really?” *Psychology Today*. Last updated February 2, 2017 accessed September 14, 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/living-single/201702/what-is-the-divorce-rate-really>.

likelihood of divorce. However, a CDC study showed that only 47% of cohabitating women were married to their partners after three years. Of those 47%, 27% ended in divorce.¹⁶⁷ Another CDC study demonstrated that 67% of men and 60% of women felt that cohabitation was helpful to preventing divorce.¹⁶⁸ Thirty-eight percent of women and thirty nine point three percent of men believed, “Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems.”¹⁶⁹ This was a decrease from 46% seen percent in 2002.¹⁷⁰ In a Gallop Poll released in 2017, 51% of respondents, who attended church at least once a week, felt that divorce was “morally acceptable” making them one of the subcategories that reflected a rise in their favorability of divorce.¹⁷¹ What this demonstrates is that Americans agree with both no fault divorce and premarital cohabitation. Within the church, acceptance of no-fault divorce has risen to the majority opinion.

Abortion

It is important to note that abortion has taken place throughout American history, but until the 19th century, it was deeply frowned upon, and, in the cases where records remain, legal

167 Cassey E. Copen, Kimberly Daniels, and William D. Mosher, “First Premarital Cohabitation in the United States: 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth” *National Health Statistics Reports*, NO. 64, April 4, 2013. 1-5. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>

168 Jill Daugherty, and Casey Copan, “Trends in Attitudes About Marriage, Childbearing, and Sexual Behavior: United States, 2002, 2006-2010, and 2011-2013” *National Health Statistics Reports*, NO. 92, March 17, 2016. 3. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>

169 Daugherty, and Copan, “Trends in Attitudes About Marriage, Childbearing, and Sexual Behavior: United States, 2002, 2006-2010, and 2011-2013”, 3.

170 Ibid.

171 Andrew Dugan, “U.S. Divorce Rate Dips, but Moral Acceptability Hits New High.” Gallup News. Last updated July 7, 2017 accessed September 6, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/213677/divorce-rate-dips-moral-acceptability-hits-new-high.aspx>

punishment was carried out or at least pursued. There are cases where, following an abortion, men would marry the women whom they had forced to have an abortion to prevent these women from testifying in court. The records of medical training textbooks show strong agreement that abortion and infanticide should not be practiced.¹⁷² Olasky writes in reference to abortion in early America through the 1800's, "Abortion, in short, was the last resort of a particular segment of the unmarried; seduced, abandoned, and helpless women, generally between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five."¹⁷³ It is also evident that theological reasoning played an important role in making abortion and infanticide unacceptable in early America.¹⁷⁴ Olasky writes, "with physical, social, theological, and 'scientific' reasons all making abortion unacceptable, only those in extreme duress or with contempt for existing standards would resort to it."¹⁷⁵ In most cases, people were tried under general murder laws and not laws specifically in opposition to abortion. Hence, it can be seen that today's distinction between abortion and other forms of murder was not made in early America. In addition, in several colonies, and later states, it was illegal for a woman to conceal her pregnancy, as this was often the practice, for the purpose of abortion. In New York, it was illegal for midwives to assist in abortion or in its concealment. In summary, the legalization of abortion in America in the twentieth century demonstrated a dramatic change in how the population viewed abortion.¹⁷⁶

172 Marvin Olasky, *Abortion Rights: A Social History of Abortion in America* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1995), 19-40.

173 Olasky, *Abortion Rights*, 40.

174 Ibid., 36.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid., 36-108.

Statistics Regarding Abortion in the United States

Gallup has a useful poll for this purpose, as it has been conducting surveys on American's attitudes on abortions since the 1970's. According to their annual poll, abortion remaining legal in all cases had a brief spike of favor in the 1990's, but it has started to see a decline. However, it was still the most popular choice, with 50% approval, in 2017. Making abortion illegal in all circumstances has been the least popular choice on the poll since polling began in 1975 and had only 18% approval in 2017. This left 29% in 2017 who believed that abortion should be legal in some circumstances. One significant change in 1995 revealed that 56% of respondents considered themselves pro-choice, and only 33% of respondents considered themselves pro-life. In 2017, 49% percent of respondents considered themselves pro-choice, and 46% considered themselves pro-life. According to polls, abortion has always been most accepted in the first trimester and becomes less accepted in the second and third trimesters.¹⁷⁷

Also important for this paper is a Pew poll conducted in 2016, which asked respondents to state their religious views and then answer whether they considered abortion morally acceptable. According to the poll, the group most opposed to abortion was white evangelical Protestants, but of that group, 7 % considered abortion morally acceptable, and 13% did not believe abortion to be a moral issue. Of the Catholics polled, 16% believed abortion is morally acceptable, and 31% believed that abortion was not a moral issue. Of black Protestants, 14% believed abortion to be morally acceptable, and 40% believed that it was not a moral issue.

¹⁷⁷ Gallup. "Abortion". Gallup News. 2017, accessed November 24, 2017. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx>

Finally, in the category, white mainline Protestants, 20% believed abortion was morally acceptable, and 45% believed that abortion was not a moral issue.¹⁷⁸

The Gallup poll demonstrates the overall trend of the nation, but the Pew Poll reflects the attitude of the church with regard to abortion. These statistics are profoundly important, because Christians profess to believe that people are made in the image of God.¹⁷⁹ If this is true, it should affect their opinion on abortion, and they certainly should consider it a moral issue. This is important, because the attitude of the culture should not change church doctrine, but, in the case of abortion, that seems to be what has occurred.

As for the abortion rate in America, it actually declined between 2008 and 2014. However, the figures remain high. By the time they reach age forty-six, 23.6% of American women will have an abortion; this is one in every four women. By the age of twenty, 4.6% will have undergone an abortion procedure, and this rises to 19% by age thirty.¹⁸⁰ Lifeway Research conducted a survey in which 35% of post-abortive respondents said that they attended church at least once a week.¹⁸¹ Of the women who reported attending church, 52% stated that none of the church members was aware that they were post-abortive.¹⁸² Of the post-abortive respondents, 23% defined themselves as evangelical, with the largest denominational group being Baptist at

178 Lipka, Micheal and John Gramlich. "5 Facts About Abortion". Pew Research Center. January 26, 2017, accessed November 24, 2017. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/26/5-facts-about-abortion/>

179 Kreeft, *Three Approaches to Abortion*, 72-74.

180 Guttmacher Institute, "Abortion Is a Common Experience for U.S. Women, Despite Dramatic Declines in Rates". Guttmacher Institute. October 19, 2017. Accessed September 15, 2018. <https://www.guttmacher.org/news-release/2017/abortion-common-experience-us-women-despite-dramatic-declines-rates>

181 Lifeway Research, "Study of Women Who Have Had an Abortion and Their Views on Church." Lifeway Research. Last Updated 2015. Accessed September 17, 2018. Slide 35. <https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/11/23/women-distrust-church-on-abortion/>

182 Lifeway Research, "Study of Women Who Have Had an Abortion and Their Views on Church.", slide 36.

33%. Seventy percent of respondents identified Christian as their affiliation.¹⁸³ Only 51% of respondents felt that churches were prepared to help women, who chose to keep their children rather than abort.¹⁸⁴ Seventy-six percent stated that local churches did not have an influence on their personal decision to abort their child. Not only do these statistics demonstrate a large percentage of abortions in the United States, they demonstrate a surprising lack of continuity between church attendance and abortion.¹⁸⁵

