

The God Virus

**How Religion Infects
Our Lives and Culture**

Darrel W. Ray, Ed.D.

**IPC Press
Bonner Springs, Kansas**

CHAPTER 5:

SEX AND THE GOD VIRUS

"Life in Lubbock, Texas, taught me two things. One is that God loves you and you're going to burn in hell. The other is that sex is the most awful, dirty thing on the face of the earth and you should save it for someone you love."

-Butch Hancock

Overview

This chapter will explore the methods religions use to control sex and sexuality. The most successful religions have learned how to utilize this powerful human drive in the interest of religious propagation. We will look at the effects of sex-negative and sex-positive religions in terms of a spectrum of control. To understand this important topic, let's start by looking at the experience of a woman we will call Sara.

Sara's Story

I met Sara and her lesbian partner in a restaurant to talk about her experience in leaving the Jehovah's Witnesses. She had been a lifelong member of the church and had married her sweetheart from the church when they were 18 years old. In subsequent years they had three children. Over the years of marriage, Sara felt a huge hole in her life. She had a high sex drive, but she was not attracted to her husband and found herself always thinking about women. At the same time, her husband, more and more frustrated with her lack of responsiveness to him, became abusive physically and emotionally.

Sara was torn between her training as a good Jehovah's Witness wife and her deep desire for a woman's touch. Everyone told her it was her duty to satisfy and obey her husband; the Bible was clear that she was committing a sin against god by denying her husband.

Through years of soul searching, Sara finally made the decision to take her children and leave her husband. Years of church teaching had taught her to fear and mistrust the courts and the government, so she used none of the resources available to women in her situation. She saved up money, rented a place far from her husband and stole away one night with her children.

After only a few weeks, her husband and a group of elders from the church appeared at her doorstep and took the children. She appealed to her husband to let her keep her children, but she was informed that the church had conducted a trial and that she was now disfellowshipped from the church. No one could have contact with her, including her own children. Their father would have sole custody and would not allow any contact with her.

Sara went into a deep depression. Not trusting the courts, she made no legal claims for her children. And having been taught that psychologists were evil, she refused to talk with anyone who could help her with her depression.

Not until she met her partner was she able to begin climbing out of her depression and take some positive action for her life and children. She enrolled in college, went to court to get partial custody and began living with her partner. Her partner was supportive and understanding, but her deep programming made it all but impossible for Sara to see any options for herself or her children. It took several years before she was able to begin seeing alternative ways of thinking and behaving.

Her life is still difficult, especially with her children. The court order for visitation rights and custody is undermined and thwarted at every turn by church elders who tell her children they will be disfellowshipped if they talk to their mother. Only one child talks with her, secretly calling late at night after everyone is in bed. If Sara calls, no one answers or whoever answers the phone immediately hangs up.

Sexual Control

Many would chalk Sara's story up to the programming of a cult, but it is not so easily dismissed. This type of programming is present in most other religions. Many evangelical and fundamentalist groups have a deep distrust of psychologists and psychiatrists and believe homosexuality is a major sin. Catholics try to keep children in the Catholic fold by demanding they be raised Catholic, even in a mixed marriage. They prohibit same-sex relationships and masturbation and allow sex only within marriage with no artificial birth control. Priests and nuns are expected to deny natural and normal drives for very unnatural and decidedly not normal celibacy. Nazarenes shun anyone who is openly homosexual or in a same-sex relationship, distrust secular psychologists and preach sexual abstinence outside of marriage. Muslims may stone to death married men and women who have affairs and persecute homosexuals. A woman may not be seen with a man who is not her relative in most Muslim countries. Hindus place great shame on a woman who divorces or has sex before marriage. Public kissing is a crime in India.¹ All major religions and most minor ones sanction women who express their sexuality in ways proscribed by the religion. The difference

¹ When actor Richard Gere kissed his cohost on an Indian charity show, the Associated Press reported April 26, 2007, "NEW DELHI – A court issued arrest warrants for Hollywood actor Richard Gere and Bollywood star Shilpa Shetty on Thursday, saying their kiss at a public function transgressed all limits of vulgarity." MSNBC, *Indian court issues warrant for Gere over kiss* [article on-line] (26 April 2007, accessed 20 November 2008); available from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18328425/>; Internet.

between Jehovah's Witnesses and other religions is only in degree. As we will see in this chapter, sexual control is a key religious strategy.

