HUGH HEFNER'S GOD: RELIGION IN *PLAYBOY* MAGAZINE

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ABSTRACT

Hugh Hefner's God: Religion in *Playboy* Magazine

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This project examines the place of religion in *Playboy* magazine. In 1962 Hugh Hefner began publishing The Playboy Philosophy—what he called his "editorial credo"—to explain what he believed to be America's overly puritanical tendencies. Much of that document which was published over the course of several years in various editions of the magazine dealt specifically with America's religious landscape. Through his editorial control over *Playboy* magazine, Hefner was attempted to transform himself into an authority on American religion. Hefner critiqued America's religiosity, and he did so primarily using two means: satirical cartoons and editorial commentary. With these two tools he intended to "strike at the root" of what he believed to be America's Puritanism. The cartoons satirized Puritans, biblical myths, the clergy and the supernatural. I have termed these comics Hefner's "soft power" because they subtly undermine confidence in religion by satirizing it. At the same time he published the cartoons and his credo, he also engaged prominent progressive religious thinkers. Martin Luther King, Jr, Madalyn Murray, William Sloane Coffin, Saul Alinsky and Jimmy Carter were interview subjects. Others, such as Harvey Cox, Gary Wills and William

Hamilton, submitted articles discussing progressive religious issues and still others participated in a "Religion Round Table" discussion on theological issues and the emerging "New Morality." Thus, as Hefner satirized some religious views he promoted and endorsed others which one could call more progressive. The editorial material was therefore more conventional, or hard power, to strike at the root of what Hefner believed to be America's Puritanism. Readers from various religious traditions responded, usually positively, to the religious content of the magazine. Hefner had obviously struck a nerve with those religious Americans who had felt marginalized by more culturally conservative tendencies, if not also the roots of American Puritanism.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who has written a dissertation knows the joys and challenges of such a project. Mine have been no different, at least in many ways. Nevertheless, it would not have been possible without the assistance and support of a number of people. Professor Terry Todd turned me on to American Religious History as an academic discipline and encouraged my *avant garde* (and by that I mean unorthodox) thinking and research. He served as my advisor and project director. Without his gentle and wise direction this project would not have come to fruition. Christopher Anderson eagerly and readily agreed to serve as a reader for this project offering ideas and reflections. In the early days of my research, Ernest Rubinstein pointed me in helpful and productive directions. The staff of the Interlibrary Loan department located for me something more precious than gold—actual paper copies of *Playboy,* the exact issues and years I needed within driving distance. I am also grateful to the staff of the Morris County Public Library for allowing me to occupy a private space to peruse the magazines.

There are others whose help, while less hands on, was no less indispensable in helping me give life to my thoughts. How many friends and colleagues have listened to me expound the virtues of Hugh Hefner and *Playboy* over the years? They are too many to count and certainly too numerous to name. I owe them all a debt of gratitude for listening and showing interest. Dear friends far and near, many whom I cannot name, have been on the other end of a telephone to listen to my woes with this project or anything else that might vex my spirit. Of course, they have also laughed at the jokes that arose from my "research" with my "one handed magazines." I have made some

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Bodhisattvas, every one, if it is possible, may you go on to greater enlightenment and peace. You have shed light on my path, and I have attempted to walk humbly therein.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Questions of religion usually conjure up images of crucifixes, Bibles, churches, altars, and discussions of God, but probably not *Playboy* Playmates. Is it possible to think about *Playboy* in religious terms? If one believes a cartoon published at cartoonstock.com, it certainly is.[1] The cartoon depicted a man in heaven, presumably a new arrival, complete with halo and wings. He was standing outside what must be the entrance gate. Before him, surrounded by clouds and another angel, was a bearded man, perhaps St. Peter, standing behind a podium holding a scroll on which one would presumably find the names of those to be admitted to paradise. The new arrival had obviously asked a question to which St. Peter responded, "This is Heaven - - - of course you can continue your subscription to *Playboy*." The new arrival beamed with a smile of satisfaction and pleasure.[2]

The cartoon clearly suggests that in heaven bodies are made of real flesh and the ones photographed for *Playboy* are a pleasure still to be enjoyed in paradise. The "of course" lends itself to the speculation that *Playboy* might even be *part of* paradise. But what else does such a cartoon suggest? Can *Playboy* magazine help save someone's soul? Would such *reading* material be permissible in heaven? The answer is apparently

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[1] See Appendix Figure 1.

[2] Roy Delgado, http://www.cartoonstock.com/cartoonview.asp?start=&search=main&catref=rde0786&MA_Artist=Delgado%2C+Roy&MA_Category=Not+Selected&ANDkeyword=heaven&ORkeyword=&TITLEkeyword=&NEGATIVEkeyword= accessed 6 February 2014.

"YES," with the caveat "in Hugh Hefner's heaven." According to the cartoon's artist, Roy Delgado, Hugh Hefner personally selected every cartoon that appeared in the magazine begging the questions then, "What was Hefner trying to say? In whom or what did Hefner believe? What is his creed?"[3] For an answer to these questions and more one needs to closely examine Hefner's life work—that of *Playboy* magazine—for Hefner's beliefs--his credo is revealed throughout the magazine in the interviews, essays, articles, responses to letters to the editor, in the cartoons, and yes perhaps, even in the photographs of the Playmates.

Hugh Hefner's religious views can be best summarized as libertarian, meaning socially progressive, open-minded, sexually liberal, and, perhaps even hedonistic—a liberty that bordered on license. His credo is defined as much by what he opposes as in positive statements about what he believes. For example, on 21 August 2012 Hefner posted an editorial on *Playboy*'s website entitled "Sexual Freedom." In that post Hef, as he prefers to be known, concluded that, "in every instance of sexual rights falling under attack, you'll find legislation forced into place by people who practice discrimination disguised as religious freedom. This is a religious nation, but it is also a secular one. For decades the American people have found a way to balance religious beliefs with secular freedoms."[4] In that article Hef could not let go of an incident from 1965 when a man from Indiana, Charles Cotner, had been arrested and sentenced for "'abominable and detestable crimes against nature.' His offense? Consensual anal sex with his wife."[5]

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[3] Author email conversation with Roy Delgado 27 September 2013.
[4] Hugh M. Hefner, "Sexual Freedom," www.playboy.com/playground/view/sexual-freedom accessed 14 September 2013.
[5] Hefner, "Sexual Freedom."

Hefner went on to refer readers back to his "Playboy Philosophy" of some 50 years earlier. Hef's Playboy Philosophy has a two-fold dimension.

Generally understood, the Playboy Philosophy is a lifestyle. To use Elizabeth Fraterrigo's terminology, it was "the good life," or "post-war consumerism" which produced a stylish identity, as Bill Osgerby called it.[6] It was, in short, a new way of being an American male which promoted the principle that individual liberty means virtual complete freedom, provided that one's activity does not infringe upon the freedom of another: "Each man's freedom should be limited only to the extent that it infringes upon the freedom of others."[7] To live the Playboy Philosophy meant to "approach life with immense gusto and relish."[8] Any attempt to censor or suppress individual liberty is to be opposed. Because conservative religion was the predominant censor in Hefner's opinion, his opposition often took the form of satirical religious cartoons. Yet, more specifically defined, *The* Playboy Philosophy is a document which evolved over three years in twenty-five installments beginning in December 1962, in which Hefner attempted to "state our own editorial credo, and offer a few personal observations on our present-day society and *Playboy*'s part in it."[9] Although biographer Steven Watts reports that for all Hefner's efforts the final product was "rather pedestrian and unsystematic, [a] recycling of ideas common to modern humanist liberalism,"[10] I find Hefner's repeated

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[6] Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (Oxford: University Press, 2009) and Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise* (Oxford: Berg, 2001). I will briefly discuss both of these later in this chapter.

[7] Hugh Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy," 187. Note that I am using a version found at http://brentdanley.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/04/theplayboyphilosophy.pdf accessed 31 October 2013.

[8] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 1

[9] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 1.

[10] Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2008), 176.

religious references within The Playboy Philosophy fascinating and worthy of analysis. He even began the nearly quarter million word manifesto by referring to it as his "credo." In Latin, *credo* means "I believe," but it can also be translated, "I give my heart to," such that Hefner was designating that to which he gave his heart. Those with even a cursory knowledge of Christianity will recognize the word *credo* for it is from *credo* that Christians derive the term Creed—a statement of faith which outlines the basics of Christian theology. The Playboy Philosophy produced much reaction during the time it was published which led Hefner to feel that he was being taken seriously as a public scholar and a participant in the socio-cultural and religious debates of the day.[11]

Hefner's interest in religion cannot be underestimated. Strange as it might first appear, he is as much a proponent of progressive faith, as he is of women's liberation. I've used the term "progressive faith" to distinguish religious beliefs deemed acceptable for Hefner because they support his Philosophy and are in opposition to, what he called, "Puritanical religion," which he will define as conservative and repressive. To show his support for the right kind of religion, and to illustrate his place as a religious authority, he offered discounted subscriptions of his magazine to ministers, sent one of his editors, Anson Mount, to study theology at an Episcopal seminary, and had an openly gay Episcopal priest, Malcolm Boyd, live at the *Playboy* Mansion for a brief time.[12] He discussed theology with Jesse Jackson, Harvey Cox, Anglican Bishop John A.T. Robinson and a host of clergy. Many of these theologians spent significant time at The

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[11] Watts, 184.

[12] Malcolm Boyd, *My Fellow Americans* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 20. Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 184. Falsani, n.d.

Mansion.[13] That's why I am particularly interested in Hefner's views on "religion," a broad term he used to encompass a multiplicity of religious thought, and how he saw religion interacting with individual liberty. Hefner saw himself as an authority on American public religion, and indeed he was. He supported those who agreed with his Philosophy and attempted to enlighten those who disagreed with him. His tools to strike at the root of Puritanical religious views included satirical cartoons and advocacy for progressive religious thinkers. Thus, Hefner advanced progressive religious views--views that advanced individual liberty--by publishing the thoughts and works of some of the greatest thinkers while satirizing those whom he felt imperiled liberty. He felt that his own childhood had been overly puritanical and he reacted to that in later life by engaging ideas and manners of living that promoted cultural changes. Although he repeatedly used the term "Puritan," which I will explore in more depth, he was probably reacting to Protestant moralism promoted by some traditions and other holiness movements. His conversations with progressive religious thinkers is one example of that reaction which helped promote the broader cultural changes he desired. Hef believed that when religion interfered with liberty it deserved to be attacked with satire. Conversely, when religion promoted and defended liberty, in any form, it deserved not only to be heard, but promoted. Hefner's religious views are reflected in his selection of interviewees, articles, cartoons, and responses to letters as much as his sexual views are reflected in his selection of Playmates. In religion as in sex, satisfying the need for individual liberty becomes paramount. "The individual remains the all important element in our society—the touchstone against which all else must be judged. The individual's very

[13] Malcolm Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 19.

individuality—his right to look, think and act as differently from his fellows as he chooses—supplies the divergent, interacting components that produce progress," asserted Hefner's Playboy Philosophy.[14] Such is the case for Hef's *Playboy* magazine, or as he termed the magazine, a Bible for the "young-man-about-town."[15]

Review of Literature

There can be little doubt that Hugh M. Hefner has become a cultural icon, and therefore someone to be carefully studied as a phenomenon of the twentieth (and into the twenty-first) century. While the magazine ceased to be profitable some years ago, the brand "Playboy" with its iconic Bunny endures. To be certain, Hefner and *Playboy* have caught the attention of cultural historians in recent years. Many have taken the perspective of history to examine how Hefner and his brand have influenced and/or intersected with the American lifestyle, sexual mores, entertainment and the "American Dream."

Elizabeth Fraterrigo's *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (2009) examines how Hefner's obsession with the "good life, his vision of sexual liberation and high living, propelled his magazine into mainstream debates about society, economics, and culture in postwar America."[16] She argues that *Playboy* was image-conscious—less so about the centerfolds and pictorials—more about the presentation of the whole man. Bill Osgerby's, *Playboys in Paradise* (2001) looks at the magazine as a pace setter promoting material consumption and rejection of "puritanical

[14] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 36.
[15] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 33.
[16] Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 2.

abstinence." Much like Fraterrigo, Osgerby's focus is on how *Playboy* presented the whole man and what that man wanted to do/be given his affluence and liberation. *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* by Steven Watts (2008) is an excellent, although dense, biography of Hugh Hefner and a history of the growth of the *Playboy* Empire. He traces Hefner's rise to cultural icon and someone who has "few limits on personal pleasure."[17] He shows how Hefner is every (straight) American man striving to have it all—women, money, culture, status and perhaps most of all, pleasure. In *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (2011) by Carrie Pitzulo the focus is on the socio-political view put forth by the magazine during the 1950s and 60s. She focuses "on the editorial voice of the publication as it pertained to gender and sexuality." She does not ignore the Playmates because "they were essential to the magazine's sexual worldview." She argues that just as Hefner reinvented himself as the consummate playboy of the age, he redefined masculinity and femininity by mixing "hedonistic bachelorism, consumerism, and quasi-feminism." A man could be more than a brute conquering beast. A man could be an attentive lover who could appreciate the finer things in life, including the beautiful woman next door. Women, then became objects, but not mere possessions--objects of attention and care. Because of these redefinitions Hefner became "an unlikely ally of liberal feminism."[18] Yet, with this interest in Hefner as a significant socio-cultural figure, few have attempted to study his views on religion. As far as I know, there is little or nothing significant written on the subject of Hugh Hefner's religious views or *Playboy* and religion even though religious

[17] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 8.
[18] Carrie Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy* (Chicago: University Press, 2011), 170, 179.

and/or theological themes appear frequently in the magazine especially during the 1960s and 70s.

Method

For this project I focus on primary source material, namely *Playboy* magazine, by delving into interviews with key historically significant religious figures such as, but not limited to, Martin Luther King, Jr., Madalyn Murray, William Sloane Coffin, Saul Alinsky, and Jimmy Carter. I examine essays and articles published in the magazine such as "Revolt in the Church" by Harvey Cox, and William Hamilton's "Death of God." I also carefully analyze many of the cartoons for in those one finds a wealth of commentary both for and against religious expression. I begin in 1962, the point when "The Playboy Interview" first appeared in the magazine, and take the survey forward to the late 70s, around the time that Hefner's daughter, Christie Hefner, joined the staff. Christie became Hefner's assistant in 1975, slowly assuming more responsibility until she became company president in 1982 and CEO by 1988. In the 80s Christie focused on returning the enterprise to profitability, making significant changes to the company structure and to the character and content of the magazine. In particular, she tended to concentrate the magazine's interviews more on entertainment and sports figures and less on public intellectuals.

This project is primarily a cultural history of some 15 years of the magazine's publication examining how *Playboy*, and thereby its publisher and editor-in-chief, became a significant participant in the "American Renaissance" of the 60s and 70s.[19]

[19] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 28.

Hefner used the term "renaissance" because of his nostalgia for the 1920s, a time he believed had been the "apex" of American culture and prosperity which were interrupted by economic depression, war and a national need for security. For Hefner, *Playboy* became the journal to help achieve that American Renaissance. As Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Durham observed, "There are no innocent texts;" rather they are laden "with meaning, values, biases, and messages. There is no pure entertainment that does not contain representations . . . of class, gender, race, sexuality, and myriad social categories and groupings." They went on to write that "Culture can also embody specific political discourses—liberal, conservative, oppositional, or mixed—advancing competing political positions on issues such as the family and sexuality, masculinity or femininity, or violence and war."[20] Thus, my work is to examine how Hugh Hefner's religious views through the innocuously called "magazine for men's entertainment," intersected and influenced American religious thinking and activities during the American Renaissance. I will identify religious elements and themes within *Playboy* that participated in the social, sexual and civil changes in American culture. Using *Playboy* as a platform, Hefner attempted to transform himself into a self-styled authority on American religion.

The significant contribution of this work is that it takes Hefner beyond his role as a socio-cultural figure who redefined masculinity and femininity, promoted sexual and civil rights and restructured American men's lifestyles in the post-war consumer age. It places Hefner as a commentator on American religion in the midst of that changing culture, a catalyst to the changes in large part because of his religious interests. His

[20] Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, ed., *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 5-6.

reaction against his Puritanical (read: conservative religious) upbringing by engaging with progressive religious thinkers helped promote the changes in culture and society in which he believed, or as he called it the New American Renaissance.

Topics to be Discussed—Questions to be Explored

Although Hefner has never offered a concerted explanation of his religious views beyond The Playboy Philosophy, many of his values and concerns are reflected throughout the magazine. As I stated earlier, I believe his religious views can best be characterized as libertarian as a reaction to the social, cultural, political and religious climate of the post-World War II era. Certainly, *Playboy* contains photographs of nude and semi-nude models and it does discuss sex, but *Playboy* was about much more than nudity and sex. There is also a great deal of racial commentary throughout the magazine, such as the comics about Native Americans, Blacks and Muslims. Hefner is complicated and complex figure. As progressive as he was on social issues, he is often blind to his context and privilege by virtue of his race, masculinity, social status, and affluence. My intention is not to focus on these issues. Instead, through the magazine Hefner intentionally entered into conversation with religious thinkers, and this project is about the religious ideas found therein. Therefore, this project is not about pornography, erotica, sex, gender, race, or at least not directly.

In the first chapter I focus on Hefner's religious and familial background and the origins of *Playboy* magazine. Hefner has been intentional about marketing his life story almost as much as his life style. Yet his story cannot be properly understood divorced from his context. His Playboy Philosophy is a reaction to his conservative religious and

familial upbringing. He is also well aware of the cultural and social milieu of post-World War II America. Hef's religious views, then, grow out of what he called a puritanical America in need of a religious enlightenment which would help bring about a cultural renaissance, sexual revolution and a social reformation. He began to find a method to promote these changes with the publication of his men's entertainment magazine, but truly found his voice as his journal grew to include The Playboy Philosophy in 1962. Here he began to attack what he believed to be the vestigial roots of Puritanism in America, but were his premises about Puritans, especially regarding sex, truly accurate? Hef defines "sin" religiously claiming that it is "'things that are hurtful to people.'"[21] Preventing the maximization of human pleasure is sinful even once claiming that the "real sinners were the people who were trying to make the rules. They were the Puritans."[22]

Hefner felt that the roots of "Puritanism" should be destroyed so that America could experience a new renaissance. To facilitate that cultural change he struck at the roots with an ax of satire through the comics he published in his magazine. Hefner could say things with comics that he might otherwise be hesitant to say outright, although that seldom seemed to hinder him. I refer to this as Hefner's "soft power," meaning a more gentle and subtle approach to undermine America's male population's confidence in the popular narratives and myths, namely its Puritan heritage. When used in political terms "soft power" refers to efforts exerted by a superpower nation to influence cultural sentiment in a less powerful nation and should be seen in opposition to convention or

[21] Cathleen Falsani, "Hugh Hefner: Man of God?" Found at www.somareview.com/hughhefnermanofgod.cfm accessed 28 September 2013.
[22] Quoted in Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 25.

"hard power" exerted usually through military might. Hefner subtly attacked biblical myths, although he was careful not to actually satirize Jesus, perhaps to avoid backlash. Chapter three looks at these satirical depictions and asks, to some extent, is his characterization accurate?

Chapter four continues to explore the comics as a form of soft power, but takes the examination further to look more at religious institutions and ideas. Christian clergy are portrayed as carnal. God is satirized as sometimes aloof, but certainly in agreement with Hefner's Philosophy. By contrast, the Devil and his minions enjoy living a playboy lifestyle, and they aren't beyond tempting humanity to do the same. Angels often fall for that temptation preferring to be humans living liberally or simply taking up the lifestyle as angels. Yet, there are few who enjoy life as much as Muslim men, or at least as *Playboy* casts them. I end my examination of the cartoons suggesting that for Hefner, most expressions of religion are absurd in light of his New American Renaissance.

In chapter five I turn my focus to the "hard power" Hefner used to strike at the roots of Puritanism—the editorial material. The Playboy Interview premiered the same year Hefner rolled out his first installment of The Playboy Philosophy. The first interviews were with entertainers, but Hefner soon realized the power of this medium and he began using its force to achieve his goals. While I take them in no particular order, I look at five interviewees with progressive religious views: Madalyn Murray, Jimmy Carter, Martin Luther King, Jr., William Sloane Coffin, and Saul Alinsky. All were prominently in the news at the time of their exposure in *Playboy*, but more than that, they had something meaningful and profound to say via the interview format. Doubtless, they

advanced Hefner's aims of a New American Renaissance and a less puritanical culture while still maintaining a "progressive" or enlightened religious voice on the public stage.

Chapter six continues to explore the powerful ways Hefner used editorial material. In 1964 Hefner participated in a "round table" discussion with three clergymen which was initially broadcast via radio. He later reproduced the transcript of that discussion under his The Playboy Philosophy. Soon thereafter, he convened another panel of leading religious thinkers to discuss what *Playboy* termed as the "New Morality," by which he meant a more liberated view of sex in America. In other editorial material during that period a Christian and a Jewish theologian put forth articles discussing the "Death of God." The writer Gary Wills used the magazine to discuss the fate of two radical Roman Catholic priests and the prospect of Roman Catholic priests foregoing celibacy, and Bishop James Pike, of the Episcopal Church, promoted a tax on organized religion. By the late 1960s and early 1970s Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox, had become a frequent contributor to the magazine putting forth a more organized theological framework to support The Playboy Philosophy. It goes without saying that all of this religious content generated a response from the readers. In many instances I have included some of the Letters to the Editor, most of which were in wholehearted support of Hefner's efforts.

Chapter seven concludes the project. By the late 1970s Hefner's daughter, Christie, had joined the magazine's management team and Hefner's focus turned from loftier discussions of religion. Perhaps Hef was concerned to keep his share of the market or perhaps he gave up his quest or perhaps he felt that he had accomplished all that he had set out to do. Whatever the case, the frequency and intensity of religious

content dropped. In this final chapter I will consider some of the strands of the story that I either could not cover or which were outside the scope of this project.

There can be no doubt that Hefner was concerned about the influence religion and "religious prejudice" had on America because conservative religion, or what he called "Puritanical religion," had the power to "subvert, distort or take away" an "uncountable number of rights and privileges" thereby preventing one from enjoying the libertine lifestyle he promoted in *Playboy*.[23] The United States was not a truly free society because of the interference of puritanical religion. However, one should not assume that Hefner was anti-religious. In fact, he unabashedly claimed that, "Life could be a very bleak and empty experience without faith and hope to fill the black void of the unknown."[24] What this project offers is a critical look at Hugh Hefner's views of American religious life—where religion interfered and where it was helpful. Through his editorial control over *Playboy* magazine, Hefner attempted to transform himself into an authority on American religion. Hefner was so passionate to eradicate what he believed was America's puritanical heritage that his personal voice was indistinguishable from his editorial voice. Hefner wanted a flourishing religious America entirely separate from the government, and he advocated for progressive religion, or religion that promoted individual liberty, by publishing the thoughts and works of some of its greatest thinkers while satirizing those whom he felt imperiled liberty. If, as I suggest, Hefner attempted to hold himself forth as an authority on American religion, then how does he know what he knows? What influenced his religious views? How were his religious views formed?

[23] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 44.
[24] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 42.

What in Hugh Hefner's world shaped him in such a way as to meld ideas of religion and sex into a magazine for men's entertainment?

CHAPTER 2

A NATION IN NEED OF A RENAISSANCE: *PLAYBOY*'S GENESIS AND GENIUS

America was in the middle of the Roaring Twenties with the First World War not far behind when Hugh Marston Hefner was born to Glenn and Grace on 9 April 1926. Appropriately foreshadowing Hugh's interests, jazz music and flappers were the rage. The Hefner family lived in the sparsely populated Austin section of Chicago, the city where the all-grown-up Hugh would later build his empire. Glenn and Grace had met at a Methodist Church youth party in 1911 resulting in a lifelong companionship with each other, and a lifelong affiliation with the Methodist Church. In fact, after their marriage in 1921 Grace became very active in a number of church programs. She quit her teaching job when she became pregnant with Hugh to devote more time to raising her son and to her church activities.[1]

The roar of the Twenties ended, of course, and young Hugh and his brother Keith, born in 1929, grew up during the Depression era. The family was fairly comfortable for the time with only Glenn working as an accountant at an aluminum company.[2] In spite of the tough times all around, Hugh remembers home life not marked with scarcity but being marked by, what he called, "Puritanism." When Malcolm Boyd lived with Hefner for three weeks in 1969 he experienced "little bitterness about the past, except in the area of religion." Hefner admitted that he was still reacting to his religious upbringing telling Boyd, "My iconoclasm and anti-establishment attitudes have probably grown out of a

[1] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 12-16.
[2] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 44.

response to the church as inhuman and irrational."[3] On another occasion he was quoted as saying that "Our family was Prohibitionist, Puritan in a very real sense. Never smoked, swore, drank, danced—all the good stuff."[4] Sundays were reserved for church and family activities which Hugh would later see as a form of repression.[5] Additionally, religious restraint meant that Glenn and Grace showed little affection toward each other seldom embracing or kissing in front of their children, although Grace did try to impart some knowledge about sex to her sons and the neighborhood children.[6] "Never hugged. Oh, no. There was absolutely no hugging or kissing in my family," Hefner told Cathleen Falsani.[7] These sorts of family restraints are consistent with standards of personal piety expected by many holiness movements of the late nineteenth century.[8]

Both parents influenced Hugh's religious understanding. Because Grace was a stay-at-home mother she taught her sons Bible stories and moral lessons, but Glenn was a faithful provider, and devoted to the family church, the Austin Methodist Episcopal Church, serving as bookkeeper and active in the men's Sunday School.[9] Their cooperative sway can be best illustrated in an incident when Grace taught her son that God was a "loving father over all of us." This prompted a three-year-old Hugh to welcome his father home soon thereafter with, "Hello, God!"[10] Hugh's home life was similar to many other American children of the time: A caring, doting mother who taught the Christian faith juxtaposed with a loving, but distant faith-filled father who was a

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[3] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 55.
[4] Falsani, "Hugh Hefner: Man of God?"
[5] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 41.
[6] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 43.
[7] Falsani, "Hugh Hefner: Man of God?"
[8] George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 42.
[9] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 42.
[10] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 26.

manly provider.[11] This tension would tear at a generation until the pendulum for many American Christians, swung toward the Evangelicalism that developed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Young Hugh had an active imagination and as a child spent a great deal of time drawing which often distracted him from his school work. That passion continued into his teenage years where "Hep Hef" became a reporter for his high school newspaper often publishing his own cartoons as well. Like most young men during World War II, Hefner enlisted in the armed forces after graduating from high school. After some academic and basic training he was given a desk job because of his typing skills. Hefner documented virtually everything happening in his life with a cartoon autobiography featuring his alter ego, "Goo Hef," as the main character. Honorably discharged from the army after two years of active service, Hefner's cartoon craft followed him into college where he published articles and a cartoon strip in the college paper. He also introduced a new feature to the college paper, the "Coed of the Month." Graduating from college in February 1949 left Hugh somewhat lost for a future, so he married his sweetheart, Millie, and enrolled in graduate school to study sociology where he became fascinated with the first Kinsey Report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, released in 1948.[12]

One semester of graduate study was enough for Hefner. He was eager to start a career so he took a couple of low-wage jobs in the years between his 1949 marriage and beginning at *Esquire* magazine in 1951. Yet, he could not shake the desire to be a

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[11] Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), shows the shift in American religious culture from the mid-nineteenth century "sweet savior" to the early twentieth century "manly redeemer." The Hefner parents would have lived through this evolutionary period, and although it would likely not have been so clearly evident as Prothero presents it, it nevertheless would have been a reality for devout believers like Glenn and Grace.

[12] Much of the biographical material regarding Hugh Hefner is taken from Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy* and "Mr Hefner's Biography," http://hmhfoundation.org/site/?page_id=20 accessed 28 September 2013.

professional cartoonist, so in 1951 he published *That Toddlin' Town: A Rowdy Burlesque of Chicago Manners and Morals*. It met with enough success to earn Hefner a small profit. An examination of *That Toddlin' Town* reveals that many of the features and themes which would later appear in *Playboy* were already swirling in Hefner's head: sexual permissiveness, satirical critique of repressive mores, and bawdy talk. Hefner claimed the cartoons were "a humorous poke at [Chicago's] institutions, its culture, its sex life."[13] The characters look up women's skirts blown by the Chicago wind; look down women's blouses on the train; watch a burlesque show in which the performer responds to a request to remove everything with, "I couldn't take these off, honey!—It'd make the show indecent!" There's even a reference to Kinsey in a post-coital scene.[14] As Hefner promised he was taking a "poke" at the "manners and morals" of Chicago. But Hef was only beginning. His penchant for satirical cartooning would reappear in bolder forms.