Pornography

The legal history of pornography in the United States is more difficult to survey than the preceding issues. The issue was first dealt with as part of “obscenity” cases.¹⁸⁶ The first Supreme Court case of this type was *Roth v. United States* in 1957. This case focused primarily on the standards that classify material as obscene. The case was argued on First Amendment grounds, but the Court ruled that obscenity is not protected in the Constitution.¹⁸⁷ The Court ruled in a similar case in 1964, but, in this case, ruled that the specific material was not obscene.¹⁸⁸ The Supreme Court heard a variety of similar cases and made individual judgements about each case. In *Butler v Michigan* in 1957, they ruled that there was a separate standard for what adults read in private, indirectly legalizing adult ownership of pornography.¹⁸⁹ In *Stanley v. Georgia* in

183 Ibid., slide 36, 33, and 32.

184 Ibid., slide 26.

185 Ibid., slide 12.

186 Gretchen Brooke Gould, "Obscenity and pornography: A historical look at the American Library Association, the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, and the Supreme Court". (2010. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 201) 3. <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd/201>

187 Gretchen Brooke Gould, "Obscenity and pornography", 6-7.

188 Ibid., 7-8.

189 Ibid., 48-49.

1969, the Court ruled that it was not unconstitutional for adults to privately own obscene material.¹⁹⁰ In 1973, in *Miller v. California*, the Supreme Court gave most prosecution of pornography to local communities, as long as state laws met the standards imposed by the Supreme Court for determining obscenity.¹⁹¹ As for its popularity in American culture, Reisman explains that *Playboy* and *Penthouse* were largely responsible for making softer forms of pornography available to the public.¹⁹²

Statistics Regarding Pornography in the United States

According to a recent Gallop Poll, 43% of Americans believe pornography is morally acceptable. This is a six-point increase from 2017.¹⁹³ In a 2015 study, 43% of men found pornography to be acceptable as opposed to 25% of women. However, despite most of the public finding pornography to be morally unacceptable, many still engage in it.¹⁹⁴ According to an extensive Barna Survey,

Teenage girls and young women are significantly more likely to actively seek out porn than women over age 25, which is similar to men. However, more than half of women 25 and under ever seek out porn (56% versus 27% among women 25-plus) and one-third seek it out at least monthly (33% versus just 12% among older men). In contrast, among teen and young adult men, 81% ever seek it out and 67% at least monthly. Among men ages 25-plus, the comps are 65% and 47%.¹⁹⁵

190 *Ibid.*, 51-52.

191 *Ibid.* 112-117,

192 Judith A. Reisman, *"Soft Porn" Plays Hardball: Its Tragic Effects on Women, Children, and the Family* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House Publishers, 1991) 24-46.

193 Andrew Dugan, "More Americans Say Pornography Is Morally Acceptable." Gallup News. Last updated June 5, 2018 accessed September 6, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/235280/americans-say-pornography-morally-acceptable.aspx>

194 Andrew Dugan, "Men, Women Differ on Morals of Sex, Relationships" Gallup News. Last updated June 19, 2015 accessed September 6, 2018. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/183719/men-women-differ-morals-sex-relationships.aspx>

195 David Kinnaman, "The Porn Phenomenon" Barna. Last update February 5, 2016 accessed September 8, 2018. <https://www.barna.com/the-porn-phenomenon/>

Pornography is a problem within the church as well. Sixty-four percent of youth pastors and 57% of responding pastors stated that they had viewed pornography.¹⁹⁶ Pearcy states that one study found no statistical difference between the pornography use of men inside the church verses outside the church.¹⁹⁷ The majority of pastors surveyed by Barna did feel shame for watching pornography.¹⁹⁸ These statistics show a split between what Americans say they believe about pornography and their actions. Most become addicted at a young age and then find it difficult to leave its use behind. This however, is a serious issue for the church because pornography exploits the human beings that it depicts and damages those who use it, and all of them bear the image of God.¹⁹⁹

Same Sex Marriage

Americans have seen a major shift in same sex marriage over the past several decades. The modern gay rights movement began in 1969 at what is known as the Stonewall riots.²⁰⁰ This change was, in large part, a result of movements within the population at large. In particular, the gay lifestyle was popularized in television programs and the media long before same sex marriage was legal. As recently as 1986, the Supreme Court upheld anti-sodomy laws in *Bowers v. Hardwick*. In 2003, the Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* reversed this decision. The Defense of

196 David Kinnaman, "The Porn Phenomenon"

197 Pearcy, *Love Thy Body*, 11.

198 David Kinnaman, "The Porn Phenomenon"

199 Pearcy, *Love Thy Body*, 11

200 Michael L. Brown, *A Queer Thing Happened to America: And What a Long, Strange Trip it's Been* (Concord, NC: Equaltime Books, 2011) 15-19.

Marriage Act was passed in 1996 and it was this law that was over-ruled in *Obergefell v Hodges* in 2013.²⁰¹ It was this Supreme Court ruling that legalized same sex marriage.²⁰²

Statistics Regarding Same Sex Marriage in the United States

The reversal in American opinion of same sex marriage is the most abrupt shift of the social issues discussed. In 2001, the majority of the country opposed same sex marriage, with only 35% of the country approving. In 2017, however, 62% of the country said they were in favor of same sex marriage. Support has risen across all age groups as well. This support is demonstrated by those who considered themselves to be “religious” according a study published in 2017 by the Pew Research Center. The group that was least favorable was white evangelical Protestants at 35% followed by black Protestants at 44%. Sixty-eight percent of white mainline Protestants approved as did 67% of Catholics. This shift is a very recent development across most of the different demographics surveyed in the poll.²⁰³ While this moral issue has taken the longest to become accepted in American society, it was an important issue to certain proponents of the Sexual Revolution, such as Alfred Kinsey.²⁰⁴ It is reasonable to assume that the shift away from biblical sexual ethics in other areas paved the way to this most recent shift.

201 David W. Machacek, and Adrienne Fulco. "The Courts and Public Discourse: The Case of Gay Marriage." *Journal of Church and State* 46, no. 4 (Autumn, 2004): 767-85, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/230069541?accountid=12085>.

202 Anthony Kennedy, and Supreme Court Of The United States, *Obergefell v Hodges*, 2015. <https://www.supremecourt.gov/ObergefellHodges/PartyBriefs/>

203 Pew Research Center, “Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage” Last update June 26, 2017 accessed September 14, 2018. <http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>

204 Reisman and Eichel. *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud*, 177-198.

Conclusion

The purpose of this section has been to give some insight into how the ideas of the Sexual Revolution and Self-Esteem Movement have affected American culture. What the histories and data have demonstrated is that, in America, there has been a shift in the source from which Americans derive their sexual beliefs. This includes a shift of opinion for many in the church as well. As a whole, American society has shifted away from biblical values with regard to sex, and, by its acceptance of these modern sexual ideas, the church also has demonstrated an implicit shift away from biblical values, which previously defined its sexual ethic. In so doing, it has shifted away from having, as the core of its sexual ethic, the doctrine of the image of God. The two movements related to one another in how they have caused this shift. They are both built on a philosophical foundation that is antithetical to biblical values, and as a result, the introduction of these philosophical systems has changed the way American's view one another. The Self-esteem Moment has led to a need for external validation, and the Sexual Revolution enabled Americans to seek this external validation from various sexual practices. Sex gives a sense of self-autonomy and self-expression, it provides instant gratification, and it allows a person to feel intimately desired. As a result, people use it to fill a void that is left when they cannot find an objective basis for their personal value. When there is no objective basis for human dignity and value, other human beings can be treated as a means to an end for another's personal fulfillment. This, ultimately then is the legacy of these two movements.