The Sex-Negative Environment

This graphic is not a scientific one, but it is an attempt to place the various god viruses on a spectrum from sex-negative to sex-positive. The primary factors in the rating are degree of control and severity of sanctions. Punishment by death for sexual practices, is found in Islam, Hindu and the Old Testament.

Some current Christian fundamentalists would like more Old Testament-type sanctions in our society. Here are some verses that they cite.

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

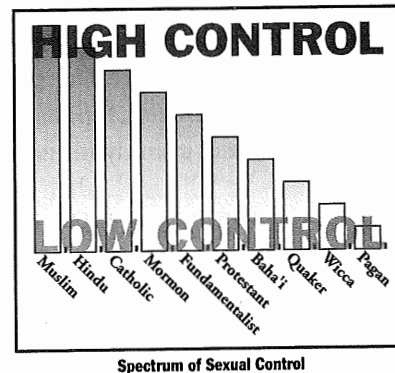
-Leviticus 20:10

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

-Leviticus 20:13

Following these passages, we might find that a significant portion of the current U.S. population might be subject to the death penalty.

Catholicism thrives in a sex-negative environment. Protestants also create a sex-negative environment but can survive with something less. Islam is among the most sex-negative religions. Sex-negative religions seek to control all aspects of sexuality; from masturbation to the role of women; from conception to sexual pleasure. The measure of sex negativity is the degree of sanction for violation. For example, if a young girl in Saudi Arabia is seen with a non-related boy she is not married to, both may be stoned to death.



Death is an extreme sanction, but other sanctions are almost as effective. A recent news item from Iraq told of a young girl who had been raped by her cousin, thereby shaming her family. Her father drove her to the Syrian border and dropped her off, thus expelling her from the family. She subsequently was forced into prostitution in Syria. Shaming one's family leads to serious, if not lethal, sanctions in much of Islam.² Most major religions maintain restrictions on females such as prohibiting them from becoming clergy, stronger sanctions for sexual violations, enforcing stricter dress codes and requiring certain practices during menstruation and childbirth. Female guilt is assumed in many religions as illustrated by the biblical story of Eve tempting Adam in the Garden of Eden.

As we saw in the last chapter, Christianity uses guilt to ensure sexual and marriage fidelity as well as fidelity to the church. Guilt is an important cause of sexual dysfunction in males and females. Sex for pleasure, from the religion's point of view, is a waste of energy, especially if it detracts from propagation of the god virus. For that reason, sexual pleasure is seen as suspect in Catholicism.

The Catholic virus has put a huge number of its eggs in the sexual basket – celibacy, abstinence, no abortion, no contraceptives, Mary was a virgin, Jesus was not married and non-sexual, none of the Apostles was married (all were non-sexual).³ St. Paul was obsessed with sexual control, as were most of the ante-Nicene fathers.⁴

Other forms of control can be seen in dress, especially that of women. It is interesting that the habit of Catholic nuns resembles the burka of Islam.

² See the discussion of guilt and shame in Chapter 4. For a recent example, a 57-yr.-old father murdered his 16-yr.-old daughter for refusing to wear a hijab to school in Toronto, Canada, Dec. 11, 2007. If it is happening in Toronto, one can imagine that it is far more likely happening in deeply infected countries like Pakistan where it might not even be seen as newsworthy. ABC News, *Slain Over Hijab? Father Allegedly Strangles Daughter Over Head Scarf* [article on-line] (12 December 2007, accessed 21 November 2008); available from <http://www.abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3987812>; Internet.

