

religious leaders show varied sexual attitudes

*Remember Eden
You must know that this fire of sex
Erupts uncontrollably
Searing the eyes of common sense
But alone above this did rise voices
Past and present—
"Not sex for mutual need
But from mutual devotion."
Insisting we be truly human
So that human love might be devine.
Robert Forsberg*

by mary jo howe

Once upon a not-so-distant time, back in the dark ages of our sexuality, many of us had a wistful dream: that someday sex without marriage would be permissible as well as fun. . . Never again would we have to murmur 'no, no' to preserve some antiquated notion of ourselves as respectable. 'Yes, Yes,' we'd swoon instead, joining in a wild flight of passion.

"Well, the day finally has come. Sexual freedom has arrived at last. . . Just about everyone now knows that sex is not only healthy and normal but enriching and invigorating, nourishing the body and soul alike. After the revolution, sex should be better than ever, right?"

"Wrong, there is, alas, a mysterious disenchantment afoot. Something vital has gone out of the forbidden passion we once knew and dreamed about. . . What is emerging in today's anything-goes society is a rising degree of dissatisfaction, and, in certain extreme cases, total withdrawal from the sexual scene."

The above excerpt is from "Is Sex Better Than Ever?" by Ziva Kwitney, in the November issue of *Cosmopolitan*. What the author is saying points to something that religious leaders have pointed to for over 2000 years. People need something deeper and more lasting in sexual relationships.

Of four religious leaders interviewed, all agree that the trend among UNL students they work with has been the discovery that traditional views towards sex are more fulfilling.

But attitudes varied considerably on premarital sex, homosexuality, contraceptives, abortion and cohabitation.

"Sex is to be used only within the marriage bond according to the Methodist Church," said Mel Leutchens, Minister/Director of Wesley House.

"Basically, the church rejects anything that will damage or destroy humanity. We are more concerned about persons rather than acts, wholeness about intentions, sensitivity and respect."

Leutchens explained that sex is like the peak of a pyramid based on a whole group of affections.

When marriage occurs, he said, usually this base of affections has already been laid. If sex occurs first, it's like the pyramid is standing on its peak. Of course, it will fall and get someone hurt.

"But it's hard to draw the line. Premarital sex among two people who have a good base relationship doesn't bother me. It's that Friday night banger that does."

Sometimes it seems prostitution is more honest than that kind of casual sex that seems so common now, Leutchens said. In prostitution everything is laid on the line—the wares, the money, and the fact that it is only a physical relationship.

Rev. Bruce Berggren of the Lutheran Student Center agreed that the Lutheran Church is opposed to premarital sex.

"Their can be no arguing with that," said Jim Holthus, pastoral intern. "Premarital sex is using other people," he said. "There's always some degree of 'what can I get out of it' rather than the total freedom to love in marriage."

Berggren said, "The church is opposed to sin in all forms, anything that would make us anything less than what we are intended."

"Sex is more than just the linking of two warm bodies. It is a spiritual union."



Photo by Tim Ford

Jim Holthus, pastoral intern at the Lutheran Student Center.



Photo by Tim Ford

Mel Leutchens, minister/director of Wesley House.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Rabbi Henry Jay Karp of the South Street Temple.

The human being is one body and what affects the body affects the soul."

Christ said "and the two shall be come one," Berggren pointed out. "It is a Holy act, sacramental. It is the means of extending your very being to another person that should not be taken lightly or with irresponsibility," he said.

Regarding the person who is "out to get a piece of ass," Berggren said they have negated the other human being to a thing.

"There is just something dehumanizing

about the whole attitude of premarital sex," Holthus added. "We want to preserve the sacredness that was meant to be."

According to Father Robert Hrdlicka of the Cathedral of the Risen Christ, the Catholic Church does not recognize premarital sex at all.