A Positive Apologetic: The Doctrine of the Image of God and Sexual Ethic

The Unique Doctrine of the Image of God

According to scripture, human beings occupy a unique place in the created order. They are the final part of God's creation in Genesis 1:1-28.²⁰⁵ Psalm 8:4-5 expresses the question all human beings have about their place in the universe. It states, "what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor." This is a unique role for human beings, but the question remains as to why they have this role. These verses demonstrate that the Bible considers people to be of great value. They are so valuable that God knows them and has concern for them.²⁰⁶ The answer is found in Genesis, where it is stated that they are made in God's image.²⁰⁷ In both Genesis 1 and 2, the description of God's creation of human beings is unique from all other elements of creation. In Genesis 1: 27, they are made in His image.²⁰⁸ In Genesis

206 Matthew 6:25-34, John 3:16, and Matthew: 25:40-46

207 Douglas R. Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011) 85-88.

208 Millard J. Erickson and L. Arnold Hustad, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015) 187-190.

Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986) 33-65.

The doctrine of the image of God has always been held as important in church history. As a result, it has garnered substantial debate. There are three major views taken by scholars on what the image of God is and how humanity displays the image. The first is called the **substantive view**. This has been the most common view through church history. This view comes from a highly literalistic reading of Genesis 1:26. In this view, the doctrine is a characteristic within human beings. In particular, many theologians have settled on the quality of reason as the characteristic. However, there are various views about what the characteristic is. Some people, mostly Mormons, have argued that the physical aspects of human beings are made in God's image. Notably, Thomas Aquinas believed that intellect was the defining characteristic and Irenaeus held that the image of God was seen in man's rationality. Next is the **relational view**. This view does not maintain the image of God as a characteristic of human beings. Instead, it is seen in the experience of a relationship between a person and God. It is still possessed by all human beings, regardless of whether or not they are saved. It became the predominant view of neo-orthodoxy. This view was held by both Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Their beliefs held overlapping ideas, but they also had significant differences. For Brunner, the key aspect of the relationship was love shared between God and human beings, with this love then being shared between humans as well. Barth focused on the relationship as being covenantal; God can communicate with human beings and human beings bear a responsibility to God. This covenantal relationship also occurs between human beings. The final view is the **functional view**. This view has been held by theologians through most of church history. It is primarily based on Genesis 1:26 and Psalm 8:5-9. This view is not focused on a

2:7, God breaths into them to give them life. There is a unique and intimate action in God's creation of human beings.²⁰⁹

For the Christian, ultimate fulfillment is found in a proper relationship with God. Ravi Zacharias highlights this point well. He does so by discussing the story of Jesus answering whether the Jews should pay taxes to Caesar. Zacharias points out if money was to be given to Caesar because it bore his image, the natural question the religious leaders should ask was: what belongs to God? The Judeo-Christian tradition, based on the first chapter of Genesis, declares that human beings bear God's image. Zacharias asserts if this is the case, then human pleasure and fulfillment can only be achieved by a right relationship with God. Any other form of pleasure and fulfillment will fail and leave the person seeking it empty and even more desperate.²¹⁰

The reason that right relationship with God is the only true fulfillment for human beings is that they were made in the image of God. As Genesis 1: 27-28 states, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." This passage is fundamental to this doctrine. Human beings were made to reflect and demonstrate God's goodness to others. Groothuis explains that these verses give important details as to what this image is and what it is not. He explains that

characteristic or the relational aspect of human beings. Instead, it focuses on the role that God created human beings to fulfill, as stated in Genesis 1:26. This has been taken by many theologians to mean that human beings have responsibility within culture and responsibility to have a proper understanding of creation. This idea has been popular with some reformed theologians.

209 Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 85-88.

210 Ravi Zacharias. "Whose Image is on You?". (Video Lecture). Posted January 17, 2008. Accessed November 24, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBxh75P8y50>

human beings are distinct from all of creation in their importance to God. However, they are not divine themselves. For this reason, it is detrimental when human beings incorrectly think of themselves too highly or too lowly. This would seem to be in contrast to the Self-Esteem Movement, where people are the arbiters of their own self-worth. Human beings have a fixed position of importance. They are not divine, but they possess an intrinsic value and worth that can never be removed.²¹¹ Groothuis writes, “Thus, from a Christian perspective, we perennially face the dual temptation either to demote ourselves below what we truly are (despair) or to promote ourselves above our true status (hubris). *All in all, humans are unique among the living.*”²¹² Their relationship to God and their very existence is uniquely purposed. While they share in God’s communicable attributes, they only hold these attributes in their finite form, unlike God who possesses them maximally. Humans are, in a way, a reflection of God.²¹³ C.F. H. Henry defines the doctrine in this way,

The doctrine that humanity is in certain respects created in the divine likeness. Bible answers the question of the nature of humanity by pointing to the *imago Dei*. That humanity by creation uniquely bears the image of God is a fundamental doctrine—as is also that this image has been sullied by sin and that it is restored by divine salvation. Humanity’s nature and destiny are interwoven with this foundational fact, and speculative philosophies inevitably strike at it when they degrade humanity to animality or otherwise distort the personality.²¹⁴

This particular passage in Genesis also contains in it the distinction between genders. It makes clear that each gender is equally made in the image of God, is also separate from the other, and specifically purposed.²¹⁵ Genesis 1:28 then contains God’s command for Adam and Eve to have

211 Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 85-87.

212 *Ibid.*, 86.

213 *Ibid.*

214 C.F.H. Henry, “Image of God” in Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001) 591.

215 Genesis 1:27.

children. This means that God, when He creates human beings, immediately outlines the family structure. They are also commanded to take care of the Garden.²¹⁶ What this passage seems to indicate is that by properly participating in these institutions, human beings have a means to properly act out their role as God's image bearers. Interestingly, the modern American sexual ethic stands in contrast to this. It demands a fundamental change in the way humans evaluate themselves, the marriage, and children.²¹⁷

When this concept is lost, humanity adopts a distorted understanding of what it means to reflect God's love. God's love is self-sacrificial. Christians then are called to emulate this self-sacrificial nature, and passages that describe Christian love always refer to the good of the other over the good of the individual.²¹⁸ Humans are called to recognize the deep value that belongs to every person as God's image bearer and as people for whom Christ sacrificed Himself. It is their highest calling according to scripture to reflect the sacrificial nature of Christ's love and to share His gospel.²¹⁹ C.S. Lewis writes, "There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization – these are mortal, and their life to ours is as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."²²⁰ The Self-Esteem movement focuses on self-expression and self-worth as the highest good. As a result, they constantly look to new and nonconforming ways to demonstrate control over all aspects of themselves.²²¹ The Sexual

216 Genesis 1:28-230.

217 Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 85-88.

218 Philippians 2: 1-11 and John 13:34.

219 C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: NY: Macmillan, 1979) 15.

220 Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 15.

221 Nathaniel Branden *The Psychology of Self-Esteem: A New Concept of Man's Psychological Nature* (Los Angeles, CA: Nash Publishing, 1969) 103-130.