³ Most Christians cannot see the oddity of a non-married Jesus walking around Israel with 12 unmarried men following him. What would you think if you heard of an unmarried man wandering around town with 12 full grown, unmarried men following him and hanging on his every word. It is also amusing to ask Christians how Christ could be called rabbi when only married men could have that title in ancient Israel.

⁴ *Ante-Nicene Fathers* are a collection of non-Biblical Christian writings of early church fathers up to 325 CE when the Nicene Creed was adopted. *Early Church Fathers, Ante-Nicene Fathers* [book on-line] (accessed 21 November 2008); available from <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>; Internet.

Both are symbolic of sexual control and surrender to a male figure – husband, father, pope, Jesus, bishop, etc.

James Dobson's Focus on the Family can be analyzed using this model. It quickly becomes apparent that it is not "*Focus on the Family*," but "*Focus*

"Of all the sexual aberrations, chastity is the strangest."

-Anatole France

on the Virus." The family is the vehicle for the virus. Guilt based on strict interpretations of sexuality in the Bible is the hallmark of James Dobson's viral efforts. A religion has no problem disbanding the family if it

does not meet the religion's needs. Christianity as well as most other religions may support divorce if one parent falls away from the virus or converts to another. Better to have the parents divorce than risk infection of the children from another virus.

Gil Alexander-Moegerle was a founding member of Focus on the Family until he got divorced. In his book *James Dobson's War on America*⁵, Alexander-Moegerle discusses his removal from Focus on the Family. James Dobson viewed Alexander-Moegerle's divorce as an affront– the Dobson virus could not allow him to remain and potentially pollute the organization.

Religion-Friendly Environment

Religions seek to create an environment that makes it easy to propagate. In most cases, religious propagation is closely tied to biological propagation. As the family goes, so goes the virus. The virus must make sure that it is passed on to the next generation. For this reason, it creates an environment where it can ensure the young will be infected as efficiently as possible.

The Family

First, the religion must try to ensure that the family consists only of virally infected parents. All major religions place some sanctions on marriage outside the faith. Hindus do not marry Muslims, Muslims are not allowed to marry Christians, and so forth. The sanction can be so strong as to invoke the death penalty if violated. In recent years, the news media

⁵ James Dobson, *War on America* (Prometheus Books, 1997).

have been full of examples of Islamic girls being killed by their families for merely wanting to marry a non-Muslim. Marriage between related sects may also be prohibited. Catholics are discouraged from marrying Protestants. Shii'a Muslims are discouraged from marrying Sunni. The Druze disown anyone who marries outside the religion. Mormons do all they can to ensure people marry within the faith.

In "mixed marriages," a demand is often made with respect to raising the children. For example, the Catholic Church insists on children being raised as Catholic in a Protestant-Catholic union. Couples may be refused a Catholic wedding or sacraments if they fail to make this commitment.

The Children

Second, the religion must ensure that the young are properly infected. This is a time-consuming and resource-intensive requirement. For this reason the religion focuses on keeping the family unit intact so it can concentrate resources on infecting the next generation. Many mechanisms are brought to bear on this task, such as:

- Parental guilt, "Am I doing enough to teach my children about god?"
- Sexual fidelity, "Have I taught my children how important fidelity is to god?"
- Viral flooding, "Am I keeping my children busy with religious activities to ensure other religions or secularism can't influence them?"
- Viral isolation, "Am I doing all I can to keep my children heavily involved with other children at religious school, church camp, Sunday School, Wednesday prayer meeting, Thursday Bible study, youth choir, scripture memorization," etc.

In a pluralistic society, it is difficult to isolate children from other religions. Until complete infection is achieved, there is a constant danger of attack and infection by another religion, or worse, the idea of no religion. Infection is much more difficult in a pluralistic society than in a more monolithic culture like a village in Afghanistan. When a religion is completely bound to the culture, the culture is brought into the service of the virus with more powerful effect. Since there are no competing religions in the environment,

isolation has already been achieved. This makes infection efficient. It also makes it easier to impose heavy sanctions on wayward children.