A Nation in Need of a Renaissance

The Roaring Twenties had been the apex for American culture and prosperity. It had produced a new "sophistication and cynicism" along with a spirit of "innovation and adventure." It was a time of "sheiks and shebas," according to Hefner's Philosophy.[15] The Great Depression and subsequent World War and Cold War brought a cloud over those better times producing a type of American Dark Age. It was virtually impossible to hold onto one's optimism. Intellect and adventure gave way to a spirit of timidity which had caused Americans to lose faith in their abilities as individuals and to seek security

[13] Hugh Hefner, *That Toddlin' Town* (Chicago: Chi Publishers, 1951), 1.
[14] Hefner, *That Toddlin' Town*, 12, 16.
[15] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 13.

offered by the government.[16] Hefner opined that movies in the 1930s and 40s were not allowed to show men and women in bed together "even if they were married in the picture—not even if they were married in real life," He claimed that Americans were disappointed in the fall from popularity of such heroic figures as Charles Lindbergh and Charlie Chaplin.[17] He expressed disappointment that popular literature from *Life* magazine to *Ulysses* had been suppressed, and that many other areas of ordinary life had been censured by the government often at the behest of religious groups. Religion promoted the abandonment of the flesh which meant the abandonment of things pleasurable, but there was nothing "moral about us all becoming poor and sick and hungry," he asserted. Instead, "morality ought to impel us to put an end to poverty and suffering and disease, and make the world a pleasant place to live in."[18] Nothing exemplified this religious extremism more than Puritanism, and Hefner was "anti-Puritanism," because Puritans were repressive, "not just in regard to sex, but the whole range of play and pleasure. Puritanism outlawed the theater and many sporting events; it couldn't stand the idea that somewhere someone was having a good time."[19] The preceding twenty years had resulted in a "Depression-bred and war-nurtured conformity" which had a "compulsive concern with security and the common man."[20] To combat the breakdown of white hegemony and the growing menace of Communism Americans were cautioned to "batten down the hatches and return to traditional values."[21] In spite of that "dark anxiety" the post war economy was doing well and the nation was awash in cash.

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[16] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 13, 20.
[17] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 16f, 28.
[18] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 33.
[19] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 35.
[20] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 20, 25.
[21] Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 15.

Women's popular culture tended to focus on domestic affairs like housekeeping, cooking and childrearing. Grace Hefner took advantage of some of these to help educate her sons and the neighborhood children aforementioned.[22] Men's popular culture had subdued messages too with magazines focused on hunting and sporting, or as Hef described those activities in the introductory issue of *Playboy* in 1953, "thrashing through thorny thickets or splashing about in fast flowing streams."[23] But Hefner felt the younger generation "would soon embrace a culture of liberation, consumption, and luxury."[24] He would find a way to exploit the desires of that generation.

The "Upbeat Generation," a jazz term Hefner coopted to describe progressive thinking people like himself who were "positive to the extreme" and distinguished from the Beats, had arrived and they were in conflict with "the old ways, the old traditions and taboos."[25] These old ways, traditions and taboos were the Puritanism against which he was reacting. He was not interested in sports and out-of-doors activities which appealed to the common man. Hefner was more concerned with appropriate dress, dining, good music (usually jazz) and how to entertain a woman. He was the sort of man who "believes the good things in life are worth shooting for be that the newest video camera, clothing, car or 'a fair lady.'"[26] In 1958 *Playboy* would launched a series of advertisements with the caption "What sort of man reads *Playboy*?" explaining the tastes of the "new American Renaissance Man," as Hefner would later call his followers.[27]

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[22] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 43. See also Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 19.
[23] Hefner, *Playboy* 1953, 3.
[24] Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies*, 14.
[25] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 25.
[26] *Playboy*, "What sort of man reads Playboy?" January 1968, 85
[27] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 28.

"Hefner thus crafted a vision of the urban, heterosexually-virile, consuming male," concluded Elizabeth Fraterrigo.[28]

Writing for Salon.com in 1999, when Hefner was 73, Chris Colin said that Hefner had more than "an impressive publishing instinct;" he had "an unparalleled knack for spinning myth."[29] Indeed, Hefner had an incredible skill for marketing his self-image which is often credited for helping build the Playboy Empire. He had begun branding and rebranding himself in childhood and seemed always aware of the cachet his brand carried. In an interview with Carrie Pitzulo he said, "I first reinvented myself when I was in high school, after being rejected by a girl. [I] started referring to myself as 'Hef,' instead of Hugh, and started changing my wardrobe, and wrote a record column for the high school paper with the byline, 'Hep Hef.'"[30] He had chronicled his life since childhood, first with cartoons, then with the cartoon autobiography of "Goo Hef," then with a scrap book collection, which by the way, is the world's largest according to Guinness World Records, and at one time he even collected video tapes of his orgies at The Mansion.[31] Hef, formerly known as Hugh, invented an image of the new American Renaissance Man combining his "obsession with popular culture, his criticism of American moral values, and his growing interest in sex."[32] His magazine was a "pleasure-primer styled to the masculine taste" and would become the means to weave that image into American mythology.[33]

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[28] Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 21.
[29] Chris Colin, "Hugh Hefner," Salon.com http://www.salon.com/1999/12/28/hefner/print accessed 28 September 2013.
[30] Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy*, 14.
[31] Chris Jones, "The Perfect Life of Hugh Hefner," *Esquire* (April 2013). Sharon Waxman, "The Playboy after Dark," *The Washington Post* (10 October 1999).
[32] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 48.
[33] Hefner, *Playboy* 1953, 3. See also Chris Colin, "Hugh Hefner."

The Genesis/Genius of *Playboy*

The Horatio Alger-like story of how Hefner raised $8,000 including $1,000 borrowed from his mother to found *Playboy* magazine has become part of the American myth even spawning a 2010 television commercial for Stolichnaya vodka which proclaimed "The most original people deserve the most original vodka. Hugh Hefner: Original Playboy."[34] When Hefner launched his magazine in December 1953 he "knew the 'girlie' pictures in the magazine would help sell it, but the sexual content took on even greater import as he began to imagine *Playboy* as a vehicle through which to advocate for a prolonged period of 'play in life' and to crusade against what he called the evils of sexual Puritanism."[35] Hefner would have to strike a delicate balance between the fashionable, upscale lifestyle and the liberated, sexualized adventures he thought the post-World War II generation wanted. One *Playboy* editor, Ray Russell, felt the magazine would "die like a dog" without the sex which caused Gail Dines in *Pornland* to say that the *vica versa* was equally true; without the sex, the magazine would be like any other literary magazine; without the articles, the magazine would be like any other pornographic rag.[36] Hefner acknowledged as much in 1979 speaking to a gathering of past Playmates at The Mansion in Los Angeles. He told them that without them (the Playmates) he would be publishing a "literary magazine."[37] Therefore, during the early years of the magazine, *Playboy* promoted a sophisticated swinging bachelor lifestyle—a lifestyle that was reflected in the previously mentioned "What sort of man reads

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[34] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn4Jo_74eDM accessed 19 November 2013.
[35] Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 36.
[36] Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn has Hijacked our Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 7-9.
[37] Hefner quoted, http://www.playboy.com/articles/hefs-historic-timeline-1970s/index.html accessed 8 July 2010.

Playboy?" campaign. Perhaps Hef was too convinced of the bachelor lifestyle leading to the end of his 10 year marriage to Millie in 1959. Nevertheless, those foundational years were important for the magazine and positioned it for the dramatic changes to come in the 1960s.

As the decade of the 60s dawned the Civil Rights Movement was heating up with the formation of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). John Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic and the youngest person to be elected President of the United States, and "the Pill," a form of female birth control was introduced. Hef felt the 1960s signaled the dawn of an "American renaissance," and that meant the need for a "new American Renaissance Man" who could handle the "broadening horizons" in "art, science, philosophy, [and] education."[38] Beginning in 1962 with the first installment of The Playboy Philosophy Hefner addressed the changing culture and railed against his magazine's critics.[39] Some critics objected to the *content* with its discussion of sex and photographs of nude or semi-nude women. Other critics attacked the *concept* of the magazine arguing that Hefner had reduced "the whole man to his private parts." He countered the critics of his content by citing the number of awards the magazine had received in the first few years of its existence.[40] The critics of his concept for the magazine would take a longer and more considered refutation. He invited some of them, such as theologian Harvey Cox, into further dialog. Hefner was proud of thinking

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[38] Hefner, *The Playboy Philosophy*, 28.

[39] Some critics continue to claim that Hefner's sole purpose was to "encourage readers to maximize their sexual pleasures and adventures." See Kenneth C. W. Kammeyer, *A Hypersexual Society: Sexual Discourse, Erotica, and Pornography in America Today* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 70. I feel strongly that this is an overly simplified reading of his Philosophy. He had a larger vision of American liberty which he wanted to advance and adamantly fought to extract the roots of Puritanism which inhibited that liberty.

[40] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 3-5.

differently and promoting new ideas and "hoot[ing] irreverently at herders of sacred cows and keepers of stultifying tradition and taboos."[41] He charged that those who invoked God's name to criticize the nude images in *Playboy* of being blatantly blasphemous because what they criticized was the very handiwork of the Creator. They, that is his religious critics, had a "cockeyed Puritanical view of sex," and he would explain how it had gotten that way.[42] The earliest religiously conservative settlers were to blame for America's cockeyed views.

> Though many of the first settlers came to America to escape religious persecution, they were soon practicing themselves what they had left Europe to avoid. Early American Puritanism required the observance of a rigid religious dogma that permeated every aspect of life. And the Puritans had little respect or tolerance for any beliefs other than their own: Dancing on the Sabbath meant a night in the stocks or a session on the ducking stool; heretics and witches (i.e., those who espoused unpopular beliefs or acted too peculiarly) were hung. . . . Civil law was drawn directly from the Puritan interpretation of Holy Scriptures. The prejudice and prudery, bigotry and boobery of Puritanism did have one unintentionally beneficial effect, however: the extreme importance our founding fathers placed upon the separation of church and state. But while most Americans in the time of the Revolution fervently favored this newfound freedom, the roots of religious Puritanism thrived and spread underground. With two strokes—the Bill of Rights and the Constitution—these first American patriots cut down the twisted tree of Puritanism (and all other forms of overpowering religious oppression), but the roots remained alive in our cultural earth.[43]

[41] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 5.
[42] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 6.
[43] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 44.

The roots of Puritanism continued to grow and soon sprouted in the form of "encroachment of religion and religious prejudice into almost every aspect of American life."[44] Hefner did not have to look very far to prove his thesis.

Organized religion had not produced a society of tolerance, sympathy, understanding, faith and love, but rather orthodoxy, ritual, dogma and tyranny "wielded in the name of God" over fellow Americans which was just as evil as tyranny in the name of the state. The Puritans who settled America did not hold their religion as "one aspect of life, but the whole of it."[45] So consumed were the Puritans with imposing their piety that when others did not conform they were punished with "public floggings, the stocks, the scarlet letter, the ducking stool . . . an occasional hanging" or even death by fire for "relatively minor infringements of the religious dicta."[46] Orwellian like, Puritans had to keep a daily spiritual diary which was scrutinized for "evidence of divine grace or displeasure."[47] Modern Americans faced similar tyranny, scrutiny, intolerance and dicta in the form of "Blue Laws" which prohibited Sunday activities, prohibition from teaching Evolution in public schools, liquor prohibitions, restrictive divorce laws, banned literature and books, censured movies, curtailed and censured free speech, proscribed sexual activity and a host of other liberties which should be available to adult individuals in a truly free society.[48] The cultural renaissance Hefner dreamed of could be a reality if Americans had a social reformation and a sexual revolution, but a religious enlightenment would be a prerequisite to further any significant change.

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[44] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 44.
[45] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 36.
[46] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 37.
[47] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 37.
[48] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 39-49.

The roots of Puritanical prudery were a persistent pestilence guised as conservative religious concern. Hefner was willing to admit that he had some lingering roots of Puritanism in him when it came to romance. He often found that he was intellectually much more liberated than he was in reality. He valued innocent women and remained vulnerable to relationships.[49] But he felt these were his issues to deal with--his baggage to carry. He was self-aware and world-aware. He did not want others to judge him or his activities, which was exactly the problem with many religious folk: "The do-gooder, the prude, the bigot and the censor have no such self-knowledge and their concern is continually with the affairs of *others*." While concern for others can result in helping the less fortunate, "a concentrated interest in the affairs of others may . . . be the basis for the meddlesome disruption of other people's private lives."[50] Those who were most meddlesome were usually the most religious. Yet, those who were condemned by religious busybodies and judged to be "going to the devil," were those who bucked convention and found a new way or different understanding of how to live their lives. Those religiously repressed people who condemned and judged the rebels, he believed, would eventually come around to the new way of thinking, and thus Hef quoted from what one might call the PBV (Playboy Version) of the Bible: "Blessed is the rebel—without him there would be no progress."[51] Hef and his ilk were rebels bent on purging America of its Puritanical dregs, but his pivot from meddlesome disruptive individuals to religious Puritanical persons begs for some examination.

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[49] Boyd, *My Fellow Americans*, 61-2.
[50] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 90.
[51] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 90.

Religious Conservatives a.k.a. Puritans

Hefner frequently used the term "religious" or "religion" in the magazine. Though he used the terms broadly the overwhelming majority of the time he was referring to Christianity because "the dominant religion in America is Christianity," and he repeatedly referred to Puritanism which by definition was Christian.[52] In The Playboy Philosophy he delineated between Protestant, [Roman] Catholic and Jewish. Within Protestantism he made even further distinctions citing more conservative, fundamentalist Christian beliefs as Puritan or puritanical only, but lent denominational nomenclature to more progressive religious expressions such as Unitarians, Episcopalians, Methodists and a few others. Non-Christian religious views were represented in the magazine in interviews, but especially in cartoons. Still these religious references do not explain to what Hefner was referring. The best definition Hefner offered came early in The Playboy Philosophy in his citation of a letter written to him by a Unitarian minister. *Playboy* "tells its readers how to get into heaven. It tells them what is important in life, delineates an ethics for them, tells them how to relate to others, tells them what to lavish their attention and energy upon, gives them a model of a kind of person to be. It expresses a consistent world view, a system of values, a philosophical outlook."[53] The minister had concluded that *Playboy* could be a religious system itself, and Hefner did *nothing* to refute that suggestion. In fact, it is from that point that he developed his Philosophy, and more often than not when Hefner referred to "religion" or "religious" he was talking about a mostly organized, conservative, holiness Christianity that in his view was

[52] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 187.
[53] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 3.

generally repressive of new ideas and activities, especially those sexual in nature, and that imposed that repression upon others.

Hefner did not, however, believe all organized religion was harmful or "guilty of being antisexual." He found some more "liberated elements" in Christianity and Judaism helpful because they were coming to realize "the true sexual nature of man," and he even cited some of those religious leaders by name.[54] He admitted in his Philosophy that organized religion had a "civilizing influence upon mankind through all of history; it has fostered hope, charity and education."[55] Rather his contention was "only with that part of [organized religion] that continues to deny man's sexual nature and pits man's body, mind and soul against one another."[56] That sort of religion had bred wars, poverty, duplicity, death, suffering and imprisonment of mind and body. In other words, conservative Protestant Christianity equaled Puritanism and Puritanism meant repression and often hypocrisy. Hefner conflated his conservative Midwestern Christian upbringing, which had been influenced by the holiness movement of the late nineteenth century, with American Puritanism. In his view, this brand of religious morality was a form of repression, sexual and otherwise. Thus, Hefner saw an opportunity to combat Puritanical influence—to strike at its root—with his magazine.

Steven Watts believes that Hefner overstates his claim of an entirely Puritanical upbringing noting that "progressive notions of morality and childrearing influenced" Grace, and Hugh and his younger brother frequented movies, the Aquarium, and amusement parks—activities that would have been forbidden to Puritans. Grace even

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[54] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 36. See also page 198 of the Philosophy where Hefner cites, of all religious leaders, "Father James Jones, a priest of the Episcopal Church."
[55] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 36.
[56] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 90.

took the boys to the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, "The Century of Progress."[57] Yet, there is a grain of truth in Hefner's construction of the myth of his early life beyond the fact that he is a direct descendent of two of the Puritan founders of Plymouth Colony, William Bradford and John Winthrop. If young Hugh experienced his home life as Puritanical it was not because vestiges of genuine Puritan morality persisted in America. It is more likely that he had a mythic and monolithic view of Puritans in mind when he experienced the pursuit of holiness and purity in his family's Methodism. Religious historians such as Vinson Synan and Donald Dayton have shown how the Holiness Movement influenced not only the Methodists but many American religious traditions during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.[58]

Puritans as Proto-voyeurs

Hefner's Philosophy, and to a great extent his magazine, was predicated on the premise that America continued to be influenced by Puritanism well into the twentieth century and that representations of Puritanism, especially those with sexual connotations, could be easily identified in American culture, society and religion. For Hefner, the facts about Puritans did not matter provided the myth was perceived as real and could be caricatured. It cannot be underestimated that Hefner was aware that two of his ancestors were Puritan founders, Bradford and Winthrop, and so in a very real way Hefner was reacting against his forbears. The editors of *The Puritan Origins of American Sex* remind us, however, that there never was a single representation of Puritanism in America, and the various expressions changed over time. This suggests that the meaning of "Puritan,"

[57] Watts, *Mr. Playboy,* 14, 19.
[58] See Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) and Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

"Puritanism," and "puritanical" is open to interpretation while recognizing that there was a group called Puritans who "propounded a highly nuanced teleology and ontology" that has "reverberated throughout U.S. history."[59] These same editors also tell us that America's common Puritan ancestry, if there can be such a thing, yields a national sense of voyeurism, a point I'll take up later and one for which Hefner was grateful whether he realized it or not. For sure there are some distinct socio-religious characteristics of Puritans, and especially of Puritans in New England. They held to Calvinist ideals and in America "they stressed the need for religious direction in the ongoing history of whole towns and communities."[60] They were not democratic, excluding non-church members, women and non-land owners. Their worship was sparse, lacking ceremony and "elaborate music." They had rather strict disciplinary codes. Yet, Jon Butler points out that the major failure of the Puritans was when they ceased to accept "censure, advice, and consolation. Only in this way [by accepting] could sinful Puritans be models for others and their communities."[61] Notable cases of such censure are Anne Hutchinson and the later witch trials, of course.

To the imagination of many Americans, Puritans were prudish and repulsed by sexual activity. In the minds of many, marriage was a spiritual affair lacking any sense of conjugal bliss, and when they did pay attention to sex it was only for the purposes of punishing those who participated in such loathsome, base activities. Edward Morgan refuted those notions showing that Puritans had a great interest in sex and in the sexual activities of their neighbors for reasons other than punishment. Morgan concluded that

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[59] Tracy Fessenden, Nicholas Radel, and Magalena Zaborowska, eds, *The Puritan Origins of American Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 13.
[60] Jon Butler, *New World Faiths* (New York: Oxford Press, 2008), 52.
[61] Ibid., 55.

they "were a much earthier lot than their modern critics have imagined. Puritans were not ascetics. They knew how to love."[62] They were not "prudish and condemnatory about sex," but they were voyeurs.[63] Yet, Puritan voyeurism was not entirely for repressive purposes. New England Puritans in particular paid close attention to the sexual activities of their neighbors due in part to the simple fact that they lived in close proximity with each other. When they observed deviant sexual activity they wanted to channel those urges into appropriate avenues such as marriage and procreation because the social order depended on the family. Even when individuals were witnessed deviating from acceptable sexual practices they could be restored to the community in good standing after appropriate censure and/or punishment.[64] There was a great deal of passion and affection toward one another within marriage as Morgan demonstrated in Puritan love letters.[65] Before marriage, intimate engagements were customary because choosing a compatible partner was important. Contrary to popular myth, Puritans were somewhat ambivalent toward premarital sexual relations and saw marital sexual activity as a duty and responsibility. A husband or wife could be punished if s/he failed to accommodate the needs of the other.[66] Much of the misunderstanding, misinformation and myth about Puritan sexuality came from misinterpreting hyperbolic rhetoric and allegorical allusions to spiritual quests and surrender.[67]

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[62] Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 27.
[63] Kathleen Verduin, "'Our Cursed Natures': Sexuality and the Puritan Conscience," *The New England Quarterly* (June 1983), 56.2, p 221.
[64] John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) 15-16.
[65] Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 21-7.
[66] Ibid., 23-4. See also Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 22.
[67] Verduin, "Our Cursed Natures," 226, 234.

Although inconsistent with Hefner's premise, Puritans were intensely self-aware and world aware regarding every aspect of life. For this reason they felt that those who failed to be introspective and circumspect should be helped to see their need for purity and the purity of the world around them. When individuals were punished for participating in worldly entertainments it was to help purify their souls and the community of which they were a part. The redemption of the world depended on the redemption of the individual and the community. "Bluntly put, *being watched* was as much a part of the religious program as interior vigilance," wrote Ed Ingebretsen.[68] In the words famously trumpeted by John Winthrop in 1630 from the *Arabella* to the Plymouth settlers, they were to envision themselves as a "city on a hill." The connotation was that such a city could not be hidden and would serve as a beacon for others to see and watch. By implication then, each inhabitant of that city was also to be watched. Awareness that the world would be watching meant that any individual could become the focal point of attention, thus one should be self-aware. Any and every aspect of life was open to scrutiny and examination, especially those things done in secret such as sexual activity. It is worth noting that Winthrop did not directly link being watched with sex. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew did that. Matthew's Gospel (5.14-32) places discussions of anger, adultery and divorce immediately after Jesus' declaration that his followers were to be a light to others. Because the Puritans cherished biblical literacy they would have likely understood Winthrop's reference and conflated it with Jesus' admonition regarding adultery. When one is examined for the light, and no light is found, then darkness must be present prompting the question, "Whence cometh the darkness? Let's more closely examine this sinner to discover." This examination could

[68] Fessenden, Radel and Zaborowska, *The Puritan Origins of American Sex*, 22.

even be taken to the extreme such as publicly looking for the mark of Satan on accused witches. This voyeuristic instinct, the need to look on even the most intimate deeds of their neighbors, meant that those who violated the community's standards were to be made examples. Again Ingebretsen: "For as much as Reformed Christians broke from Roman Catholic hagiographic tradition, in the end they retained it in inverted form, replacing visibly marked saints with communally repudiated sinners. Repudiating sin necessitated the display of sinners."[69] Whether wittingly or not, Hefner tapped into American's voyeuristic past, and though he would critique and satirize it, he should have been grateful for America's tendency to look for looking gave Hefner entree into men's minds.

[69] *The Puritan Origins of American Sex*, 26, 28.

CHAPTER 3

IT'S FUNNY CAUSE IT'S TRUE? *PLAYBOY* COMICS, PURITANS AND THE BIBLE

In 1969 Jon Alston published a longitudinal content analysis of religiously themed cartoons appearing in *The New Yorker* magazine between the years 1930-1968. He divided the content of the cartoons into eight categories.[1] He found that there was a marked increase in the category focusing on the "supernatural," meaning miracles, heaven, hell from 1960-68. More interesting perhaps, is the fact that "Biblical and Puritan themes do not occur in significant proportions until 1960."[2] Though his conclusions were by no means definitive, he did suggest that "America's value orientations" were changing and those new orientations were being reflected in humor.[3] He did not suggest what led to these changing values, nor did he offer a hint as to what direction they would take the country. *Playboy* magazine had a similar phenomenon with its cartoons during the period of the 60s and 70s, and Alston's categories provide a useful construct for examining these cartoons. Without doing a complete longitudinal analysis one can easily detect an increase in religious cartoons as the magazine entered its second decade. Since Hefner used cartoons to strike at the roots of his understanding of

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[1] Jon P. Alston, "Religious Humor: A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Cartoons," *Sociological Analysis* (Winter 1969) vol. 30 no. 4, p 219. His categories are (1) Personality and subculture of ministers, (2) Church modernization and secularization, (3) Public too secular, (4) Current events, (5) Comments on prayer, service, (6) Heaven/Hell/Angels/Devils/God, (7) Biblical and Puritan themes, (8) End of the world, sects. I will roughly use these categories for my examination of *Playboy*'s cartoons.

[2] Jon P. Alston, "Religious Humor: A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Cartoons," 217-222.

[3] Alston, "Religious Humor," 221.

Puritanism in America, and since *Playboy* was not the only magazine to use them, it is incumbent to ask what the purpose of satirical cartooning is. Do cartoons *reflect* societal values or do they help *shape* values?

In this chapter and the next I will focus on *Playboy*'s religiously oriented comics and steer clear of those that dealt with more politically charged issues such as the Sexual Revolution, objection to the Vietnam War, women's liberation, and race though those topics appear in abundance. To borrow a phrase from the field of Political Science, cartoons function as "soft power" to do their work in contrast to the "hard power" of interviews, editorials, essays and the like which are more conventional, aggressive and direct. Innocent cartoons attracted readers, subtly persuaded them, and undermined their confidence in power structures such as the Church, the Bible, and religious leaders. Hefner specifically used the term "satire" early in The Playboy Philosophy to describe his response to some points of view that differed from his own. "We believe in the Western tradition of satire and polemic," he wrote, "and we aren't above poking fun at ourselves once in a while either."[4] Sometimes his satire took the form of parody, a satirical form of imitation, but more often he used cartoons to focus on what he viewed as religious hypocrisy or repression.

With its moral function, satire has a particularly distinct history as a religious genre dating to Greco-Roman times. Comedic repartee was suppressed, but never snuffed out, during the Middle Ages. It survived and with the dawn of the Renaissance and Reformation reemerged as an antagonistic tool of papal and ecclesiastical authority. Anti-Protestant groups also employed cartoons to satirize Lutherans and others.

[4] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 5.

Religious satire tends to make the mystical and ethereal down to earth and real, at times even bawdy.[5] Edward Sewell felt that the cartoons of that period functioned as fools or court jesters to correct pretentious persons, ridicule over-conformers and as an "outlet for aggressive tensions."[6] Sewell went on to look at modern uses of religious cartooning which satirized the hypocrisy of televangelists such as Jim Bakker, Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and even Pope John Paul II. Cartoons as a genre are extremely difficult to define, and some scholars believe that it is an art form which is self-defining.[7] Others say that comics are a democratic, albeit low, art form that juxtaposes visual and literary languages which are often commercially produced and which "encourages a strain of anarchic humor and anti-authoritarian sentiment."[8] However comics might be defined, or not as the case might be, they are certainly a form of satire for satire is a means to ridicule "any subject—an idea, or institution, an actual person or type of person, or even mankind in general—to lower it in the reader's esteem and make it laughable." Satire has the goal of "destruction or reform or both."[9] The satirist becomes a "self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth" whose purpose is to "correct, censure and ridicule" some aspect of society.[10] Leonard Sweet surmised: "In satire one can play rough; one can be simultaneously funny and deadly serious [but, there is] a lump of truth

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[5] Robert A. Kantra, *All Things Vain: Religious Satirists and Their Art* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1984), 15.
[6] Marshall Fishwick and Ray B. Browne, eds, *The God Pumpers: Religion in the Electronic Age* (Bowling Green, OH: State University Press, 1987), 47.
[7] Aaron Meskin, "Defining Comics?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (Autumn 2007) 65.4, p 376.
[8] Katherine Roeder, "Looking High and Low at Comic Art," *American Art* (Spring 2008) 22.1, 5-6.
[9] Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, *Literary Terms: A Dictionary* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 247.
[10] J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 780.

locked inside."[11] By employing cartoons the editor-in-chief of *Playboy* was able to act as a metaphysician. The English author and literary critic, John Cuddon surmised that the cartoonist could be "a kind of spiritual therapist whose function [was] to destroy the root causes of the major diseases of the spirit, like hypocrisy, pride and greed."[12] Couched as cartoons, then, Hefner's religious satire was polysemic allowing him to not only convey his philosophy in words, but also to illustrate the story, which allowed for various and sundry interpretations of the situation represented.[13] In these satirical cartoons he could stereotype, parody and/or caricature the idea, person, event or institution in ways that would be less allowable in an entirely literary format. To the extent then, that his readers believed what they read and saw in the cartoon images he not only reflected societal values he was also able to shape those values. The soft power of satiric cartoons allowed Hefner to subtly barrage puritanical institutions partly because they contained enough truth to be dangerous. In fact, sociologist David Feltmate said that is precisely why cartoons are so dangerous. The comics are not funny because they are true. Rather, "they are funny because [the cartoonists] think they represent a larger truth which is based on their assumptions about religion, religious institutions, and the value of religious life which is then filtered through their sense of humor."[14] The readers did not have to know a great deal about Puritans, the Bible, the Church or any other topic covered by the

[11] Leonard I. Sweet, "Pearlygate Satires Are Weak on Substance," *Christian Century*, (July 29-August 5, 1987), 104.22 p 644.
[12] Cuddon, "satire," 780-1
[13] Matthew McAllister, Edward Sewell, Jr., and Ian Gordon, *Comics and Ideology* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 4.
[14] David Feltmate, "It's Funny Because It's True? *The Simpsons*, Satire, and the Significance of Religious Humor in Popular Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (March 2013), 81.1, pp 231-2.

cartoons provided they had enough familiarity with the subject to agree with the cartoonists' tacit assumptions.[15]

Parodied Puritans

With caricatured depictions of Puritans in mind and the ax of satire in hand, Hefner set out to strike at the root of Puritanism in America. Using mythic socio-sexual-religious characteristics Hefner, or more appropriately his cartoonists, set up a Puritan straw man. The images seem far more akin to the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne than real history. A number of themes reoccur: punishment (usually for sex), the joy of sex (even for women) and swindled Indians. A July 1965 comic featured a young couple in stocks. The woman, with a very concerned and angry look on her face tells the smiling man, "Don't get any ideas—I'm just here for scolding."[16] One wonders if this was perhaps a reference to Kinsey's work. Channeling other sadomasochistic punishments a group of eight Puritan men each with only one limb confined were locked in stocks obviously intended for only two people. Each man had a somewhat amused smile on his face as another Puritan man looked on them with the declaration, "I hear it was quite an orgy."[17] The stocks were again featured for the punishment of two men and one woman. The two frowning men below the frowning woman. A Puritan couple passed by the trio as the man commented, "Some sort of triangle, I suppose."[18] Two other examples show how hypocritical Hefner via his cartoonists really thought the Puritans were. In October

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[15] G. Frank Burns, "The Bible in American Popular Humor," *The Bible and Popular Culture in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 25-6. Burns discusses the "various techniques used to adapt biblical material to popular humor."
[16] *Playboy*, July 1965, 154.
[17] *Playboy*, October 1967, 186. See Appendix Figure 2.
[18] *Playboy*, November 1968, 136.

