

Pornography

Obscenity is anything that is filthy, repulsive, impure, lewd, offensive, and indecent. Etymologists debate whether the Latin roots mean "against filth" or "off the scene" (not worthy of occupying our attention at center stage).

There are three tests for obscenity when to consider a pornographic material:

- It appeals to old sinful nature or carnal interest with the intent to arouse lascivious thoughts and illicit sexual desires.
- It is patently offensive to Scriptural moral norms and standards (even though socially accepted and legalized).
- It is utterly without redeeming social importance.

Controversies as well as legal battles have ordinarily restricted the discussion of obscenity to sexual matters, though the essential meaning of the term could well include other forms of obscenity, violence and sexual crimes. The difficulty of combating obscenity through censorship and legal prosecution of the merchants of obscene materials is due to the following reasons.

There is understandable fear of any encroachments on freedom of speech, trade, commerce, and civil rights. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between an appeal to artistic or aesthetic interest and the appeal to prurient interest.

Redeeming social importance is an impossible task because of widespread moral corruption. It is difficult to determine community standards, especially in an age of great confusion and decline in moral standards and where legal restrictions against obscenity are eliminated and such trades are protected.

A Christian response to obscenity begins with the summary of Paul: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things" (Phil. 4:8).

Much in the Bible, of course, urges us to consider, sometimes in graphic, realistic terms, the problem of evil around us. We are to consider the plight of our neighbors and our city. Obscenity, however, is to leave the situation as it is or, worse yet, to find gratification or pleasure in viewing degradation (sexual or otherwise).

The Christian disciple is called to grasp the situation realistically and then to visualize and work toward the redemption of his neighbor. Obscenity is wrong for it dehumanizes both the participant and the observer. Both subjects are left at a level considerably less than what God intends.

A more difficult issue has to do with social policy and the Christian's responsibility outside of the Christian community. Since standards of dress and the meaning of language are historically conditioned and thus the perception of obscenity varies from one generation to the next, it is essential that moral discernment takes place in a Christian community.

Out of genuine love for one's neighbor, however, it seems clear that Christians ought to struggle for restrictions, including censorship, on obscene materials that portray persons in cruel and dehumanizing fashion which contributes to the rapacious atmosphere of this era. It is also out of genuine neighbor's love that Christians should struggle to protect children from the frontal assaults of obscene materials on news-stands and media like television, movies, mail and through the internet.

While sexual sins receive full censure in Scripture, Christians must be careful not to allow their zeal against sexual obscenity to overshadow their zeal to combat violence, dishonesty, greed, and other sins which are also condemned in the Bible. Finally, Christians must remember that their primary calling is not to act negatively as to restrain evil but rather to act positively as promoters of the gospel and everything good. The Christians answer to sexual obscenity is to promote a true appreciation for sexuality in terms established by the Creator and Redeemer. The answer to all forms of obscenity is to promote the interests of the kingdom of God.

Sex as having universal interest or any allusion to it is legitimate and necessary if dramatic or literary descriptions of human life are to be truthful or educative; but an enormous market exists for those who exploit sex for gain. The social and moral questions arising from the representation of erotic behavior in books, films, and pictures are manifold.

Pornography is obscene literature; pictures, photos, or films considered to be of no artistic merit and intended only to arouse sexual desire. Standards of what is obscene and whether a particular work has artistic value are subjective; hence it is often difficult to determine whether a work is obscene or otherwise.

Pornography is harmful and incites violence to women and children. The illegal income that goes to police and corrupt politicians or authorities is much higher than the revenue that goes to the government, where pornography is not legalized. The real beneficiaries of pornography are the producers, publishers and middlemen and not the nude models or prostitutes.

Psychologically, the over stimulation of imagination by sexual images renders the whole personality oversexed by disproportionately concentrating thoughts and desires, often to the point of pornographic addiction; it coarsens feelings and attitudes toward the other sex as tools for sexual indulgence, unrefined by affection, tenderness, or respect; it inverts the sex drive into sterile, self-absorbed, physical pleasure alone, masturbation; and because over stimulation brings diminishing effects, it leads readily to mental indulgence in ever coarser, sadistic perversions, resulting to hard-core" pornography.

Artistically, a literary, visual, or dramatic representation of human behavior becomes very powerfully educate, clarifies, "purges" the emotional life of spectators, through secondhand experience. The human body and human love are worth adoring. The nude statue, the exploration of sexual situations in a book or play, has a role in sex education and in the appreciation of the human scene. The problem is one of taste, explicitness, intention, and restraint. The deliberate importation of salacious ideas, to appeal to a wider audience or to compensate for want of literary power is another level must never misuse the body.

Socially, the problems are protection of the immature and unstable; the danger is that emotions stimulated may erupt into antisocial sexual aggressiveness; the tendency to devalue women and marriage; and the effect of sensualist display and sexual abuses.

Legally, suppression of "obscenely offensive" materials has been difficult to enforce because of variable public taste, political corruption and poverty. These problems will continue to increase and reach its climax after the rapture of the Church. Some social scientists claimed that the offensiveness is all in the viewer's mind.

Suppression of "what tends to be depraved and corrupt faces the difficulty of producing witnesses who would admit to having been depraved and corrupted. Partial censorship by "certificates of accessibility" has made pornography more attractive for the supposedly "adult" audience. Some nations have abandoned legal restraint and diminished interest regarding sexual crimes.

The New Testament abounds in warnings concerning lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, concupiscence, uncleanness, "following the inclination to sensuality" (2 Pet. 2:2), and "the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3), on the principle that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," or so he will do (James 1:15). Obscenity is a mental attitude sin.

It is significant that the fullest discussion of "setting the mind on the flesh" (Rom. 8:5-13, almost a definition of pornographic addiction, though Paul includes more), as spiritual death, hostility to God, inability to please Him, slavery, contrasts it with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whose shrine the Christian's inner life should be. Not every thought or desire concerning sex is sinful. But Christians "must crucify the flesh with its desires and lusts," refuse to obey it, or be slaves to it (Rom. 6:12; Titus 3:3), but keep it to its divinely appointed place, subordinate to spiritual ends (Romans 13:13, Phil. 4:8).

Pornography definitely causes us to lust after flesh, and it is undeniably a lust of the eyes. Pornography definitely does not qualify as one of the things we are to think about, according to Philippians 4:8. Pornography is addictive (1 Corinthians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:19), and destructive (Proverbs 6:25-28; Ezekiel 20:30; Ephesians 4:19).

Lusting after other people in our minds, which is the essence of pornography, is offensive to God (Matthew 5:28). When habitual devotion to pornography characterizes a person's life, it demonstrates the person is not saved (1 Corinthians 6:9).

For those involved in pornography, God can and will give the victory. Are you involved with pornography and desire freedom from it? For believers, here are the basic steps to victory:

- Confess your sin to God (1 John 1:9)
- Let God to cleanse, renew, and transform your mind (Romans 12:2) by continuing in the Word of God in daily, consistent, progressive and systematic intake of Bible doctrine.
- Learn to possess your body in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).
- Understand the proper meaning of sex and rely on your spouse alone to meet that need if you are married (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
- Realize that if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).
- Take practical steps to reduce your exposure to graphic images. Install pornography blockers on your computer, limit television and video usage and spend more time in the Word of God.



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