Revolution also supports this pursuit. It allows a person to find immediate gratification by being desired by another human being in the most personal and intimate way possible. The issue is that this gratification is being found in a distorted way. As a result, the person treats their own body as though it only exists solely as a material means for pleasure and gratification, and people view others in this way. The deep and intimate love that is supposed to be conveyed through the sex act is distorted into a new form of selfishness. The other person being engaged is not so much an equal in the act as they are the measuring stick by which to gage one's own desirability and the means by which someone engages in a pleasurable act.²²²

Of the four moral issues that have been discussed, pornography and abortion are two important examples of this distortion. An apologetic for the biblical definition of marriage in response to the issues of homosexual marriage and divorce will be provided in a later section of this paper. When a person uses pornography, it is physically impossible for any love to be transferred because sexual gratification is achieved through an object. That object however is an image of a real human being, but it is an image of a human being for which the consumer has no care. The person depicted is part of something that is collected and brought out whenever the consumer desires to use them. Dugandzic explains masturbation, which often accompanies pornography, does not allow for the whole person to be considered or valued; only those desirable attributes are focused on and no need is ever met. The image, often of a real person, simply serves the individual in whose mind it exists. He argues whether the person is being aroused by real or imagined persons, masturbation damages a person's ability to love and serve others because, when this the object, depicted or imagined, loses its desirability, the person

²²² Percy, *Love Thy Body*, 117-154.

masturbating can simply return to their own imagination.²²³ He quotes Lewis who refers to this as “the prison of himself” and the man’s “harem of imaginary brides.”²²⁴ He explains “this harem once admitted, works against his ever getting out and really uniting with a real women.”²²⁵ As a result, it is denigrating to both the person who is engaging in the act and the person who is the object of such fantasy.²²⁶

The child killed through an abortion procedure is likewise viewed as a material product that can be kept or discarded depending on convenience or circumstance. The child is not regarded as having value inherent in itself, rather its value is determined by whether the parents want it and whether they make the decision that it is a blessing rather than a burden. In this way, from childhood, American children subliminally learn that they have no inherent value but rather their parents make that decision. Children are immediately being put in a situation where they and those around them are the arbiters of their worth and value. It will inevitably be essential for them to define their value.²²⁷

Historical Beliefs About the Doctrine of the Image of God

While this doctrine has been held throughout church history, there has been debate over the details of what it entails. Debate has also centered on the image of God post fall. One example is Irenaeus, who held that there was a split between the image of God and human

223 Matthew Dugandzic, “Coincidence, Character, and the Morality of Masturbation.” In Jerry Walls, Jeremy Neill, and David Baggett, eds. *Venus and Virtue: Celebrating Sex and Seeking Sanctification*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018) 144-150.

224 Dugandzic, “Coincidence, Character, and the Morality of Masturbation.”, 145.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid., 144-150.

227 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 47-68.

likeness to God. While the likeness to God was lost in the fall, humans continue to be image bearers. They continue to have rationality and freedom and, as a result, are morally responsible for their decisions, but the likeness must be restored by salvation. This view seems to place an over-emphasis on rationality as being the primary attribute of the image of God. Hoekema explains that this split between image and likeness is biblically difficult to defend. Similarly, Aquinas focused on man's mind as being the primary attribute, specifically his ability to know God. He believed that the image had been distorted by the fall but that all people retained it in part.²²⁸

During the Reformation, this understanding began to change.²²⁹ C.F.H. Henry writes, "By the *imago*, the Protestant Reformers understood especially humankind's state of original purity, in accord with Genesis 1 and 2, wherein Adam is depicted as fashioned for rational, moral, and Spiritual fellowship with his maker."²³⁰ John Calvin notably gives an explanation of this doctrine. He places a greater emphasis on the damage done to the image by sin.²³¹ It seems as if God's image is almost completely lost in the fall, with only "traces" of the image remaining.²³² Calvin does not make the distinction between image and likeness. Calvin believed that the restoration process begins at salvation but is not completed until the resurrection.²³³

Karl Barth, who is associated with neo-orthodoxy, held to the idea of a split between the "creation-image" and the "redemption-image".²³⁴ The first was given at creation and continues in

228 Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986) 33-42.

229 C.F.H. Henry, "Image of God", 592.

230 Ibid., 592.

231 Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 42-49.

232 Ibid., 43.

233 Ibid., 42-49.

234 C.F.H. Henry, "Image of God", 592.

some form in all humanity; the second is conferred at redemption. The first elevates humans and makes them distinct from animals, and the second separates the redeemed from the unregenerate.

Emily Brunner also believes that the image, at least in part, continues after the fall.²³⁵

These views, while not comprehensive, help to illustrate some of the major ideas pertaining to the doctrine of the image of God. It also helps to demonstrate that this is a complex topic and that there has been disagreement and debate throughout the centuries. However, there have been shared concepts in all definitions of this doctrine.²³⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, the image will refer to the definition in the first section of this chapter, “The Unique Doctrine of the Image of God”.

True Eros

The Bible is clear that “God is Love”, and if this is the case, it can be logically inferred that all human love, correctly displayed and directed, is a reflection of God’s love.²³⁷ If this is the case, then eros, if properly oriented, must also be a reflection of God’s love. However, when eros is improperly directed, not only can it cause a person to miss knowing someone intimately, it can actually lead to lust.²³⁸ Jesus expresses that the inner attitudes of the heart lead to sinful desires and actions, as stated in Matthew 15:18 and that one’s values reflect the orientation of one’s heart as explained in Matthew 6:21.²³⁹ Groothuis writes, “Jesus’ teaching disallows adopting an inner orientation that countenances, values or plays out the vices he mentions.”²⁴⁰

235 Ibid., 592-593.

236 Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 33-65.

237 1 John 4:8

238 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 39-41.

239 Douglas R Groothuis, *On Jesus*. (Belmont, CA.: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003) 66-67.

240 Groothuis, *On Jesus*, 66.

Lustful thoughts are harmful to the person imagining them; they keep them reflecting on things that are in opposition to God, as opposed to the things on which the Bible directs Christians to reflect.²⁴¹ Lustful thoughts are directly harmful to a person's sanctification and causes them to long for and desire something that is displeasing to God. It also is devaluing to the other person. It is without the consent of the other person, imagining the using and abusing of the other person's body. In so doing, the individual, who is the object or image, is at the disposal of the one controlling the fantasy.²⁴² Groothuis writes, "the very mental act of such fantasies is an exercise in unhealthy and disrespectful unreality. One might call it psychic rape."²⁴³ This idea would seem to be in agreement with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5: 21-22. Lust then is the corruption and distortion of eros.

Eros, then, can be expressed in sexual intercourse, but it must not stop there. Sex, at its heart, should express the desire to know one's spouse deeply and intimately. It is not simply the wish to have a carnal desire fulfilled, but rather to know a person in the most vulnerable and intimate way possible. It is the desire to care selflessly for another person, while knowing them deeply.²⁴⁴ Thornhill writes, "Sexual intercourse, then, acts as an image of the combination of this perichoretic union within the trinity and the other-serving and other-desiring love found within the character of God. . . . This type of perichoretic, eros-oriented love involves feelings. But it cannot be reduced to feelings. It contains the posture and practice of seeking another."²⁴⁵ To

241 Philippians 2:5 and Philippians 4:8

242 Groothuis, *On Jesus*, 67-69.

243 Ibid., 68.

244 Thornhill, "Three In One and Two Become One", 39-41.

245 Ibid., 40.

reduce eros to physical attraction or mere sexual desire is to cheapen it and misrepresent the love of God that it was intended to express.²⁴⁶

The Value of Both Mind and Body and the Christian Recognition of the Whole Person

An important aspect of the Christian sexual ethic is the respect it gives to the body. It recognizes both soul and body as being valuable. Both aspects were created by God to make up the full person. This rejects other philosophies such as Neoplatonism, which saw the material world as less than the spiritual.²⁴⁷ It also is an idea that runs counter to Gnosticism, to which the early church had to respond. This belief system, based on the idea of secret knowledge, rejected the physical world as evil and believed that only the spiritual world had true value.²⁴⁸ As Pearcey explains, this concept is similar to the materialism that has become popular in America.²⁴⁹ It seeks to divorce the actions of the body from the spiritual, psychological, and emotion aspects of human nature.²⁵⁰ She calls this philosophical concept, “the two-story worldview”, in it the mind or spirit makes up the upper valuable story and the body makes up the lower half that is less valuable. In this system, the body is simply a tool for pleasure. It has no specific value.²⁵¹ She writes, “In the two-story worldview, if the body is separate from the person . . . then what you

246 Ibid., 39-41.

247 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 144-146.