1970 an unspoken question was answered. A woman was tied to a stake. Around her was a group of Puritan men, women and children, and before her was a man with a burning torch. The man with a smile on his face said to the distressed looking woman, "Oh, we don't believe in witches anymore . . . This is just for kicks!" The stocks were again used in an improvisational manner to confine a couple. Only their feet were visible but from the direction of their feet, the woman's feet pointing upward while the man's pointing downward, one can easily discern that they were secured face to face. The gag line, "Since you asked, yes—the constable is a friend of mine," explained someone's delight at the awkward position.[19] We're not told who asked the question. One might naturally believe it was the man, but according to the cartoons below, women enjoyed sex, too.

In addition to punishment the cartoons suggest that Puritan women enjoyed sex, but the Puritan hierarchy did not understand that as a possibility. Hefner had cited the "ducking stool" as an example of punishment used by the Puritans, and the stool made an appearance in a November 1966 full page comic. The setting was a town with dozens of angry, frowning town folk gathered at a body of water where two ducking stools were a permanent fixture. Four men raised a young couple out of the water. Dripping wet the man looked at the woman and said, "I always like to shower afterward anyway, don't you, Miss Wingate?" The angry scowl on the magistrate's face showed his dissatisfaction particularly when juxtaposed with the satisfaction on the faces of the young couple. Obviously the punishment had not taught them a lesson.[20]

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[19] *Playboy*, November 1970, 233.
[20] *Playboy*, November 1966. 101.

Puritan women could be disappointed sexually if they were spurned as in a 1969 full page cartoon. The young woman had her skirt pushed up mid-thigh; her bosom was partially exposed. Her fully clothed male partner gazed out over a stone wall into the wilderness as she exclaimed, "Here I am, poised on the brink of womanhood, and you start worrying about your Puritan ethic." Another Puritan woman wanted clarity from "Hiram." "Put it to me straight. Are you, or are you not, propositioning me?" she insisted.[21] Sexually eager women were the feature of a November 1972 full page cartoon when an anxious Pilgrim man twirling his mustache addressed a group of his anxious fellow travelers with, "Gentlemen, the Pilgrim Fathers are ready to sail. Now, let's pick some Pilgrim Mothers!" To his right there were a half dozen giddy young women wearing tight corsets so that their breasts were pushed up. From the background of the cartoon one gets the sense that they were the employees of a brothel which they would happily exchange for an adventurous trip to the New World.[22] Sometimes the women were either not sexually satisfied or simply unwilling to consent. This sentiment was evident as a Puritan couple walked through the forest. The man questioned the pious, somber looking woman with, "You came across on the Mayflower, why not now?"[23] Sometimes disappointed women could be seen through open windows by passers. The town crier heralded, "Eleven o'clock and, oh, boy, what I just saw . . . !" when he witnessed a nearly nude woman with a disappointed look on her face.[24] Still at other times, Puritan repression was invoked centuries after the group had disappeared. The August 1965 issue featured a multipage cartoon entitled "Among the Hippies: The further

[21] *Playboy*, November 1966, 180.
[22] *Playboy*, November 1972, 107.
[23] *Playboy*, November 1970, 217.
[24] *Playboy*, October 1965, 119.

adventures of truth seeker Shel in darkest hashbury" by Shel Silverstein. Perhaps following Hef's example from his army days, Silverstein chronicled his time among the Hippie culture of San Francisco using cartoons. In one revealing scene he depicted his sexual exploits with a young woman who said, "I'm doing this as a statement of independence, a rebellion against my parents and a protest against outdated puritanical morality." Then she asked the confused looking investigator, and sexual partner, "Why are you doing it?"[25] Magdalena Zaborowska believes that in Puritan America, women who are outspoken, or in this instance, enjoying sex to make a political statement, are "kept outside of the national consensus" because they are "too outspoken and too sexual."[26] Progressive women since the time of Anne Hutchinson have been asked to conform or suffer persecution for their beliefs. *Playboy*'s comics about Puritan women seemed to further prove Hefner's thesis and it also helped to advance his ideas that "good girls," i.e. the girl next door, likes sex, too, and sometimes they were willing to "suffer" whatever was necessary to have sex. Nevertheless, the fact remains that women, whether outspoken and independent or the docile girl-next-door, were objects to be viewed and appreciated by men. They are objects of the male gaze. In the words of John Berger: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."[27]

In addition to portraying Puritans as sexually repressed, angry and hypocritical, Hefner wanted to destroy the public confidence in their morality and truthfulness. One way to do that was to show that they cheated Native Americans as in a 1963 issue that although without words, showed several stern faced Puritan men offering an open chest

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[25] *Playboy*, August 1968, 74.
[26] Zaborowska, "Americanization of a 'Queer Fellow,'" *The Puritan Origins of American Sex*, 229.
[27] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1972, 45.

of jewelry to three inquisitive Native men.[28] One presumed that the beads were worthless. Often the Natives were unaware of the duplicitous nature of the settlers. Thanksgiving dinner was to be a brief meal for the Indians in one full page comic where they were already seated at an empty table and awkwardly stared at by two children. The Puritan man drew ale, or something of the sort, from a barrel telling his wife, mugs in hand, "Give them a couple of drinks, put out some salted nuts and hope they don't stay for dinner."[29] Sometimes the Puritans were even less kind telling some Natives who showed up for dinner, "We call it Thanksgiving. Now, get lost!"[30] At other times the Native Americans were keenly aware of the untrustworthy nature of the settlers as when one Native man told two others, "They've shot twenty-nine of our braves, polluted all the rivers, killed most of the game and raped the chief's sister. Now he wants us to drop over next Thursday for turkey dinner with all the fixin's." The oblivious character in this scene was the Puritan man in the background.[31]

Perhaps because November was Thanksgiving month and the close association of the myth of the Pilgrims with Thanksgiving, many of the November issues of *Playboy* Featured Puritan cartoons. 1976 was an especially important year celebrated as the nation's bicentennial, and it happened to be an election year. Therefore, on the auspicious date November 1976, in an issue featuring the famous and much anticipated Jimmy Carter interview, Hefner unveiled *prurient puritans: the true story of how our early settlers got their Plymouth rocks off* by J. B. Handelsman. The cartoon exposé depicted the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock, and combined many of the recurring

[28] *Playboy*, February 1963, 141.
[29] *Playboy*, November 1967, 179.
[30] *Playboy*, November 1972, 218.
[31] *Playboy*, November 1969, 167.

themes in *Playboy*'s Puritan cartoons. The opening frame featured what might be Hef's own ancestor, John Winthrop, hypocritically praying, "And if we should fall into temptation, Lord, and indulge in unspeakable sexual excesses in the New World, we solemnly promise You that we will feel very, very guilty afterward."[32] The three page spread featured white male settlers ogling nude Native American women. One can tell that they are Native American because of the feathers in their braided hair, tan skin, and innocent expressions. The Native men were very astute in their observations of the "Paleface" surmising that the settlers were "not here for religious freedom [but] here to screw Indians" as they watched a settler engage in sex with a Native woman. They also keenly observed that the guns carried by Paleface appeared to be big phallic symbols of repressed homosexuality. Even though some of the male settlers accidentally got the Pilgrim women pregnant they claimed not to enjoy sex and in circular logic confessed that settler women who wore "flimsy bodices that become transparent when wet" deserved to be punished with the ducking stool. Ed Ingebretsen said that women most often bore the "brunt of 'private' transgression. Sexual sins were most often laid at their doors, and women were typically punished more severely than men for sexual irregularities."[33] The one scene out of the nine that possibly bore truth was the final scene which depicted the settlers filing into the meeting house, presumably for prayer, men with guns over their shoulders and the women, clad in long dresses and bonnets, each bearing the scarlet red "A" on her back, even the girls. The cartoon clearly indicts the Puritan founders for hypocrisy, exploitation, prejudice, voyeurism, lying and various forms of repression and abuse. Whether the cartoon resembled any truth about the

[32] *Playboy*, November 1976, 161-3.
[33] Fessenden, Radel and Zaborowski, *The Puritan Origins of American Sex*, 25-6.

Puritan settlers did not matter. What mattered was that the stereotype or caricature proved Hefner's point. Hefner used the cartoon to reinforce his stereotype of Puritan repression of women while the men were allowed, even expected, to be promiscuous. More than that, white European men were desirable, perhaps especially to the poor Native women, and white European men were entitled to the land they conquered with all its spoils, including the women. *Playboy*'s readers were equally desirable, entitled and capable of fulfilling their fantasies of conquering the women they discovered. In the bicentennial year of the nation's founding and on the eve of a Presidential election, America should remember that the founding fathers were repressive abusive hypocrites who imposed rules on others that they did not intend to obey themselves since they believed they could always simply repent. Yet if satirizing Puritan behavior directly was not enough to cut the American Puritan root, then perhaps their source of authority, the Bible, could be attacked.

Satirizing Sacred Scripture

Playboy's cartoons often poked fun at the Bible. Most American men would have known the biblical references in the comics even if they could not specifically cite where the story originated in the Bible. September 1971 featured a multipage Handelsman cartoon to illustrate the Creation account. Purporting to be a mirthful "Mephistophelean" account of "how it all began" it imagined God with long white hair and beard, who apparently grew tired of playing solitaire because he often lost, and so decided to create the world.[34] God seemed clueless at times and depended on Lucifer, also known as

[34] *Playboy*, September 1971, 187-89.

"Prince of Darkness" or after Lucifer created fire, he was known as the "Prince of Cold." (One was supposed to see the ironic satire in "Lucifer" meaning "light" being named "darkness" and as a creator of fire being called "cold.") God's ignorance extended to the fact that he did not realize that there was nothing in existence until he created light, and when he did create things, such as the firmament, he did not know what it was. God was prone to mistakes failing to create the sun correctly after millions of tries. These failures were known as the stars, and the creation of fish could be credited to the fact that God had a craving on a Friday. Man and woman, created in God's image out of vanity, had no knowledge of sex. In the end, God prayed to himself for humanity's wellbeing. Alas, he was unable to produce a miracle which would have been necessary for the humans to resist the temptations of the "wily serpent." God resigned himself to the inevitable, went back to playing solitaire, and turned the whole Creation over to Lucifer. The mirthful retelling was intended to show God as detached and foolish, but Lucifer was gleeful and tuned in to events. One was left with the feeling that a person with modern sensibilities would be absurd and ill-advised to believe in such a puritanically contrived being as God, for not only was God aloof, but God was fickle evidenced by how he treated Adam and Eve in the account of the Garden of Eden.

There were many comic depictions of The Fall perhaps due in large part to its oft close association with sexual activity. Hefner picked up this idea in The Philosophy telling his readers that the Garden of Eden account was "changed to suggest that the 'forbidden fruit' Adam tasted in the Garden was sex, with Eve cast in the role of the temptress. Thus the Original Sin that Adam handed down to all of us was sexual in nature." Hefner refuted that claim: "The Bible makes no such statement . . . Adam ate

from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and it is for acquiring this knowledge, which made him godlike, that he was expelled from Eden. No reference is made to sex in connection with Adam's fall from Divine favor."[35] Interestingly, very few of the *Playboy* cartoons directly associate the expulsion from the Garden with sex. In one cartoon Adam and Eve left the Garden under the excessively large finger of God which pointed at the couple prompting Adam to grumble, "Just who does He think He is?!!"[36] The finger of God appeared again in June 1967, this time with lightning bolts. The couple ran out of the Garden as Adam hastily told Eve, "I just hope He doesn't find out about the oranges. . . !"[37]

When sex was referenced in the cartoons it was often subtle as in a full page cartoon where Adam sat alone in the Garden. The voice of God boomed from above, "Have I got a girl for you!" Adam had not asked for a mate; God simply decided to play divine matchmaker, which surprised even the serpent at Adam's feet.[38] In another Garden comic with a subtle sexual reference Adam protested to a skeptical looking Eve, "Eve, I've told you a thousand times—there isn't anyone else!"[39] Yet all sex references were not so subtle. A six page comic article entitled, "*palette-able sex*" was a "*roguish gallery of artful variations on an ever-popular theme*."[40] The multiframe, multipage cartoon featured several religious topics including a stained glass window with the subject "Adam and Eve." Both are nude except in the genital area where Adam was clothed with a green leaf and Eve's piece of stain glass which was to cover her pubic

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[35] Hefner, The Playboy Philosophy, 194.
[36] *Playboy*, April 1963, 99.
[37] *Playboy*, June 1967, 190.
[38] *Playboy*, July 1971, 147.
[39] *Playboy*, September 1966, 261.
[40] *Playboy*, March 1972, 100-05.

region was missing such that sunlight streamed from her pubic region which would obviously catch anyone's attention, and it did. A curious monk was only steps away from the beam of light causing one to speculate that perhaps he would be enlightened by Eve's coercive aspect. Hefner was keenly aware that the female form could, and did, catch the attention of straight men. Since the time of Eve women had been a source of temptation despite Hefner's protests that Eve was not to blame for the "fall from Divine favor," but she *was* to blame since she encouraged Adam to "march in there and ask [God] for an increase in knowledge."[41] Hefner was fully aware that his readers, who were presumably straight men, had the propensity to look at women, or if not always to look to at least pay them undue attention, and he had capitalized on that weakness. Therefore, Hefner did at times overtly present Eve as a temptress as in a depiction where a nude Eve offered a nude Adam a piece of fruit. Adam's surprised response spoke volumes: "An apple for <u>me</u>? Well, I'll be damned!"[42] Perhaps it is conjecture, but Adam found Eve's voluptuous nude physique too tempting, which is why he asked her to put on some leaves, to which she replied, "I must have looked at a hundred trees and I couldn't find a leaf I liked," which left Adam looking dejected.[43] Hefner might not be in agreement with Augustine that sex was the original sin as a result of temptation by Eve, but he was aware of typical straight male proclivities. Yet, even with allusions to sex and the tempting nature of women the Garden cartoons never fully exposed the cause of the fall leaving one to wonder if sin was a reality or an idea formulated by theologians and puritanical prudes to inhibit humanity's liberated and libidinous nature. Whichever the

[41] *Playboy*, September 1968, 192.
[42] *Playboy*, November 1971, 228.
[43] *Playboy*, December 1969, 317.

case, the serpent was ever present in the background of the Garden comics watching over human activity, much like Lucifer in the earlier mentioned Creation account, and regardless there were still other biblical accounts to satirize.

Perhaps second only to the number of Garden cartoons were those depicting Noah's Ark. The Ark comics were usually light hearted and appealed to those who had a basic, Sunday School-level knowledge of the Bible. Nevertheless, there were some recurring themes such as sexual activity especially between the animals aboard the ark which would be the obvious outcome of a pair of each animal, and "missing the boat" with a subtheme of discrimination.

Having a pair of each type of animal aboard a boat yielded humorous and predictable results when those animals became amorous as in a pair of elephants. Their copulation shook the Ark, even knocked a monkey overboard, provoking an angry response from Noah: "For heaven's sake—are those accursed elephants mating <u>again</u>?"[44] Sometimes the procreative activity was too much for Noah leaving him exhausted. It took no words to convey this sentiment as dozens of rabbits disembarked from the Ark.[45] But the potentially most troublesome coition was human. Noah stopped his son from entering the Ark because he proposed to bring two women aboard with him: "I'm sorry, son—if I let <u>you</u>, they'll <u>all</u> want to." Given the angry looks from some of the animals, Noah's was a good decision to keep harmony.[46] But not all received salvation because of the Ark.

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[44] *Playboy*, June 1970, 170.
[45] *Playboy*, November 1969, 283.
[46] *Playboy*, April 1968, 113.

The aardvarks were nowhere to be found when Noah and his wife began to load the animals on the Ark.[47] One centaur shaking his fist threatened another when they didn't make the Ark: "If I hear you say 'We missed the boat' once more----!"[48] A monkey left behind was not happy about the situation. He offered an angry, rude gesture instead of "Bon voyage."[49] Some animals voluntarily left the ship as in two mice who jumped overboard, though we are not told exactly why.[50] Yet, perhaps the most poignant commentary about something, or in this case, someones, not making the boat came in March 1971. The full page comic depicted a man and woman of presumably African origins based on their dress. A light from heaven shined on them as they looked up to the Ark filled with animals. The rain had begun to fall as the man shouted, "I said, 'How come there aren't any soul brothers on the ark?"[51] Someone had certainly heard his cry, but he never received an answer to his desperate question. The Noah's Ark cartoons might seem innocuous and light hearted, but for Hefner they are laden with commentary. For one they showed that sex was a part of being alive—a natural instinct like that of any other animal. But more importantly it was a commentary on the exclusionary and prejudicial tendencies of religion. Some were not admitted to the means of salvation for arbitrary reason and whether it was God, the Church, or in this case, Noah who excluded them didn't matter. They were excluded, reinforcing Hefner's belief in the unreasonable and capricious ways of religion. As in sexual matters, Hefner saw the Church's racial stance as duplicitous. Even progressive Church leaders talked about equality and

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[47] *Playboy*, March 1977, 181.
[48] *Playboy*, March 1966, 152.
[49] *Playboy*, February 1967, 178.
[50] *Playboy*, May 1968, 190.
[51] *Playboy*, March 1971.

inclusion, but seldom followed through to full integration. Rules and regulations about who was permitted to do what in the Church had little to do with the true spirit of scripture and more to do with arbitrary decisions of inclusion and exclusion. One could be excluded for having the wrong skin color, wrong sex, or more to his point, engaging in sex—a natural act which could not be changed any more than race or sex.

Hefner, via *Playboy*, satirized yet other biblical accounts, although some of them supposed a high biblical literacy. Here are some examples. During the Exodus some Israelites objected to crossing the Red Sea because they would "get [their] sandals all muddy."[52] The June 1964 issue depicted God interrupting Belshazzar's feast using the vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. In the cartoon the hand and arm of God appeared holding a flaming sword. The revelers were shocked by the appearance as a voice, presumably from God, thundered, "Better let me do the talking!"[53] A June 1977 comic referred to Samson's destruction of the temple of the Philistine god Dagon. As the worshippers fled the crumbling temple one of them, perhaps the king, growled at a woman who must have been Delilah, "It obviously wasn't his hair you should have cut off."[54] In the background still standing beneath a falling temple, stood Samson. He was wearing nothing but a loin cloth except it was rather elongated as if to imply he had a much larger than average penis. Hefner must have had a better than average knowledge of the Bible, and expected the same of his readers. It's hard to imagine even with the high rate of church attendance in the 1960s and 70s that someone with a casual acquaintance of the Old Testament would catch the references to Daniel 5 or Judges 16.

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[52] *Playboy*, February 1977, 188.
[53] *Playboy*, June 1964, 164.
[54] *Playboy*, June 1977, 145.

Similarly, the subtle comedy of a December 1963 reference to David and Goliath, while a story probably familiar to most, might still be lost on many as a young David was assured by an elder man that he should not worry about the giant standing before them because "the old fixeroo is in."[55] Another cartoon had a giant even larger than Goliath, who lay dead in the background, confront tiny David with, "Are you the guy who hit my kid brother?"[56] Still another cartoon about the biblical conflict showed David strike the giant between the eyes. A Philistine soldier protested angrily to another soldier, "What a cheap trick! Is it any wonder I'm anti-Semitic?"[57] And another struck a blue note when David's stone hit Goliath in the testicles. One Jewish soldier standing in the background (identified by the Star of David on their chests) declared to another, "Let the record show that he got hit in the head."[58] Double entendre aside, some readers might not have known how Goliath was struck down. Though these Old Testament references might have been obscure to some readers, they were not to Hefner. Given Hefner's assumption that most Americans were Christianized, his readers would certainly have known the story of the birth of Jesus and so he capitalized on that knowledge.

The Christmas issue of *Playboy* was always packed with advertisements, promotions and sometimes even perforated cards to share, and although most of the cartoons featured Santa or parties many of them addressed the birth of Jesus albeit often indirectly. In 1964 Hefner published the transcript of a *Trialogue* in which he and several religious panelists addressed the sexual revolution and other topics. The transcript was accompanied with a graphic showing six Magi riding camels. The comic was positioned

[55] *Playboy*, December 1963, 219.
[56] *Playboy*, April 1967, 158.
[57] *Playboy*, April 1971, 208.
[58] *Playboy*, May 1972, 248.

on the bottom quarter of two opposing pages with three of the Magi on each page so that they appeared to be heading toward each other, but curiously each trio had one Magi figure pointing to a star in the distance. One trio pointed to a Star of David in the sky while the other pointed to an ordinary star. Though the two groups were heading toward each other the implication was that they would pass each other in their efforts to follow their own star.[59] This was probably a commentary on the *Trialogue* partners: A Roman Catholic priest, an Episcopal priest and a Rabbi. Well-meaning though the religious leaders were, they could not agree on their own direction. Unfortunately, there was no "gag line" assigned to the comic.

The Magi appeared in other issues usually in full page cartoons, and often as a trio. In one instance they stared into the sky at a star declaring, "It's a Happening!"[60] Perhaps echoing the culture of the 1960s and 70s Jesus Movement, the Magi lament that "The talk around Bethlehem is that we're Jesus freaks."[61] Still another comic had the trio lost, gifts in hand, asking for directions. The proprietor of "The Dog and Cat Inn" offered them his hunch "that you'll find them either at the Grand Hotel or the new Bethlehem. Both have excellent mangers."[62] The distant star would indicate that they were well off their target. In at least one cartoon there was only one Magi. He was confronted by his wife who questioned his wisdom. "If you're such a wise man, why do I have to think up a gift?" she asked as he gazed cluelessly into the night sky. Again, the star is in the distant background.[63] In all of these cartoons the Magi appear baffled,

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[59] *Playboy*, December 1964, 212-13. The *Trialogue* began on page 91. Note also that the term *Trialogue* was *Playboy*'s as well as the italics.
[60] *Playboy*, December 1966, 214.
[61] *Playboy*, December 1971, 125.
[62] *Playboy*, December 1972, 333.
[63] *Playboy*, January 1971, 235.

bewildered, perplexed and lost, much like the Magi from Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, which is as much a commentary on what they were supposed to be doing as it was on them.[64] Thus one who might question their wisdom in searching for and worshipping the Christ-child, and if they had it wrong, then who is to assure moderns that they are right to search for and worship Emmanuel?

Surprisingly few of *Playboy*'s cartoons dealt directly with the subject of Jesus' birth. Perhaps Hefner felt the need to tread carefully into such areas knowing that satirizing Jesus and/or his birth would provoke too much of a backlash. Besides, Hefner had little disagreement with the teachings of Jesus. Yet, he took a careful jab at the Christmas story in 1971. Joseph led a very pregnant Mary who was riding on a donkey toward a distant star. Mary looked serene, but Joseph was flustered as he asked Mary, "Where am I going to find pickles and ice cream at this time of night?"[65] The comic did not deal directly with the birth narrative, but rather poked fun at awkward and unusual pregnancy cravings. This attempt to demythologize the birth of Jesus by making some aspects of it seem ordinary was a way of humanizing Jesus, and whereas the birth and life of Jesus were not subject to satire, Jesus did make a few appearances in *Playboy* artwork.

A December 1973 satirical piece asked, "Is the Supreme Court Soft on Pornography?" Several common and ordinary items and images were offered suggesting that they might be construed as objectionable including the Washington Monument and hot dogs as phallic symbols. Toward the end of the seven page piece appeared an image of Jesus on the cross flanked by distressed women. Instead of having his hands

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[64] Monty Python, *Life of Brian*, 1979. The wise men mistake Brian for Jesus resulting in Brian's mistaken identity throughout his life ultimately ending in his crucifixion.
[65] *Playboy*, December 1971, 253.

outstretched on the cross, he covered his groin. The caption beside the image asked "Does our Christian trademark represent the sort of father-son relationship we care to encourage?" The question clearly implied that there was something objectionable, perhaps even pornographic, about how Jesus is portrayed and how we talk about his death. Americans tolerated a naked, or nearly naked, Jesus in the most sacred of places—the church, but they were outraged by similarly depicted women. Furthermore, theology which taught that God the Father would not only allow, but needed, the gruesome punishment and death of his Son exceeded any graphic descriptions and language put forth by *Playboy*, even in its fiction. If the courts thought that censuring *Playboy* and other such magazines deemed pornography was permissible, then they might also begin to look into areas closer to American Christians' hearts and places of worship. Censorship had no place in Hefner's scheme of life whether in literature, art or religion.

Jesus had made an earlier appearance accompanying an article by Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox. I will discuss the article in a later chapter, but the image bears noting here. The title of the article was "For Christ's Sake: Renouncing the image of Jesus as a melancholy ascetic, a progressive theologian calls out for his resurrection as a joyous revolutionary." The image of Jesus came to be known as "The Laughing Christ."[66] The pencil sketch, now rather famous, was by Fred Berger, a Chicago artist, and shows an almost cartoon-like Jesus engaged in a massive guffaw. When it first appeared in the January 1970 *Playboy*, the Jesus Movement was in full swing. Rebellious young Christians distanced themselves from the established Church embracing hippie culture in dress, physical appearance and demeanor. Consistent with

[66] *Playboy*, January 1970, 117. See Appendix Figure 6.

their theological perspective, the image was controversial for depicting Jesus in such an earthy way. Jesus looked like he could be a carefree hippie. Being a rebel bent on progress, Hefner ran with the controversial image perhaps because he saw Jesus as a rebel also bent on progress. This was an image of Jesus Hefner could appreciate because he appeared fun-loving and free spirited—just the type of guy Hef might hang around.

Undeniably, Hefner believed the Bible was dangerous, or if he did not, he wasted a great deal of paper, space and ink with three elaborately drawn pages to introduce a December 1973 article by Alan Watts entitled "The World's Most Dangerous Book." Though not the typical cartoon for *Playboy* it depicted a distressed looking Jesus standing atop a bejeweled skull that was atop a bishop (probably the Pope).[67] Taken as a whole, the full page, full color introductory page was intended to look similar to jeweled cover for the Gospel Book ceremonially used in liturgy. Throughout the three pages, two of which bore almost no text at all, the number of violent scenes were outnumbered only by the number of skulls. The theme of the article was summed up thus: "and it came to pass that in the hands of the ignorant, the words of the bible were used to beat plowshares into swords."[68] Those biblically literate would recognize the inversion of Isaiah 2.4 where swords would be turned into plowshares. Appearing in the traditional Christmas issue the images of battles, sword fights, beheadings, war and other destruction would seem somewhat odd, but Hefner was trying to convey a message in the midst of the seasonal mirth. Religion was dangerous and deadly. In the wrong hands religion caused bloodshed, war and sundry destructions. Just as Hefner wanted to show that Puritans were exploitive, voyeuristic, lying, repressive, abusive hypocrites, he wanted to

[67] See Appendix Figure 3.
[68] *Playboy*, December 1973, 119-21

demythologize scripture. If scripture's mystery and authority were debunked then it could have no power over individual activity and could not be used as a tool of repression against others. There would be no fear of sin, original or otherwise. The discriminatory, prejudicial, pugilistic and exclusionary tendencies of Christianity would be revealed. The folly of the Bible stories would be evident—they were Sunday School myths and only as good as fairy tales. Hefner's satirical cartoons were tools--an ax laid at the root of Puritanism--and America was on its way to a new Renaissance.