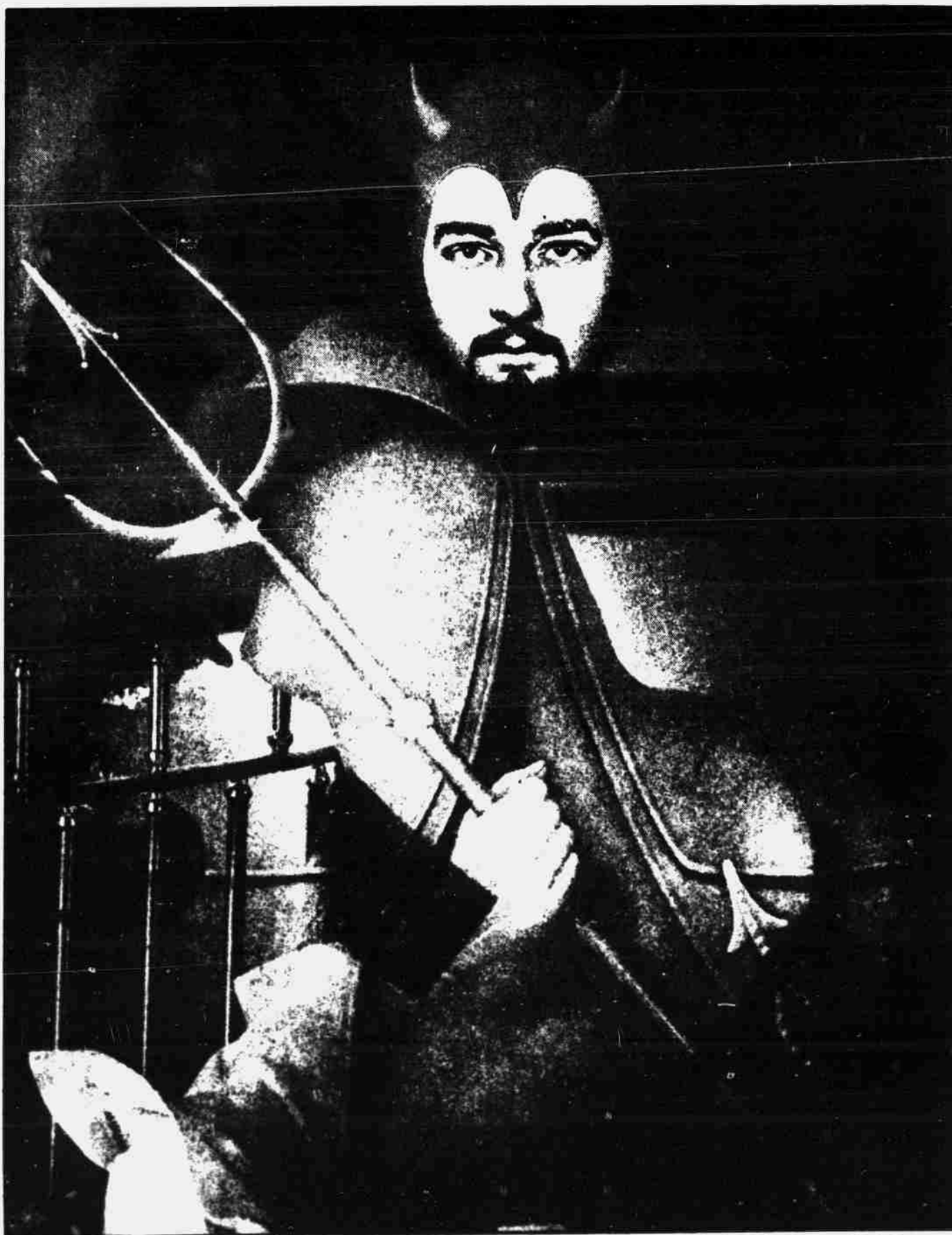
"Sex is not a toy, it should be reserved to marriage," he said. "Before marriage it is only the satisfaction of concupiscence. Each sexual act in marriage is the manifestation of the love of a man for a woman and should be left open for children as a natural consequence."

In Judaism, marriage is a sacred institution, and the ultimate good is for one to be married, agreed Rabbi Henry Jay Karp of the South Street Temple.

"Sex is not dirty or wrong," he said. "It is considered the highest expression of love between two people."

According to the Jewish Laws of Sexual Obligations, premarital sex is not necessarily wrong. "It depends on the situation," Rabbi Karp said. "But adultery is a direct violation of the ten commandments and highly frowned upon."

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