

More than Moral Indignation

God, Sex, and You: An Evangelical Perspective, by M. O. Vincent (Holman, 1971, 200 pp., \$4.95), *I Married You*, by Walter Trobisch (Harper & Row, 1971, 135 pp., \$4.95, and paperback, \$1.95), *Christian Perspectives on Sex and Marriage*, by William Fitch (Eerdmans, 1971, 160 pp., paperback, \$2.95), *Sexual Understanding Before Marriage*, by Herbert J. Miles (Zondervan, 1971, 222 pp., paperback, \$1.95), *Manual for Group Premarital Counseling*, by Lyle B. Gangsei (Association, 1971, 251 pp., \$6.95), *Growing Up With Sex*, by Richard F. Hettlinger (Seabury, 1970, 162 pp., paperback, \$2.25), *Manners to Love By: For Young Couples*, by Robert H. Loeb, Jr. (Association, 1971, 128 pp., \$4.95), and *Contemporary Sexual Morality*, by John F. Dedek (Sheed and Ward, 1971, 170 pp., \$5.95), are reviewed by Anne Eggebroten, graduate student, University of California at Berkeley.

Sex is probably the most talked about, thought about, written about subject in American society today. In the past few years the already swollen market for sex manuals, alluring paperbacks, and pornography has seen the addition of a new kind of book: the popularized "How to" book for persons who are doing it more but enjoying it less (*The Sensuous Woman, Everything You Always Wanted to Know . . .*).

In the midst of this proliferation of written advice, explanation, encouragement, and admonition, the Church is actively striving to publish its views. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's indictment of thirty years ago in *Ethics* is no longer true:

The Church confesses that she has found no word of advice and assistance in the face of the dissolution of all order in the relation between the sexes. She has found no strong and effective answer to the contempt for chastity and to the proclamation of sexual libertinism. All she has achieved has been an occasional expression of moral indignation.

It is still true that the Church as a whole has found no unanimous answer, but individual churches and churchmen are publishing answers at an increasing rate. Some are capitulations to the here-and-now demands of society; others are narrow manifestos defiantly ignoring the contemporary social order. A few are indeed "strong and effective" answers.

One of these few is M. O. Vincent's *God, Sex, and You: An Evangelical Perspective*. This book is unique among the group here reviewed: it is the only one that is both evangelical in orientation and written for non-Christians. This combination is all too rare: most books written by evangelicals are for evangelicals, and most for non-Christians

are by non-Christians. In a preface, Vincent writes, "If you are a loyal follower of the *Playboy* philosophy or the New Morality, or just interested in 'sex without hurting others,' then this book is written with you in mind." And it is.

A Christian psychiatrist, Vincent doesn't begin by prescribing standards of premarital and marital behavior and defending them from a biblical stance. Instead he spends the first-third of his book making a searching appraisal of sex in the modern world. As he discusses sex in communications and entertainment, nudity, premarital intercourse and pregnancy, marital problems, divorce, and infidelity, a clearly bleak picture of exploitation, unhappiness, and confusion emerges. Using a barrage of quotations from psychologists and sociologists such as Rollo May, Paul Gebhard, and Max Levin, he documents the emptiness and dissatisfaction caused by sex as it is often practiced today. Yet nowhere does he condemn anything or suggest any standards. By the time he finishes, the reader is crying out for some new approach to it all.

Vincent then takes the reader on a tour of each of several philosophies toward sex: Hugh Hefner's, the "new morality," and legalism. He shows the practical results of the *Playboy* approach, dissolving many myths. He carefully and fairly explains the new morality, going back to John A. T. Robinson, Joseph Fletcher, and Paul Lehmann, showing it as a reaction to hyperlegalism, and giving it due credit for its important emphases. But he also shows it is based on assumptions of man's goodness, rationality, and knowledge—assumptions that on closer examination do not hold up. In a chapter important for many Christians to read, Vincent points out the deficiencies of

legalism: it makes absolutes out of relatives, ignores the spirit of the law, and neglects love. In a historical survey he candidly discusses fear of sex in both the Church and secular society.

After Vincent has presented the crisis and knocked down each proposed answer, the reader becomes impatient to find out where the author himself stands. The chapter on "How It Should Be According to God" is therefore received with welcome if not relief, and the last section of the book (applying God's principles to specific situations) becomes a needed answer rather than a burdensome list of commandments.