CHAPTER 4

WHO'S LAUGHING NOW? *PLAYBOY* COMICS, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND IDEAS

Puritans and the Bible were not the only religious subjects *Playboy* satirized in cartoons. Ministers, often depicted wearing a liturgical collar; the Supernatural, meaning heaven, hell, angels, Devils and God; the End of the World; and other (non-Christian) Religions were frequent subjects of the satirical ax. I have already established that comics act as a form of "soft power" to undermine confidence in power structures such as the Puritan hegemony and the Bible. This chapter will explore how the editor-in-chief undermined other religious institutions and ideas. As with Puritans and the Bible, intimate knowledge of the subject matter satirized was not necessary provided the reader had some point of reference. Furthermore, the images in the comics conveyed as much, if not more than the "gag line." In fact, in some instances, words were superfluous. According to Linus Abraham cartoons are intended to "transform otherwise complex and opaque social events and situations into quick and easily readable depictions that facilitate comprehension of the nature of social issues and events."[1] In other words, comics deconstruct complex issues and events, and in the case of *Playboy*'s religious comics, institutions and ideas. Cartoons do not present objective facts. Rather they are intentionally interpretive. They exaggerate and distort in order to "penetrate the reality

[1] Linus Abraham, "Effectiveness of Cartoons as a Uniquely Visual Medium for Orienting Social Issues," *Journalism and Communication Monographs* (Summer 2009), 11.2, p 1.

behind the appearance of the characters and events they represent. [They are] intended to explain the nature of things, rather than provide evidence."[2] In the comics that follow, seldom is one individual singled out for caricature. Their purpose is to convey a larger sentiment about clergy, God, the Devil, and Muslims but, what they portray could be read as factual by those who took The Playboy Philosophy to heart.

Carnal Christian Clergy

No single religious group was caricatured more than male Christian clergy—not even Puritans. Unlike Jon Alston who in his longitudinal analysis of *New Yorker* clergy cartoons had found a decrease from their height in the 50s into the 60s, it seemed *Playboy*'s pages contained an increase from the 60s into the 70s. Alston had suggested that there was a value reorientation. If there indeed was a marked increase in Playboy, it might reflect how Hefner felt emboldened to attack traditional and conservative institutions. This would explain why the clergy were variously satirized as being duplicitous and hypocritical, lecherous and carnal, avaricious, obtuse, pretentious, aloof and at times, angry. In the dozens of comics reviewed in the fifteen plus years surveyed, few comics showed the clergy person in an entirely positive light, and even in those instances he had done something any decent human should have done. One full page, eight frame comic showed a clergyman walk by a businessman in a suit carrying a briefcase. The businessman slipped on a banana peel landing on his back distressed and disheveled. The clergyman put aside his Bible (into his pocket), helped the man to his feet, cleaned the man's glasses, restored the man's cigarette and saw him on his way.

[2] Abraham, 2, 10.

Thereafter, the clergyman continued on his journey glancing back at the man. In the final frame the clergyman seemed to joyfully sing with empty hands in the air as he went on his way. The cartoon had no words, but depicted a sort of "Good Samaritan" narrative. The clergyman's Bible was not visible at all in the final three frames especially as he rejoiced with his hands in the air.[3] Could it be that Hefner was conveying the message that clergy can be helpful only when they lay aside their Bibles? Could he be saying that clergy were not prone to be helpful, and like the Samaritan of Luke 10.29ff, one would hardly expect such kind and caring acts? September 1966 brought another glimpse of a "good clergyman"--this time a monk. "Brother Ignatius" sat alone on a bench staring peacefully at some nonspecific spot on the ground. He had an almost beatific expression on his face, yet two of his brothers were not so pleased with his serenity. Wearing their friar robes they glared at Brother Ignatius as one of them wondered aloud if he was "meditating or reminiscing."[4] Of course, one could focus on the negativity and jealously of the two on-looking clergy, but Brother Ignatius seemed to be the focal point. These two examples left one with the conclusion that "good clergy" help others in need and spend the rest of their time piously meditating, or at worst "reminiscing" Thus, "good clergy," though hard to find, are indeed good.

Closely akin to the "good clergyman" was the "hip clergy" which was almost as rare as the good ones. Hipness might involve smoking marijuana instead of imbibing on wine as when two monks passed a marijuana cigarette between themselves concluding that "it's better than wine."[5] One older clergyman met sharp criticism from his

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[3] *Playboy*, September 1968, 175.
[4] *Playboy*, September 1966, 224.
[5] *Playboy*, May 1972, 194.

congregation when he tried to address progressive issues in his homily. The middle aged cleric greeted his parishioners at the rear of the church presumably after the liturgy only to hear from an older angry looking man and his sullen wife, "Frankly, doctor, don't you think it's time to get off this civil rights kick and get back to the fundamental teachings of Christianity?"[6] Besides the fact that the message missed the mark and that the parishioner was oblivious to the irony of his statement, the fact remains that the clergyman had been tuned in to current events—he was hip, if you will—and he had tried to share his progressive revelation with his congregation.

Sometimes clergy were afraid to share their progressive thoughts for fear of alienating their congregation.[7] Or their efforts to be hip were thwarted by something as simple as a bongo player not being able to make vespers.[8] However, a more likely outcome of a clergyman's attempt to be hip was that he would lose touch with his constituents. Almost certainly, the young pot smoking, free love advocating, long haired, shoeless "Reverend Denton" had trouble relating to the problem presented to him by the elderly couple even though they deferred to him as the "spiritual leader."[9] One pastor was too far ahead of his members because he was showing "underground movies, and having wild jazz concerts and freewheeling discussions on LSD." This prompted a committee to advise him that "church is not a proper place to send [their] children."[10] In an interesting twist, there were occasions when the clergy, in this case a nun, just did not get the message of the fast paced world, or at least so they thought. A feminist holding a

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[6] *Playboy*, February 1968, 146.
[7] *Playboy*, December 1968, 273.
[8] *Playboy*, July 1968, 153.
[9] *Playboy*, September 1970, 198.
[10] *Playboy*, November 1967, 207.

protest sign which read, "SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL," accosted the nun in full habit with a declaration, "You should be making the same as the Pope!" The nun's only response was to look rather nonplus.[11]

When clergy were not good or attempting to be hip and progressive they could come off as being conceited. An August 1966 comic needed only one word to convey its message. As one monk addressed another, both in friar garb, he said simply, "Congratulations," as he took note of the newly minted halo over his brother's head. The newly sainted monk grinned.[12] Yet pretense hardly described some clergy. "Edmund" was at home for dinner with his wife. If he was not already a bishop, he clearly had aspirations to the office as he showed up wearing his clerical collar underneath vestments and stole with a crozier in his hand prompting his wife to declare, "Really, Edmund—not just for saying grace!"[13] *Playboy* wanted its readers to understand that humility was not always the clergy's greatest character trait. To the contrary, in addition to pretention, clergy were often duplicitous.

These haughty attitudes were bad but were nowhere as bad as a clergyperson could be. With few exceptions such as those noted above, the overwhelming number of Christian clergy did not have personal traits to be imitated. Though they did not "gambol," especially with voluptuous women and satyrs, they often lacked sympathy as when a younger priest confessed his struggles to an older colleague. "I have love and compassion for those down and out, but I can't stand those who are up and in," he bemoaned.[14] In another instance an older priest could not sympathize with a younger

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[11] *Playboy*, July 1971, 182.
[12] *Playboy*, August 1966, 137.
[13] *Playboy*, November 1965.
[14] *Playboy*, February 1963, 91; May 1963, 173.

priest's complaint telling him, "True, the parsonage is small and the remuneration meager, but the congregation should be the source of a best-selling novel."[15] Clergy showed little or no concern for the plight of those who did not pay their salary. When a gentleman tried to get a priest to attend to the spiritual needs of a man presumably dying in the street being looked after by two policeman, the priest objected, "Sorry—this isn't my diocese."[16] The love of money was a recurring theme among the clergy.

Unlike the earlier mentioned clergy who attempted to update their thinking, poorly executed as it was, some clergy wanted to suppress progressive thought. An August 1969 cartoon showed a bishop, complete with miter and pectoral cross standing in front of the church door. He pointed at the crowd gathered around the church where some carried protest signs reading, "Protest God" and "We want the pill." The incensed bishop had a message, too. Echoing a line from the 1967 movie *Cool Hand Luke* he paraphrased, "What we have here is a failure to *ex*communicate."[17] He had no desire to be hip and was not going to let his traditions slip away. Wanting to suppress rebellion, one pastor lamented to another as they strolled through the stained glass church, "What it comes down to is—if we don't put an end to all this 'death-of-God' talk, we'll soon be out looking for jobs."[18] They were not concerned with the implications of the "Death of God," a theological system which held that the concept of God was essentially a social construct that had outlived its practicality especially in light of modern socio-scientific developments.[19] Rather they were more concerned with the consequences of liberal

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[15] *Playboy*, November 1966, 202.
[16] *Playboy*, April 1968, 189.
[17] *Playboy*, August 1969, 179. Italics added.
[18] *Playboy*, March 1967, 183.
[19] I will discuss Death of God theology in relation to *Playboy* in depth in Chapter 6.

theology on their livelihood. Clergy were concerned with the future, but not in an apocalyptic way, rather in an avaricious way. As two ministers sipped coffee in a well-appointed library they discussed the "sick society where traditional values have become practically worthless . . .the pound, the franc, the dollar . . ."[20] The cure they sought was for their bank accounts.

Money was more important than the well-being of parishioners. At the church bazaar the pastor, looking into the "Kissing Booth," expressed his hope that "Miss Collins" was "charging more than one dollar for that!"[21] "Miss Collins" and her client were not visible as they had apparently declined to a more comfortable position for something more involved than a kiss. Further evidence of clergy lack of concern for parishioner well-being was seen in a full page September 1972 cartoon. The pastor looked out from the pulpit on the congregation where at least five congregants were in various stages of disintegration from what must have been a curse pronounced on them. Some had passed out in the pews while others had fallen to the floor, some in the fetal position. A few parishioners looked on with concern as the pastor said, "And to those of you who <u>did</u> contribute to the church fund—our blessings."[22] Those dying parishioners were in no better condition than the man cited above dying in the street even though they were clearly in the priest's diocese—even in his very cure. Clergy were even willing to be heretical to protect their wealth and that of the Church. Two priests walked together outside their house of worship when one declared to the other, "I always think of the eleventh commandment as 'Thou shall not tax the churches.'"[23] The message? Clergy

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[20] *Playboy*, February 1970, 216.
[21] *Playboy*, May 1970, 210.
[22] *Playboy*, September 1972, 229.
[23] *Playboy*, December 1969, 252.

were as concerned with money as anyone else, if not more so. Clergy were given over to the love of money, but they were also prudish.

One clergy duo watching a band of revelers leave a nightclub deplored that they could not "save all of the people all of the time . . . ."[24] Another pastor was not amused as the funeral he conducted was interrupted by someone shouting "Baloney."[25] The bishop did not appreciate "Benedictus' attitude" as he fashioned a stained glass window of the bishop flanked by two Devils.[26] Even when he needed glasses "Reverend Pratt" could still spot a "dirty word" in the eye exam chart.[27] Apparently no one had ever made it to such fine print before, or at least the optometrist had never examined the chart so closely. This is to say nothing, of course, of the fact that "Reverend Pratt" knew the objectionable word.

It is consistent with *Playboy* to assume that divines would be prudish about sex and subversive material so it is not surprising that the senior pastor cautioned the young assistant that "The board of deacons [felt he had] been overdoing the quotations from 'Rat' and 'Screw.'"[28] Similarly, in a 1971 three page cartoon it was announced that "EVERYBODY'S DOING IT." The "it" was sex. Throughout the various frames of the comic most everyone seemed happy or at least interested in the appearance of the word "sex" except the clergyman who happened upon a street sign pointing multiple directions all with the word "sex" affixed.[29] The inference was that the pastor could have gone anywhere to find "sex," but he seemed confused in contrast to the other characters. Yet,

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[24] *Playboy*, December 1970, 231.
[25] *Playboy*, July 1964, 127.
[26] *Playboy*, May 1964, 131.
[27] *Playboy*, August 1967, 15.
[28] *Playboy*, September 1971, 202.
[29] *Playboy*, October 1971, 171-3.

religious prudishness about sex did not appear to be Hefner's majority complaint. He seemed far more concerned with religious hypocrisy regarding sex, and this is where he struck the hardest and the most with his satirical ax.

The attack on clergy sexual hypocrisy became more aggressive as the 60s rolled into the 70s. In 1965 it was humorous to depict a pastor looking at a centerfold—in this case the centerfold was from *Presbyterian Life*—no doubt a parody of the *Playboy* centerfold.[30] A few years later clergy on a missionary campaign realized they could not compete with a larger-than-life, voluptuous nude female even if the woman was a stone image worshipped by the native population.[31] One prelate assertively discussed sex with his congregation. He leaned far over the pulpit—so far he had to firmly grip the sacred desk with his left hand—as he pointed toward the church door and shouted, "Let's show the Pope where we stand! Let's get out there and get pregnant!"[32] The cartoon was obviously in response to Pope Paul VI's *Humane Vitae* which discussed sexuality and reproduction including the Churches' continued rejection of most forms of birth control. *Playboy*, on the other hand, had taken the document as an affirmation of more sexual activity, even, or especially, if it resulted in pregnancy.

The papal declaration prompted churchmen to think about sex, as if they were not thinking about it already such as in a cartoon depicting two monks, again in friar robes. Both men had their hands solemnly folded, but one of the monk's halos had turned into the "Venus" or the scientific symbol for women. The bawdy thought provoked a hostile reprimand from the more pious friar. "Brother Anthony!" he barked.[33] Other monks

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[30] *Playboy*, December 1965, 248.
[31] *Playboy*, September 1967, 221.
[32] *Playboy*, March 1969, 169.
[33] *Playboy*, July 1970, 195.

thought about sex, too, but in more artistic ways such as one who painted a mural of naked women dancing with Devils, or painted the walls of the men's room at the Vatican.[34] Still another monk's artistic abilities came out as he wrote a romance novel with a quill pen by candlelight. His furtive lines told his story of passion: "As he opened the top button of her blouse and exposed more of her lovely skin, Rodric's heart pounded even more fiercely. His hands quivered as he reached to complete his task. 'Stop!' commanded Father Antonio."[35] Sometimes the monks wondered how life would have been different if they "had had someone to lead [them] into temptation."[36] Similar to Puritan women, nuns occasionally thought about giving up their celibacy by flirting with monks who speculated that "she's trying to kick the habit."[37]

Thinking about sex led to voyeurism, exploration and eventually to having sex in clergy comics. A Medieval lady was shocked to find a cardinal "on the window sill." Upon closer examination the reader indeed found a Roman Catholic prelate in princely scarlet garb sitting on the lady's window sill.[38] An October 1970 full page comic exemplified the slide from theory to praxis. A beautiful young blonde woman wearing a very short skirt and tight sweater had grown up in a devoutly Roman Catholic home. With both a crucifix on the wall and a Bible on the table in the background, a dumpy but properly dressed mother questioned her daughter about her fiancé: "Now, before I meet this fiancé of yours, tell me one thing. Is he a Catholic?" The reader would have been very aware that he was indeed a "Catholic," for he was standing just around the corner

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[34] *Playboy*, January 1969, 216; November 1977, 115.
[35] *Playboy*, April 1971, 215.
[36] *Playboy*, February 1972, 188.
[37] *Playboy*, March 1971, 192.
[38] *Playboy*, June 1971, 206.

out of the mother's view patiently waiting with hat-in-hand wearing an exaggeratedly large clergy collar.[39] According to *Playboy*, clergy were so desperate for female companionship that they considered the possibility of dating even if they could not marry, while others thought that marriage would be acceptable if sex was not.[40]

Sometimes priests would transgress sexually. As a disheveled and distressed woman knelt in the confessional for penance, her pastor told her that they "can't go on meeting like this . . ."[41] One wonders if the confessional booth was the place for their liaisons or if he was trying to break off the relationship. Some shepherds pursued their sheep. "Miss Lomax's pastor assured her that "the Lord speaks in strange ways," as a bed floated toward the deserted island on which the two found themselves marooned.[42] The worst shepherds became wolves aggressively devouring their sheep right in the pasture. Lecherous pastors attacked their prey right in the church pew all the while quoting scripture. "Miss Higginbotham," the carnal cleric said, "The Almighty works in mysterious ways His miracles to perform."[43] From the looks of it, Miss Higginbotham was shocked to unexpectedly find her dress pushed up to her buttock and her legs thrust into the air.

Perhaps most direct to Hefner's Philosophy, some cartoons reveal that clergy could be so hypocritical about their voracious sexual appetites that they corrupted young people. A multi-frame full page cartoon from June 1971 told the story of a pastor obsessed with sex. The pastor, Bible in hand, walked along as he noticed that someone

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[39] *Playboy*, October 1970, 229.
[40] *Playboy*, March 1968, 179; September 1969, 300.
[41] *Playboy*, November 1970, 252.
[42] *Playboy*, December 1971, 339.
[43] *Playboy*, March 1977, 189.

had repeatedly written "six" on the picket fence along his path. He soon discovered a young boy, possibly aged six, as the source of the graffiti. The benevolent pastor undertook to correct the child's spelling--and thinking. In the final frame of the cartoon some of the sixes had been changed to "sex." The child and the pastor left with troubled facial expressions.[44] One of the most disturbing caricatures of clergy corrupting influence and hypocrisy came in June 1977. The setting of the full page color cartoon was the interior of a country church. According to the clock on the wall in the background it was almost 9 pm. Another telling sign on the wall in the background was a plaque declaring "ye must be born again." At the front of the church kneeling at a pew was a late middle-aged parson. He wore a white shirt and his pants had been held up with suspenders although they were hanging loose. His jacket was draped over the pew and his hat was atop the jacket. The outfit bespoke "country preacher" or circuit rider. The pastor's Bible was noticeably pocketed. Beside the fervently praying parson was a young wide-eyed, blonde girl. She looked underage with her hair in pigtails. Her hands were folded in prayer, but she was wearing only a blouse and sneakers. Her buttocks were bare as her skirt and underwear were cast aside. The scene alone spoke volumes, but the reader heard the sincere petition. "Oh, Lord, bestow Thy mercy upon our dear young sister and forgive her for straying . . ."[45] The parson apparently saw nothing wrong with his behavior; only with the young girl's. Regardless, like the Puritans of old all the parson need do was repent and feel very, very sorry. This one comic summed up Hefner's Philosophy regarding how puritanically religious folks were filled with duplicity and illustrated how they corrupted America's thinking.

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[44] *Playboy*, June 1971, 195.
[45] *Playboy*, June 1977, 199. See Appendix Figure 4.

Still, a final cartoon vividly revealed Hefner's Philosophy about the dangers of conservative clergy in America. This comic did not depict clergy as lecherous, carnal or pretentious. Rather this character looked angry and his caricatured (or parodied) image was very recognizable. The comic accompanied an article by Saul Braun, a frequent contributor to *Playboy,* and was entitled, "Nearer, Silent Majority, to Thee." The article chronicled the Reverend Billy Graham's substantial influence on "an ever-growing flock" who believed in the melding of God, patriotism and the Presidency of the United States.[46] Graham was easily recognizable even if his name had not been attached to the article. The preacher was depicted with a background of a church and what could be the outline of Jerusalem. Graham stood at a podium holding a book, presumably the Bible, in his right hand. An American flag served as a bookmark for some page in the Bible. Graham's eyes are fixed and wide, almost emblazoned as he gestured with his left hand. His mouth was agape as if he was sternly saying something urgent. The caricature along with the article would easily strike a note of caution, if not outright fear at this angry preacher. Although it is impossible to know if the readers would have even known such reference, the image was reminiscent of Jonathon Edwards' hands and eyes during his sermon "Sinner in the Hand of an Angry God." Graham, like his predecessor, was preaching for an American return to Puritan values or else face the wrath of the Almighty. And make no mistake, according to *Playboy* the Almighty was active, as were the Devil and angels.

[46] *Playboy*, February 1971, 120ff. It is worth noting that the title of this article predates the origins of the Rev'd Jerry Falwell's "Moral Majority" founding in 1979. See Appendix Figure 5.

Supernatural Beings—No, Not the Bunnies

Jon Alston noted that the number of *New Yorker* cartoons with supernatural orientation, meaning God, Devils, angels, heaven and hell, increased in the mid-to-late 60s. *Playboy*, too, had a considerable number of cartoons dealing with the supernatural during the same period and into the 70s. Though God did not appear with the frequency of Puritans, the Bible, and the clergy, he nevertheless appeared in the comics. Earlier I highlighted one appearance of the Almighty in "The Creation: A Mirthfully Mephistophelean Rescripting of how it all Began" from September 1971. As I noted, the Devil appeared in that comic, and as we will see below he appeared repeatedly throughout the 60s and 70s. By contrast, the infrequency and relative benign appearance of God might portend the sensitivity Hefner continued to feel toward religion. As I noted earlier, Hefner was not anti-religious, and he was careful not to dismiss the importance of religion. If God in the Mephistophelean account of Creation was rather clueless, then a comic from January 1967 suggests that he was also apprehensive about Creation. God, with the characteristic white hair and beard, lounged on a cloud consulting another being about the specs for his proposed creature "Adam." The other being also sat on a cloud, but we have no indication who or what he was. He did not have wings typical of cartoon angels, and he could not be a human since they were not yet created. One wonders, then, if he might be a second person of the Trinity. Whomever he was, he cautioned the Creator about the proposal: "It looks good on paper, but who knows if it'll work?"[47] God's omniscience was called into question for even he cannot know the outcome of his creation, and he lacked confidence.

[47] *Playboy*, January 1967, 249.

If God lacked confidence in Creation and also lacked all knowledge, then God at least knew how to call football plays—albeit for Notre Dame. The Fighting Irish were behind by three points at fourth down and twelve yards to go for the goal with four seconds left in the game, all of which was revealed by the score board in the background. The announcer was not very optimistic about the outcome saying, "Well, fans, Notre Dame will have to come up with some kind of miraculous play to pull this game out and . . . and . . . and . . ." Suddenly a giant hand appeared out of the sky and began diagramming the winning play for the saintly team.[48] Clearly there was a great deal at stake for the team's reputation, if not God's also. But football was not God's only sport. He was also a golfer in October 1970. He appeared with the usual hair and beard riding a cloud, rather than in a golf cart, and angels were his caddies. His golf partner was none other than the Devil himself. His caddy was Death and serpents were his clubs. They had just finished playing the first hole on the course leaving it in a smoldering fire. The other golfers on the course had no problem standing aside for the supernatural duo with one mortal player saying, "Are you kidding? Of course we let them play through!"[49] Neither of the other worldly golfers looked particularly pleased, so we have no idea what the outcome of the game might have been, but there were some games that God perhaps did enjoy—politics.

Earlier I highlighted the "Prurient Puritans" of November 1976 which also contained the much anticipated interview with presidential candidate, Jimmy Carter during the bicentennial year of the nation. *Playboy* issued what amounted to God's endorsement of Carter in a November 1976 cartoon. Later we will see that Hef approved

[48] *Playboy*, November 1969, 220.
[49] *Playboy*, October 1970, 255.

of Carter's interpretation of Christ's message apparently finding it more congruous with his Playboy Philosophy. This out-of-the-world cartoon was set in what was presumably heaven with puffy clouds all around. A small human-looking, gender nonspecific angel with wings held a large telephone receiver out for the hand of God. God, a large male figure yet again with long white hair and beard, white robe, halo beaming from his head, reached for the telephone receiver. The gag line read, "I'll take the Carter call. Put Billy Graham on hold."[50] As in the 1971 article depicting the southern preacher Graham, the message again to the American male voter was rather clear. Graham was not in constant contact with the Divine, but God would listen to Carter allowing Graham to cool his heels for a while. Hefner endorsed Carter and with this cartoon claimed that God would endorse him as well. The subtext of the cartoon was less clear unless one stepped back from the page and surveyed the American religious landscape of the mid-to-late 70s. Although Billy Graham was not allied with any political movement he nevertheless represented the typical conservative Evangelical American Christian for whom "the sexual revolution, feminism, legalized abortion, easily accessible pornography, the homosexual rights movement, church-state separation, high rates of violent crime, and declining standards of public and political morality" were felt to be signs of a "national moral crisis."[51] Though Hefner was careful not to show God endorsing the morality his Philosophy advanced, he was not afraid to have God endorse those who issued tacit approval. Yet, having some type of supernatural being who indulged in the Playboy Philosophy would be helpful—re-enter the Devil.

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[50] *Playboy*, November 1976, 236.
[51] Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 151.

The Devil Made Them Do It—Devilish Playboys

Puritanically religious people were quick to look for a cause for the rebellion they so eagerly wanted to suppress, and they could find no greater culprit than the Devil. Hefner, who had said, "Blessed is the rebel" was quick to embrace the mischievous imp in the pages of his magazine, and the Devil was extremely busy during the 60s and 70s endorsing and living the Playboy Philosophy. Early in 1962 one poor soul found out from the Devil what hell really was. Hell was dozens of beautiful women with whom he was for all eternity forbidden to make contact, and a similar fate awaited an older gentleman who saw three amorous nude women as his "personal hell."[52] These men might have been disheartened, but the Devil certainly was not.

Dressed in a tuxedo the Devil was able to select one of the most beautiful women in all of hell for his evening date.[53] If his desired partner was not in hell already he could bargain with her perhaps for her virginity. "Right now, I'm up to here in souls—what say we bargain for something else?" pointing to his neck as he propositioned a young woman on her bed.[54] Sometimes the Devil was rebuffed because of the heat. "Are you kidding? In this heat?" one woman told him.[55] Make no mistake, the Devil almost always had fun doing his job.

Devils engaged in things they enjoyed, such as provoking the "Vietnam mess," "sloth, gluttony, avarice, wrath and envy," but nothing so much as "pride and lust."[56] Although their parties could prompt "reports that [their] prisoners are not always treated

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[52] *Playboy*, January 1962, 58; December 1968, n.d.
[53] *Playboy*, October 1971, 213.
[54] *Playboy*, April 1968, 196.
[55] *Playboy*, June 1966, 105.
[56] *Playboy*, August 1967, 122; September 1966, 198.

according to the Geneva Conventions," they had no problem putting on a good party for the Klan or a "Saturday-night hoedown."[57] Like Napoleon and Hitler, the Devil had job security in part because he knew how to capture a "whole bunch" of souls who were not "guilty of any overt acts, but [were caught in] a conspiracy rap."[58]

Similar to other multi-page, multi-frame cartoon narratives, *Playboy*'s March 1971 issue "*hotfooted through the nether regions*" in "*ffolkes' inferno*" by Michael Ffolkes.[59] In the adventure two Devils, presumably of the same sex, locked tails in "Boys' Town." A Devil offered to reduce a woman's sentence by five hundred years for sexual favors. While others complimented women, tortured souls with Wagner, and ogled women's bodies. Two of the most revealing frames, however, might be the final two. In the first, Hell's "Border Control" agents sought admittance for "one of the upstairs crowd [who] want[ed] to defect." In the background an angel was detained by two Devils in police-style uniforms. In the final frame, which happened to take up a full page, a Devil showed another around his "kinky place." The place was appointed with a cross, a triptych, a *prie dieu* topped with a text, a coffin, and a large stained glass window depicting a saint and a bishop. If Christians could not have fun in church then Devils positively could. Hefner, a self-proclaimed rebel for the sake of progress, embraced the rebellious spirit attributed to the Devil and caricatured the mythic creature as a playboy whose activities were consistent with The Playboy Philosophy. Yet more importantly he depicted the Devil as anti-Puritan, like himself. Though Puritans, and thereby religious conservatives, did not smoke, swear, drink, dance—"all the good stuff," as Hef called

[57] *Playboy*, September 1968, 207; October 1972, 150; February 1972, 206.
[58] *Playboy*, August 1969, 193; December 1972, 259.
[59] *Playboy*, March 1971, 155-7.

it—the Devil did. Playboys did. Therefore, playboys were the Devil, and that was good. Hefner's readers could see that it was far more fun to join with rebellious souls than to continue to be suppressed by puritanical prudes. Yet, the Devil was not the only one having fun.

