

❖ Other Voices ❖

We are what we think. This is why we should never underestimate what we allow to enter our minds. It is by means of thoughts that the spirits of evil wage a secret war on the soul. Thus the fifth-century bishop Maximus warns us, “Just as it is easier to sin in the mind than in action, so warfare through our impassioned conceptual images of things is harder than warfare through things themselves.”

JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT, “Forward” to J. Heinrich Arnold, *Freedom from Sinful Thoughts*

Paul is not attacking the nature of the body but the unbridled license of the mind, which abuses the body. The body was not made for the purpose of fornication, nor was it created for gluttony. It was meant to have Christ as its head, so that it might follow him. We should be overcome with shame and horror-struck if we defile ourselves with such great evils, once we have been accounted worthy of the great honor of being members of him who sits on high.

CHRYSOSTOM (347-407), *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:13

In the Platonic view, the body is a prison; in that of Paul, it is the temple of God because it is in Christ.

TERTULLIAN (160-220), *On the Soul*

Men and women can find real intimacy in loving, committed marriages with open communication. The temptation everyone faces, however, is the desire to take a shortcut—to settle for what [Dr. Harry] Schaumburg calls “false intimacy.” Instead of going through the effort required for real intimacy, people often settle for an illusion—an airbrushed image, a virtual reality, a cyberaffair—something that seems to give a high without hurt, ecstasy without expectations, fulfillment without faults.

STEPHEN O. WATTERS, *Real Solutions for Overcoming Internet Addictions*

One of the boasts of our century is that its artists—not to mention its psychologists, therapists, anthropologists, sociologists, statisticians, and pornographers—have pried open the bedroom door at last and shown us sexual love for what it “really” is. We have, we assume, cracked the shell of sexual privacy. The resulting implication that the shell is easily cracked

disguises the probability that the shell is, in fact, not crackable at all and that what we have seen displayed is not private or intimate sex, not sexual love, but sex reduced, degraded, oversimplified, and misrepresented by the very intention to display it. Sex publicly displayed is public sex. Sex observed is not private or intimate and cannot be.

Could a voyeur conceivably crack the shell? No, for voyeurs are the most handicapped of all the sexual observers; they know only what they see.... The intimacy, the union itself, remains unobserved. One cannot enter into this intimacy and watch it at the same time, any more than the mind can think about itself while it thinks about something else.

W E N D E L L B E R R Y , *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*

Porn erodes intimacy because [as Gary Brooks says] it “pays scant attention to men’s needs for sensuality and intimacy while exalting their sexual needs.” In other words, porn ruins men’s appetites—their healthy sexual hunger for their wives (or future wives). C. S. Lewis once wrote, “You must not isolate the sexual pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to try to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.” By offering arousal without intimacy, pornography feeds men’s sexual cravings with the equivalent of sticky sweets loaded with empty calories....

S T E P H E N O . W A T T E R S , *Real Solutions for Overcoming Internet Addictions*

[Pornography is] a powerful symptom of injustice and alienation in human society. Through words and images, pornography debases God’s intended gifts of love and dignity in human sexuality. Although humankind was created male and female, equally and fully in the image of God, the history of humanity reveals a fundamental pattern of dominance and subjugation.

C A T H E R I N E I T Z I N , *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties*

Human laws demand that women be chaste and if they are not they are punished for it, but they do not demand the same for men. Since it was men who made the laws, they did not make themselves equal with women but allowed themselves extra indulgence. The holy apostle, however, inspired by divine grace, was the first one who made the law of chastity apply to men as well.

T H E O D O R E T O F C Y R U S (393-457), *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, commenting on 1 Corinthians 7:3*

Though its primary harms may be to women and children, pornography affects all of us, for it makes serious statements about our world and human life. It asserts that some people are legitimate victims and others legitimate victimizers; it reinforces the worst of our society’s hierarchies of

inequality and injustice. It asserts that sexual pleasure comes from de-meaning, exploiting, objectifying and degrading our partners in the most intimate ways, rather than from an eager and passionate cherishing of the wholeness of that partner. Good theology can be helpful in clarifying what is at stake in porn....

If the churches are to deal responsibly with porn, they must also affirm and celebrate healthy human sexuality.... And if we in the churches are concerned that porn provides serious misinformation about sexuality and sexual violence, then we must also take very serious steps to provide accurate and sensitive alternatives—such as supporting rape centers, sex education, and genuine artists who may depict sex in their work.

MARY D. PELLAUER, “Pornography: An Agenda for the Churches”

Both erotic and pornographic material can be sexually stimulating; however, pornography is used to degrade others, while erotica celebrates human sexual experience. Although erotica is sexually arousing material, it is not meant to degrade women, men or children. Pornography, on the other hand, uses subjugation themes for the explicit purpose of sexual arousal. Pornography *always* dehumanizes, and we believe dehumanization is a violation of the value God places on human life and sexuality.

JUDITH K. & JACK O. BALSWICK, *Authentic Human Sexuality*

From Homer to Shakespeare, from the Bible to Jane Austin, we have many imaginings of the intimacy and power of sexual love that have respected absolutely its essential privacy and thus have preserved its intimacy and honored its dignity....

The danger [in explicit artistic representation of sexual lovemaking], I would suggest, is not in the representation but in the reductiveness that is the risk of representation and that is involved in most representations. What is so fearfully arrogant and destructive is the implication that what is represented, or representable, is all there is. In the best representations, I think, there would be a stylization or incompleteness that would convey the artist’s honest acknowledgement that this is not all.

The best representations are surrounded and imbued with the light of imagination, so that they make one aware, with profound sympathy, of the two lives, not just the two bodies, that are involved; they make one aware also of the difficulty of full and open sexual consent between two people and of the history and the trust that are necessary to make possible that consent. Without such history and trust, sex is brutal, no matter what species is involved.

WENDELL BERRY, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community*