Vincent's approach is not only doctrinally sound (like so many others) but also psychologically sound. I join him in recommending it to anyone "trying to decide the place of sex in [his] life or unhappy with it as it is." It will not offend with dogmatism the person who has a liberal church background or a sexually liberated life style; it will draw him into a serious reexamination of his position and possibly change it. Young evangelicals reading Vincent may find that the moral baggage handed down from the older generation makes sense and frees them, rather than restricting them. For older churchmen, too, Vincent can be an eye-opener, making them rethink some of their views. For example, he argues that "the Christian home must favor sex education, whether that education is in the home, the church, or the schools." He also states, "My conviction is that, if masturbation is utilized to decrease lust or excessive sexual fantasies, it is good."

Although *God, Sex, and You* is comprehensive and intellectually stimulating, it is still only an armchair discussion of the issues of sex and marriage. Walter Trobisch's new book, *I Married You*, does a much better job of actually communicating the attitudes and values that form a Christian approach to sexuality. As in *I Loved a Girl*, Trobisch tells a true story, drawing the reader into the emotional involvement necessary for learning spiritual and interpersonal truths.

The book describes his four-day visit to an African city to lecture on sex and marriage. Every spare minute he spends counseling the young Africans who come to him for help with problems involving premarital sex and marital adjustments. As they begin to apply the concepts of the lectures to their own lives, a near-suicide is averted, a marriage is planned, an affair is broken off, and a romance is begun. At the climax of the book, Trobisch's wife wounds him with the accusation, "You don't know what marriage is." He admits he has been so concerned with lecturing and counseling that he has neglected her, and the episode adds a compel-

lingly authentic note to the book.

Trobisch builds the lectures in his new book around a simple but effective illustration. Marriage is like a triangle whose three angles are love, wedlock, and sex; if any of the angles is missing, the relationship is not a healthy marriage. The best way to "enter the marriage triangle" is through the angle of love, since a relationship begun by sex or by marriage itself lacks a sound base. Trobisch's explanation of the place of sex in the relationship of an engaged couple is the best I have seen: "Each step in the direction of faithfulness and wedlock should go hand in hand with the deepening of tenderness and intimacy, until finally, coming from the

entrance of love, the two other angles—wedlock and sexual union—are reached at the same time."

The best way to appreciate the quality of the books by Vincent and Trobisch is to take a look at some of the others currently being published. *Christian Perspectives on Sex and Marriage* by William Fitch is a prime example. Like the first two books, it is written by an evangelical; however, it is also written exclusively for evangelicals. Anyone else who opened the book would either shut it with a bang or read on for amusement. In an approach precisely the opposite of Vincent's, Fitch begins laying down the law to the younger generation on page one and

by the end of the book has issued warnings and advice on every possible area of male-female relations. He uses a question-and-answer format; the questioner is apparently some very devout and very naive young evangelical. Sometimes Fitch gives a biblical basis for an answer, and in a few instances he quotes from another authoritative source, but generally the answers are from his own experience and opinions.

Some of his advice is sensible and some not so sensible, but all of it is given with a paternalism that destroys any chance of its reaching young Christians. It seems that the writer is at least sixty. Age in itself is not a disqualifying factor for a would-be coun-

NEWLY PUBLISHED

A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities, by Robert T. Handy (Oxford, 282 pp., \$7.95). A fresh look, based on a thorough study of the sources, at the grand aims and underlying assumptions of our white Protestant forebears. Helps us to see how we got where we are.

Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition, by Kenneth Keniston (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 403 pp., \$9.95). A Yale psychology professor who has long been writing outstanding essays on the youth of today offers them in collected form.

A Global View of Christian Missions: From Pentecost to the Present, by J. Herbert Kane (Baker, 590 pp., \$8.95). The first 100 pages survey Pentecost to 1800. Then comes a country-by-country look at Protestant missions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America since then. A useful reference work, though unavoidably there are omissions, and obviously some data are already dated.