248 Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*. Volume 1. (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2010) 70-73.

249 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 144-146.

250 Ibid., 30-33.

251 Ibid., 27.

do with your body sexually need not have any connection to who you are as a person. Sex can be purely physical.”²⁵² This is the prominent idea in what is called the “hook up culture”.²⁵³

Donna Freitas describes the results of her eight-year study of the college students, who readily engaged in casual sex.²⁵⁴ She writes of the results of one poll that she conducted, “Of students who reported hooking up, 41 percent used words such as ‘regretful,’ ‘empty,’ ‘miserable,’ ‘disgusted,’ ‘ashamed,’ ‘duped’ and even ‘abused’ to describe the experience.”²⁵⁵ This seems to imply for almost half of the students surveyed, it was not realistic to live out the mind versus body split.²⁵⁶ Another twenty-three percent were described as being “ambivalent”.²⁵⁷ A study published by the American Psychological Association found similar results and concluded that most people, who engaged in casual sex, actually wanted a more romantic relationship. Both men and women surveyed felt regret. In the case of women, they were more likely to feel shame and men felt regret for using another person. The less time a person spent with their partner before intercourse also correlated with an increased level of regret felt.²⁵⁸ The study reported,

In a large Web-based study of 1,468 undergraduate students, participants reported a variety of consequences: 27.1 percent felt embarrassed, 24.7 percent reported emotional

252 Ibid.

253 Ibid., 117.

254 Danna Frietas, “Time to stop hooking up. (You know you want to.)” *Washington Post*, last updated March 29, 2013 accessed September 3, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-to-stop-hooking-up-you-know-you-want-to/2013/03/29/87496b66-8cc4-11e2-9f54-f3fdd70acad2_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.99f226c46822

255 Frietas, “Time to stop hooking up. (You know you want to.)”

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid.

258 Justin R. Garcia, Chris Reiber, Sean G. Massey, and Ann M. Merriwether. “Sexual Hook-up Culture”. *Monitor on Psychology*, Vol 44. No. 2. Last updated February 2013 accessed September 2, 2018. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/02/ce-corner.aspx>

difficulties, 20.8 percent experienced loss of respect, and 10 percent reported difficulties with a steady partner (Lewis et al., 2011). In another recent study conducted on a sample of 200 undergraduate students in Canada, 78 percent of women and 72 percent of men who had uncommitted sex (including vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex) reported a history of experiencing regret following such an encounter (Fisher et al., 2012).²⁵⁹

The study then continues,

In a study of 270 sexually active college-age students, 72 percent regretted at least one instance of previous sexual activity (Oswalt, Cameron, & Koob, 2005). In a report of 152 female undergraduate students, 74 percent had either a few or some regrets from uncommitted sex: 61 percent had a few regrets, 23 percent had no regrets, 13 percent had some regrets and 3 percent had many regrets (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008).²⁶⁰

These studies recognized what the Judeo-Christian ethic has historically recognized, the actions of the body cannot be separated from the effect they have on the soul or mind. This is true even though at certain times in Christian history, the body's value, as espoused in scripture, has not been recognized. The number of studies and articles being written on this topic suggest that a deep emotional void has been created by the hook up culture, and its effects are now coming to national attention.²⁶¹

Christianity recognizes something unique that happens during intercourse, "the two become one flesh."²⁶² This verse from Genesis recognizes that not only the body engages in the physical act; rather, something happens at the spiritual level. Genesis 1:27 lists humanity and the body as part of God's good creation. Christ quotes this verse in Mark 10:6-9. Paul also recognizes the importance of the body in 1 Thessalonians 3-4 and 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. A. Chadwick Thornhill explains that the deepest expression of love that all human beings should

259 Garcia, Reiber, Massey, and Merriwether. "Sexual Hook-up Culture".

260 Ibid.

261 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 117-154.

262 Genesis 2:24.

model themselves after is the Trinity. The deep and selfless love that is shared within the persons of the Godhead is what humans are called to give to one another.²⁶³ He writes,

God's plan for the world and for our bodies is redemption. It is resurrection: bringing life from death. This means Christians, through living with an awareness of good restraints necessary when it comes to sex, have profoundly beautiful reasons to celebrate sex as God's gift to husbands and wives. Sex, rightly configured in a covenantally bonded, other-serving, other-desiring marriage, is good not because God arbitrarily decided so, but because it reflects the realities of the kind of love we find within the godhead. Sex acts as a sign of the redemptive love of God, the love that is restoring the goodness of God's created order.²⁶⁴

Not only the soul but also the body will ultimately be redeemed. For this reason, the actions for which the body is used matter, it is not something that will be discarded but rather glorified. The Christian ethic recognizes the value of the whole person and recognizes that it is the intent of God to redeem the whole person to its original state of goodness.²⁶⁵

A final important evidence that God values the body is the incarnation of Christ.²⁶⁶ Christ, contrary to the claims of the Docetics and the Gnostics, was fully human. He had a fully human body. Christ then came to redeem the whole person. He did not come to redeem only the spiritual component of human beings. This then puts the Christian claims at odds with any system that wishes to devalue the body.²⁶⁷ He came as an infant, experienced a real death, and ascended, retaining His now glorified body.²⁶⁸ John's Gospel makes this explicitly clear, "the

263 Thornhill, "Three In One and Two Become One", 37-67.

264 Ibid., 46.

265 Ibid.

266 Todd Wilson, *Mere Sexuality: Rediscovering the Christian Vision of Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017) 44.

267 González, *The Story of Christianity*, 70-73.

268 John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969) 202-205.

word became flesh, and dwelt among us”.²⁶⁹ Christ’s work results not only in a spiritual redemption but will also result in a resurrected and glorified body.²⁷⁰ In fact, Christ Himself still has His human body; He did not shed His humanity after His ascension. This fact should eliminate doubt as to the value of the human body.²⁷¹ Christ has come to redeem the whole person, not just one part, and, for this reason, the body cannot be treated as though it is merely a tool for human pleasure but rather must be treated with dignity and value.²⁷² First Corinthians 6:17-19 makes this point clear demonstrating that the body is valuable and, once redeemed, the Holy Spirit dwells within it, and for this reason, sexual sin is particularly egregious precisely because, as verse 17 states, the person “sins against their own body.” The Bible is also expressly clear that the image of God means that humans cannot harm one another but must treat one another with respect, as stated in Genesis 9:6. This idea occurs in the New Testament as well in James 3:9.

Christian Sexual Ethic

For many in the West, the Christian sexual ethic is regarded as puritanical and outdated. It is viewed as restrictive and constraining; it keeps people from enjoying themselves as they see fit. However, if God genuinely values human beings, if they hold some special place within His created order, it seems logical that He would have a higher standard for how love is to be demonstrated to among them. This is not because He desires to deny them pleasure, but rather

269 John 1:14.

270 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 46.

271 Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 121.

