

## “The Moral Crisis of Our Time”

“The moral crisis of our time consists primarily not in the widespread violation of accepted moral standards . . . But in the repudiation of those very moral standards themselves.” —Will Herberg, “What is the Moral Crisis of Our Time” (*Intercollegiate Review*, 1968)

### I. A FRACTURED FOUNDATION

#### A. Articles illustrating Issue

1. David Carlin’s “What Do We Agree On?”—historical move in U.S. from Protestant to Judeo-Christian to Secular
2. Gerald Murray’s “Cardinal Capuch’s Revolutionary Conscience” re authoritative “lived experience” & evolving sexual standards following Pope Francis’ *Amoris Laetitia*
3. George Rutler’s “Mathematical Innovations of Father Antonio Spadaro”— $2+2=4$  not necessarily true in theology!
4. Anthony Esolen’s “Church Critics Have Long Abandoned the Real World,” says Arnold Lunn’s FIF (“funny inside feeling”) now reigning

#### B. Tracing Trajectory in SCOTUS decisions: replacing text with justices’ convictions

1. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954—segregation
2. *Engel v. Vitale*, 1962—school prayer
3. *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965—contraception
4. *Roe v. Wade & Doe v. Bolton*, 1973—abortion
5. *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* 1992—abortion supported, plus Justice Kennedy re liberty & personal construction morality
6. *Obergefell, v. Hodges*, 2015—same sex marriage

#### C. Tracing Developments in United Methodism—Karen Booth’s *Forgetting How to Blush*

#### D. Analyzing Reasons

1. Nihilism/Antimonianism—no moral laws; Is 5:21: “call evil good, and good evil”
2. Nominalism—no universals; Pilate: “What is truth”

### II. A SURE FOUNDATION: SINAI SIGNIFICANCE

- A. GOD revealed at Burning Bush: He Who IS
- B. GOD commands: 10 Commandments

### III. REBUILDING A FOUNDATION

- A. Persons: rearing; education;
- B. Families: lawgiver; codes; routines; duties
- C. Churches: teaching; discipline; celebration; stigmas
- D. Communities: laws; leaders

Booth, Karen. *Forgetting How to Blush: United Methodism's Compromise with the Sexual Revolution*.

“Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush” (Jeremiah 8:12).

But the roots of our long struggle over homosexuality go back farther than that—at least to the late 1950s and early 1960s when several strategic educational and programmatic decisions were made. Key Methodist agency leaders and staffers (most of whom were men) adopted and promoted a value neutral approach to sexual ethics called “the new morality”—a decision that laid the groundwork for the sexual confusion and compromise that would follow.

Three years earlier, he had delivered a faculty presentation that his biographer, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, believes was the first fully developed public expression of the ideas [Alfred] Kinsey would advocate for the rest of his life: —Human beings are animals whose sexual behavior is derived from their mammalian background. —So-called “perversions” are rooted in primate behavior and in that sense are “natural.” —Sexual activity is a required “outlet” for men and women. —Long frustration and denial of sexual urges are the primary causes of social problems and sexual conflicts in young people, leading to “psychic conflict of such magnitude as to constitute probably the most serious threat against the home.” —The Christian church is to blame for this situation; it is the main culprit behind sexual ignorance, repression and dysfunction.

Kristin Luker, professor of law and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, wrote that: Men and women of a certain age have lived through a [sexual] revolution as disorienting and historically important as any of the revolutions we routinely recognize as such . . . and like them it will continue to reshape human life in profound ways for many, many years to come. That revolution questioned a whole set of assumptions about what were the right ways for men and women to relate to one another sexually, how sex was and should be related to maleness and femaleness, and how and where marriage and sex should coincide. The opening up of what had been taken-for-granted truths has changed the world.

Hugh Hefner was deeply affected by *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, which put down on paper and justified many of the thoughts and feelings he had and knew other people had as well. As usual, Hugh Hefner became obsessed with Kinsey’s book, and it became a guiding influence in his life.

Pitirim Sorokin was similarly prophetic in his book *The American Sex Revolution*: Any considerable change in marriage behavior, any increase in sexual promiscuity, and illicit relations, is pregnant with momentous consequences. A sex revolution drastically affects the lives of millions, deeply disturbs the community, and decisively influences the future of society.

I had struck up a conversation with an elderly man who I assumed was a conservative. A bit into our talk, it became obvious he wasn’t, and that he had incorrectly assumed I was a comrade of his on the pro-gay side. When we finally got to the core of our disagreement over biblical authority and theology, he said something I will never forget. It was one of the most honest admissions I’ve ever heard from a progressive. “You know, we could resolve our conflict quite easily,” he told me, “if we could just agree to get rid of the first five books of the Old Testament. If we could just eliminate the doctrine of original sin, we wouldn’t have this problem.”

Poring through the historical records of a number of Methodist and United Methodist Boards and Agencies, I discovered that deliberate curriculum and program choices made in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s and 1970s laid the foundation for the moral revisionism that would follow and spread. And it all began with the then Methodist Church’s development of sex education material.

. . . with substantial amounts of Tillich and Buber, a few revisionist twists and a dollop of Jungian psychology for good measure. Myers taught that truth is not static but a “continuing revelation”; that church teaching should therefore “readjust itself” to the insights of modern psychology and sociology; that justification is not, as traditionally understood, being made right with God, but is “accepting the fact that I am accepted”; that in the ultimate union of masculinity and femininity man’s “wholeness,” including his homosexuality, emerges and, therefore, that all relationships are equally “valid” if they are loving, committed and “responsible.”

Biblical authority and scriptural interpretation have become two of the principal battlegrounds in the Christian conflict over human sexuality.