Heaven Helped Them—Angelic Playboys

Angels, or former humans living as angels, and people of non-Christian faiths, usually Muslim, had fun, too. Most caricatured depictions of angels showed them as former humans who had been given wings and halos, sometimes harps, and immortality, which not all newly minted angels appreciated. They found it boring, hardly able to believe that "this [went] on forever."[60] Perhaps that's why we earlier saw the angel who wanted to defect to hell, while other angels took in parties in the sinful twin cities of "Sodom and Gomorrah."[61] But not all angels were bored by their new state. Most saw it as an opportunity to continue to engage in carnal earthly pursuits.[62] They could appreciate curvaceous angel-women, even if tipping their halo to them caused trouble.[63] Angel-men possessed heavenly gifts to please angel-women.[64] Other earthly cares followed angels into their new state, also. One angel realized how foolish he was to assume that he could not take his worldly possession with him into heaven as he witnessed a new arrival drive through the pearly gates in his car, accompanied by a beautiful woman and a back seat filled with cash and golf clubs.[65] Another angel was

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[60] *Playboy*, September 1966, 220.
[61] *Playboy*, February 1967, 160.
[62] *Playboy*, February 1962, 86.
[63] *Playboy*, June 1965, 195.
[64] *Playboy*, December 1968, 262.
[65] *Playboy*, April 1967, 194.

upset to find that his broker "Fairchild" was admitted to heaven with trumpeted fanfare especially since "Fairchild" had advised him "to unload Xerox at 78!"[66] On the rare occasion when angels were depicted doing God's bidding they were either discouraged by their task or confused about carrying it out.[67] Beyond any doubt, Hefner believed that being in heaven was boring unless it included some of the same activities one could enjoy on earth or in hell, but for real fun it was best to be a Muslim man, or at least as they were caricatured in *Playboy* magazine.

Mirthful Muslims

Muslim men, or sheiks, as Hefner had earlier referred to them, usually appeared wearing a fez, also known as a tarboosh, or a turban. Occasionally, cartoons depicted a mix of men wearing both, but always fully clothed. In contrast, in most of the comics women were portrayed as nude or almost nude. Many women had Western features, such as white skin and blonde hair, and very often they were part of a harem. Like the Native Americans and some of the images in the Noah's Ark comics, one cannot deny the inherent racism in the "Mirthful Muslim" cartoons. Edward Said explained the stereotypes perpetuated by these Western media, which included cartoons and animations, as being a lensis to "understand the unfamiliar and strange." American images, in particular, were based on "abstractions and indirect experiences" of the exotic Muslim often depicting the men as violent and the women as "sensual . . to be used by

[66] *Playboy*, July 1967, 143.
[67] *Playboy*, February 1971, 213; July 1972.

the man."[68] Hefner's depictions of Muslim men were not violent. Quite the contrary, but the women certainly were sensual and sexual objects.

Muslim men were always having fun, as if they were carefree, but the women didn't seem to mind their lives much either. One lighthearted Muslim news reporter rode a magic carpet over the "Pakistani Expressway" in order to report on the "moderate to heavy" traffic.[69] One was not supposed to question why the commuters lacked magic carpets, but rather to see the joy of riding a carpet high above the jumble below. Another stereotype caricatured in the comics was the snake charmer, but ever wanting to have fun this poor charmer's snake had died and lay as a skeleton behind him. Undaunted, the man placed a wooden board over his lap, sat naked and performed for a group of Western dressed tourists. It took no words to reveal his trick. The wooden board had a hole cut in it approximately where his penis might be.[70] The tourists would not see a snake, but they would see something charmed.

Aside from these comics, most others depicted Muslim men in the company of women. Besides being nude or semi-nude and very often having Western facial characteristics, two other features stood out in the comics: the women's purpose was to please the man and they were commodities to be acquired. Logic would dictate that to the Muslim man, women were pleasure objects to be obtained for the purposes of pleasure. One could even trade in old wives for new ones.[71] Therefore, one might infer that it was unfortunate that *Playboy* men did not enjoy such easy access to wanton women. And access was easy for Muslim men. "The loaf of bread and jug of wine

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[68] *Edward Said on Orientalism*, Media Education Foundation 1998.
[69] *Playboy*, June 1967, 173.
[70] *Playboy*, April 1971, 197.
[71] *Playboy*, April 1972, 199.

[were] on the house," for "Omar, but the 'thou' [was] going to cost" him, the mostly nude sultry prostitute told the excited sultan.[72] All men needed to do was pay their tab to satiate their desires. One sultan was denied any new women because he had not "paid for the last girls yet."[73] Of course, some men had trouble making a decision with so many women to choose from, so they preferred "to sleep on it [read "her"] before [he] decided on any deal," while other men preferred to "browse" [read "have sex with"] before they made a final purchase.[74] The easily acquired women usually made for excellent companions.

One dreary sultan complained to three topless, large breasted, Western-looking women that his "other wives don't understand me . . ."[75] These women offered an understanding ear and a caring touch because these women knew how to please a man. The sheik was "easy to please. He wants the same thing every Christmas," one blonde girl in the harem told another.[76] Men want to see women nude—completely nude—not even with veils. "Everything off," as one sinister grinning doctor told his shy patient.[77] And men wanted women in bed with them rather than talking.[78] On the rare occasion when a man did want "someone intelligent to talk to in the evening" it was a good idea to keep a flat-chested, bookish and prudish looking woman in the harem.[79]

Though it was a minor challenge for most Muslim men, sexually accommodating and satisfying all the women in one's harem could prove to be a challenge. At the hotel

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[72] *Playboy*, November 1976, 156.
[73] *Playboy*, January 1962, 141.
[74] *Playboy*, July 1970, 193; July 1971, 183.
[75] *Playboy*, January 1966, 236.
[76] *Playboy,* December 1966, 317.
[77] *Playboy*, November 1967, 202.
[78] *Playboy*, February 1968, 101.
[79] *Playboy*, December 1971, 329.

the sultan had trouble making the desk clerk understand that he did not "want ten rooms with single beds—[he wanted] a single room with ten beds!"[80] And the women had voracious sexual appetites sometimes gossiping about "interesting" things that crept into their tents at night.[81] As four men carried a mostly nude sheba who had summoned a passerby to join her on her litter, one complained that what he hated about the job of litter bearer was the "hitchhikers!"[82] The sultans were sometimes preoccupied with other things, such as a magic lamp, and failed to rub their women leaving the women angry and attention deprived.[83] Or then again, perhaps it was their liberal alcohol consumption that left the men unable to satisfy their harem, but of course, this was never presented as a problem.[84] From this set of deeply racist comics, one is left feeling that if any religion was a good religion it was Islam. According to the comics at least, Hefner would have gladly turned all *Playboy* men into satisfied sheiks and all women into sultry shebas, but wasn't that what Hefner had already declared in his Philosophy?

The Absurdity of (Most) Religion for a New American Renaissance

With all the hope and promise Hef had imbued in the 60s it seemed that outdated modes of puritanical thinking had no place, and his cartoons reflected that sentiment. If religion did not promote the equality of the sexes for the fulfillment of individual desires then religion was nothing better than raving lunatics, or in *Playboy*'s case, comedic caricatures of prophets foretelling the end of the world. Though not occurring as

[80] *Playboy*, July 1969, 160.
[81] *Playboy*, May 1963, 169.
[82] *Playboy*, September 1972, 245.
[83] *Playboy*, March 1970, 207.
[84] *Playboy*, December 1975, 261.

frequently as the comics mentioned in this and the previous chapter, deranged prophets predicted the end of the world just as everyone was beginning to enjoy life. One madman was able to strike a note of fear in a modestly dressed couple as he carried a sign that read, "THE WORLD IS COMING TO AN END!" He drove his message home by beginning the countdown, "Ten . . . nine . . . .eight . . . .seven . . . ."[85] One could count on the doomsday prophets to interrupt a couples' amorous activities in the backseats of cars, that is if the prophets were not attracted to each other. Readers were treated to the irony of one prophetic pair who wanted to be together provided they were still around later in the evening, i.e. if the world did not end.[86] Yet, to show the ridiculousness of their message *Playboy* presented modern seers inclination to sell their message board to the highest bidder on Madison Avenue.[87]

Clearly these do not represent all the caricatured religious references for they are too many to recount. Buddhists were confused for nudists.[88] In December 1966 a yogi imagined a young woman he passed on the street as being naked doing a head stand.[89] A woman took her guru to bed in September 1968, much to her husband's chagrin.[90] Perhaps it was Joseph Smith with his three wives who stopped for directions to Salt Lake City.[91] Other absurdities included a "select-o-matic" machine that dispensed "Instant Religion," or a man fervently praying in church for guidance on his stock portfolio, or the fact that California was "turning back anyone who doesn't believe in God."[92] There was

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[85] *Playboy*, February 1967, 165.
[86] *Playboy*, February 1971, 195; December 1964, 215.
[87] *Playboy*, August 1968, 156.
[88] *Playboy*, April 1968, 178.
[89] *Playboy*, December 1966, 275.
[90] *Playboy*, September 1968, 133.
[91] *Playboy*, March 1970, 213.
[92] *Playboy*, July 1966, 164; April 1970, 198; September 1967, 211.

futility in the Arab-Israeli peace conference unless the Arabs provided the site and the Israelis did the catering.[93] Even something as serious as Christian martyrdom was humorous when the roar of the lion cured one martyr's hiccups, or when the lions themselves confessed to one another that everybody suffered heartburn from eating Christians.[94]

Using the soft power of comics, Hefner had begun to strike at the root of America's Puritan past. He satirized religious expressions that did not promote the Playboy Philosophy—a lifestyle of virtual complete individual liberty—showing that they were to be avoided and even opposed. And why not? Just look at how the *Playboy* comics caricatured religious expression. The earliest settlers of America were hypocritical, prejudicial, prudish, bigoted, tyrannical boobs. The Bible had produced countless wars, untold poverty, duplicity, death, imprisonment and suffering, not to mention willful ignorance. Christian clergy tended to be lecherous, carnal, avaricious, obtuse, and pretentious in addition to being hypocritical and prudish like the Puritans. To have any fun one had to die and hope to go to hell where the Devil put on excellent parties. Sure, going to heaven might be acceptable provided one could enjoy the carnal delights of earthly life consequence-free. However, if one was determined to be religious in this life, then perhaps being a Muslim man was the surest bet. Women were easily attainable and there were no objections to women being used to satisfy men's desires. But then again, why not forego all religion? It was all absurd and futile anyway to modern sensible people.

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[93] *Playboy*, August 1971, 199
[94] *Playboy*, October 1972, 186; July 1967, 147.

Much like the "good clergy," what must have been "authentic" religion for Hefner had its place in the *Playboy* comics. In the midst of a massive church nave where tourists milled about admiring the architecture and stained glass, a solitary woman knelt to pray. We are not told whether or not her prayers were noticed by God, but she did catch the attention of the security guard who approached her with, "Please, madam—you're disturbing the tourists."[95] Hefner did know the meaning of true religion. The problem was that he seldom found it among the more prominent and vocal examples available to the mass of Americans. Notable was Billy Graham, a contemporary with Hefner, and the only religious caricature specifically named. But there were other religious figures in America who understood the nature and purpose of religion as Hefner did. Religion, if it was to be expressed publically, should produce a society of tolerance, sympathy, understanding, faith and love.

[95] *Playboy*, March 1967, 175.

CHAPTER 5

THE *PLAYBOY* INTERVIEWS ATTACK ROOTS OF AMERICAN PURITANISM

In 1962 Hugh Hefner faced a slight setback. His short-lived magazine, *Show Business Illustrated*, folded. A key feature of that magazine had been interviews with notable entertainers. Undaunted, Hefner decided to incorporate the left over interviews from the defunct magazine into his more successful venture, *Playboy*, as a new feature. One of his editors, A.C. Spectorsky, worked with the Miles Davis interview fashioning it into what would become the first "The Playboy Interview" released in September 1962. In the immediate following months the magazine featured interviews with Peter Sellers, Jackie Gleason and Frank Sinatra, but by March 1963 some of the interviews began to take on a considerably more intellectual deportment as the interviewees became Bertrand Russell, Helen Gurley Brown and Malcolm X. The interviews were added to other popular features of the magazine, such as "The Playboy Advisor," articles from public intellectuals and short stories by popular fiction authors, and became a much looked for standard among its readers.

Hefner had long believed his magazine was sophisticated because of its savvy and unique blend of fashion, sex and intellect despite some who had viewed it as a "skin mag" from its 1953 inception. Because *Playboy* mixed such editorial content with erotic photographs some scholars have had trouble classifying the magazine. For example, Charles Winick found that *Playboy*'s heavy editorial content meant that it was too tame

for most adult bookstores.[1] Precisely because of its blended content, some scholars had placed it in the same category with *The New Yorker* and *National Geographic* claiming that it was "Intellectual/Cultural," but a later study placed it in a category by itself.[2] Thus, in the hierarchy of magazines *Playboy* stood alone because of its unique content due in no small part to the presence of the interviews.[3]

The unique combination of the erotic photographs along with the interviews and other editorial material became the butt of jokes. "I read *Playboy* for the articles," men often defensively claimed, but that actually was the case. In recent years, historians such as Carrie Pitzulo, Bill Osgerby and Elizabeth Fraterrigo have shown that the interviews and articles were more than just filler in between the nude models. These same scholars have noted how the articles on masculine identity and narcissistic consumption shaped male identity in the post-war and Cold War eras. Entertainers, "popular writers and public intellectuals voiced concern over a series of troubles thought to be plaguing the American male."[4] But the *Playboy* articles also addressed larger cultural issues such as civil rights for blacks and even homosexuals, prayer in schools, upward mobility for the middle class, the Vietnam War, domestic and foreign political doctrine, religion and, of course, sex, among many other topics. James Beggan and Scott Allison suggested a different, perhaps third, way to understand the tension between the editorial text and the

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[1] Charles Winick, "A Content Analysis of Sexually Explicit Magazines Sold in an Adult Bookstore," *The Journal of Sex Research* (May 1985), 21.2 pp 206-210.
[2] Hugh M. Cannon and David L. Williams, "Toward a Hierarchical Taxonomy of Magazine Readership," *Journal of Advertising* (1988), 17.2 pp 15-25.
[3] It's worth noting that the July 1986 Attorney General's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, which became commonly known as the "Meese Commission" or "Meese Report" ordered by President Ronald Reagan, concluded that *Playboy* was indeed a men's magazine and dismissed it as pornography largely because of its non-sexual content. See Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 201-2.
[4] Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life*, 27.

nude photos of *Playboy*. They suggested that "the presence of nude photographs of women served as the justification for purchasing the magazine, which, in reality, had been acquired to reinforce a preferred identity, one at odds with many existing beliefs about the nature of masculinity."[5] In an article two years later, Beggan and Allison revisited the notion that men read *Playboy* for the articles by interviewing men who had subscribed to the magazine during the 1960s. Many of their subjects reported that the magazine helped them construct their masculine identity but also their views on larger cultural and social issues concluding: "Although the promise of the Playmate brought them in, once hooked, at least some men actually did read the magazine. *Playboy*'s editorial content, especially for older readers who matured during the social unrest of the late 1960s, also served as a counterpoint to other, more conservative, news media."[6] Therefore, men really did want to read the articles, but protected their manly identities by viewing the photos. Men, then, were concerned with more than just what "plagued" them or "men's issues" such as rejection of "responsibility, domesticity and puritanical abstinence."[7] No, many of *Playboy*'s readers were concerned with the weightier issues discussed in the magazine which included religious issues and/or social and cultural issues often discussed by prominent religious thinkers.

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[5] James Beggan and Scott Allison, "The Playboy Rabbit is Soft, Furry, and Cute: Is this Really the Symbol of Masculine Dominance of Women?" *Journal of Men's Studies*, 9.3 (April 20, 2001), 345.
[6] James Beggan and Scott Allison, "'What Sort of Man Reads Playboy?' The Self-Reported Influence of *Playboy* on the Construction of Masculinity," *Journal of Men's Studies*, 11.2 (Winter 2003), 199-200.
[7] Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise* (New York: Berg, 2001), 122.

Indelicately Incendiary

At least since the publication of the first installment of The Playboy Philosophy in the December 1962 issue Hefner had shown that he was eager to engage with religious thinkers. I have described the cartoons mentioned in the two previous chapters as Hef's "soft power" aimed at the roots of Puritanism in America. Hefner's "hard power" came in the form of interviews, articles and editorial material. If the comics had been subtly seditious, then the editorial material was the "hard power" aimed at the roots of Puritanism and was often indelicately incendiary. Much like the images of naked women, the cartoons appealed to every (or almost every) red-blooded American male, in contrast to the interviews and editorial content which appealed more to the intellect, or those whom Hefner dubbed "the New American Renaissance man."

Perhaps in part because of the urgency he felt with the burgeoning New American Renaissance of the 60s, Hefner intentionally attempted to engage with the religious community. No fewer than eight interviews between 1963 and 1976 featured prominent religious figures, which is to say nothing of references to religion or religious issues in other interviews. This does not account for the articles by religious figures such as Harvey Cox, William Hamilton and Gary Wills or about religious issues and topics, or the numerous letters responding to topics from a religious perspective. Some in the religious community paid attention to Hefner's overtures. *Motive*, "the Magazine of the Methodist Student Movement," published an article in April 1960 entitled "The Lowdown on the Upbeats" by Roy Larson positing the Ten Commandments and the five Beatitudes of *Playboy*.[8] In April 1961 Harvey Cox speculated on "Playboy's Doctrine of

[8] Roy Larson, "The Lowdown on the Upbeats," *Motive* (April 1960), 20.7 pp 38-41.

Male" in the journal *Christianity and Crisis*.[9] *Playboy*, he argued, is a guidebook to male identity and at the same time offers instruction on how to attain that identity. Under the guise of liberation, it endorsed recreational sex with no strings attached. The magazine was not to be criticized for its nudity and focus on sex, but rather how it encouraged men to use others, especially women. *Playboy* encouraged men to use women as a means to an end and that end was "at radical variance with the biblical view" of "being *for* the other."[10] Allen Moore blatantly took up Hefner's charge to the religious community in the *Christian Advocate*, also a Methodist magazine, in July 1965 responding directly to The Playboy Philosophy and *Playboy*'s questions regarding "morality, ethics and the nature of man's existence."[11] And later that same year Harvey Cox cooperated with Hefner for an article entitled "Sex: Myths and Realities" again in *Motive*.[12]

The religious interviewees tended to agree with Hefner's Philosophy which promoted individual liberty while restricting conservative religion's imposition on ordinary life, such as the Jimmy Carter and Madalyn Murray interviews. But the religious interviews also tended to reflect a more humanistic view, meaning that they were with people who believed that individuals had the capacity to help redeem humanity from its more troublesome self, such as the interviews with William Sloane Coffin and Martin Luther King, Jr. Importantly, they also reveal that Hefner did not feel that religion, or religious individuals, needed to be quiet on socio-cultural issues. Not surprisingly, the interview subjects talked little about their personal faith, Carter being the most notable exception. Consistent with The Playboy Philosophy, religious individuals

[9] Harvey Cox, "Playboy's Doctrine of Male," *Christianity and Crisis* (April 1961).
[10] Ibid.
[11] Allen J. Moore, "Playboy goes Religious," *Christian Advocate* (July 1965) 9.14 pp 7-8.
[12] Hugh Hefner and Harvey Cox, "Sex: Myths and Realities," *Motive* (November 1965) 26.2 pp 7-11.

were perfectly free to express their faith provided it was in service of broadening individual liberty. Closely associated with that, individual religious beliefs should not infringing upon others, and Hefner found just the person to illustrate that point.

The Most Hated Woman in America Ends School Prayer

On 17 July 1963, in an eight-to-one vote, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that publically funded schools could not compel students to recite The Lord's Prayer nor to study the Bible. The case of *The Abington School District v. Schempp* had been consolidated with another case, *Murray v. Curlett*, which was originally filed against the Baltimore School District in 1960. "Murray" was William Murray, son of Madalyn Murray, who soon became known as "the most hated woman in America,"--a moniker she readily embraced. During the court case in 1963 Madalyn Murray founded the Society of Separationists, later to be known as American Atheists, advocating for the separation of church and state.[13] After the case, Murray became somewhat of a celebrity, albeit notoriously so to most Americans, and agreed to The Playboy Interview. The appointment for the interview apparently took some considerable effort on the part of the interviewers, and was published in the October 1965 issue.

Playboy interviews were customarily prefaced with a historical sketch, commentary and an explanation of why the person interviewed was important. Given how timely most of the interviews were, such seemed unnecessary, but the sketches gave some information that would not be contained in the body of the interview which was

[13] Bryan F. Le Beau, "Becoming the Most Hated Woman in America: Madalyn Murray O'Hair," *The Journal of American Culture*, (June 2003), 26.2, 153-70.

published with minimal editing. The interviewers were usually identified in the preface, but in the body of the interview text they were only identified as "PLAYBOY." In the preface to the Murray interview, after explaining the significance of the Supreme Court decision, *Playboy* further explained that Murray was launching another case to eliminate religious tax exemption. Ever aware that the physical image was important, *Playboy* described Murray as "A plain, plump, graying divorcee with two sons." To illustrate, they published the customary three black and white photographs at the bottom of the introductory page. In the middle photograph Murray flipped a bird toward the camera, but said it was intended for the "establishment." One can hardly keep from contrasting the gruff-looking, angry, "plain, plump, graying" woman with the smiling sweet girls-next-door featured elsewhere in the issue.

This interview was conducted in two parts. The first part of the interview took place shortly after Murray had an altercation with the Baltimore police which she claimed was retaliation. The second part of the interview was conducted from her new Honolulu home where she had fled to escape persecution by the Maryland court system because of the police altercation. One can imagine that her accusations of state sanctioned persecution fit nicely with Hefner's Puritan narrative. Although Murray said she did not believe in God she nevertheless continually invoked the deity with the expletive "God damn." The unnamed interviewers were taken off-guard by her vulgarity and referred in the preface to her "four-letter vehemence."

The Murray interview began with the obvious question, "Why are you an atheist?" She claimed that religion was a crutch and that she was perfectly capable of getting around on her own two feet. She claimed that religion was a stone-age invention

and then she paraphrased First Corinthians 13.11 claiming that she had "put away childish things." She claimed that she read the Bible in one weekend when she was in her early teens and found that it was filled with inconsistencies, improbabilities, impossibilities, wretched history, sordid sex and sadism leaving her profoundly shocked and perplexed. She also found her early experiences of church attendance troublesome because she remembered the pastor insisting that she and everyone else was "full of sin," then the financial collection followed soon thereafter leading her to connect the two events forever in her mind. Beyond that, two years of Bible classes in college had left her with a good understanding of the Bible from, what she called a "Protestant point of view." All of these experiences left her feeling like an "intellectual prostitute" because she would answer biblical questions for academic rewards. She had allowed Christianity to use her intellect for its enjoyment. Although she did not exactly know what an atheist was when she learned about it, she knew enough to realize that it felt genuine.

Though she had a Protestant understanding of scripture and God, she was especially critical of the Roman Catholic Church for its views on human sexuality, civil rights and for being the religion of the governor of Hawaii. She felt that his faith had persuaded him to grant her extradition to Maryland, a Roman Catholic state. Her ongoing court battle with the City of Baltimore was the subject of much of the interview. She thought the Roman Church was unfair to nuns referring to them as "those dried-up women lying there on their solitary pallets yearning for Christ to come to them in a vision some night and take their maidenheads." Even Jesus "with his wooden staff" would not be "able to pierce them." She had particular distaste for an archbishop and a cardinal for prohibiting priests' participation in civil rights demonstrations. She was keenly aware of

the wealth held by the Roman Church, and other churches for that matter, and of the growth in church attendance during the 1950s and 60s. All of these resentments fed her determination to challenge religious tax exemptions. As vehement as she was against most "organized religion," she was compassionate toward two Unitarian ministers who had aided her, her family and her cause. One of those ministers gave her sanctuary after she had fled to Hawaii seeking refuge from her Catholic persecutors. The other Unitarian minister, whom she claimed was an atheist, had been killed in 1965 at Selma.

In many ways Murray was much like Hefner. She believed in maximum social, civil, sexual and religious liberty. In her opinion, religion repressed sexual appetites and diverted real thinking. Yet she said, "At no time have I ever said that people should be stripped of their right to the insanity of belief in God. If they want to practice this kind of irrationality, that's their business." She almost seemed to echo Hefner stating, "We should all live life to the fullest, and sex is a part of life." She read a segment from a fan letter she had received which referenced Hefner's Philosophy, although most of her mail was more vitriolic and hate-filled. Unlike Hefner however, she did not believe that Christianity had "contributed anything to anybody, anyplace, at any time." She believed that the "Virgin" Mary was a liar and that there was no historical evidence for Jesus. She balked at any efficacy in the Bible and disputed the afterlife. It's also important to note that she was critical of *Playboy*'s objectification of women. Partly because of *Playboy*, many American men were looking for "an empty-headed little chick who's very young and very physical—and very submissive," lamenting that most men would not be able to handle a mature woman like herself. The interview with Murray reinforced The Playboy Philosophy and Hefner's contention that religious belief should not be imposed upon

others. Though unwritten, it also reinforced the stereotype of the male gaze upon the younger women elsewhere in the magazine. The point of the interview, however, was to show that matters of faith should be private unless, of course, that faith compelled one to broaden the sphere of inclusivity. In other words, when Civil Rights leaders or political leaders were compelled by their faith to incorporate others into America's liberties, they were justified so long as they did not impose their faith along with the expending liberty. Hefner found just such an example in the person of Jimmy Carter.

Carter's Lust-filled, Adulterous Heart

Only weeks before the 1976 US Presidential election Hefner published one of the best known interviews in journalism with Jimmy Carter, judged by many to be "the most religious of candidates." It was well known that Carter was an Evangelical Christian from the Southern Baptist tradition, and a Sunday school teacher. Like all Evangelicals, Carter believed in the authority of the Bible, the historical Jesus, salvation through faith in Christ's redemptive death, and the importance of sharing that message with others. "Carter's grinning godly goodliness attracted voters in a way it might not have done in other years," surmised Patrick Allitt.[14] Carter's interview with *Playboy* met with much criticism among many conservative clergy and voters, but he managed to defend himself eventually winning the election. That magazine edition also included a candid behind-the-scenes look at the candidate entitled "Jimmy, We Hardly Know Y'All," by interviewing family and friends from Carter's native Plains, Georgia. It claimed to be a

[14] Allitt, *Religion in America since 1945: A History*, 148.

lighter look at the man Carter illustrated by political cartoonist Ranan R. Lurie. That revealing spread included two caricatures of Carter—one with a grinning Carter in overalls, and the other a more thoughtful Carter in a business suit. By far, however, Hef's most revealing affinity for Carter came later in that same edition of *Playboy* via a cartoon in which Carter is never depicted.

Hefner must have agreed with Carter's message because he issued a virtual endorsement of the candidate in the 1976 issue via a cartoon. The cartoon was set in what is presumably heaven with puffy clouds all around. A small human-looking, gender nonspecific angel with wings held a large telephone receiver out for the hand of God. God was a large male figure with long white hair and beard, white robe, halo beaming from his head as he reached for the telephone. The caption read, "I'll take the Carter call. Put Billy Graham on hold."[15] We might speculate about what Carter wanted, but the message to the American male voter was rather clear: God was willing to listen to Carter, allowing Graham to cool his heels for a while. Hefner was endorsing Carter and claiming that God would endorse him as well. The subtext of the cartoon was less clear unless one steps back from the page to survey the American religious landscape of the mid-to-late 1970s. Although Billy Graham was not officially allied with any political movement, he nevertheless represented the typical conservative Evangelical American Christian for whom "the sexual revolution, feminism, legalized abortion, easily accessible pornography, the homosexual rights movement, church-state separation, high rates of violent crime, and declining standards of public and political morality" were felt to be

[15] *Playboy*, November 1976, 236.

signs of a "national moral crisis."[16] In fact, before the end of Carter's term as President, the conservative Christian right turned against him resulting in the formation of the Moral Majority which would usher in the Reagan era. A look at the Carter interview reveals why Hef was fond of the Southern candidate.

Although time after time Carter and his *Playboy* interviewers made reference to his faith, Carter was careful to distinguish between his personal beliefs and his political views. The interview granted *Playboy* was the longest Carter gave to any news organization during his campaign, a fact not lost on the candidate. Part of the interview took place on the campaign trail, while the vast majority of it took place in Carter's Plains, Georgia home. The interviewers admitted that they wanted to get beyond the "hype" around Carter and ask some "irreverent questions." When they met Carter at his home he was dressed "in rumpled work clothes and dusty clodhoppers."