272 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 46.

because He does not want them to settle for something less. Lewis, while responding to the issue of pain and suffering, makes a statement that is directly applicable to this debate. He explains that God's love is often confused for kindness that merely wants people to be happy at any cost; this includes at the cost of their sanctification and betterment. He argues that God's love would be something less if this form of happiness was His only concern.²⁷³ Lewis writes,

It is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptable and estranging modes. If God is love, He is by definition, something more than mere kindness . . . He has paid us the intolerable compliment of loving us, in the deepest, most tragic, most inexorable sense.²⁷⁴

God is not satisfied with human happiness when it costs them greatly, even if they do not have the understanding to recognize why an action that seems to cause happiness is actually degrading. God, having gifted people to bear His image, must then require a higher standard for them.²⁷⁵

Humans should recognize, if there is a God who created everything and deemed it good, then He created sex and created it to be enjoyed by human beings. He is not trying to take away a pleasure but wants it to be used in the way He designed. It makes sense, being its designer, God would know best how sex was intended to be used.²⁷⁶ Todd Wilson makes an important observation in regard to America's overly sexualized culture.²⁷⁷ He writes, "This sexual identity framework now dominates the way we Westerners think about our sexuality and our identity; it

273 C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Harper One, 2017) 32-34.

274 Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 33.

275 Ibid., 32-34.

276 Wilson, *Mere Sexuality*, 96-100.

277 Ibid., 66.

has made one particular aspect of our sexuality, namely, our sexual desires and attractions, all-important in determining who we are.”²⁷⁸ Perhaps part of God’s design to this sexual ethic is to keep sex from becoming the most prominent source of a person’s identity. Sex and gender are essential to human beings, but the most important part of a person’s identity is the image of God and their relationship to their creator. It is this relationship that will be of eternal significance, and, consequently, this should be at the heart of a person’s identity. It also gives more permanence to one’s identity. Partners can leave, and sexual desires can change, but a person’s identity that rests on being made in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ is permanently fixed.²⁷⁹

The Creation of Gender and the Image of God

There is another unique element to the Christian sexual ethic. Contrary to popular claims, Christianity elevates the status of women.²⁸⁰ The claim of Genesis 1:27 cannot be overstated. Women and men are made in the image of God. This concept was different from other religious ideas in the ancient world. By the time of Christ, women were not respected in Jewish culture either, but scripture as well as the example of Christ demonstrate that God created women to be equally respected with men.²⁸¹ Wilson states, “Being male and female is essential to being created in God’s own image. Reflect for a moment on the radical implications of this idea. When

278 Ibid., 66.

279 Ibid., 65-75.

280 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 71-74.

281 Jo Vitale, “JMI CONF 2017: Session 3 ‘Foreigners, Slavery and Women in the Old Testament’”. Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. February 9, 2017. accessed September 1, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06ysI6hOpBM&t=2492s>

God creates a creature in his own image, after his likeness, he doesn't create a solitary individual, a genderless monad. Instead, he creates a complimentary pair—male and female.”²⁸² For this reason, women, while having different roles, are equal in dignity and respect to men. Jo Vitale argues that the Bible is unique in its defense of many traditionally oppressed groups.²⁸³

Nancey Pearcey makes this argument as well. She explains this was the view of the early church. The church demonstrated this in two particularly shocking ways to the ancient world. The first was their rejection of the sexual molestation of slaves. Slavery was common in the Greco-Roman world, and sexual molestation was common as well, but, as Christians rose in political power, they strove to outlaw this evil.²⁸⁴ Pearcey explains, “Let that historical fact sink in: *The* most reliable index of how deeply Christianity had permeated a society was whether it outlawed sexual slavery.”²⁸⁵ The early church fathers wrote sermons against the practices of sexually abusing slaves and prostitution. They recognized that these practices were harmful both to the women, who were slaves and prostitutes, as well as to wives whose husbands were unfaithful. This treatment in the Greco-Roman world had direct religious ties, as sexual adultery was an imitation of the gods of the Greek and Roman pantheon.²⁸⁶ The God of the Bible is different. Genesis opens with an unparalleled statement of women's equality. This theme continues throughout scripture. It is seen in the Old Testament Law, where women are given protections not found in other ancient writings. It is also seen in the New Testament where

282 Wilson, *Mere Sexuality* 69.

283 Jo Vitale, “JMI CONF 2017: Session 3 ‘Foreigners, Slavery and Women in the Old Testament’”

284 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 71-76.

285 *Ibid.*, 72.

286 *Ibid.*, 71-76.

women were involved in supporting the ministry of Christ, and they are the first witnesses to the resurrection.²⁸⁷ Jo Vitale states, “The God of the Bible affords women every measure of protection possible in a hostile and broken world.”²⁸⁸ She highlights Jesus’ teachings on lust as a radical departure from cultural teachings that blame women for men’s sexual immorality. Rather, He explains that men are accountable for controlling their lust.²⁸⁹ Paul likewise upheld women as important. Pearcey highlights 1 Corinthians 7: 3-4 as an important example. In these verses, Paul, contrary to the teaching of the culture around him, made clear that women did not exist for the sexual pleasure of their husbands but that the two belonged to one another. Pearcey explains that the language Paul employs for this passage is one of legal obligation; in other words, men were required to treat their wives as though they had equal value, including the marriage act. This idea continues in verses 33-34. This concept was not a consideration in the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day. In fact, this drove women to Christianity because, for the first time, they were treated as persons with dignity and value.²⁹⁰

This is in contrast to the modern American sexual ethic, in particular what has been termed “the hook up culture”.²⁹¹ Mona Charen argues that women have been encouraged to engage in commitment-free sex.²⁹² Nancy Pearcey provides similar examples in her work as well.²⁹³ Charen argues that this has led to women being treated simply as objects for male sexual

287 Vitale, “JMI CONF 2017: Session 3 ‘Foreigners, Slavery and Women in the Old Testament’”.

288 Ibid.

289 Ibid.

290 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 72-74.

291 Ibid., 117.

292 Mona Charen, *Sex Matters: How Modern Feminism Lost Touch with Science, Love, and Common Sense* (New York, NY: Crown Forum, 2018) VI- VII.

293 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 117-154.

gratification. It has, in reality, led to a loss of true romantic encounters and has left women feeling vulnerable and helpless, thinking that their only option in having a relationship with a man is to engage in casual sex.²⁹⁴ She writes, “Early feminists urged women to model their sexual conduct not just on men, but on the worst men.”²⁹⁵ This she hypothesizes is most likely a factor in the rise of reports of rape. Women are not designed to view sex in this way and, consequently, this particular result of the sexual revolution has been particularly demeaning.²⁹⁶ She writes, “‘No strings attached’ sexuality is debased and unnatural, especially for women – which, I submit, is why drinking to the point of blacking out has become so common among women.”²⁹⁷ This is in contrast to the Christian sexual ethic, which requires a monogamous marital relationship between people of the opposite sex. In so doing, it helps to assure for women a greater opportunity for safety in their sexual activity.²⁹⁸

The second issue where the church represented a radical departure was infanticide. Justin Martyr highlights this in his writings.²⁹⁹ It was common practice in the Greco-Roman world to leave babies to die if they were not wanted. Babies were not wanted if they had physical deformities, but another common reason that Pearcey highlights was based on gender. It was not uncommon for baby girls to be left to die because they were not considered as valuable as boys were. Typically, Roman families only had one female child, the rest were discarded.³⁰⁰ She

294 Charen, *Sex Matters*, VI-VII.

295 Ibid., XVI.

296 Ibid., VI-VII.

297 Ibid., XVI.

298 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 69-70.