Control of Sexuality and Reproduction

Uncontrolled sexuality prevents efficient propagation and risks wasting viral resources. The primary way to control sexuality is to create an environ-

"Of the delights of this world, man cares most for sexual intercourse, yet he has left it out of his heaven."

-Mark Twain

ment of prohibition and sanction. All of the major western religions and many of the eastern ones have learned to harness the power of the sex drive in service of the god. This is probably the single biggest factor in the evolutionary success of the major religions today: They learned how to harness the power of the sex drive for viral propagation through the use of guilt,

suppression of women's sexuality, indoctrination of the youth in the virtues of having sex only inside of marriage and other techniques.

Within this context, the religion takes over the mating and reproductive parts of the brain and directs specific behavior. This behavior is NOT what humans are inclined to do and may, in fact, be dramatically different. It may not even be in the best interest of the individual, but it is in the best interest of the god virus. Religion is not concerned with the pleasure aspect of sex. The concern is propagation. This leads to a sex-negative environment that is friendly to the virus.

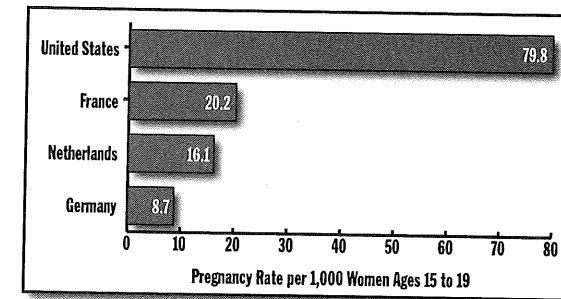
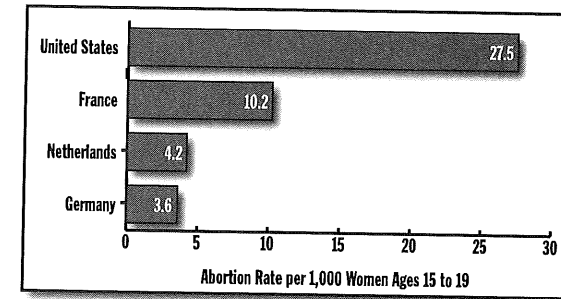
Sexual Suicide

The power of the virus is so great that it can induce sexual suicide. For example, Catholic priests and nuns are required to stop all sexual activity, including masturbation. Normal, biological drives are redirected or eliminated to allow the vector to focus all its energy on viral reproduction. The process creates huge psychological and emotional issues for priests and nuns, leading many to pathological behaviors.

While Islam does not make such unnatural requirements as celibacy, young suicide bombers in Islam in fact commit sexual suicide by giving up their reproductive capacity in the service of the virus. Virtually all suicide bombers in recent years have been young and clearly of reproductive age.

Reproductive Control

Control of reproduction is a fundamental strategy of the virus. Where the strategy is undermined, the virus is weakened. For example, god viruses are weak in Europe where access to birth control and abortion is higher than in the rest of the world. Ironically, the abortion rate is far lower in Europe, as are teenage pregnancies. Many religions in the United States claim that they want to reduce abortions and teenage pregnancy, yet in areas where religion is strongest, the rates are far higher. Don't be fooled by the viral words; if reduction in abortion or teen pregnancy were the goal, it could be achieved in a few years. Look at the following statistics:⁶



The god virus is not concerned with abortion or teen pregnancy; it is concerned with propagation.

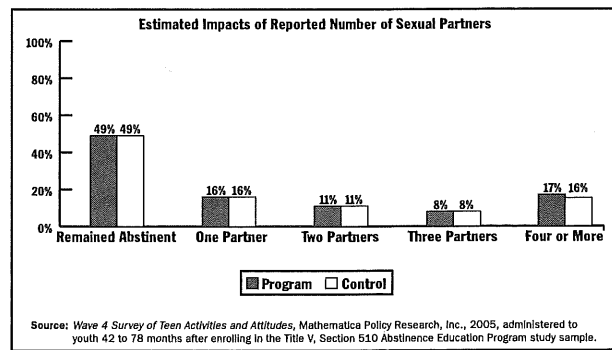
God viruses are highly threatened by low birthrates. That is why many of the Christian viruses are so focused on the question of when life begins. Abortion and birth control limit the potential hosts. Availability of abortion and birth control tends to push the environment toward the more sex-positive.