The interview began as the interviewers attempted to establish Carter's *bona fides* as a liberal politician while at the same time establishing that he was an Evangelical Christian who lived and believed conservatively. Carter had no problem reconciling the two. He was able to highlight the Democratic Party platform which included equal rights for blacks and women, and he was quick to cast aside any notion that he was an "ignorant, racist, backward, ultraconservative, redneck South Georgia peanut farmer." From there he attempted to demystify his faith insisting that he believed in Christ and attempted to always live aware of the presence of God. He acknowledged that he prayed on a regular basis, several times daily, although he could not say exactly how many times

[16] Allitt, *Religion in America*, 151.

each day. He also assured the interviewers that he was not radicalized like his faith healing sister, Ruth.

The interviewers were still not convinced. They wanted to know more about how Carter's religious views would "translate into political action." Most specifically they wanted to know how he would respond to "victimless crimes—offenses such as drug use, adultery, sodomy and homosexuality." Carter tried to carefully explain that he believed in the concept of sin as he felt it was defined by the Bible including adultery, extramarital sex (homosexuality not withstanding), but he explained that Jesus did not call upon believers to judge other people. "Judgment comes from God," Carter said, "not from another human being." On the other hand, political matters were different. As governor of Georgia he had minimized punishments for and enforcement of victimless crime, explaining that these types of crime should have a low priority. He felt the level of enforcement for these types of crimes should be a matter of states' rights.

Getting more directly to the point and pressing the issue even further, the interviewers asked: "Do you think liberalization of the laws over the past decade by factors as diverse as the pill and PLAYBOY—an effect some people would term permissiveness—has been a harmful development?" Carter's response confused them perhaps because they expected an Evangelical Christian who was personally conservative to be condemnatory. Carter said, "Liberalization of some of the laws has been good. You can't legislate morality." He cited Reinhold Niebuhr as his guide as he explained that there were often conflicts between God's law and civil law. Christians, he explained, were obligated to follow God's law first. He also recognized that there were times when civil laws become anachronistic and therefore should be ignored.

Still not satisfied that Carter would balance his faith with his civil responsibility they pressed him again, this time on the issue of homosexuality. Carter explained that he viewed homosexuality as no more sinful than any other extramarital sex, and that it should not be singled out. This talk of sin left the interviewers uneasy so they challenged his potential puritanical White House. By this point Carter had become exhausted with their line of questioning so he attempted to summarize his point of view which was to not judge others while realizing that, "I can't change the teachings of Christ." He repeated, "I can't change the teachings of Christ! I believe in them, and a lot of people in the country do as well." He attempted to settle the matter once and for all by saying that he would not "run around breaking down people's doors to see if they were fornicating. This is something that's ridiculous." His adamant pronouncement seemed to finally satisfy the interviewing duo and they moved on to other topics including the Vietnam War and foreign policy. In every instance Carter's position seemed to be consistent—he would not get overly engaged in other's affairs. With the notable exception of the Israeli-Egyptian conflict, Carter seemed to favor limited government involvement, just as he did for individual rights, and this is perhaps why Hef's cartoon God was willing to take Carter's call. Though Carter expected God to be present and active and responsive in his life, he was not willing to impose his God on anyone else. Carter's call to God was a personal one. Hef felt safe with Carter's God even though Carter was an Evangelical Christian, he was an Evangelical Christian unlike those who had been and were becoming more vocal and attempting to restrict the *Playboy* lifestyle. Carter summarized his own seemingly competing views this way: "On human rights, civil rights, environmental quality, I consider myself to be very liberal. On the management of government, on

openness of government, on strengthening individual liberties and local levels of government, I consider myself a conservative."

The most talked about and perhaps the most memorable portion of the Carter interview was his admission to having an adulterous heart. The sweater-mending candidate told of his friendship with some *avant garde* characters such as Hunter Thompson, the drug using journalist, Bob Dylan, Charlie Daniels, and others to name a few. As the interview in his home was ending, the interview team tossed one more provocative question out: "Do you have any problems with appearing in PLAYBOY? Do you think you'll be criticized?" The question almost seemed to suggest that Carter was appearing as nude as the Playmate of the Month. Upon reading the interviewers' note one gets the sense that they did not expect an answer to their question, or at least an answer as involved as Carter offered. Standing poised to depart the candidate again held forth for several minutes on his faith and its place in his life. When he approached some sensitive areas, the interview team signaled that the tape recorder was still running. Carter "nodded his assent."

Carter's monolog began as he trumpeted the uniqueness of the Baptist Church exemplified in its complete autonomy. The Baptist Church had no dominion over him, and likewise the Baptist Church believed in the total separation of Church and State. "One thing the Baptists believe in is complete autonomy. I don't accept any dominion of my life by the Baptist Church, none," Carter declared. "I try not to commit a deliberate sin. I recognize that I'm going to do it anyhow, because I'm human and I'm tempted," Carter said. He explained that he tried to avoid sin, but that Jesus had set a nearly impossible bar such that "anyone who looks on a woman with lust in his heart already

committed adultery." He then confessed, "I've looked on a lot of women with lust. I've committed adultery in my heart many times. This is something that God recognizes I will do—and I have done it—and God forgives me for it. But that doesn't mean that I condemn someone who not only looks on a woman with lust but who leaves his wife and shacks up with somebody out of wedlock." Then he made a statement that offered a ringing endorsement to Hef's Playboy Philosophy: "Christ says, Don't consider yourself better than someone else because one guy screws a whole bunch of women while the other guy is loyal to his wife."[17] Carter's God was not going to condemn the sexually permissive lifestyle promoted by Hefner in *Playboy*. Perhaps Hef's cartoon God answered Jimmy's call because he wanted to clear his conscience of its lust? Regardless, the Christ proclaimed by the soon-to-be President was entirely compatible with Hefner's views on individual liberty including sexual liberation, and as such, Hef could agree with such a theology.

Civil Liberties, Religious Voice

Hefner's appeal to liberty that verged on license extended to social issues. Those who advocated disobeying laws that were deemed unfair and unjust by progressive thinkers were allies with Hefner and he promoted their causes. Ten years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, *Playboy* visited with the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. at his Atlanta home. The interviewers had made several vain attempts to meet with the Civil Rights leader before they were able to sit with him for a "series [of] hour

[17] *Playboy*, November 1976, 86.

and half-hour conversations" resulting in the longest interview King had granted to any publication up to that point. The December 1965 interview began in King's home with questions about how he explained segregation and his work toward civil equality to his children. King explained the heartbreaking conversation he had with his eldest daughter and also how he had become involved with the bus boycott. Curiously, *Playboy* asked King to focus on some of his failures which he was all too willing to do. One of his greatest failures and disappointments came in the reluctance or outright refusal of Southern white ministers, priests and rabbis to join in the Civil Rights' cause. The church was to be a "thermostat of society. But today [he felt] that too much of the church [was] merely a thermometer, which measures rather than molds, popular opinion." King talked at length about the Social Gospel and the need for civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance to unjust systems claiming the triumph of love over injustice. "Christians should compare themselves to Jesus. Thus I consider myself an extremist for that brotherhood of man which Paul so nobly expressed: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' Love is the only force on earth that can be dispensed or received in an extreme manner, without any qualifications, without any harm to the giver or to the receiver." The interviewer was not entirely persuaded by King's soliloquy. He wanted to know how King responded to his critics who said he pushed too hard and too far for equality. He freely discussed his critics in both the white and black communities concluding that obeying God's law was far more important that obeying man's law even if it meant he was criticized or imprisoned. He rejected outright those who claimed that "Negroes" were inferior to whites while at the same time rejecting black militancy. King was

cautiously optimistic about the future of the black struggle and the outcome of the movement and shared the status of the progress around the country especially in the South. He did not necessarily believe that he would see full integration within his lifetime. He dispelled any myth that he had personally grown wealthy from his work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. *Playboy* asked him if he agreed with the 1963 Supreme Court *Abington School District v. Schempp* decision to prohibit compulsory prayer and Bible reading. King agreed with the decision because it "outlawed neither prayer nor belief in God." He continued, "In a pluralistic society such as ours, who is to determine what prayer shall be spoken, and by whom? Legally, constitutionally or otherwise, the state certainly has no such right. I am strongly opposed to the efforts that have been made to nullify the decision. When I saw Brother [George] Wallace going up to Washington to testify against the decision at the Congressional hearings, it only strengthened my conviction that the decision was right."

Like so many other interview subjects, the much of King's views were consistent with The Playboy Philosophy. King had a deep faith in God and the potential power of the Church to reform society, but he was not waiting for divine intervention. He allowed his faith to propel him in his mission to reform society--to increase individual liberty by simply extending it to more persons. Hefner had featured the first black Playmate, Jennifer Jackson, in March 1965. He had also insisted that Playboy Clubs be open to everyone regardless of race, and although some of the cartoons were overtly racist, Hefner had demonstrated a sense of inclusion not heard of from other sectors of society. King might not have endorsed all of Hefner's advances, he nevertheless recognized that

Hefner was attempting to break down yet another the racial barrier.[18] Like Hefner, King was taking a swing at the restrictive roots of American culture. Albeit not necessarily Puritanism, it nevertheless was consistent with Hefner's aims to remold and remake American culture during an age of Renaissance. There were other clergy interviewed by *Playboy* who also eagerly worked to help reshape American society and culture during this time.

Ivy League Chaplain defies the Government

The interview with the "embattled chaplain of Yale and Vietnam war critic," The Reverend William Sloane Coffin, was released in August 1968. Coffin came to prominence after he encouraged men to violate the military draft by turning in their draft cards. He faced federal trial along with noted pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock, writer Mitchell Goodman, policy analyst Marcus Raskin and graduate student Michael Ferber. All but Raskin were convicted, but the conviction was later overturned. Coffin worked for a brief time as a CIA agent and briefly led the first Peace Corp training program in 1961. He became active in the Civil Rights movement leading some to call him King's heir and *Playboy* said "he was one full example of the masculine principle at work in the cloth." Coffin's federal trial was pending when *Playboy* came calling.

Coffin was eager for peace in Vietnam and was rather pessimistic about the prospect for a positive outcome to the talks underway in 1965. Through a series of question and answer with the magazine he demonstrated that he fully grasped what was at stake in the conflict and for American foreign policy. Coffin felt the national priorities,

[18] Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream*, 196

as well as the priorities of many individual Americans, were misplaced finding it "a dreadful commentary of the country when the peace movement is symbolized by baby doctors and chaplains." He cited his army and CIA experience as evidence that he was not entirely against war under any circumstances. Regarding civil disobedience, Coffin felt that laws had purposes and consequences and he did not feel that individuals had a "right to break the law; but . . . upon occasion, every man has the *duty* to break the law." He was very careful to strike a balance between free speech and inciting fanaticism and believed that it was better to hand in draft cards than burn them and to "wash" the American flag rather than burn it. Though Coffin's objections to the war were theologically based, he did not resent nonreligious conscientious objection claiming that it was unfortunate for anyone not to believe in God, but such lack of belief did not make them amoral. Toward the end of the interview *Playboy* turned the subject toward his involvement with the civil rights struggle and the role of faith. He readily admitted that Christians were "the best argument against Christianity," but what people had to really deal with was Christ. In rather compassionate terms he talked of humanity's need for humility, forgiveness, and the "need of strength beyond our own capacities. The need that comes from acknowledging that very few of us are really free in the sense that our hands can be extended to anybody else in need. We're all a bit paralyzed, disabled. People say, 'The church is a crutch.' My answer is: 'It certainly is—but what makes you think you don't limp?' As we begin to recognize that we limp as human beings, there's a willingness to be a bit more open to a need for strength beyond our own capacities. Your soul has to have shrunk a great deal to have lost the appetite for the transcendent glories of a religious belief." And then in a statement that almost echoed Hefner's Philosophy:

"There's no question in my mind that a man is impoverished without [religion]." Also agreeing with Hefner's Philosophy he felt that a true Christian "is one who is constantly trying to move history along toward the fulfillment that is always there as a vision. Toward this end, I think all Christians must be permanent revolutionaries."

He resisted being called a hero-leader, but said that he would be happy to be a "spokesman" for a more humanistic lifestyle. It is hard to say exactly how Hefner would appreciate Coffin's final quote in light of Hefner's aspirations for a New American Renaissance. *Playboy* asked if he thought Americans would choose their own future or if their future would choose them. He responded: "If I can be theological for a moment, I think there's a great difference between being optimistic and being hopeful. I am not optimistic, but I *am* hopeful. By this I mean that hope, as opposed to cynicism and despair, is the sole precondition for new and better experiences. Realism demands pessimism. But hope demands that we take a dim view of the present because we hold a bright view of the future; and hope arouses, as nothing else can around, a passion for the possible."[19] Regardless of how you parse it, those are deep theological reflections to end an interview in a "skin mag."

Jewish Community Organizer Promotes Middle Class (White) Upward Mobility?

In March 1972 *Playboy* introduced its readers to Saul Alinsky, a 63 year-old community organizer and author of *Rules for Radicals,* a guidebook to help teach communities which he could not visit how to organize. *Playboy*'s preface reported that a number of magazines and newspapers had warned that Alinsky and his tactics were

[19] *Playboy*, August 1968, 140.

dangerous, and an unnamed "conservative church journal wrote that 'it is impossible to follow both Jesus Christ and Saul Alinsky.'" *Playboy* began the interview by asking Alinsky about his "latest and most ambitious campaign: to organize nothing less than America's white middle class," a very odd prospect in the midst of the black struggle for Civil Rights. Alinsky was convinced that the middle class felt defeated. Contrary to many in the political establishment, Alinsky thought the middle class were progressive in their worldview. He was not deterred by the challenge of organizing 150 million people. On the contrary, he was invigorated.

Though the vast majority of the interview was about his work to reshape society—an obvious reason Hefner wanted to interview him—a portion of it was devoted to his faith as a Jew. His parents were Orthodox, but he felt he grew up with a "goyischer hop" which he translated as "a gentile brain." As a child he was taught that gentiles were "practically Mongoloid," but learned differently and felt that such prejudice was just as offensive as anti-Semitism, although he had never really encountered anti-Semitism. He had apparently always been for the underdog. As a child he witnessed one of his friends being beaten up by some Polish children. He organized a group to beat up the Poles only to be arrested for his organizing activities. The police took him to his mother who straightaway took him to the rabbi. He defended his actions to the rabbi by appealing to the Old Testament injunction an eye for an eye. He admitted that he was not a devout Jew, but nevertheless maintained his Jewish identity. His disillusionment with his faith came when he was ten or eleven years old. His rabbi was tutoring him in Hebrew. One day his rabbi attempted to bribe him to study, so the next day he refused to do his work unless the rabbi increased the payment. The rabbi became physically abusive, slapping

him so hard he actually hit the wall. Thereafter, Alinsky rebelled against God and did not feel any consequences so he never regretted his decision.

Though Jewish and in full rebellion against God, Alinsky knew the power of the Church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. His first community organizing project was Back of the Yards, the area behind the Chicago stockyards; what he described as one of the worst slums in the country. "The area was 95 percent Roman Catholic, and I recognized that if I could win the support of the Church, we'd be off and running. Conversely, without the Church or at least some elements of it, it was unlikely that we'd be able to make much of a dent in the community," he told the interviewer.[20] The Chicago Roman Church was a bastion of liberalism and its leaders were pro-labor. Church members joined his efforts and he was ultimately successful. He told of other organizing efforts where he had garnered the support of the Church, in particular against Eastman Kodak. Though invited by the Rochester Area Council of Churches, "a predominantly white body of liberal clergymen" he would not help organize the community without black community support. They agreed, but it was when he convinced the General Assembly of the Unitarian-Universalist Association to grant him voting proxy over their 5,620 company shares that he was able to make inroads. Other churches joined the Unitarian-Universalists prompting congress to take note and ultimately Kodak changed its hiring practices. Yet he did not see himself as a biblical type prophet. Prophets, in his estimation, got to go into the wilderness to coordinate their thinking, whereas community organizers like himself and Martin Luther King, did their thinking in jail cells.

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[20] *Playboy*, March 1972, 72.

Playboy turned the conversation back to things religious toward the end of the interview asking if he thought about death and/or believed in an afterlife. He did not think about death all that much and he tweaked the question concerning the afterlife: "Sometimes it seems to me that the question people should ask is not 'Is there life after death?' but 'Is there life after birth?' Man's obsession with the question comes out of his stubborn refusal to face up to his own mortality. Let's say that if there *is* an afterlife, and I have anything to say about it, I will unreservedly choose to go to hell." He concluded that once he arrived in hell that it would be full of the "have-nots" and he would never be bored because he could spend all eternity organizing his kind of people.

Alinsky's disregard for the status-quo or the traditional social structures appealed to Hefner. He was a rebel like Hef, and Hef had already said "Blessed is the rebel" without whom there would be no progress. Alinsky's dislike for a faith that would be so punitive likely also appealed to Hefner. He would have seen the Orthodox Jewish tradition in which Alinsky was reared much the same as the Puritans, moribund and over layered with rules, and that leads into some broader conclusions about why Hefner wanted to interview these prominent religious thinkers. Through The Playboy Philosophy Hefner had invited a conversation with the religious community, and the responding voice of that invitation came through the interviewees willing to bare their souls in the pages of a magazine that had made its name more for women willing to wear their birthday suits. Changing the religious landscape was crucial for fomenting a sexual revolution and bringing about the New American Renaissance he so desperately desired. It's also clear that the interviewees were capable of producing some deep and profound theological conclusions. In the concluding chapter I will quote some of those gems,

along with others from the other editorial material. Yet, the interviews were but one way Hefner entered the American religious conversation. His was a magazine in touch with men of intellect at a time of national change. He would invite others to bear themselves in his pages.

CHAPTER 6

NO ONE('S) RELIGION WAS HARMED DURING THE MAKING OF THIS MAGAZINE

The number of interviews with overtly religious content was surpassed by the number of essays and other editorial material. In The Philosophy Hefner expressed interest in engaging religious communities to help bring about the New American Renaissance. That invitation was met with thoughtful and thought-provoking responses from some prominent progressive religious thinkers such as Harvey Cox, William Hamilton and others which I will explore later in this chapter. "Other" editorial material covers a host of categories including essays, both humorous and serious, movie and theater reviews, vignettes, and Letters to the Editor. It can also include jokes and non-comic artwork with religious themes which appeared frequently.

Ever interested in popular culture, Hefner reviewed theater productions and movies with religious themes such as *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, which was deemed a snore, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. *Jesus Christ Superstar* even merited an article in July 1973 entitled "Jesus Christ Superham: Strange doings in Bibleland—the Lord delivers hip parables, his Apostles cry up a storm while Judas pouts in sullen silence—Is there no Balm in Gilead?"[1] The article was a lighthearted look at the production behind the fantastically successful movie version of

[1] Nik Cohn, "Jesus Christ Superham: Strange doings in Bibleland—the Lord delivers hip parables, his Apostles cry up a storm while Judas pouts in sullen silence—Is there no Balm in Gilead?" *Playboy* (July 1973), 89ff.

the play. At other times he featured vignettes about religious personalities in a series called "On the Scene." Religious figures such as the Reverend Malcolm Boyd, Father Robert Drinan and Mother Waddles appeared alongside social trend setters such as Ike and Tina Turner, Dennis Hopper and Roberta Flack. According to Hefner, like up-and-coming musicians or actors, these religious figures were the people to watch—Boyd for his jazz-infused prayer, Fr. Drinan because he was the "first priest ever to hold voting status in Congress," and Mother Waddles because she was a ministry of last resort for Detroit's inner city residents call to testify before Congress regarding the problem of poverty in America.[2]

There were fictional articles such as "The Machineries of Joy: The Clerics were in Conflict concerning Man's invasion of Space" by Ray Bradbury, the well-known science fiction writer.[3] The article opened with breakfast in the rectory and just as the subtitle implies, the discussion centered on the theological implications of space exploration. Other articles were more humorous. Richard Hooker wanted to know "Who Stuck the Flag in Reverend Titcomb?" as the cast from MASH tried to aid the "horny parson and his horny wife."[4]

Some articles were more serious. E.V. Griffith explored the world of witchcraft in "The Sabbats of Satan." Though much of the opening story was fictional, the history was correct as he surveyed 1000 years of Medieval European "Satanism," as he called it.[5] The March 1969 issue described the numerous "cults" exploding in California in

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[2] *Playboy*, April 1967, 154; April 1971, 199; September 1972, 184.
[3] Ray Bradbury, "The Machineries of Joy: The Clerics were in Conflict concerning Man's invasion of Space," *Playboy,* December 1962, 105ff.
[4] Richard Hooker, "Who Stuck the Flag in Reverend Titcomb?" *Playboy*, January 1972, 199ff.
[5] E.V. Griffith, "The Sabbats of Satan," Playboy, July 1963, 83ff.

"Cultsville U.S.A." Robert Jennings told of the proliferation of Buddhism, Sufism, Satanism, Bahai, Yoga and other non-Christian religions growing in the state.[6] James Collier penned an opinion article attacking the Christian Church's teachings on the purposes of sex. He called it "The Procreation Myth" concluding "that any ethical code based on the theory that the primary function of sex is reproduction is built on quicksand. The evidence points to a defensible, scientifically valid argument that in human beings, the purpose of sex is pleasure."[7]

In an earlier chapter I mentioned Saul Braun's article entitled "Nearer, Silent Majority, to Thee" which took on Christian evangelist Billy Graham.[8] I took note of the cartoon-like graphic of Graham that accompanied the article. Braun had requested an interview with Graham and had initially received a positive response. He was even given a copy of Graham's biography to read in preparation for the interview. One of preconditions for the interview was that *Playboy* would remove the centerfold from the issue in which the interview appeared. The magazine declined the conditions and ultimately so did the Graham camp. Braun followed the Graham crusade anyway, from Shea Stadium to the steps of the Lincoln Monument on the National Mall. He documented the religious fervor which led to thousands of conversions and the heated exchanges between those gathered for Honor America Day, 3 July 1970, and the group of marijuana supporters who had organized a "smoke-in" prior to the announcement of Honor America Day. He accused Graham of colluding with the Nixon administration and those who supported the war in Vietnam surmising: "Bill Graham's Christian is no

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[6] C. Robert Jennings, "Cultsville U.S.A." *Playboy*, March 1969, 86ff.
[7] James Collier, "The Procreation Myth," *Playboy*, May 1971, 194.
[8] Saul Braun, "Nearer, Silent Majority, To Thee," *Playboy*, February 1971, 120ff.

threat to Caesar, and never has been. This is a good religion for greedy princes and for anybody who favors passive obedience, who prefers not to confront the reality of his own responsibility for this world and the next and the next and the next: disguising desire as submission."[9] In one of the longest non-interview articles in the fifteen years surveyed, Braun spent a great deal of time recounting the events in Washington on that patriotic day and how much disconnect there was with the concerns and sentiments of the nonconformists. Graham, he concluded, is a "credible symbol of the dying culture," because he is committed to it "unremittingly and without the slightest trace of doubt or reserve."[10] For Hefner, Graham represented a dying culture and thereby typified exactly why America needed a Renaissance—why the roots of Puritanism had persisted and needed to be cut. As with the religious thinkers Hefner had featured in interviews, there were others whose thoughts and writings he promoted in articles and in transcripted conversations.

A Religious Round Table (and no one had to sit in the corner)

In December 1964 Hefner included as part of The Playboy Philosophy the transcript of a "Trialogue" with a moderator and three religious leaders. The moderator was Murray Burnett; the religious leaders were Father Norman O'Connor, a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, the Reverend Richard Gary, an Episcopal priest representing Protestantism, and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. Hefner, of course, was included in the Trialogue. The discussion had been broadcast twice on WINS, a New York City radio station. Hefner published it to further clarify his views on organized religion and the

[9] Braun, "Silent Majority," 195.
[10] Braun, "Silent Majority," 201.

perils of Puritanism in America especially in relation to sexual views. Hefner prefaced the published transcript claiming that "any serious analysis of the sexual ills of society" must begin with the "historical link between sex and religion."[11] He reiterated his previous points about the dangers of the remaining roots of Puritanism which continued to endanger sexual liberty, and many other liberties for that matter—a point he revisited in the Trialogue.

The discussion began with the question of the Sexual Revolution and the role of Hefner's Philosophy. They agreed that what they were really talking about was a re-examination of the role of sex and how Hefner via *Playboy* had shaped that discussion in its decade of existence. Hefner conceded that his magazine was conceived as entertainment and even satirical toward sex, but that he wanted it to include serious discussions about important issues, ergo The Playboy Philosophy and similar editorials and interviews. Fr. Gary, while largely supportive of Hefner and even of the Playboy Clubs, alleged that Hefner caricatured religion "a little." Hefner responded, and those who had kept up their reading of Hef's Philosophy would have been familiar as he held forth on his interpretation of the history of religious repression of sex. The development of organized religion was to blame. Primitive Jews and even Jesus had little or no quarrel with liberated sexual expression, in Hef's opinion. He had buttressed his argument with "liberal statements regarding sex by various religious leaders."[12] Recalling his reading of the Philosophy, Rabbi Tanenbaum felt that Hefner had much more in common with Jewish thinking on the purposes of sex than with Christians.

[11] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 1," December 1964, 91.
[12] Hefner, "Religious Round Table 1," December 1964, 215.

The second installment of the Trialogue was published in January 1965--the same issue bearing the Martin Luther King interview—an issue packed with religious content. Hefner prefaced this installment by discussing several articles in mostly religious publications concerning The Playboy Philosophy. In particular, he responded to Dr. Harvey Cox's article "Playboy's Doctrine of Male" published in *Christianity and Crisis* on 17 April 1961, of which he seemed rather intrigued.[13] He would later invite Cox into further conversations, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Hefner appreciated the exchange of ideas between the "secular and religious segments of society" because it was necessary to formulate a new morality.[14] Hefner reprised the first installment before beginning the next with a discussion of the differences between liberal and conservative. He analyzed the semantic contradictions between the terms explaining that when one believes in individual rights economically he is called conservative, but in terms of sexual morality, to champion individual rights is considered liberal. And herein lay Hefner's main point:

> *The Playboy Philosophy* is predicated on my belief in the importance of the individual and his rights as a member of a free society. That's my most basic premise—the starting point from which everything else in which I believe evolves. When I use the word "free," I'm not referring to a society completely devoid of restrictions, of course, but one in which controls are established to serve rather than suppress the common citizen; a society that is unfettered, just rational and humane, in which the individual and his interests are paramount. I believe that each individual should have the right to explore his own individuality and that society should assist him in this—to discover himself, as well as the world around him—to that pride in himself and in the individuality that sets him apart . . . . I believe in a moral and law-abiding society, but one in which morality and law are based upon logic and knowledge rather than superstition and dogma.[15]

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[13] Harvey Cox, "Playboy's Doctrine of Male," *Christianity and Crisis*, 21.6, 17 April 1961, 56-9.
[14] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 2," January 1965, 54-6.
[15] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 2," January 1965, 58-60.

Rabbi Tanenbaum charged that such primacy on the individual could result in a preoccupation with pleasure to the exclusion of everything else, but Hefner dismissed that charge as the inevitable outcome of a puritanical upbringing.

As the discussion continued the religious leaders came to the agreement that the ideal norm should be a loving relationship that resulted in marriage, procreation, the nurture of family and from that, concern for the larger society. Hefner even agreed that such was ideal, but posed his essential question concerning the individual: Why can't mature individuals choose to have sex without marriage, without creating children, without condemnation from society and church? Hefner concluded this installment of the Roundtable without a resolution to the question, but readers would not have to wait long.

The third installment of the Religious Roundtable was published the next month, February 1965. Hefner dispensed with the extended recap and delved into the transcript. The first topic was "sex as sin." The clergy had differing views on the topic especially when it came to sex out of matrimony. Hefner, of course, did not want to address the topic of sin since he was not a theologian, but he felt strongly that sex should not be limited to married individuals. The prerequisite for sex, according to Hef, should be love, but that was not to rule out the possibility of loveless sex. Fr. O'Connor objected that *Playboy* did not really focus on love, but rather more on sex to which Hefner somewhat agreed. Hefner's reluctant agreement was based on the fact that society had been too prudish about the subject of sex. "A sexually suppressed society soon becomes a sexually *ob*sessed one," he would later claim.[16] It only seemed that he focused so much on sex because people were not accustomed to seeing sex dealt with in the mass media

[16] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 3," February 1965, 139.

even though he admitted that *Playboy* was filled with dreams and aspirations.[17] Besides, even with sex being an "important editorial ingredient" he was "determined from the outset to try to approach the subject in a healthy, heterosexual, positive and appealing way."[18]

America's puritanical obsession with sexual repression led to early marriages meaning that men married before they reached maturity in their late 20s and early 30s. It was better for men to have time to play, or to have an opportunity to have multiple sexual partners prior to marriage. Religious institutions, he felt, should engage in more conversation to promote an atmosphere of freedom and not abdicate that responsibility to public education. Religious institutions should re-examine their moral codes in light of newly developing social norms. He warned the religious leaders on the panel that "unless you are willing to begin relating to this problem *realistically* and making suggestions for the establishment of a new, enlightened contemporary morality that *works*, people will look elsewhere for their answers, or continue to be lost in this gap that exists between complete permissiveness and the traditional all too negative thou-shalt-not morality of old."[19] The third Trialogue ended with Hefner's call more emphasis on sex, not less.