Praise the Lord and Pass the Contribution, by Alan Bestic (Taplinger, 259 pp., \$6.50). A biting survey—from Garner Ted Armstrong and Carl McIntire to Oral Roberts and Billy Graham—very obviously biased. The author's attitude is summed up in a quote he attributes to St. Jerome: "Avoid as you would the plague a man of God who is also a man of business."

Great Religions of the World (National Geographic Society, 420 pp., \$11.95). A splendidly illustrated introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity—best suited to those who want only the "good" side.

Stop Treating Me Like God, by Levi Keidel (Creation House, 223 pp., \$4.95), and *Never Say Can't*, by Jerry Ballard (Creation House, 172 pp., \$4.95). Problems encountered by missionaries are discussed. Keidel writes from first-hand experience, and Ballard recounts the struggles and victories of Thomas H. Willey.

Bright Essence: Studies in Milton's Theology, by Hunter, Patrides, and Adamson (University of Utah, 181 pp., \$7.95). Good discussion that refutes Milton's so-called Arianism. The authors concentrate on *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost*. Quite technical in places.

You Can Know the Future, by Wilbur M. Smith (Regal, 118 pp., paperback, \$1.25). Not on fortune-telling but on biblical prophecy; popular lectures by one of the editors of the New Scofield Bible.

You Can So Get There From Here (MARC, 919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, Calif. 91016, 23 pp., paperback, \$1). If you are considering employment or missionary service abroad, short or long term, this is the booklet to use for addresses for more information.

Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom, by Walter Zander (Praeger, 248 pp., \$8.50). A brief history, starting with Jerome, of Christians' attitudes toward the Holy Places; concentrates on the time since 1967, when Israel gained possession of them.

Christian Reunion: Historic Divisions Reconsidered, by John S. Whale (Eerdmans, 141 pp., paperback, \$2.95). Speaking primarily to the theologian, Whale questions traditional answers to the theological issues that have divided the Church in the past and suggests new opportunities for the ecumenical movement.

Law in the New Testament, by J. Duncan M. Derrett (Darton, Longman and Todd, 503 pp., £ 7). A collection of extremely original and illuminating essays by the professor of Oriental laws in the University of London. All but one are related to the Gospels, and the majority deal with the parables of Jesus.

A Turned-on Church in an Uptight World, by C. Peter Wagner (Zondervan, 124 pp., paperback, \$1.45). A cut above the usual study guide for discussion groups. Based on First Corinthians.

The Coming Convergence of World Religions, by Robley Edward Whitson (Newman, 209 pp., \$6.50). Anticipates and advocates a union between Christianity and other world religions. The basis of this unity, he says, will be "religious experience." Vague and ill-defined.

Caught in the Act: Modern Drama as Prelude to the Gospel, by John Van Zanten (Westminster, 201 pp., paperback, \$2.95). Discusses plays by such dramatists as Beckett, Ionesco, Stoppard, and Williams in relation to the spiritual crises of our day. Thought provoking.

Grace and Common Life, by David Baily Harned (University Press of Virginia, 150 pp., paperback, \$2.85). An unusual discussion of a central Christian doctrine. The author tells of the importance of grace in non-Christian religions, as well as in Christianity.

The Healing Trinity, by Peter S. Ford (Harper & Row, 133 pp., \$5.95). Fascinating, insight-filled account of the relation between organic, spiritual, and mental illness, by a well-qualified physician who believes in God's healing power for all three.

No Middle Ground, by Roger Huber (Abingdon, 155 pp., paperback, \$2.95). Calls for laymen to lead in the Church's revitalization. Interesting, and stimulating in places, but the author's less than conservative view of the Bible will blind some readers to his valuable insights.

Thomas Merton, Social Critic, by James Thomas Baker (University Press of Kentucky, 173 pp., \$8). Interesting spiritual biography of an outspoken Catholic monk by a Southern Baptist.

How Are You Programmed? by J. Edward Barrett (John Knox, 122 pp., paperback, \$2.45). Computer language and existential jargon are used to consider the age-old question, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" David's answer is better than Barrett's.

selor of the young; for all I know, Fitch may be no older than Trobisch or Vincent. However, he speaks from a different world and uses a different language. His choice of words ("real square"), his condescending tone, and his stiff but folksy style all mark him as someone far removed from the tensions and dangers faced by youth today. A sample: "I know that it is very natural for you to want to be with young people like yourself, and it is the most natural thing also for you to want at times to be alone with someone of the other sex, but be careful." His writing needs some polishing, quite aside from the question of its appropriateness for his intended audience.