⁶ Sue Alford and Ammie N. Feijoo, *Adolescent Sexual Health in Europe and the U.S.—Why the Difference?* 2nd ed. (Advocates for Youth, 2001).

None of the major god viruses does well in sex-positive environments. Without sexual control, they face a serious challenge to their existence. Can you imagine the Catholic virus as sex-positive? Could you imagine Pope Benedict XVI, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Billy Graham, etc., carrying a sex-positive message of openness, sex as pleasure to be enjoyed to please yourself and your partner or partners as long as it is consensual and safe?

I don't think you will hear those sermons soon. As vectors of the virus, their job is to ensure sufficient sexual control to propagate the virus. Therefore, their sermons will be about abstinence, self-control, the terrors of abortion, the scandal of the Plan B drug and the horror of giving birth control pills or condoms to teenagers. Sexual control is the message, and it cannot be otherwise for a sex-negative virus.

Abstinence-only programs, advocated for by American fundamentalists, are a miserable failure according to most research. Nevertheless, these programs have the effect of creating sufficient guilt and fear in children to keep them bonded to the religion. The research shows these programs don't reduce pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, age of first sexual intercourse or the number of partners.⁷ As can be seen by the accompanying graph from a large meta-analysis of abstinence programs, there is no difference between abstinence groups and control groups. The groups are virtually identical.



⁷ Mathematica Policy Research funded by the U.S. Congress to evaluate abstinence-only programs found, "That youth in the four evaluated programs were no more likely than youth not in the programs to have abstained from sex in the four to six years after they began participating in the study. Youth in both groups who reported having had sex also had similar numbers of sexual partners and had initiated sex at the same average age." See Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., *Impacts of Four Abstinence Education Programs* [article on-line] (accessed 22 November 2008); available from <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/abstincencereport.asp>; Internet.

If these programs are so clearly ineffective, why does the government keep funding them with millions of dollars? It gives the new civil virus and allied god viruses a direct line to children in the public school systems. Abstinence is not about sex, it is about exposure to the god virus with the assistance of public school money. If reduction of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases were the real goal, why not emulate non-religious European societies where all of these are far lower? Most of Europe has cheap birth control and appropriate sex education for the young. These ideas are anathema to the god virus because every hour of training in an abstinence-only program helps imbed the guilt cycle into young persons so they will become more infected. They then get relief from their guilt through the god virus.

The Special Case of the Clergy

The Catholic Church has only recently been brought to task over the priest sexual abuse scandal, but Protestant churches have a scandal of their own that is yet to be fully exposed. In a January 23, 2007, article about two North Texas Baptist pastors accused of molesting young girls, Joe Trull, professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, had this to say:

Possibly if you looked at the statistics, I think there would be a higher incidence in nondenominational and Baptist churches because of a lack of accountability. Pastors there have not been prepared by their denomination. There is still that attitude in seminaries and colleges that prepare these pastors that they're on their own. It's that CEO mentality. And the thing that grieves me is that there's absolutely no sense of how this misconduct affects other ministers and churches.

Trull goes on to say:

In other denominations, [pastors] know that if charges are brought, truth will win out, Doctors and psychologists know if they are caught, they will lose their credentials and there will probably be a malpractice suit. Most Baptists and nondenominational ministers know that "If I get caught, I can move to California and start a new church."⁸

Oversight is extremely difficult in these independent churches, as their

⁸ Associated Baptist Press, *Baptist churches more vulnerable to clergy sex abuse, experts say* [article on-line] (23 January 2007, accessed 21 November 2008); available from http://www.abpnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1753&Itemid=120; Internet.

governing structures are entirely dependent on the vector. While they have governing boards, the vector is largely responsible for their appointment and knows how to run someone off who asks too many questions.