Hefner allowed his readers to wonder what the outcome of the Trialogue was for a couple months. He delayed the final installment of the Religious Round Table until May. Perhaps he delayed publication because the fourth part had relatively little to say regarding religion when compared with the first three. Much of the final discussion was concerned with free speech, censorship and the definition of pornography and obscenity.

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[17] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 3," February 1965, 44.
[18] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 3," February 1965, 43-4.
[19] Hefner, "The Playboy Philosophy: Religious Round Table 3," February 1965, 138.

The moderator summarized the views of the religious leaders that censorship was not necessarily good, and that they might vote for less censorship. They could also agree that public views on morality and sex were changing and that they, that is the religious community, would do well to reevaluate their positions. Hefner thought that publishing the four Trialogues would be advantageous to his readers. And so he did, and they responded.

The letters to the editor in response to the Trialogue poured in. Some asked for clarity on various points Hefner had made, which he freely offered. Others praised his sound logic. One critic thought him a bully and asked: "Is he big enough to take it as well as put it out?" In uncharacteristic fashion Hefner responded in only one word: "Sure."[20] On the other hand, in response to a suggestion from a Unitarian Minister, Harold Scott, that Hefner consider publishing a condensed version of a fellow Universalist's sermon, John Graham, Hefner published the entire sermon filling some three pages of the March 1965 issue. The sermon heaped high praise on The Playboy Philosophy.[21] The letters continued to come for most of the year from laity and clergy, men and women, friend and foe, proving that Hefner had struck a nerve. People were reading *Playboy* for the articles and they were interested in the religious content of the magazine.

[20] *Playboy*, March 1965, 43-4.
[21] *Playboy*, March 1965, 47ff.

How many Theologians does it take to change a Society?

Hefner revisited the religious panel format in 1967 assembling nine "leading liberal clergy [to] debate the church's role in today's sexual revolution."[22] The panel included Bishop Pike who had contributed an article to *Playboy* in April 1967 and Harvey Cox who would become a frequent contributor to the magazine. The panel moderator, listed only as "Playboy," set the tone of the discussion and posed the questions. Liberal religious thinkers, *Playboy* suggested, agreed that a new sexual moral code was developing more than sexual practices were actually changing. In other words, people were thinking about sex differently and to a greater degree than they were actually having sex, and this new way of thinking was threatening the hegemonic power of religion. While some of the theologians brushed aside the notion that there was anything called "the new morality" in any way other than nomenclature, they agreed that people were thinking about sex differently the results of which might not be apparent for a decade or more. Others felt that there was indeed more sexual activity and that the young people engaged in the activity were as of yet too immature to do any significant thinking about what it meant. Rabbi Rubenstein said that "The old idea that religion can supply a meaningful set of guidelines derived from divine sanction no longer carries much conviction with the average college student."[23] By and large they agreed that casual sex, devoid of love, was not a good thing, although it might be a real thing.

The discussion jumped to various topics. The panel thought that religious institutions should deal with the question of single adult premarital sexual activity, most agreeing that it was acceptable. The moderator raised the question of extramarital sexual

[22] *Playboy*, "The Playboy Panel: Religion and the New Morality," June 1967, 55ff.
[23] *Playboy*, "The Playboy Panel: Religion and the New Morality," June 1967, 60.

activity. Whereas most thought the biblical injunction regarding adultery was clear and that such activity usually led to serious marital problems, several, surprisingly, felt that there might be extenuating circumstances to allow such. Harvey Cox said that because the level of commitment within marriages varied that "a wide pluralism is really necessary, and we should not condemn *other* people for not living up to *our* standards."[24] The operative maxim should be that a person must be treated as an end in themselves and never a means. Almost all, with the exception of Fr. Herbert Rogers, a Jesuit priest, thought that non-coital sex to the point of climax was probably acceptable. The same was true for birth control and contraception.

The panel discussed homosexuality. Most felt that it was a psychological abnormality, but were not willing to condemn homosexuals, even the Roman Catholic representative. The panel wholly agreed that anti-obscenity laws were wrong and that censorship was more a family matter. This discussion turned to the reasons for censorship. Martin Marty pointed out that once the cry was that we censor material to protect the "womenfolk," but now people wanted to protect the children, which turned the conversation to the differences between men and women.[25] The panelists were rather progressive in their thoughts on the equality of women and they were rather disparaging of how the Church had depersonalized and dehumanized women. They were borderline critical of the manner in which *Playboy* portrayed women which left the moderator sounding somewhat defensive.

Toward the end of the discussion Robert Lynn defended the Puritans against popular misconceptions, many of which had been put forth in the magazine. James

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[24] *Playboy*, "New Morality," 68.
[25] *Playboy*, "New Morality," 152.

Adams and Martin Marty joined the defense of America's progenitors. One must wonder what Hefner thought when he read Adams: "The term puritanism, from a historical point of view, has been egregiously distorted. Puritanism was the greatest revolutionary force for 200 years in the history of Western civilization." Marty added, "And the Puritan sex ethic, the *real* Puritan sex ethic, not our caricature of it, made much sense at the time it was promulgated. But like other ethical systems within the Christian tradition, by the time it actually became codified and formally assimilated into church doctrine, it was out of date." Cox agreed: "Morality must always be a living, organic thing. We must constantly be rethinking our morals on the basis of human needs."[26] Fr. Rogers summarized the points of agreement among the panelists citing that, as a Roman Catholic, he disagreed with the other theologians very little.

The fact that the panelists agreed on so many points despite their various religious backgrounds is remarkable. The fact that they came together at the invitation of Hugh Hefner is amazing. The fact that they knew that in a time of such national upheaval and social unrest their conversation would be published in *Playboy* magazine is nothing short of a miracle. Most of these men went on to incredibly distinguished careers, if they had not already achieved that distinction. It is also largely significant that the entire discussion lacked any comprehensive discussion of the meaning of sin, nor did they retreat to the cliché of "The Bible says . . ." The nine theologians, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, openly discussed sex and the implications of sexual relationships for religious people and institutions, and *Playboy*'s readers paid attention to the Religious Panel on the New Morality.

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[26] *Playboy*, "New Morality," 160-61.

Roman Catholic, Methodist, Episcopalian, Unitarian-Universalist clergy wrote in to thank Hefner for publishing the thought provoking and serious treatment on the topic of sex and religion. The Rev'd Charles Whittier of Dover, New Hampshire reluctantly wrote, saying he felt "forced" to thank Hefner for the panel. One woman wrote that she had never been so "enthusiastic" to read *Playboy* while another woman who identified herself as the Associate Secretary for the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church asked for 25 copies "for professional use."[27] Yet, not everyone was positive. W. A. Smith quoted 2 Timothy 4.3-4 which claims that the time will come when people will look for teachers who tell them what they want to hear, rejecting sound doctrine. J.W. Bigger said that the panel avoided discussing the seven deadly sins with the exception of lechery. A retired pastor referred not to the panel as theologians, but as "egologians," a term he claimed to coin.[28] Love him or hate him, the evidence was clear, Hefner had hit a root, a nerve if you will, and Americans responded.

Playboy **declares [Jewish and Christian] God Dead**

Nietzsche had declared the death of God in the 1880s. Hegel had used the phrase even before him, but it was *Time* magazine's cover on 8 April 1966 that brought the question to the attention of most Americans. Hefner, seeing an opportunity to continue shaping public opinion, published an opinion article by the Reverend William Hamilton, Ph.D., a self-proclaimed "Christian Atheist." In 1966 Hamilton, along with Thomas J.J. Altizer, authored *Radical Theology and the Death of God* which contributed to what he

[27] *Playboy*, September 1967, 10.
[28] *Playboy*, September 1967, 11.

called "the death-of-God fuss."[29] Hamilton began his treatment of the complex and deeply theological question with a long quote from Nietzsche referring to the quote as "wild and lovely words." The death of God was a reality, but made new ways of thinking about the Christian faith possible. He proposed "doing Christianity without God" ultimately finding it overwhelmingly more Christian than the inherited Judeo-Christian tradition had been. He brought his readers up-to-speed on the conversation leading up to his article and explained the possible meanings for the use of the word "death." He saw no point in the future when it would be possible to return to the previous conception of the Christian God.

With some painstaking brevity he summarized ten possible meanings or implication to consider when discussing the death of God. For Hamilton, the thrust of the death of God was that the "meeter of needs and a solver of problems" had disappeared.[30] God could not be counted on to be there to help with every problem an individual person might have. He explained, "The death of God means two closely related things: that some of the human experiences to which men have traditionally given the name of God must be redescribed and renamed, and also that some of those experiences are no longer ours."[31] In his search for accessible examples of how to explain this he appealed to popular literature. Of the many examples, one was Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The sacred was found in the nonmarital sex between Hester and Dimmesdale set in the Puritan world, yet God was not present. The sacred existed without God. In his conclusion, Hamilton speculated that those attributes once imputed to God were now to

[29] William Hamilton, "The Death of God," *Playboy*, August 1966, 79.
[30] Hamilton, "Death of God," 137.
[31] Hamilton, "Death of God," 138.

be found in the real person of Christ and subsequently, the community of faith making the church and ministry in the world possible. Put simply, because we can love one another God is dead.

Make no mistake, Hamilton was doing theology in a public way in *Playboy* magazine. One might consider his discussion to be more obscene than any photograph Hefner ever published. To many, this was a full frontal assault on the Christian tradition. Hefner must have been delighted that the sacred was found in sex among Puritans, albeit fictional Puritans, and God was nowhere to be found. This might be everything Hefner wanted in his religious views—the divine was being created in the act of making love. There was no need for a vengeful, punitive God—the God of the Puritans—only the loving, caring actions of Christ. But could the person of Christ even be removed from the equation? Hefner would explore that option with a rabbi.

Just ten months after Hamilton's piece was published, Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein followed up with "Judaism and the Death of God."[32] Rubenstein was born into a family of secular Jews and never received a bar mitzvah. His theological work was primarily in radical theology, like Hamilton, where he argued for the death of God. His first published book (1966) was *After Auschwitz* in which he tried to understand the Holocaust in light of radical theology and the death of God. Unlike some of his fellow theologians he did not see a need to abandon the traditions of his faith. He felt that in a time of a lost God "we need the discipline and guidance of our traditions more than ever . . . we need the old liturgies."[33]

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[32] Richard L. Rubenstein, "Judaism and the Death of God," *Playboy*, July 1967, 69ff.
[33] Rubenstein, "Judaism," 131.

His *Playboy* article agreed in many parts with Hamilton's although he preferred to think in more poetic terms of "liv[ing] in the time of the death of God."[34] He was rather pessimistic about the society as a whole seeing it moving in a more profane direction where gods were unnecessary and humanity relied primarily upon itself. Death was the inevitable outcome of life which, contrary to the idea of many, should neither be a disappointment nor filled with regret provided that life had been lived fully. "People who react violently to death-of-God theology are not in reality defending God; they are defending themselves against the terrible fear that their entire moral universe will fall apart," he concluded.[35] Humanity is not liberated by God's death. On the contrary, we have to try harder to maintain civilization and decency. Ultimately the work of religion was to provide the rituals that surround life's events such as birth, marriage, death: "No one, for example, has to believe in an omnipotent God to be married in a church or synagogue."[36] The dead God would be replaced by more spiritual practices such as Jewish and Christian mysticism buttressed by traditional religious rituals.

More mystical and poetic in his writings and conclusions than Hamilton, Rubenstein was nevertheless "doing theology" in the pages of *Playboy*. Though Jewish, his theology might more closely adhere to Hefner's views some 40 years later when he was interviewed by Cathleen Falsani. In that interview Hefner stated that he had cast aside a punitive God—the Puritan God—in favor of ethical humanism (my term, not his). He never attended church for anything other than a life ritual such as a wedding. Hefner was referred to as a deeply spiritual person by those who knew him and he self-reported

[34] Rubenstein, "Judaism," 69.
[35] Rubenstein, "Judaism," 74.
[36] Rubenstein, "Judaism," 131.

that his prayer life, when it happened, was primarily to the Creator and was simple gratitude. His most spiritual moments were when he was able to commune with nature "feeling connected to the wonder of what this is all about."[37] Despite the controversy, Hef seemed comfortable with God's death, even if some of his readers where not.

As one might imagine, many letters followed the Death of God articles. Most were overwhelmingly favorable, and those that were not, were instructive critiques. Of course, Hefner might well have chosen not to publish any letters that were seriously condemnatory. Protestants, Roman Catholics and Jews responded to the articles most signing their names, professions and geographical locals. Father John Sheehan from De Le Salle College was going to use the article in his classroom as were United Christian Fellowship pastor, Leon Johnson, of Central State College and religion professor Robinson B. James of the University of Richmond. Lutheran Pastor Arthur Hale thought Hamilton should have been more accommodating of human free-will, but agreed with his overall premises. Episcopal Bishop James Pike had a rather lengthy response to Hamilton in which he critiqued him pointing out his sin in four points attempting to pull Hamilton back from the left. Hefner allowed Hamilton to respond to Pike who concluded that he, Pike, should stick to faith practiced referring to him as a "canny spokesman for traditional theology."[38] Whereas another Episcopal cleric, Walter Dennis of The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, disagreed with Hamilton, he appreciated the coverage to promote further discussion. One creative respondent disagreed with Hamilton because he had conversed with God and discovered that he was not dead but drunk. John Parker's purpose thenceforth was to spread the religion of "Inebredeism."

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[37] Cathleen Falsani, *The God Factor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 27.
[38] *Playboy,* November 1966, 13.

Though Rubenstein's article generated fewer letters to the editor they too mostly agreed with his conclusions. One Lutheran pastor from Pittsburgh, Jay Rochelle, found Rubenstein more palpable than Hamilton. K.S. Pickett from Hemet, California was the only hostile respondent calling God's death "twaddle and a joke." "He is alive," Pickett asserted.[39] Hefner was not content to pronounce the death of God, he also wanted to reform the Church.

Sex and the Single Priest, A Revolution?

In 1971 and 1972 Hefner published two articles by Garry Wills, a classicist, who at the time of the articles was teaching history at Johns Hopkins University. Wills had attended a Jesuit high school and for a brief time joined the order before leaving to pursue graduate studies. In "A Revolution in the Church" Wills told the story of Philip and Daniel Berrigan, brothers who became Roman Catholic priests and celebrities because of their activism against the Vietnam War and nuclear buildup following World War II. Wills was very sympathetic toward the non-violent activities of the two priests. Daniel became a Jesuit and was less radical. Philip joined the order of Josephite Fathers which was dedicated to African descendants and worked especially to combat segregation and racism. Wills described them:

> Few brothers could be more different than the Berrigans—Philip tall and fair, the athlete; Daniel slight and dark, with the face of a smug leprechaun. Phil, unafraid, always needs action; he practically dragged Dan into the Cantonville action (or drank him into it, through a long night of passionate fraternal arguing). A moody, emotional Irish, a bit of a brawler like his father and pestered by the ardent girls drawn to him, Phil is a hard man to say no to, a good man to have with you in a war. Dan, by contrast, is a bit chilly—aloof. Where Phil inspires, Dan disturbs, in his quieter way, probes deeper; the lines in his young-old face are the map of

[39] *Playboy*, March 1967, 48; October 1967, 14.

> some strange country not yet explored. The world's troublemakers—not a bad description of these brothers.[40]

The two brothers, along with seven others all of whom were Roman Catholics, were convicted of breaking into the Cantonsville Draft Board Office, stealing 600 draft card and setting them on fire using napalm. The Cantonsville Nine, as they were called, released a stinging rebuke of the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian bodies charging that they were complicit in unjust war, racist, and antagonistic toward the poor. The Berrigan brothers, and others like them, brought repute on the Roman Catholic Church at a time when it had begun to achieve acceptance and respect. After all, it was not even a decade since Kennedy had been elected. Yet to some the Berrigans were prophets and were acting in accord with other great conservative Roman Catholic reformers such as the Jesuits in Tudor England and the social activist Dorothy Day. Wills felt the brothers knew that they were being consistent with a stream of Roman Catholic resistance: "All seers have been told that they must not see; all visionaries have been ordered to give up their visions. Prophecy looks simultaneously backward and forward, assigns men fresh tasks with an urgency born of ancient obligation."[41]

In the July 1972 issue, Wills again took up the cause of reforming the Church, again using the Berrigans, or at least Philip Berrigan. In "Sex and the Single Priest" Wills argued that celibacy and chastity are not synonymous.[42] In 1970 Philip had secretly married a nun, Elizabeth McAlister, while he was still a priest. When the secret sacrament was discovered, he was laicized. Wills' article was to further his cause as a

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[40] Garry Wills, "A Revolution in the Church," *Playboy*, November 1971, 180, 220.
[41] Wills, "A Revolution in the Church," 227.
[42] Garry Wills, "Sex and the Single Priest," *Playboy*, July 1972.

reformer of the Church arguing that he had done such a superb job for social justice in the world; he could do an equal job for equality within the institution. Wills' argued that celibacy did not give a priest more time for parish work; he did not have more love to spread around; it made him awkward; and it perpetuated a mythic hierarchy with celibates at the top and all others falling in order behind depending on number and frequency of marriage. The whole teaching of celibacy stemmed from a misunderstanding of "two virginities—that of Jesus and that of his mother."[43] Properly understood, these virginities could help to reinterpret the doctrine of celibacy, and the Berrigan brothers had undertaken just such a task. One brother, Daniel, had made a "radical, exceptional, exceedingly private choice." Celibacy was not used to "tame" his spirit. Philip, on the other hand, had made no less a choice in getting married. The only impoverishment was that he could not serve God as a priest—he was not allowed to live for the spirit and the flesh.

In choosing to publish these two articles Hefner was lending his endorsement. First, he was endorsing peaceful, nonviolent protests against the war in Vietnam and against nuclear armament. He was endorsing resisting the draft. But more than that, he was endorsing a "Revolution in the Church." He was calling out priests and bishops who had not rebelled against the institutional hierarchy whether of the Church or government. One letter to the editor in response to the first article said, "I do not quite share Wills's charitable attitude toward a serious religion that tends to be 'politically radical and theologically conservative.' Why not be radical on both fronts?"[44] Yet, it seems that that was Wills' point. The Berrigan brothers were being theologically and politically radical

[43] Wills, "Sex . . .," 196.
[44] *Playboy*, February 1972, 11.

in the eyes of most—they were being prophetic. Hefner certainly was being both politically and theologically radical by endorsing the articles in his ever growing distribution.

Bishop calls for Tax on Organized Religion

In the April 1967 issue of *Playboy* Hefner presented three controversial theses to eliminate personal income tax: tax oil companies, tax organized crime and tax organized religion. The "Tax Organized Religion" piece was written by Bishop James Pike, the former Episcopal Bishop of California from 1958-66. A controversial figure on many topics, Pike felt that tax reform would be good for churches because many were in danger of "gaining the whole world and losing their own souls." Ecclesiastical wealth, in his opinion, had led to numerous problems in church history. The present state of federal religious tax exemption was a hindrance to the financial health of the nation, and he lamented that the Supreme Court had declined to hear the case brought by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, although he admitted that her argument was suspect and too broad. In some great detail he recited examples of the wealth held by many churches and church organizations. He was particularly critical of secular businesses held by church organizations for the sole purpose of producing wealth. In the three-tiered tax structure he proposed, wealth producing entities belonging to a church would be taxed at the same rate as any business. Church property would be taxed according to its "club" usage versus its community service usage. He explained his proposal in detail and even cited examples. He argued that such a plan would force churches to consider their usefulness to the community, but more importantly to consider ecumenical cooperation. Some

churches were already doing this and the results were extremely positive, according to his assessment.

His most compelling argument, however, might be that such a tax program would promote a "radical refocusing, that first things would be put first" so that the church could focus and refine its message. Too many churches were burdened by heavy mortgages such that the loss of a few contributors could cause financial hardship. "This fact alone—whether or not a majority of the congregation is open-minded—is enough to make many a minister cautious about preaching the social gospel in anything but the most vague generalities or in making constructive changes in the organization or program that could bring the parish into the 20th Century," he wrote. Without the encumbrances of a building churchmen would be able to boldly proclaim, "'We have tables, bread and wine, voices and pens; what can they take away from us?'"

Aside from the fact that Hefner might have leaned toward libertarianism, his endorsement of Pike's religious taxation program seems oddly placed. In light of the conclusion of this article by Pike, one wonders if Hefner might be interested in a more authentic and credible expression of Christianity. Followed to its conclusion, religion enforces rules to keep believers in line so that they can finance their buildings and property. Remove the property and you remove the motives for enforcing rules. Believers are then free to serve their fellow man from a more pure and genuine impulse.

Did Hefner have a Favorite Theologian?

Hefner had long been aware of his critics. As you might recall, it was largely because of his critics that he undertook the task of writing The Playboy Philosophy in the

first place which in many instances only provoked even more criticism. Theologian Harvey Cox came to Hefner's attention in 1961 because of his article "Playboy's Doctrine of Male," published in *Christianity and Crisis*.[45] Hefner referenced Cox's article in his preface to the transcript of the Religious Roundtable in 1964 and he invited Cox to participate in the Religious Panel on the New Morality in 1967. The primary criticism Cox levied against *Playboy* was not its nudity or focus on sex, but rather that the magazine promoted a lifestyle that promoted using other people, especially women, for the sake of pleasure. Women became a means to an end rather than end in themselves. Cox's critique obviously caught Hefner's attention because he fancied himself a promoter of women's liberation and equality. Women should feel just as free to use men and men did women. By 1965 Hefner and Cox had teamed up to respond to "Sex: Myths and Realities."[46] Cox admitted that his position on *Playboy* had changed if the four years since the *Christianity and Crisis* article, but he was still suspect of the magazine. His concern was that the magazine promoted sex without intimacy. Beginning in 1967, Cox would become a frequent contributor to the magazine with at least one article each year for four years, not to mention that he appeared with Hefner in other venues both print and broadcast.[47]

In 1967 Harvey Cox contributed his first article to *Playboy* entitled "Revolt in the Church."[48] He set the stage by referencing the numerous socio-cultural developments taking place within the context of the 60s. Young people were leaving the Church not because they could not believe the Church's teachings, but because they did, and they

[45]Harvey Cox, "Playboy's Doctrine of Male," *Christianity and Crisis*, 56-9.
[46] Harvey Cox and Hugh Hefner, "Sex: Myths and realities," *Motive* 26.2, November 1965, 7-11.
[47] For the purposes of this dissertation I am not going to deal with non-*Playboy* material.
[48] Harvey Cox, "Revolt in the Church," *Playboy*, January 1967, 129ff.

perceived a disconnect between those teachings and how the Church lived out those ideals. "Faith has more to do with one's fondest hopes for *this* world than with saving one's soul in the next," he wrote.[49] Community organizers like Saul Alinsky and Milton Kotler, while not Christians, were nevertheless finding church members supportive allies, and this is to say nothing of the extensive use that Martin Luther King had made of the churches. But the Church hierarchy was not necessarily supportive.

James Francis Cardinal McIntyre removed a priest, William DuBay, for his open criticism of the cardinal. He also cited the revolutionary work of Fr. Daniel Berrigan in New York City who was "shipped out" suddenly to take a "'study tour' of missions in Latin America."[50] Roman Catholics shared their outrage openly. Meanwhile, Fr. Berrigan was enjoying the Latin American education because of its own growing revolutionary movement. There was a growing divide in the Roman Church between the conservative patriotic right and the progressive socially conscience left. The liturgical reforms of Vatican II had emboldened the left, but the future was still uncertain. That uncertainty and growing divide had overtaken the Protestant tradition, too. One of the main concerns was between the North and South, integrated and segregated. While the official statements and actions from the ecclesiastical and judicatory authorities had largely spoken in favor of progress, the local congregation, especially in the South, had not always followed suit. Schism might be the result.

Cox thought the ongoing Death-of-God debate exemplified the struggle because our language for God and our experience of God says a great deal about where we are socio-culturally. He felt certain that the language of the time regarding God failed to

[49] Cox, "Revolt," 129.
[50] Cox, "Revolt," 206.

adequately express the sentiments especially the increasing angst among young people. The answer, he felt, lay with those who struggle to reconstruct and innovate those matters "that affect the deepest hopes and fears of man."[51] One such group was the Hippies.

The Hippie culture developed in the mid-1960s typified by peace advocacy and "free love," as both a concept toward one's fellow human and as a coital act. Hefner reacted rather negatively against the Hippies because they often embodied the opposite of what his magazine promoted. They were poorly groomed and dressed. They declined to work hard. They embraced rock and roll music. They often used mind-altering drugs. They often associated with trendy religious movements. But there were some things that Hefner could agree with. For example, they believed in individual liberty and expressing that liberty, among other ways, in the act of having sex. They rebelled against authority, and though they embraced trendy religious movements, they shunned traditional Christianity. Harvey Cox undertook the task of developing a theology to address the Hippie subculture in the article "God and the Hippies."

Cox thought that the Hippie movement was a secularized version of the American "quest for a faith that warms the heart, a religion one can experience deeply and feel intensely."[52] The Hippie culture was able to develop at the time it did primarily because of the post-war economy and the emerging welfare society. This allowed the Hippies to reject the Protestant work ethic—something no earlier generation would have been able to do for economic reasons. But their embrace of Eastern faiths intrigued him. He speculated that it was in part because the Christianity that they encountered in most churches was "too bland" and lacked the mystical elements that the Eastern faiths

[51] Cox, "Revolt," 211.
[52] Harvey Cox, "God and the Hippies," *Playboy*, January 1968, 94.

promoted. Yet more than that, Western Christianity had colluded with Western economies to subdue the earth and suppress creativity, especially sexual expression. The Christian faith lacked erotic material and eschewed the body and its needs. He attempted to delve deeper into "the hippie phenomenon" by looking more closely at three aspects: "Hippies take drugs, derogate work and make love in open defiance of conventional ideas about sexual morality."[53]

In Cox's opinion, Christianity had largely turned its back on the search for an experience of the mystical and transcendent. Mind altering drugs allowed young people the opportunity to achieve emotional release, and therefore marijuana should be legal and drugs like LSD deserved more research to determine if they caused serious, long-term harm. Christians should be less eager to condemn experimentation just because the government made it illegal. Likewise, Christianity should develop a theology of leisure. Cox was overly optimistic that as a result of technology the day was surely near when the American work week would be only 20 hours long, but he was correct that as a result of the Protestant work ethic, many Christians did not know how to relax. Perhaps the Hippies overdid their leisure, but there was room for compromise. Similarly regarding sex, Cox thought that Christianity should work to develop a sexual ethic that recognized the positive nature of sex rather than the condemnatory attitude taken by most Christians. Christians would do well, he felt, to try to learn from the Hippie culture, but he was not willing to concede everything to them.

The Hippie subculture was overly self-indulgent, politically naïve and too disconnected from their neighbor, a Christian imperative. Hippies would do well to

[53] Cox, "Hippies," 206.

develop their own theology about what they intended to achieve with their movement. Both Hippies and traditional Christians had much to learn from each other, but the Church had the greater responsibility to respond. The Hippies were looking for an experience of God and he felt that it was incumbent on the Church to offer something substantive. Curiously, Cox did not mention the "Jesus People," a quasi-Hippie movement among many Christian young people which tended to reject the Church establishment. Yet it was not only the Hippies looking for a utopian world. Politically, President Lyndon Johnson had promised a "Great Society" in 1964. Neither the Hippies nor Hefner were content with the progress of that society, thus Hefner invited "eleven men of realistic vision [to] chart a practical course . . . toward a more humane America." The 1969 article was entitled "The Decent Society," and Harvey Cox was invited to contribute to the section dealing with religion and morality.