Another book written by an older evangelical for younger evangelicals is *Sexual Understanding Before Marriage* by Herbert J. Miles. Here the condescending tone is not quite so strong, and the writing is excellent.

Miles, a professor of sociology, makes more of an attempt to document his views than does Fitch, but some of his documentation is rather sketchy. For example, he makes the statement that "the female sex drive does not demand release through masturbation. . . . Our research indicates this is true." His "research" consisted of one questionnaire distributed to 103 girls at a Christian college. This is hardly a thorough sampling of the female population. The fact that 35 per cent of that particular sample said masturbation is necessary may be more revealing than the fact that 65 per cent said it is not.

Miles also leans heavily on such props as, "There is much evidence that . . ." and "Marriage counselors have much confidential information to this effect in their files." He may be writing for teens, but they can tell the difference between fact and opinion as well as anyone else, and they would prefer either evidence or an honest opinion to "Father knows best" and a pat on the head.

Miles is not as far removed from the world of youth as is Fitch, but he does occasionally give some rather far-fetched advice. He defines *petting* to include hand-holding and kissing and then says that Christian youth should avoid all "petting" on social dates. At another point he says, "To marry a virgin is to marry a person who seems to understand the relationship of sex to total personality and life"—though virgins may be even less likely to understand this than the rest of the population. In another place he chides, "Any youth who is not interested in the right answers to these questions has simply stopped thinking and certainly does not have a bright future." How can anyone living today not know that "bright futures" went out with the fifties? To

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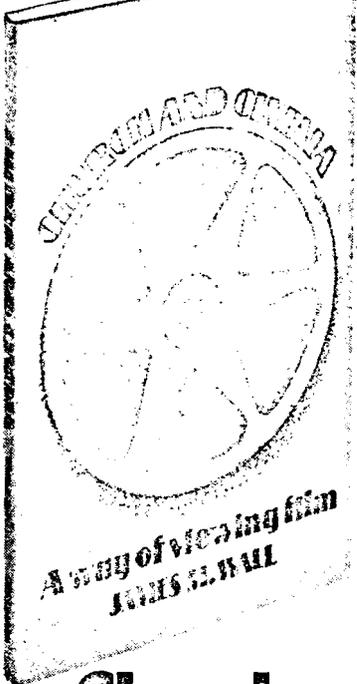
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today's youth growing up with crises in pollution, over-population, and guerilla and atomic warfare, Miles's threat has little impact.

A broad perspective on the issues of sex and marriage is offered in Lyle B. Gangsei's *Manual for Group Premarital Counseling*. Though it is specifically designed to be a handbook for small-group discussion sessions with engaged couples, this collection of excerpts from the writings of foremost authorities in marriage counseling is worthwhile for anyone interested in marriage. In each chapter Gangsei presents the complete spectrum of opinions on one subject (such as the meaning of marriage), usually beginning with the most liberal, even amoral voices and concluding with Christian viewpoints—from Hugh Hefner to Evelyn Duvall.

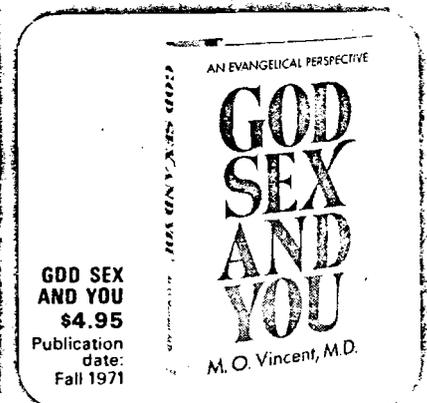
His evaluative discussions at the end of each chapter point out strengths and weaknesses in the arguments presented and lead the reader toward a Christian understanding. Gangsei also thoroughly covers areas that are usually skimmed over, such as family worship, monetary adjustment, and changing role patterns for husband and wife.