Continuing from the article mentioned above, Trull writes:

Christa Brown, an attorney from Austin, Texas, insists that Baptist leaders would not let autonomy delay action if they truly cared about protecting children from abuse. Brown works with the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, an organization of clergy sexual-abuse survivors. She maintains www.stopbaptistpredators.org and has asked the Baptist General Convention of Texas to hire independent experts to investigate sexual-abuse cases within the convention.

This is strong proof that the virus cares more about protecting the preacher than stopping abuse. It is unlikely that Baptists will take effective

action in the near future.

"When I get down on my knees, it is not to pray."

-Madonna

The independent model has been extremely effective. I have personally witnessed five different congregations torn apart by pastoral sexual affairs.⁹ In each case, the pastor was able to overcome

those who asked too many questions and eliminate them. After several incidents occurring over 10-15 years, in each case, the minister was finally forced out but only moved on to continue his predatory behavior at another church.

Those infected have great difficulty seeing inappropriate behavior in the vector. They are virtually hypnotized into believing he can do no major wrong.¹⁰ Sex-negative religion sets everyone up for some kind of fall: whether divorce, sexual abuse, sexual dysfunction, pedophilia or adultery.

⁹ The congregations represented Presbyterian, Baptist and the Independent Christian Church.

¹⁰ How often do we see headlines like this: "Megachurch leader in mega-sized sex scandal"? It seems to happen quite often. This was the headline on *MSNBC*, Nov. 19, 2007, about an Atlanta mega church where sexual misconduct of the founding minister was ignored for 35 years despite many complaints by women, until DNA testing found that his "nephew" was really his son by his brother's wife. Sounds like something out of the Old Testament. *MSNBC*, *Megachurch leader in mega-sized scandal* [article on-line] (19 November 2007, accessed 21 November 2008); available from <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21888916>; Internet.

As in the crime of rape, clergy sexual abuse is more about power than sex. Especially in mega churches,¹¹ charismatic vectors have a great deal of power and opportunity.¹²

From an anthropological perspective, ministers in mega churches clearly put themselves in an alpha male role within the social structure. In most cases, they have total control over who serves on the board and the budget. As the alpha male, the minister tends to attract a high proportion of females to males. The sex ratio in these churches is female dominated, as high as 60/40, and even higher in some. Within this context, the alpha male has groupies, like a rock band; females who work hard to get close to the alpha male by working on committees, volunteering, etc. The high-status male is sexually attractive to the females, which gives him the opportunity to choose the most desirable among his followers.

It may sound far-fetched, but it fits well within the structure of any polygamous society. In early Mormon culture, the high-status alpha males got the pick of the desirable females. In Middle Eastern Islamic culture alpha males, those who are tribal leaders or have huge resources clearly, have the pick of desirable females. A cursory study of many cults from Jim Jones' People's Temple to Warren Jeffs' Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints reveals the same pattern. Mega churches produce a tribal group with similar hierarchies and some of the same sexual patterns. Power is the aphrodisiac, as Henry Kissinger once suggested.

Some religions are sex-positive, but they keep a low profile in the United States. These include Wiccan and Pagan groups.¹³ Some of the less mainstream groups like Unitarians, Quakers and Baha'i are also more sex-positive, but they are still quite influenced by the larger sex-negative culture. They may not use the reproductive control strategy as much, if at all.

¹¹ A mega church is generally defined as having 2,000 or more attendees, on average, each Sunday. A mega church might have tens of thousands of members.

¹² Dee Ann Miller, *The Truth About Malarkey* (1stbooks.com, 2000) is a disturbing account of Protestant clergy abuse and the trials of the victims as they seek justice.

¹³ For an excellent article on a sex positive philosophy see Charlie Glickman, *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* Vol. 3 [journal on-line] (6 July 2000, accessed 21 November 2008); available from <http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/sexpositive.htm>; Internet.

Living in a Sex-Negative Environment

If you are a non-religious person you can no more avoid the influence of the sex-negative environment than a fish can avoid pollution in its stream.