299 González, *The Story of Christianity*, 67.

300 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 69-70.

writes, “Archeologists have discovered sewers clogged with the tiny bones of newborn babies.”³⁰¹ The church not only rejected the practice of infanticide, but it actively saved children who had been left to die. Christians would take them and raise them as their own children, including the unwanted girls. They considered them valuable enough to save and to provide for, and not only this but, at a time when the culture looked down upon having more than one girl, Christians fully adopted these infants into their families. It was so well known that the ancient pagans mocked Christians and spread rumors about them as a result. Christians faced ridicule rather than treat these children, including the girls, as though they were anything less than image bearers of God. This example should continue to be recognized by Christians today when facing issues of adoption, abortion, and infanticide.³⁰²

Marriage: Self-Sacrificial Love

Marriage is given as a gift in Genesis 2. Marriage, along with gender and human sexuality is given as a gift before the fall.³⁰³ God established marriage as an expression of love between the couple as well as for the purpose of procreation. This logically follows from God’s purpose in creation. He creates not out of a necessity to do so but in order to express the perfect love within the Godhead to other beings, specifically human beings. Humans, in turn, are to express that love to one another. God not only allows this between husband and wife but also generously grants human beings the gift of taking part in creation themselves.³⁰⁴ He commands

301 Ibid., 70.

302 Ibid., 69-70.

303 Genesis 2:24

304 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 37-46.

them to, “be fruitful and multiply”.³⁰⁵ He wanted human beings to produce more human beings out of an act signifying their love for one another in order to them have them love the child that resulted from the marital union.³⁰⁶ Pearcey explains that this biblical affirmation of fertility and child birth runs counter to the modern understanding, which seeks to artificially delay or eliminate fertility, particularly in this case of women. As a result, many women delay fertility past their natural ability to have children, leaving them unable to conceive when they feel they are ready to start families. The Bible, by contrast, regards the female body in its natural state as a blessing and affirms it rather than deny one of its most basic functions.³⁰⁷

God strictly gives rules for the operation of marriage and sexuality, but not because He wants to take away pleasure from human beings. Rather, the intimate love expressed between humans is to be reflective of God’s love. When God’s standard of marriage is deviated from, so is God’s standard of love. He gives human beings the highest standard of love by which to live: Himself.³⁰⁸ God, throughout the Old and New Testaments uses the language of marriage to represent His relationship to both Israel and the church.³⁰⁹ Marriage must then conform to the expression given by God because it must conform to the highest standard of love.

Todd Wilson also explains another reason for the Christian definition of marriage. He explains that because of the complimentary natures of men and women, by interacting with a person of the opposite sex, people can learn about who they are. This allows for personal growth

305 Genesis 1:28.

306 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 37-46.

307 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 74-76.

308 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 37-46.

309 Jeremiah 31: 31-33, Hosea 1:2, Ephesians 5:25-27, and Revelation 19:7-9.

and it allows someone to aid in the sanctification of someone else.³¹⁰ He writes, “You won’t grow into the kind of person God wants you to become if you don’t have meaningful relationships with those of the opposite sex.”³¹¹ He goes on to say that the opposite sex is, “God’s gift to you, as a compliment, whether you are male or female.”³¹² Once again, God has made the marital relationship so that people bless one another. Marriage, for the Christian, is not simply for personal fulfillment, even though it is a great joy and gift. It is for the purpose of finding fulfillment in deep service and commitment to another person and to one’s children.³¹³

Marriage is a covenant just like the covenants God made with Israel and the church.³¹⁴

Paul is explicit that this relationship mirrors that relationship in Ephesians 5:24-33

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

In this passage, Paul brings his reader back to God’s original intention for marriage. At its very heart, it allows human beings to uniquely participate in reflecting the love of God as His image bearers.

310 Wilson, *Mere Sexuality*, 72-74.

311 Ibid., 73.

312 Ibid., 73

313 Ibid., 72-74.

314 Thornhill, “Three In One and Two Become One”, 41-43.

Infertility

The natural question that arises is what does the biblical understanding of marriage mean for those who do not have the option to have children naturally. They too are made in the image of God, infertility does not make a person less valuable in the sight of God. They engage in marriage with the intention to reflect God's love for one another and the intention to share that love with children. In this case, it is the intention that is important. Their church should be considerate of those who struggle with this issue, and reach out to them to provide comfort, as it can be a heartbreaking diagnosis. These church members are made in the image of God, and their marriage is whole and pleasing to Him. Scripture, in fact, makes clear that God is particularly close to those who are facing heartbreak.³¹⁵

Adoption

Also important to recognize is adoption has been encouraged for families throughout church history going back to the rescue of victims of attempted infanticide.³¹⁶ Adoption is not a lesser means for a married couple to reflect God's love. By choosing to adopt a child, they are actively choosing to make a loving and powerful commitment to another person, who bears the image of God. Adoption is not merely acceptable but is affirmed, as it is precisely the language of adoption that God uses to describe those whom He has redeemed.³¹⁷ Galatians 4: 4-5 reads, "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship." God Himself is a

315 Psalm 34:18

316 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 70.

317 Galatians 4: 4-5.

“Father to the fatherless”.³¹⁸ Throughout scripture, God commands His people to care for orphans.³¹⁹ Adopted parents also reflected the love of God, and they do so in a powerful way that is a living example of the Gospel.³²⁰ Far from being a lesser good, adoption is a special way to adhere to the commands of God and to demonstrate His love. It also recognizes the image of God in the adopted child, who will begin their life with a living example of the Gospel and the love that God wants to demonstrate to them.

The decision to put one’s child up for adoption is also a heartbreaking one. Parents, who make this decision, should also be cared for in the church. This decision is not one that should in anyway be diminished or demeaned. Rather, the church should help the parents, who make this decision, to be aware that they have also demonstrated a self-sacrificial love. By allowing the child to be adopted, the parents give the child the gift of life and life as part of a family that is in a position where the adoptive parents can provide for the child. The church should recognize its deep history and theological roots with regard to adoption and work to support all involved with the process. It is one of the best ways in a broken world to demonstrate the full power of the Gospel, and both biological and adoptive parents should be recognized and supported for the sacrificial love that is offered in the process of adoption.³²¹

Singles and Wholeness in God

Another group that also benefits from the Christian sexual ethic are single people. They fall into two groups, those who wish to be married and those who feel called to a life of celibacy.

318 Psalm 68:5.

319 James 1:27 and Psalm 82:3

320 Galatians 4: 4-5

321 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 69-70.

For both groups, the biblical sexual ethic, at times, can be difficult to follow because, regardless of whether or not singleness is a conscious choice, both groups feel sexual temptation. Another issue has also arisen; the hook up culture has made dating difficult. Pearcey explains that there is a sense of despair toward dating for many millennials and that many no longer perceive marriage to be an option. Dating, in the traditional sense, is no longer the norm culturally, and this has resulted in many millennials struggling to understand how to form lasting relationships. She writes that within the church, it is also difficult. Many want to be married, and there is almost a sense that there is something missing until marriage takes place.³²²

American culture, which is hyper-sexualized simultaneously glorifies the hook up culture and, at the same time, expresses the idea that a person is incomplete until marriage. Thornhill notes that this sexualization is visible in many avenues of the culture, including television shows.³²³ This issue becomes confusing when the secular world advocates both views simultaneously. At the same time, the church also emphasizes the idea that a person is not complete until marriage.³²⁴

This is not the biblical perspective for two reasons. Because humans are made in the image of God, their primary defining relationship is their relationship to Him. Marriage is significant, and it is a blessing, but a person's wholeness is not contingent upon marriage. All people are valuable because they bear the image of God, and they are made whole when their relationship to Him is fixed at salvation. It is this relationship that will define them throughout eternity.³²⁵ After all, marriage will no longer exist on the other side of eternity, and certainly

322 Ibid., 146-149.

323 Thornhill, "Three In One and Two Become One", 35.

324 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 146-147.

