

NO RULES, NO CIVILIZATION: The Sexual Revolution left us free . . . to be miserable

By Michael Wagner

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We all want different things. And because of our fallen natures, many of our wants are for things that will harm us and those around us—we lust after power, sex, other people's possessions, even revenge. If everyone simply pursued their own desires, it's hard to see how civilization could survive.

Fortunately for us, God has provided rules for living—the Ten Commandments—that restrict these desires so that they don't harm others. The Law helps to make harmonious social life possible. Rules make civilization possible—no rules, no civilization.

The Bible is bad?

But many today don't like rules and this is especially true with regard to sexual behavior. So-called "Victorian" sexual morality has been accused of being the cause of psychological "hang-ups"; Biblical morality is seen as the source of much human suffering. The solution, in this view, can only be found in individual and societal sexual liberation.

The "need" to break out of the confining and suffocating constraints of traditional morality was thus a major impetus to what has been called the "Sexual Revolution," a significant social development in the Western countries whereby modern liberal views of sexual attitudes and behavior replaced the traditional norms of Western civilization. This revolution, and the attitudes and behaviors it promoted, has been embraced by the political, academic and media establishments, as well as many common citizens. It was the Sexual Revolution that led to the legalization of abortion and the widespread acceptance of divorce, promiscuity, pornography, homosexuality and cohabitation without marriage, basically a shopping list of many current social problems.

***Playboy's* role**

David Allyn's book, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution, an Unfettered History* (Routledge, 2001), describes in gory detail the major figures and events of the Sexual Revolution. Allyn is a proponent of the changes he describes and is clearly excited by the sexual "liberation" that occurred. Strangely, however, he sees the Sexual Revolution as coming to an end by the mid-1980s (due to the emergence of AIDS and the Christian Right in the USA), so I'm not sure what he's thinking—today the presence of the Sexual Revolution is more obvious than ever before.

Pornography has been a major component of the propaganda arm of the Sexual Revolution. *Playboy* magazine was founded in 1953 and soon became exceedingly

popular. By 1960 its circulation was over one million. The magazine's founder, Hugh Hefner, not only became very wealthy, he was also a cultural celebrity. *Playboy* magazine has played a central role in the Sexual Revolution.

Although *Playboy* is a heterosexual magazine catering to heterosexual interests, it nevertheless contributed to the strength of the homosexual rights movement. For one thing, the Playboy Foundation (affiliated with the magazine) contributed money to some homosexual rights organizations. More importantly, however, was *Playboy's* undermining of traditional morality. Allyn writes,

“As gay playwright and AIDS activist Larry Kramer states, ‘Hugh Hefner did more for gay liberation by creating *Playboy* than any other single person did.’ It is not so much that *Playboy* promoted the discussion of gay issues or endorsed gay rights (though it occasionally did do so) as that the magazine legitimated sexual desire outside of marriage” (pp. 161-162).

***Penthouse* goes further**

Playboy's financial success was bound to attract imitators, and it sure did. One of the most significant was *Penthouse* magazine founded by Bob Guccione in 1970. This magazine gained attention by publishing racier pictures than even *Playboy* would allow. And it was more ideologically committed to overthrowing traditional morality.

“*Penthouse* was more than just another skin magazine. It promised to keep the reader on the front-lines of the sexual revolution. Guccione made a virtual pledge to his readers that he would forever do battle against the forces of repression. This was an essential element in the magazine's extraordinary appeal” (p. 231).

With the spread of pornography, and at the same time a dramatic increase in the production of adult literature (i.e. immoral literature), came a basically simultaneous liberalization of obscenity laws, often through judicial interpretation. When immoral materials were challenged under obscenity laws, judges increasingly decided in favor of “free expression,” thus helping to unleash further increases in the production of immoral materials.

“Free” love

One of the most popular novels of this period (the mid-1960s and early 1970s) was *The Harrad Experiment* by Robert Rimmer. Basically the novel is about the sexual experimentation of a group of college students. But the underlying purpose of the novel was to promote a stridently anti-Christian view of morality. Allyn notes:

“The book's thesis was clear: If individuals took a rational view of sex, there would be no more jealousy, no more monogamy, no more shame—all products of Judeo-Christianity's superstitious anti-sex agenda. From a historical perspective, monogamy was rooted in the concept of woman as property. In an enlightened,

humanistic world, such a barbaric concept would be abolished. Ultimately, sexually liberated men and women would form happy, enduring group marriages, in which jealousy and secrecy and adultery and divorce would be unknown. In fact, by eliminating shame and self-loathing, sexual rationalism would solve virtually all of society's remaining problems" (p. 72).

This is a fairly succinct summary of the ideology guiding many sexual revolutionaries. Eliminate Christian morality and—presto!—many of society's problems will disappear. Some people actually believe that.

Hand-in-hand with this kind of thinking went a favorable view of divorce. Traditional monogamous marriage was seen as a confining institution, basically a form of slavery. Many people suffered unhappy lives in unhappy marriages. Divorce, it was argued, would lead to liberation for the couple, and the children would be spared the trauma of watching their parents fight. Everyone would be better off, right? That's what many "experts" were saying by the early 1970s. And so "the sexual revolution of the 1960s and '70s created a new context for the national debate on divorce. Divorce went from a necessary evil to a positive good almost overnight" (p. 259).

Promiscuous sex outside of marriage was seen as a major component of "freedom" by proponents of sexual liberation. And as one would expect, such behavior led to a large number of "unwanted pregnancies." What to do? Well, kill the babies, of course. The problem was that abortion was commonly restricted or even illegal in most jurisdictions. Many states in the USA had laws against abortion, for example. So these laws needed to be overturned. The US Supreme Court obliged by striking down all abortion laws in that country in the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. Allyn makes the significance of that decision very clear: "*Roe v. Wade* was the crowning achievement of the sexual revolution" (p. 266). Legalization of abortion was the "crowning achievement"—how about that?

The "good life" is godly

According to this view of the world, Christianity is the killjoy of life. It compels people to restrain their natural sexual appetites, which can only legitimately be expressed within monogamous marriage. Supposedly this causes Christians to be "repressed," leading to various social and psychological problems. Sexual liberation (that is, throwing off Christian moral restraint) leads to relaxed, well-adjusted people. And these people can freely enjoy the good things in life—you know, like promiscuity, pornography, divorce and abortion. Isn't that appealing?

No. The rules stipulated in the Ten Commandments lead to the good life, not a so-called "liberation" from the Commandments. All people are sinful, and so all people experience problems in their lives, including Christians. But those problems cannot be alleviated by throwing away God's rules for human living. Quite to the contrary, in fact. Biblical morality is a sure guide to the good life. The happiness promised by the Sexual Revolution is a fraud. Surely that should be apparent by now.

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