"The basic religious idea of all patriarchal religions is the negation of sexual need."

-Wilhelm Reich

From access to the Plan B drug or abortion, to the fundamentalist pharmacist refusing to sell birth control, to public funding for abstinence programs, you are affected by religious control efforts all around you.

As a psychologist, I see a good deal of sexual dysfunction directly related to religious guilt. When

parents are afraid to have sex while the children are in the house, they are displaying specific viral behaviors. I have worked with many women who simply cannot enjoy sex if the children are anywhere near. The message is that children should not be exposed to their parents' sexual nature. Where did this come from?

Not many centuries ago in our culture and in many cultures still today, parents had sex in the same room where the children slept. How does a Hutu couple living in a one-room hut avoid sexual activity within sight or hearing of their children? How did nomadic Cheyenne or Shawnee Indians hide sexual activity from their children while living in a tent? How did Iroquois Indians living in an open lodge have sex? The answer is, they didn't worry a lot about it. Sex was seen as a normal, natural activity. These cultures don't make a display of sex, but they don't try and hide it from their children. Hiding implies guilt. Remember the story of Adam and Eve? They hid their nakedness from god.

Before the invasion of the hugely successful, sex-negative viruses of Christianity and Islam, many cultures were more sex-positive.¹⁴ The rise of non-culturally based viral religions has led to sex-negative environments in many areas of the world that were once sex-positive. As a sex-negative religion invades a culture, it strongly influences the mores and taboos of that culture. Whether the old mores and taboos were more sex-positive or sex-negative, they inevitably move toward the sex-negative after the invasion.

¹⁴ See such studies as Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Harper Perennial, January 1, 1971) and Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* 1 edition (Mariner Books, January 26, 2006) for examples of both sex-positive and sex-negative cultures that largely predate western influences.

Christian missionaries for two thousand years have been invading native cultures and creating sex-negative environments. The process has been so complete that even cultures that have not converted to one of the main religions have felt the influence. Just as smallpox hit communities in the Americas that had never seen a white man, sex-negative ideas have passed to societies who never saw a missionary.

A look at the missionary influence on Hawaiian culture is a classic study. Marriage was loosely defined, and sexual contact was not particularly regulated. One author notes that before contact with westerners, Hawaiians put more control on eating than on sexual practices.¹⁵ As an example of sex-positive culture, sexual ethnographer Milton Diamond wrote:

As they slept in the family house, they observed their parents having coitus. Among the Mangaian Islanders, as it was described by Marshall (1971, p. 108), probably is similar to the 'privacy' that was found in Hawai'i and elsewhere in Polynesia: A Mangaian may copulate, at any age, in the single room of a hut that contains from five to fifteen family members of all ages — as have his ancestors before him. His daughter may receive and make love with each of her varied nightly suitors in the same room ... But under most conditions, all of this takes place without social notice: everyone seems to be looking in another direction.

Your Sexuality

If you were raised in the United States, you were raised in a sex-negative culture and probably have some sex-negative ideas and behaviors. Eliminating the virus from your life means taking a hard look at activities that may be outside your consciousness. Compare your attitudes to those of pre-contact Hawaiians. It does not appear that they experienced any guilt over sex. That would be one benchmark against which to measure our cultural and individual sex negativity.

You probably received feelings of guilt about sex from parents, priests, nuns, preachers and Sunday school teachers. How does a Pope give anyone advice on sex? A Pope, priest or nun teaching about sex or giving advice

¹⁵ Milton Diamond, Ph.D., *Sexual Behavior in Pre-Contact Hawai'i: A Sexological Ethnography* (University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2004), 43.

on sexual matters seems rather odd. Almost as bad is an uptight, highly sex-negative fundamentalist preacher telling you about the joys of Christian sex! What kind of advice does Ted Haggard have that would enhance your marriage?¹⁶

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you try to diagnose the effects of the virus on you today:

- How does my sex-negative training affect my relationships?
- How does it affect my enjoyment of sex with others or with myself?
- Do I find myself fixated on things that were prohibited by my training?
- How much is my own sexual response affected by guilt or early viral training?
- What did my parents teach me about sex?
- Were my parents open and direct with me concerning sex as I was maturing, or were they secretive and nervous around sexual issues?
- Have I had sexual partners who were strongly affected by the virus? How did that affect my relationship and ability to enjoy them?
- Do I feel guilt about masturbation and pleasuring self?
- Am I self-conscious about my body in ways that may be related to the virus?