325 Ibid.

people will not be in any way less in Heaven than they are on Earth.³²⁶ Marriage is valuable and covenantal, but it is not what gives ultimate definition to a person's life. This ultimate definition comes from being named a child of God, and this is open to all people. Pearcey explains that many women in the early church refused offers of marriage, even when their rejected suiters threatened them with torture and execution for their faith, because their meaning was not derived from a physical relationship.³²⁷ She writes, "Those who rejected marriage were announcing that the Christian life of community and service offered a radically different path to meaning and fulfilment. Their model was Jesus himself, who lived a fully human life without sex, romance, or marriage. The lesson is that sex is good, but it should not be made an idol. Sex and marriage should not be elevated to the meaning of life."³²⁸

The second reason that a negative view toward singleness is not biblical is that the Bible never denigrates it. Scripture treats being single as a legitimate option and as a blessing.³²⁹ Paul expresses the idea that singleness offers a unique opportunity for ministry and relationship to God.³³⁰ Jesus Himself declares that some people will remain single and that it is good.³³¹ He states, ". . . and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."³³² Wilson explains that Jesus Himself, because he remained single and celibate while

326 Matthew 22:30

327 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 147-148.

328 Ibid., 148.

329 Ibid., 147.

330 1 Corinthians 7:1-18.

331 Matthew 19:12

332 Matthew 19:12

having a fully sexed body, is the best example for Christian singleness. Jesus lived a fulfilled and complete life while remaining single.³³³ He writes, “From the very story of his life, we learn that sexual activity isn’t essential to human flourishing. Jesus found contentment with his sexuality in the pursuit of chastity and celibacy.”³³⁴ For this reason, singleness is not something that makes a person incomplete. People are complete when they have a proper relationship with God. Pearcey is also correct in saying that the church should reach out to singles and help them to realize that they are full members of the body of Christ regardless of their marital status. Finally, this is important because many people, who struggle with homosexuality, choose to live celibately in order to be faithful to Christ. They have found that their identity comes from God, not their sexual desires. By remaining single, they are choosing to be faithful to the one who gives their lives true identity. They should never be made to feel as though they are not complete because of their commitment to celibacy. They are complete because they are complete in Christ.³³⁵

Concluding Remarks

If human beings are made in the image of God, then they possess inestimable value. For the Christian, Christ proved the value that God places on human beings by dying for them. This cannot be overstated, if the church is to take scripture seriously, and if it is to truly proclaim the Gospel, then it has to care for the concerns of all who bear God’s image, because God desires their redemption. Not only this, God desires their sanctification as well. Aspects of the culture, which are in opposition to this desire of God, are necessarily in opposition to the church. In order

333 Wilson, *Mere Sexuality*, 48-51.

334 Ibid., 49.

335 Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 146-148.

to fully respect the image of God in all persons, they must be graciously confronted with the truth of scripture including its teachings on sexual ethics. While the culture has been radically influenced by the Sexual Revolution and the Self-Esteem movement, both philosophies contain elements that run contrary to Christian ethics precisely because they degrade rather than affirm belief in the image of God.

Christians believe that a person's worth is not self-imposed or subjectively determined. Rather, it is a deep intrinsic value that results from being graced with the image of God. This gift is given to all people. For this reason, human beings should not be treated cheaply, they are not merely means for another person's sexual desires, and they must not be disposed of for the sake of convenience. God Himself has demonstrated that they are worth far more. When Christians fail to recognize this, they ignore people, who desperately need the Gospel message and allow multiple lives to be damaged or, in some cases, destroyed. Kreeft writes, "Sex is God's invention for originating life. Since we love the effect (human life), we love the cause--- both the ultimate cause (God) and the proximate, instrumental cause (sex). It is because we love it that we resist its trashing."³³⁶ The Christian sexual ethic does not deny the beauty of sex but recognizes that, as a gift from God, it can only contribute to human flourishing when His design for it is embraced. When this design is distorted by divorce, pornography, abortion, or rejection of traditional marriage, it is harmful to all involved, all of whom bear God's image. Because God created the intuitions of sex, marriage, and family to enable human beings to reflect His image to one another, He is opposed to any deviation, which misrepresents His love and uses a person, one of His image bearers, as means for another's sexual pleasure. When the image of God is honored, it

³³⁶ Peter Kreeft. *Three Approaches to Abortion: A Thoughtful and Compassionate Guide to Today's Most Controversial Issue* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2002), 64.

allows for all involved to receive a deeper and richer love and helps them to understand the love that God has for them as well.

Conclusion

It was the intention of this thesis to argue that the rise of the Sexual Revolution alongside the rise of the Self-Esteem Movement changed the American culture as well as the church's perspective on sexual ethics. This has led, in practice, to a diminished value placed on the doctrine of the image of God. This doctrine, which has been foundational to both Christian and Jewish belief about the intrinsic value of human beings, also leads to greater flourishing in the area of human sexuality. It is by having a renewed understanding of sexual ethics that is informed by the doctrine of the image of God that human beings will be able to relate to one another correctly in the area of sexuality. In so doing, they will treat one another respectfully and accurately reflect the love of God to one another.

The paper began its argumentation by examining the rise of the Sexual Revolution in the United States. This discussion began with an overview of the legalization of birth control and later abortion. It discussed the major proponents of the Sexual Revolution and the ideologies they contributed to it. This was done to contrast the ideas of the Sexual Revolution to the traditional Christian sexual ethic, which is informed by the doctrine of the image of God. This was done to demonstrate that the Christian sexual ethic and modern sexual ethic are at odds, fundamentally in the value that each places on human beings.

The second section of the paper began by explaining past attempts to popularize versions of self-esteem before Nathaniel Branden's version successfully brought it into the American consciousness. It explained the philosophical concepts of his mentor, Ayn Rand's philosophy of

Objectivism. This was essential to show how she diverged from Christian beliefs, including the doctrine of the image of God. The section then explained the concepts of Branden's version of self-esteem and presented how he believed it impacted sexual ethics. Finally, the section concluded by demonstrating how his ideas lead to Americans turning to external forms of validation for their personal self-esteem.

The third section examined the relationship between the two movements and the rise in divorce, abortion, pornography, and gay marriage in American society as well as their acceptance within the church. After making this philosophical case, brief histories of these issues as well as statistics about their prevalence in society and the church were used to argue that, in practice, the modern sexual ethic has replaced the Christian sexual ethic with its grounding in the doctrine of the image of God. In fact, they stand in contrast to the biblical ethic by using those who bear the image of God for personal gratification.

The final section of the paper put forward an apologetic for a renewed understanding of the doctrine of the image of God in American churches. It was a response to the philosophical ideas put forward by the Sexual Revolution and the Self-esteem Movement, by arguing that those philosophies encourage human beings to use one another. Instead, the biblical sexual ethic calls for the respectful treatment of all people, recognizing their inherent dignity as God's image bearers. This section began with a brief overview of the doctrine of the image of God as well as its traditional understanding within the church. It was explained how this doctrine relates to human dignity and sexuality. In so doing, it was explained that, as God's image bearers, human beings are to be a reflection of His attributes, including His selfless love. This can only be done when human beings view themselves and one another as image bearers of God deserving of value and dignity. When the doctrine of the image of God is lost, people use one another for

personal gratification, and they reject and dispose of others when they are no longer valuable to their gratification. It is only by respecting the image of God in one another that human beings flourish and treat one another with respect and dignity. It is only by a renewed understanding of the doctrine of the image of God, informing sexual ethics, that human relationship acknowledges the dignity and respect that is due to all persons as God's image bearers.

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