Called to Responsible Freedom:

The Meaning of Sex in the Christian Life

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RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM? *There they go again! These church guys are really something. They tell us they want us to be free, which sounds real cool, but just try really being free and they lower that big boom they call responsibility. They pull this act all the time in committee meetings to plan parties, in discussion groups of every kind, and now they are trying to sell us their pitch about sex. How simple do they think we are? If we are going to be free in our dating, then, man, let us be free! Don't give us that responsible business. We don't mind being told what we should and shouldn't do (of course we may not pay any attention to such advice!), but don't try to pretend that this means freedom. We know that you can't have your cake and eat it too, so stop trying to persuade us that we can.*

Touché, my friend. There's truth in what you say, but lend me your ears for a few minutes, will you please? I know you are confused about this business of sex, and I admit that we church guys, as you call us, are partly to blame. But that's what this program is all about. We are trying to bring a little light into what is a pretty dark room.

To begin with, let's confess that much of our discussion of sex is vague, prudish, and squeamish. Parents, teachers, ministers, and youth group leaders tend to be awkward and embarrassed by the whole subject. You seem to learn a lot more from each other in the alley, the locker room, or at pajama parties than from adults. Of course, much of what you learn in such a way is misinformation rather than information, but how are you to know? Where can you turn for the real facts?

All of the media of mass communication bombard you constantly with sexual stimulation. Movies, television, magazines, novels, advertisements—they all act as though sex were the most important thing in life, and the standards of morality they present are in direct conflict with those preached at you at home

and in church. Your parents and your church want you to "be good," whatever that means, while it appears that very few people in our society are. Most of them seem to be having a lot of fun by being naughty. Talk about double standards! The adult world is expert at telling you, "Do as I say, not as I do."

On the one hand you have parents, preachers, and teachers telling you to be "responsible" which freely translated simply means "don't," while on the other hand much of society, including a good proportion of your own age group, is urging you to be "free" which means in effect "anything goes." And now along comes this program talking about responsible freedom which really seems to you to be double talk, right?

O.K. So far, so good. I read you, but so what, if I may be so bold?

Fair enough. The so what is simply this: We are asking you to take a look at what the Bible has to say about this whole problem. Now wait, don't run off! Just give it a try. You will find it won't hurt much at all. In fact, you may be surprised to discover how much sense this dusty old book makes. For instance, I am sure you think the Bible takes a dim view of sex in general —all that jazz about "Thou shalt not" and anybody who even thinks about sex is already guilty. The fact is, however, that the Bible as a whole is not only strongly in favor of sex, but also surprisingly frank about it. The Old Testament begins with a description of God's creation of sexuality: "Male and Female created he them" and with the divine command to "be fruitful and multiply." There is no suggestion anywhere that anyone should be celibate. Everyone is expected to marry and have children, and numerous Old Testament males had more than one wife, apparently with the full blessing of the Almighty. Adultery was strictly forbidden, as were other sexual deviations, but no shadow whatsoever is cast upon sex as such.

Sure, sure, I know what you mean. I've read some of those passages in the Old Testament which are pretty interesting, but what's this all got to do with responsible freedom? It seems to me that the Bible is still saying no to us. Responsible, maybe, but where does the freedom come in?

Good question. Let's look at it this way. Jesus had his greatest difficulty with a group of characters known as Pharisees. They wanted everyone to live according to the rules. They were respon-

sible, all right, with a large, capital R. They had every possibility worked out in detail down to the most minute jot and tittle. If they were around today (and some of them are!), they would have your relationships with the opposite sex regulated totally. Holding hands in the back seat of a theatre would be permitted as would a chaste good night kiss at the door, providing only the lips met without further bodily contact. You could neck in a parked car for six minutes and thirty seconds, but no longer, and there would be carefully detailed rules about what you could and could not do. Precious little freedom there, is there?

Are you kidding? ! ! ! ! !