Evolution of the Sexual Culture

While our culture is largely sex-negative, there have been some sex-positive developments. It began slowly with the women's suffrage movement and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's efforts to teach and support family planning in the late 1800s. With birth control in the 1960s, feminism in the 1970s, the gay movement of the 1990s, and the polyamory¹⁷ movement in recent times, many pockets of sex-positive culture have developed.

¹⁶ For those who don't recall, Ted Haggard was the fundamentalist minister who was caught with a Denver male prostitute in 2007. He went through six weeks of counseling with other fundamentalist ministers who report that he is completely cured, an amazing feat only a fundamentalist could achieve.

¹⁷ Polyamory (from Greek [poly, meaning many or several] and Latin amor [literally "love"]) is the desire, practice or acceptance of having more than one loving, intimate relationship at a time with the full knowledge and consent of everyone involved.

Fundamentalism has tried to control sexual expression but has not been very effective. In fact, there seems to be a correlation between pornography and fundamentalism. When I was in graduate school in Nashville in the 1970s there was a church on every block, but far more porn shops than in northern cities with far fewer churches. The same was true than in Houston, Atlanta and other southern cities. Porn seems to follow fundamentalism. I guess the more they rant against something, the more people want it.

"The more prohibitions you have, the less virtuous people will be."

-Tao Te Ching

While the religious right rails against pornography, no reputable study has established a link between pornography and child or sexual abuse. At the same time, some interesting research shows a clear link between parental sexual abuse and religious orientation. According to research by Brown and Bohn:

A disturbing fact continues to surface in sex abuse research. The first best predictor of abuse is alcohol or drug addiction in the father. But the second best predictor is conservative religiosity, accompanied by parental belief in traditional male-female roles. This means that if you want to know which children are most likely to be sexually abused by their father, the second most significant clue is whether or not the parents belong to a conservative religious group with traditional role beliefs and rigid sexual attitudes.¹⁸

The god virus is very active in trying to define what sexuality is permitted and what is not. From homosexuality to monogamy, religion continually tries to limit or eliminate normal human sexual expression. Question the training and assumptions you received from your family and culture and decide for yourself what is appropriate sexual expression, not what the god virus wants.

I have always been open-minded about sex, but one day when I was about 35 years old, a non-theist friend of mine challenged me on some homophobic

¹⁸ Carolyn Holderread Heggen, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Herald Press, 1993), 73.

statements I made. I immediately denied that I was homophobic and got quite defensive. I started thinking about his observation and reflecting on some of my childhood training and experiences. I soon realized that I had some irrational ideas about homosexuality that had been hidden from my awareness.

As I go through life, I find these little surprises quite invigorating. Just when I think I have figured myself out, something comes along to upset the apple cart. This is the stuff of real life. Hard as it is sometimes, it is powerful and empowering, so embrace it when the opportunity presents itself.

Summary

Modern, highly evolved religions propagate best in a sex-negative environment to maximize viral control over the family unit and to guarantee efficient propagation. The alleged focus on the family is really focus on the god virus. Indeed, the virus will disband the family to preserve its ability to propagate. Do not be fooled by the words; look at the effects of a given behavior from opposition to birth control to guilt in the bedroom, the viral purpose is propagation – not the happiness of its victims. The virus is so powerful that it can literally shut down sexual drive and reproduction, as in nuns and priests or married couples that severely restrict their sexual practices. Sex-positive god viruses are rare and getting more so with the invasion of the powerful sex-negative western religions. Take a good look at yourself, and you may find a surprising amount of residual indoctrination in your behavior.