

# For better or worse

by TOM WIESE

There has been a lot of talk today about a "New Morality" which is said to have descended upon our nation like a swarm of locusts. One major aspect of the "New Morality" is said to be free love, or in other words an increase in the occurrence of pre-marital sex.

My question is "Does this 'New Morality' really exist?" and if it does, how is it different from morality of old? If you are interested in a thorough and historically based discussion of this subject, I suggest that you talk with Alan Pickering, past director of the United Ministries for Higher Education. The following comments are in part based upon his explanations of morality and its relevance to modern life.

DR. PICKERING defines morality as the way things really are, not the way society thinks they ought to be. The logical question which follows is are things different now than they have been since man first grouped into societies?

The answer, in a moral sense, is no. Judgments of morality are still made on the same basic standard that has been employed for centuries; that is — what is moral is that which will cause the least cost to the least number of people.

THE EXAMPLE of a supposed change in morality in our times was cited as growth in practice of pre-marital sex. The fact of the matter is that there has been only a minimal increase in the occurrence of pre-marital sex in the last several centuries (or at least as far back as information was available).

It may surprise many that the greatest upsurge in this practice is not happening now. The largest shift in numbers was around the year 1920 (the advent of the automobile).

CLOSELY-RELATED to any changes that occur in the popular morality of the times is the concept of social costs. If it will cost an individual a good deal of social embarrassment and ridicule, chances are that there will be relatively little participation in the activity.

For pre-marital sex, there is a substantially greater possibility of social sanction today than ever before.

With the expanded use and availability of birth control devices, and with a more open approach to sex by the public, the degradation and social costs to the individual have less chance of materializing. One can see the changed attitudes of society by the relatively lax enforcement of existing laws in this area, and by the move towards more liberalized laws of abortion and divorce.

THE INSTITUTION of marriage has long been held to be a commitment "for better or worse." Men and women face the problem of selecting a compatible mate for the rest of their lives, regardless. To help avoid the mistakes which undoubtedly occur in such a selection, careful preparation is necessary.

MANY CASES point to the fact that if the couple approaches a premarital relationship prior to marriage with the proper attitude, a much closer and less superficial understanding can be achieved between the two people, not only in the sexual sense, but in other aspects of the relationship as well.

This is not to say that pre-marital sex is necessary or even right. What is right for one person or one couple may not be right for another. What is necessary though is a thorough examination of each individual's attitudes towards the marriage situation, and until this is done, serious thought of living for and with the other person for a lifetime is most difficult.

THE "NEW MORALITY" of today is not so new as it is timely. It is a product of the day in which we live, and if you really stop and think about it, it isn't so different from the morality of any other age. The difference is primarily in how society views this morality, and more important, how the individual views it.

## \* \* RAPPING \* \*

Editor:

IN HIS ARTICLE, "Suppository", Dan Ladely vented his feelings about several different things at once. He was talking about the situation of the American Indian, the University as a reservation, the University administration, the government, and the Church as it relates to individuals and the world.

While it is difficult to know exactly which issue Mr. Ladely is the most concerned about, it is his ideas about the Church and religious faith to which I am responding.

IT IS VERY popular to criticize the institutional church today and God himself knows there are some miscarriages of religious faith going on there. That cannot be denied or apologized for. The curious thing is that Mr. Ladely makes a subtle shift from the institutional church to religious faith itself and then straps it all with one of the most popular but erroneous concepts around today.

It is true that some "missionaries" have been most excited about pronouncing judgment in order to create a climate of need for their product. The "missionary" in Hawaii is a tremendous example of playing on people's guilt.

Some missionaries have seen the task of getting Western clothes on people as

synonomous with conversion to Christianity. But these practices are in error and even most of the institutional religious people know it. It would be unfortunate to label the whole church with Mr. Ladely's names.

OTHER THINGS have been done with equal vigor in the name of Christ — people have been called to their highest, individual fulfillment as persons; hospitals and schools have saved lives and minds; correction of social ills has been given energy; and persons have been helped to a realistic understanding of themselves.

The support and encouragement of a faith in the very source of being has been adopted in free will by great numbers of people. And even women's liberation was begun by Jesus (he was concerned about the worth of every person).

While I do not believe that all problems are somehow automatically solved by saying you "believe in Jesus," it is my conviction that a real faith in the hope that Jesus' resurrection reveals and adherence to the spirit of his teaching as a guide to behavior are more freeing than oppressive.

THE DISCIPLINE of continual awareness to the needs of others and the honest appraisal of one's self may very well be more an indication of strength than of weakness.

— Mel Luetkens



"Let 'em fine us for polluting. We'll make it up in prices."