Well, both Jesus and the Apostle Paul were seeking to set men free from this sort of legalistic bondage. This scandalized a lot of the pious folk of the day who were sure that only stern prohibitions and rigorous commands kept people on the straight and narrow and out of the primrose path. Take away the laws and sheer moral chaos will result. Against this viewpoint, Jesus argued that it meant very little merely to refrain from doing wrong outwardly while inwardly one was seething with illicit desires, or to do the right thing grudgingly and reluctantly. The trouble with the Pharisees, he said, was that they gave all their attention to polishing the outside of the cup while the inside was sticky and grimy with dried sugar and stale grounds. They were like graves covered with white and shining limestone beautifully decorated with flowers concealing the rotting flesh and decaying bones beneath. It's the inside of a person that matters. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Or Paul put it another way. "I can do all sorts of good works, giving away everything I own to the poor, even becoming a martyr, but if I do it without love, it is empty and meaningless."

What is required is a transformation of inner attitudes, not putting on greater pressure with sheer will power to resist wrong impulses and to drive oneself to be good. The man who really loves God and his neighbor doesn't need any laws or rules to tell him what to do or not to do. He spontaneously and freely and joyously acts out of love. This is what led St. Augustine and Martin Luther both to say, "Love God and do as you please." Now that's what we mean by freedom.

Yeah, but isn't that kinda dangerous? To let people do as they please seems—well, you know, dangerous!

The entire booklet is photographically reproduced above and on the following pages

The Shame of the National Council of Churches

This *Called to Responsible Freedom —Meaning of Sex in the Christian Life,* is a call to throw overboard the standards set up by the Lord Jesus Christ and the standards which Western civilization has sought to maintain in monogamous marriage. Here is an appeal for illicit sex relations outside the marriage bond and before the marriage bond. Here are arguments for "free love."

The climax of this can be seen on page 9, where Western civilization's "official" position is described and where, in as plain a language as could possibly be used, it is said this must be corrected. The old way, the old standard, is called "misguided" and "wrong."

At the bottom of page 9, we are told: "Our culture declares that all sexual activity within marriage is legal, proper, and good, while any such activity outside marriage is illicit, sinful, and wrong. This is to ignore the personal dimension of life, to seek to force everyone under one massive legal unbrella."

This is a complete destruction of moral standards or restraints as they have been taught in the Christian church in accordance with the Seventh Commandment and the explicit teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here the name of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. is used to encourage young people to believe that, if they are "motivated by love," they can proceed. These are arguments for lawlessness, promiscuous and lustful license.

When the standards of marriage and morality and the restraints set up by the commands of God are undermined and attacked in this direct manner, the family unit in our society is suffering a mortal blow.

The conclusion of the whole matter (page 13) simply is, "We must keep

free from sterile legalism on the one hand, remaining always open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit." But the guidance of the Holy Spirit is here separate from the Seventh Commandment, separated from the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit here is used as a term to cover up license and what a young couple may consider "to be love."

Here is a complete twisting of the Christian faith and we are told, "Jesus never promised that Christianity was easy." The difficult point here is the conflict between observing the commands of Christ and following the temptations to license and freedom outside of the marriage bond. This is a farcical representation of Christianity and the climax of this type of irresponsibility is seen in the last sentence in the book when the young person is told, "You can leap into the pool of personal decision," and then, "From here on, the matter is between you and the Lord."

But here all that the Lord has taught has been thrown aside as a "rigid standard." All that the Lord would set before us as His own standard of morality as given in the Seventh Commandment is laid aside. The name of the Lord is brought back as a convenience to be used to tempt the young person to move on out in throwing over the restraints of the moral law which God has placed upon each man —and the violation of that law is sin. The name of the Lord is at this point used to encourage young people to proceed to sin. At this point we come out at the end of the discussion where each man does that which is right in his own eyes.

This entire booklet should be repudiated. The Christian churches should rebuke the National Council of Churches for being a party to this attack upon the Word of God. It is significant to note the argument about the Pharisees. The Pharisees are completely misrepresented at this point. The Pharisee here is the person who holds the position that our Lord Himself took. On this point Jesus Christ has become the Pharisee!

Then we are told that this "love" delivers one entirely from any rules or laws. Even Martin Luther's name is brought in to support this untenable position. Jesus Christ said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments," and "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." True love of God is manifest in implicit obedience to the commands of God. Here again you have a deliberate perversion and complete twisting of the teaching of love as it is presented in the Bible. You