The other books included in this review are neither particularly good nor particularly bad. *Growing Up With Sex* is written for teens and has much the same content as Miles's book, except that Hettlinger actually comes to grips with their world and rarely talks down to them. He includes discussion of "a religious view of sex" but does not write from a specifically Christian perspective. About halfway through the book he endorses the standard sometimes called "permissiveness with affection" (intercourse may in some cases be appropriate before marriage). However, he then spends much of the rest of the book citing physical and emotional dangers and proving that the appropriate cases are very rare. This convincing approach will probably do more to persuade teens against premarital intercourse than the flat "no" often given them. He also argues effectively against teen-age marriages.

Manners to Love By is exactly what it says it is: a discussion of those basic patterns of thoughtful interaction that, though they should be second nature, are often neglected by two people who know each other well. Loeb is a non-Christian writing for couples at any stage of marriage involvement. His advice may at times seem rudimentary, especially for a Christian, but when he hits upon the particular habit or attitude that has thrived unexamined in the reader's life, he will cause some rethinking. His deliberately "witty" style becomes grating by the end of the book.

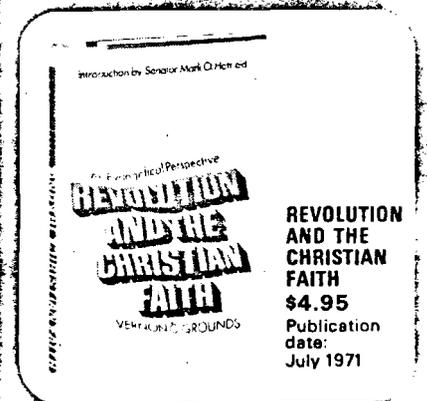
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and philosophical approach, John F. Dedek's book will be useful. A Roman Catholic priest, he presents the history of his church's attitude toward sex and related issues, including celibacy and contraception, and some new views of his own.

With this wide variety of books now being published, it is inexcusable for any church to leave sex education up to the schools. However, using the wrong book may be worse than doing nothing at all. Books such as *God, Sex, and You* and *I Married You* should be made available to every student in the youth fellowships—it is not enough to have a single copy lying dormant in the church library or minister's office—and Christian parents should give their older sons and daughters these books. With its moving personal story, *I Married You* would make an appropriate gift for any friend or relative. Unless individual Christians make the effort to promote a healthy understanding of sex and marriage, the loudly publicized new morality and *Playboy* philosophy will be the only voices the younger generation ever hears. □

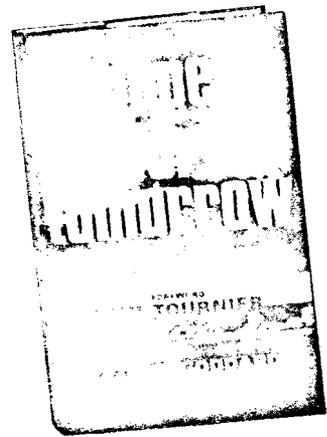
— IN THE JOURNALS —

Church libraries and serious-minded Christian leaders should be sure to subscribe to the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (Box 267, Springfield, Pa. 19064; \$3.50 a year). In the current volume, number seven, there are two dozen articles plus news reports and book reviews. (The first six volumes will soon be available in a reprinted two-volume hardback edition for \$9.95 from William Carey Library [South Pasadena, Calif. 91030]. As a bonus a 350-page report of the recent EFMA-IFMA conference at Green Lake will be included.)

For those interested in the thinking of self-designated fundamentalists, a good journal is *Central Bible Quarterly* (2105 Fremont Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minn. 55411; \$2 a year). The summer '71 issue concludes a four-part study of the New Testament teaching on economics. Other recent issues include articles on creation and on Jesus' literary style.

Sunday-school teachers should welcome the appearance of *Concept*, published by the National Sunday School Association (Carol Stream, Ill. 60187; \$3 a year), a monthly in tabloid format that began this September. Articles include "How Personal Is Your Class?" and "A Mandate for Change."

Members of a little-known worldwide fellowship, a branch of the so-called Exclusive Brethren, last year began a quarterly journal that merits a wider audience. Among the first-year articles in *Until* (Box 261, Sunbury, Pa. 17801; \$2 a year) were "The Myth of Christian America," "A New Testament Basis for Objection to War," and "The Powers that Be and the Obligations of Christians Toward Them."



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