Cox began visioning the future of religion and morality, and it seems he was more focused on the religious aspect, by questioning whether or not religion makes sense for the modern era. He emphasized that religion was not necessarily what church does. "Religion is larger than any church, and one can lambast the churches without jettisoning religion," and there are any number of excellent examples to prove his point.[54] The dominant Western religion, Christianity had a purpose to remind us that ecstasy is found in love, but there were three other key reasons to persist at religion. First, religion should remind us that "every single person counts," and there were people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and William Sloane Coffin who were actively working to organize religious people to make certain that every voice was heard. Second, religion should remind us

[54] Harvey Cox, "The Decent Society: Religion and Morality," *Playboy*, January 1969, 289.

that "the human family is one." Americans cannot be content that they have "enough" when there were people in developing parts of the world who lacked. The Church is universal and has a responsibility to its family in every place. Third, religion is there to provide us with "vision and fantasy." Even if modern humanity solved every problem associated with human existence, religion could still help individuals search for the meaning in life. "The function of faith is to make a civilization discontent, to rouse it from its complacency and fire it with richer fantasies, he concluded.[55]

In January 1970, Harvey Cox again revealed himself in the pages of *Playboy*; this time in an opinion piece entitled, "For Christ's Sake."[56] Like most magazines, the January issue was released toward the end of the month of December. The issue contained last minute gift ideas and Christmas cartoons. Cox used this as an opportunity to critique the American approach to Christmas, while in truth he wanted to indict Christianity. Different from his other articles, this one was dubbed an "opinion" piece and it was accompanied with a rather striking graphic image. The image is by Fred Berger and is of what is commonly referred to as "The Laughing Christ" which I mentioned in a previous chapter. The controversial image fit well with the tone and content of Cox's article.

Christians complained that Christmas had become too commercialized when it was they who first commercialized it, Cox claimed. The same was true for all of Christianity, or at least what most Christians claimed was Christianity. "The fraud, sham and swindle the prelates have made out of Christmas is, I submit, only a symptom of the mockery they have made out of Christianity as a whole," he charged. They have made

[55] Cox, "Decent Society," 290.
[56] Harvey Cox, "For Christ's Sake," *Playboy*, January 1970, 117ff.

the story about Jesus into a legend about a sad and dreary ascetic who hated people. In truth, Cox claimed, Jesus was a party-person. He liked being around people and was even accused of gluttony and drunkenness. The pictures of Jesus as being pale and emaciated did not do him justice. Jesus probably liked women, although scripture is rather silent on the subject. The prelates had made Jesus into a moralizer who went about telling people "no," when in truth Jesus had very little interest in telling people what to do. He did address ethical issues, but he did not create and impose rules on people. He advocated an ethic of love as a moral code. And finally, Church authorities had "deradicalized" Jesus. They had tamed him and made him seem apolitical: "The real miracle of transubstantiation is not that the Church turns wine into blood but that it has transformed Jesus into a cosmic Tory." The solution is not to undo the revelry of Christmas, but to extend that excitement throughout all the year. Christian theologians need to develop a theology of festival and celebration. The salvation of the faith will come when we stop quibbling over the Death-of-God and realize that people enjoy celebration because it blends myth, mirth and the body, much like Christmas.

One cannot conclusively say that Harvey Cox was *The Playboy* theologian, but his frequent appearance in the pages (and at the Playboy Mansion), seems to suggest that Hefner agreed with Cox's thoughts. Cox's theology developed between 1961 when his first article appeared criticizing *Playboy*'s doctrine of male until his skillful use of the magazine to critique the Church. But Hefner's approach to women and the social issues of the time changed also. Hefner showed that he was contemplating what religious thinkers were writing and saying and his approach became more progressive during the period. If Hefner had a vision of Jesus it was likely that he was the playboy described by

Cox. If Hefner had a dream of the Church it was likely a Playboy Club. In any case, Hefner's faith was not "out of this world," but very much in it and of it. Harvey Cox's theological constructs simply justified Hefner's dream. In spite of his earlier criticism of Hefner in "*Playboy*'s Doctrine of Male," he now provided technical religious language to explain the individual liberty and rejection of social conventions Hefner appreciated.

CONCLUSION

PLAYBOY AND RELIGION *SANS* APOCOLYPSE

Since 1978 Hugh Hefner has slowly released control of the empire he built. Today he remains the Chief Creative Officer of *Playboy* selecting centerfolds and cartoons, but he leases the *Playboy* Mansion from his own company and receives a salary. Hefner's daughter, Christie, joined Playboy Enterprises after graduating from Brandeis University. By 1978 Hefner had made her a vice president of the company, president of Playboy Enterprises in 1982 and Chairwoman and CEO in 1988. She stepped down from that position in 2009. Like so many magazines in the internet age, *Playboy* fetches very little profit from its print version. Today the company's profits come from licensing agreements for the iconic bunny image. No longer content to be hidden on the cover of a men's magazine, the image appears all over the world on every type of clothing, various foods and drinks and a host of other popular consumer items endorsed by the playful rabbit. In that way, at least, The Playboy Philosophy has been marketed to the world. The magazine publishing industry has certainly changed, but so has the culture. One might say that it's experienced a cultural renaissance of sorts, thanks in no small part to Hef.

Now in his late eighties, Hef is content to enjoy most days in The Mansion going about his routine in his trademark pajamas. Although he frequently engaged in religious conversation and reflection with prominent religious thinkers who avowedly claimed an afterlife, Hefner did not buy into life beyond this one. He thought that an afterlife would

be a good idea if it were true, but he believes that one's rewards come in this life. No, when Hugh Hefner thinks about his future it's not the afterlife of heaven or hell, but rather his legacy. He is so concerned with how he will be remembered that he has a full time archivist. Hef has repeatedly told his archivist, Steve Martinez, that his last responsibility will be to paste his obituary on the last page of the last scrap book. He is to be buried next to Marilyn Monroe, whom he never met, by the way, in the Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery.[1] Eternal rewards based on good or bad deeds in this life are unimportant, too. Though he declined to discuss particulars regarding "sin" with the participants of the Religious Round Table in 1964, many years later he defined sin. When pressed by reporter Cathleen Falsani, "Sin," he said was "'things that are hurtful to people.'" Hef admitted that he had sinned, but on the balance he had lived a rather moral life.[2] If we take him at his word, the greatest sin for Hefner was to suppress another's liberty. Puritans and Puritanism had suppressed individual liberty. That's why the vestiges of their way of life had to be eliminated from American culture so that the New American Renaissance could take root, or so he thought.

Hefner presented himself as an authority on America's public religion, using his magazine to do so. He supported those with whom he agreed, usually more socially progressive voices, by publishing their thoughts, while satirizing those with whom he disagreed using comics. Interviews with significant religious figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., William Sloane Coffin and editorial material from Gary Wills and William Hamilton and others show that Hefner was supporting a particular progressive religious agenda of individual liberty. At the same time, the cartoons published in the

[1] Jones, "The Perfect Life of Hugh Hefner," 11.
[2] Falsani, *The God Factor*, 23.

magazine reveal an agenda, too. One that undermines confidence in traditional religious myths and authority. This material revealed how Hefner's religious views reflected and influenced American religious thinking and activities during the period he called the New American Renaissance. The significance of this work has been to take Hefner beyond his role as a socio-cultural figure who redefined masculinity and femininity, promoted sexual and civil rights and restructured America's men's lifestyles in the post-war consumer world. It has placed Hefner as a self-proclaimed authority on America's public religion in the midst of a dynamic culture. He reacted to his own Puritanical upbringing and what he believed to be the Puritanism in the larger culture, whether a true perception or not, by engaging in religious dialog hoping to further his agenda of a New American Renaissance.

From his earliest days, Hefner was concerned with marketing his life story and much of that marketing endeavor was a reaction to what he perceived to be his puritanical upbringing. He expanded his perceptions and applied them to the entire nation claiming that America needed a religious enlightenment which would spark a cultural renaissance, a sexual revolution and a social reformation. He made his first attempts at this when he began to publish *Playboy* magazine. Yet he truly found his voice nine years later when he published the first installment of The Playboy Philosophy in 1962. In that credo he began to attack what he believed to be the vestigial roots of Puritanism in America. To attack these roots he used a double-headed ax: satirical cartoons and editorial commentary. I called the comics "soft power" because they subtly, or sometimes not so subtly, undermined confidence in what Hefner called America's Puritan heritage, but also the myths of the Bible. They lampooned Christian clergy, the Church, and God while

extoling the virtues of the Devil, human debauchery, and Muslim men. These cartoons convey an element of meaningful message, for to be humorous they must ring with some elements of familiarity and truth. The cartoons lead one to conclude that most religion is absurd in light of Hef's New American Renaissance.

From the cartoons I turned to the editorial material in the magazine which advocated for more progressive religious views. I called this Hefner's "hard power" because they more forthrightly attacked conservative religious views. The editorial material was a more conventional attack against the Puritan establishment. The voices of progressive religious thinkers still leap from the pages of *Playboy* as a testament to what Hefner was trying to achieve. Hear the words of Coffin, Rubenstein, King, Wills and Cox and consider their historical context.

In 1965, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s interview appeared in *Playboy*. Hefner had been supportive of racial equality insisting that the Playboy Clubs be fully integrated allowing black membership even in the Deep South and hiring black Bunnies.[3] It was also in 1965 that Jennifer Jackson appeared as the first African-American Playmate. King used the magazine to turn up the heat on the Church saying, "The church once changed society. It was then a thermostat of society. But today I feel that too much of the church is merely a thermometer, which measures rather than molds popular opinion."[4]

Facing federal trial for encouraging students to defy the draft in the midst of the Vietnam War, William Sloane Coffin granted an interview with the magazine. One

[3] Watts, *Mr. Playboy*, 194-96.
[4] *Playboy*, January 1965, 67.

should not discount the importance of the ongoing and escalating Cold War when Coffin challenged both the "gentle apocalypse" of "the sacrificing of humanity to the demands of technology" and the "nongentle apocalypse, the Maolike, revolutionary alternative." He proposed a third alternative for humanity—a more hopeful future when he said: "I think there's a great difference between being optimistic and being hopeful. I am not optimistic, but I *am* hopeful. By this I mean that hope, as opposed to cynicism and despair, is the sole precondition for new and better experiences. Realism demands pessimism. But hope demands that we take a dim view of the present because we hold a bright view of the future; and hope arouses, as nothing else can arouse, a passion for the possible."[5]

In 1971 Daniel and Phillip Berrigan were in the news for their opposition to the Vietnam War. Vatican II had ended only six years before and many in the Roman Catholic Church were optimistic about the liturgical and social changes continuing to take place when, in *Playboy*, Gary Wills wrote: "All seers have been told that they must not see; all visionaries have been ordered to give up their visions. Prophecy looks simultaneously backward and forward, assigns men fresh tasks with an urgency born of ancient obligation. Prophets summon men into history, down where the deep streams run, fed by the oldest springs."[6] Could the Roman Catholic Church, and the greater society tolerate prophets like the Berrigans? It was the same world when, in January 1970, Harvey Cox issued a rebuke to the greater Church. He was fed up with griping and discontent he heard from Christians when he charged that "The real miracle of transubstantiation is not that the Church turns wine into blood but that it has transformed

[5] *Playboy*, August 1968, 140.
[6] *Playboy*, November 1971, 227.

Jesus into a cosmic Tory."[7] Christians, he felt, should be more light-hearted and effervescent. Yet more prophetic words in the midst of a troubled culture.

Rabbi Richard Rubenstein offered a Jewish response to William Hamilton's assertion that God was dead. He did not entirely agree with Hamilton about what God's death meant for the larger society, but he was sure that "The loss of God is not a happy event that liberates man; it is a sad event that makes the task of maintaining the slender thread of civilization and decency infinitely more difficult. . . . We are very much together in this quest for religious meaning in our time." Religious rituals would always have a place in society, and people were likely to identify more as spiritual. The shifting ground he feared would be regarding social mores. Without a God the larger society would have to find a way to justify what it deemed moral and immoral.[8] Harvey Cox might share Rubenstein's views and much like Hefner, he did not put much stock in heaven or hell. What mattered most was how we treated people and lived in this world. "Faith has more to do with one's fondest hopes for this world than with saving one's soul in the next," he wrote in "Revolt in the Church."[9]

These quotes are profoundly theological and are gems to be pondered especially when set within their historical context. They are taken from interviews, essays and other editorial material in *Playboy* magazine—perhaps overlooked by many because they appeared in between the pages with nude women. Writing in January 1965 about how *Playboy* was being portrayed in the religious press and speaking specifically about comments made by Harvey Cox, Hefner wrote, "Cox also reflects the influence of the

[7] *Playboy*, January 1970, 119.
[8] *Playboy*, July 1967, 130, 132.
[9] *Playboy*, January 1967, 129.

new enlightenment that is permeating current theological thinking, when he says in this more recent article on Protestant morality: 'We must avoid giving a simple yes or no to the question of premarital chastity'—a statement that would certainly have been considered sinful coming from a prominent member of the clergy only a generation ago."[10] Hefner was aware that the socio-cultural religious landscape was changing, and that religious thinkers were talking about progressive issues. This statement shows that he was aware that his magazine was contributing to that conversation. In the midst of profound socio-cultural religious changes of the 1960s and 70s, Hefner had a voice, although he often used the words of progressive religious thinkers. One might wonder how much the times made the man versus how much the man made the times.

All along the way Hefner left his mark. Whereas it is rather easy to see the effects on the broader culture of the Sexual Revolution, Women's Equality Movement and the Civil Rights Movement—all in which Hefner participated—it is harder to see what effect, if any, he had on American public religion, but one thing is sure: Hefner presented himself as an authority on religion in America. Throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s Hefner was in conversation with progressive American religious thinkers via *Playboy* magazine. He promoted the thoughts and work of progressive religious thinkers while satirizing puritanical beliefs. In his effort to bring about a New American Renaissance, he had put the ax to the roots of American Puritanism as he understood it using comics and commentary. This at a time when many Americans were embracing conservative religion more enthusiastically as a bulwark against encroaching Communism and the mushrooming Cold War. Whitney Strub has shown how many anti-

[10] *Playboy*, January 1965, 53-4.

pornography crusaders connected pornography with Communism because it "destabilized America through moral decay."[11] These censorship efforts would eventually falter as assuredly as Communism collapsed, but the morality police would not be stopped. Seeing Hefner as nothing more than a purveyor of pornography they tried time after time to bring down the "bunny empire." Ultimately, however, *Playboy*'s undoing came from other directions. Technological developments, cultural changes and internal management decisions at the magazine became its cause of slow decline.

Areas for further exploration

There are numerous topics and avenues that I have not covered in this dissertation. One could further explore Methodist influences on the Hefner family and Hugh in particular. In a similar fashion, the reaction of Episcopalians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Jews and other groups to the magazine might yield some interesting trends. Another avenue to explore would be the reaction of religiously-based anti-pornography groups, especially the Catholic Defense League (CDL). I did not deal with social issues such as desegregation, abortion and homosexuality, although Hefner was an early advocate for all three, and reaped backlash from religious groups as a result. It might be interesting to survey the religious backgrounds of those who wrote to the magazine to either endorse or condemn Hefner's Philosophy. Since my interest was more narrowly focused, there remains the presence of non-Christian faiths. I mentioned a couple of Jewish contributors such as Saul Alinsky, Rabbi Rubenstein, and Rabbi Tanenbaum, but there are other religious groups represented such as Muslims and Hindus in the interviews with Malcolm X and Jawaharlal Nehru. There is also rich research in

[11] Whitney Strub, "Perversion for Profit," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15.2 (May 2006), 272.

the interviews with philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, Albert Schweitzer, Ayn Rand and John Paul Satre. Because it was outside the scope of my research, I have also largely ignored Hefner appearances in other forms of media. There have been numerous occasions outside the *Playboy* medium where he has appeared on television and in print with religious leaders. I mentioned only briefly that Hefner reviewed movies and plays with religious overtones, but what else. I also briefly mentioned his spotlight on "up and comers" in the "On the Scene" editorials. What made those religious figures he spotlighted important? What came of their lives and work?

I wanted to look at what I have called the spirit-body correspondence. As the magazine focused more on women's bodies (i.e. pubic wars, airbrushing, breast implants, and lusty looks) and to feature more individuals who used their bodies to earn their living (i.e. sports figures and actors), it focused less on the intellectual content. Conversely, when the magazine's focus had been on more intellectual and spiritual pursuits, there seemed to be fewer photographs of women, and they certainly were less concerned with perfect models. Thus, a greater focus on the body, a subject one might expect with *Playboy*, the less focus on the spirit or intellect, a subject not associated with the magazine.

Hefner was certainly in conversation with progressive religious thinkers. He was contributing to America's public religion, AND he was doing it at a time and in a manner that was critical. His contributions were revolutionary and controversial. Is it any wonder he raised the ire of so many religious and social conservatives? Hefner wanted to be a religious reformer. Perhaps at one time he saw the Church as a force for positive change and good. In addition to his efforts at fomenting a sexual revolution,

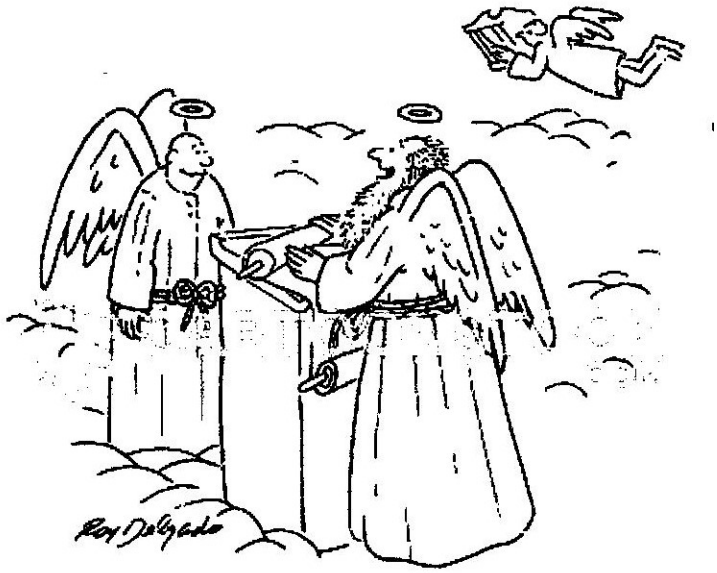
championing free speech issues, advocating women's equality, he was also attempting to reform the Church. All of these things comprised the roots of Puritanism, and taking on all these efforts was too much. Much of the Church pushed him away. The exception was those progressive thinkers who agreed to bear themselves in the pages of *Playboy* alongside the Playmates. I have heard it said that the Church thinks in decades, but moves in centuries. If that is the case, Hefner's influence might never fully be realized. How would the Church world be different today if we had fully embraced his efforts as eagerly as the larger society embraced the Sexual Revolution? Was Hefner a rejected prophet? Was he a theologian? Can I still have my subscription to *Playboy* if I get to heaven?

EPILOGUE

When an interviewer asked my mother whether she was proud of me, she answered, “Oh, yes, but I would have been just as happy if he’d been a missionary.” Later, I told her, “But Mom, I was!”

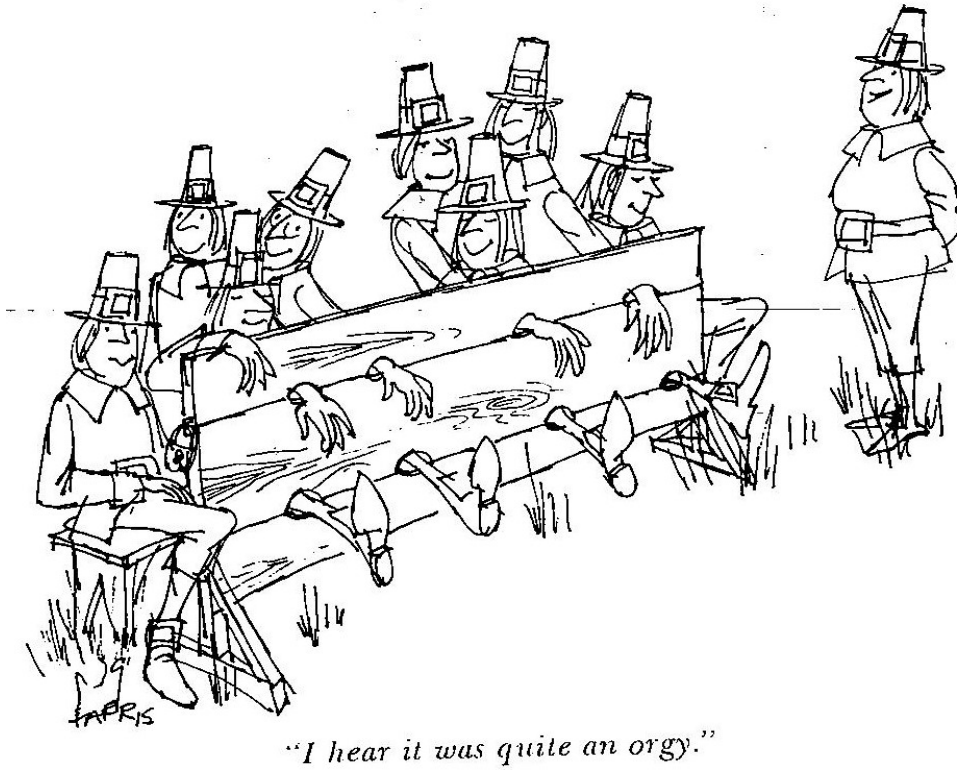
--Hugh M. Hefner interview with Steven Watts

APPENDIX



" This is Heaven - - - of course you can continue your subscription to *Playboy*. "

Figure 1. www.cartoonstock.com, 6 February 2014.



"I hear it was quite an orgy."

Figure 2. *Playboy*, July 1967, 186.

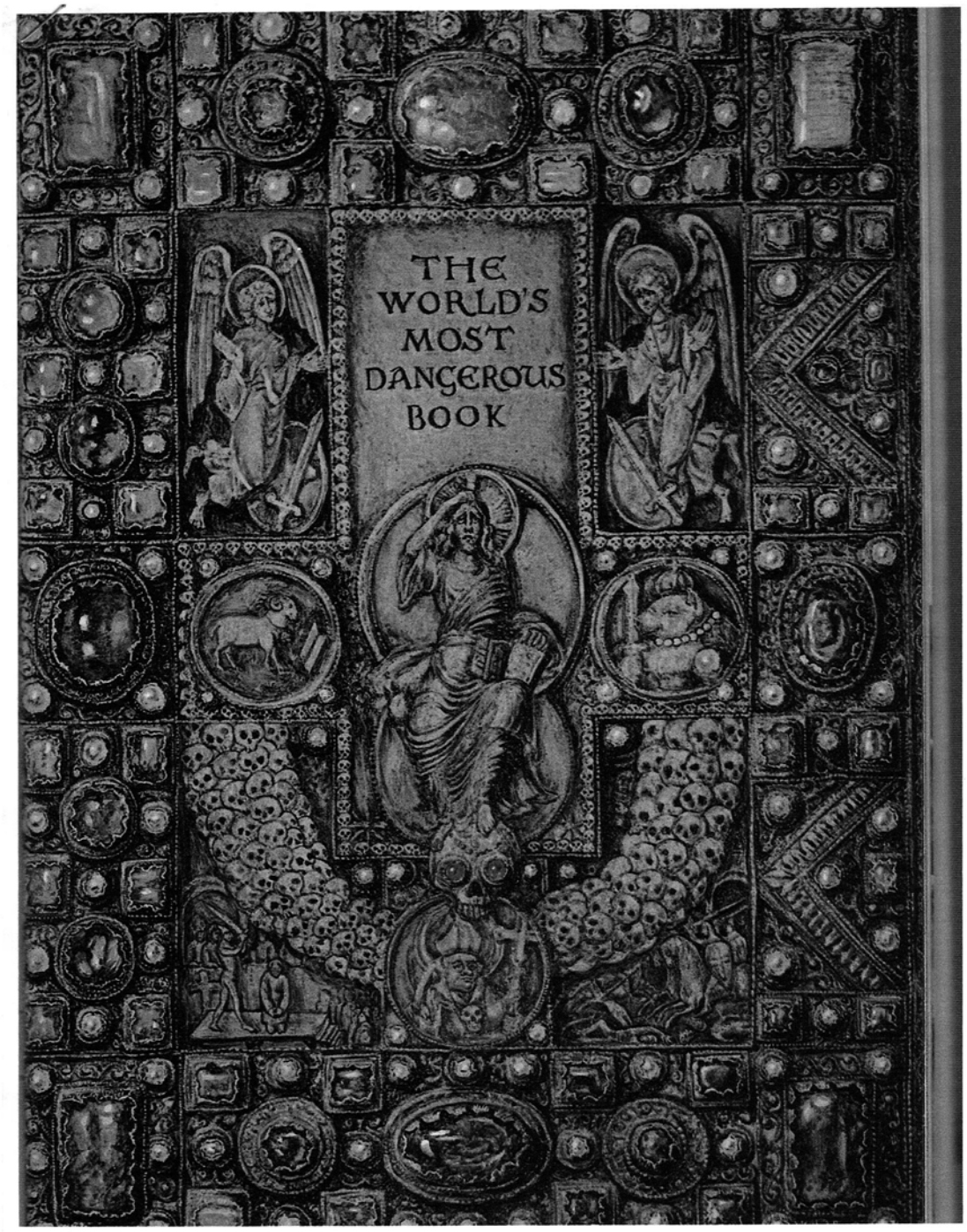


Figure 3. *Playboy*, December 1973, 119.

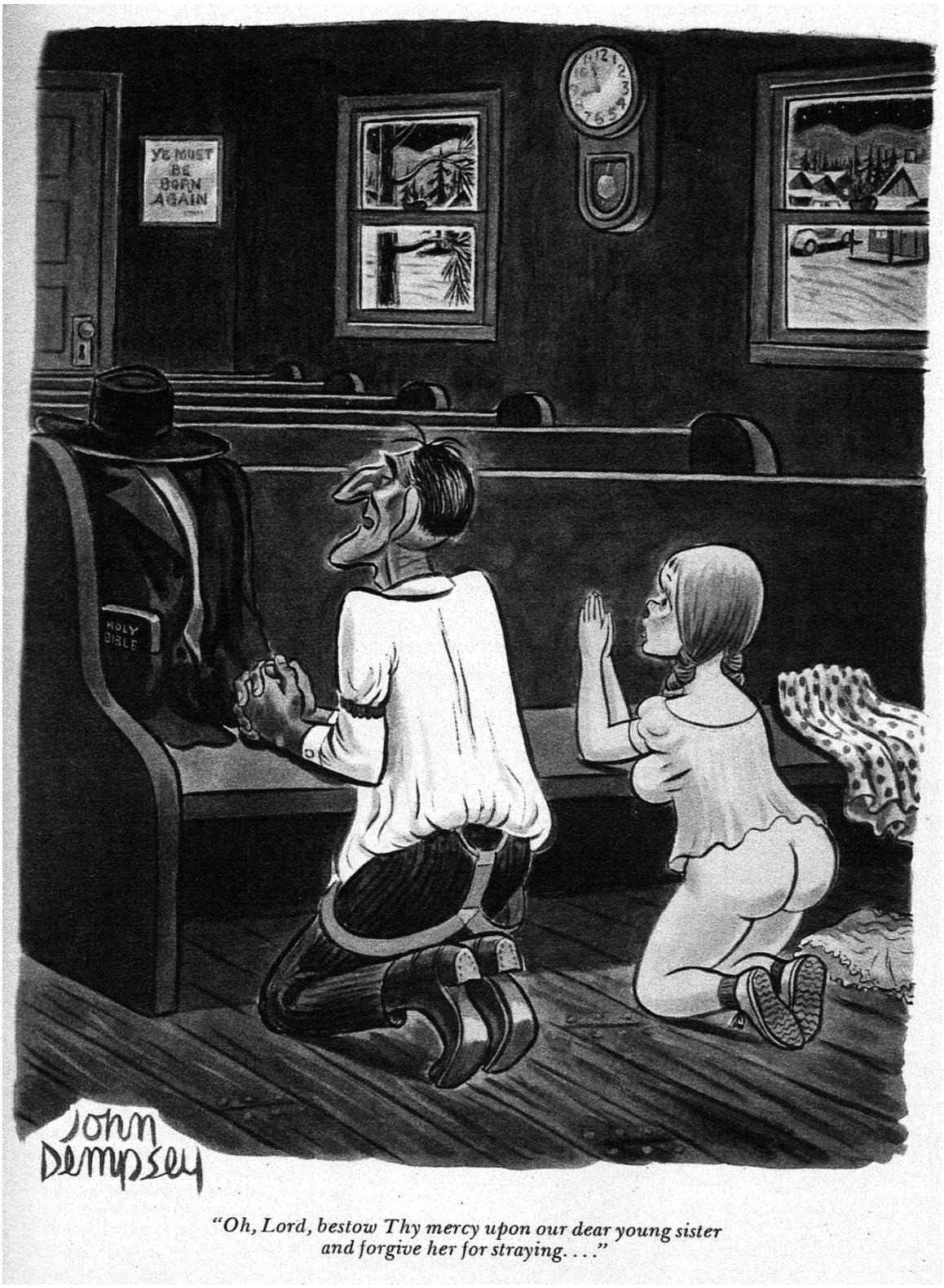


Figure 4. *Playboy*, June 1977, 199.

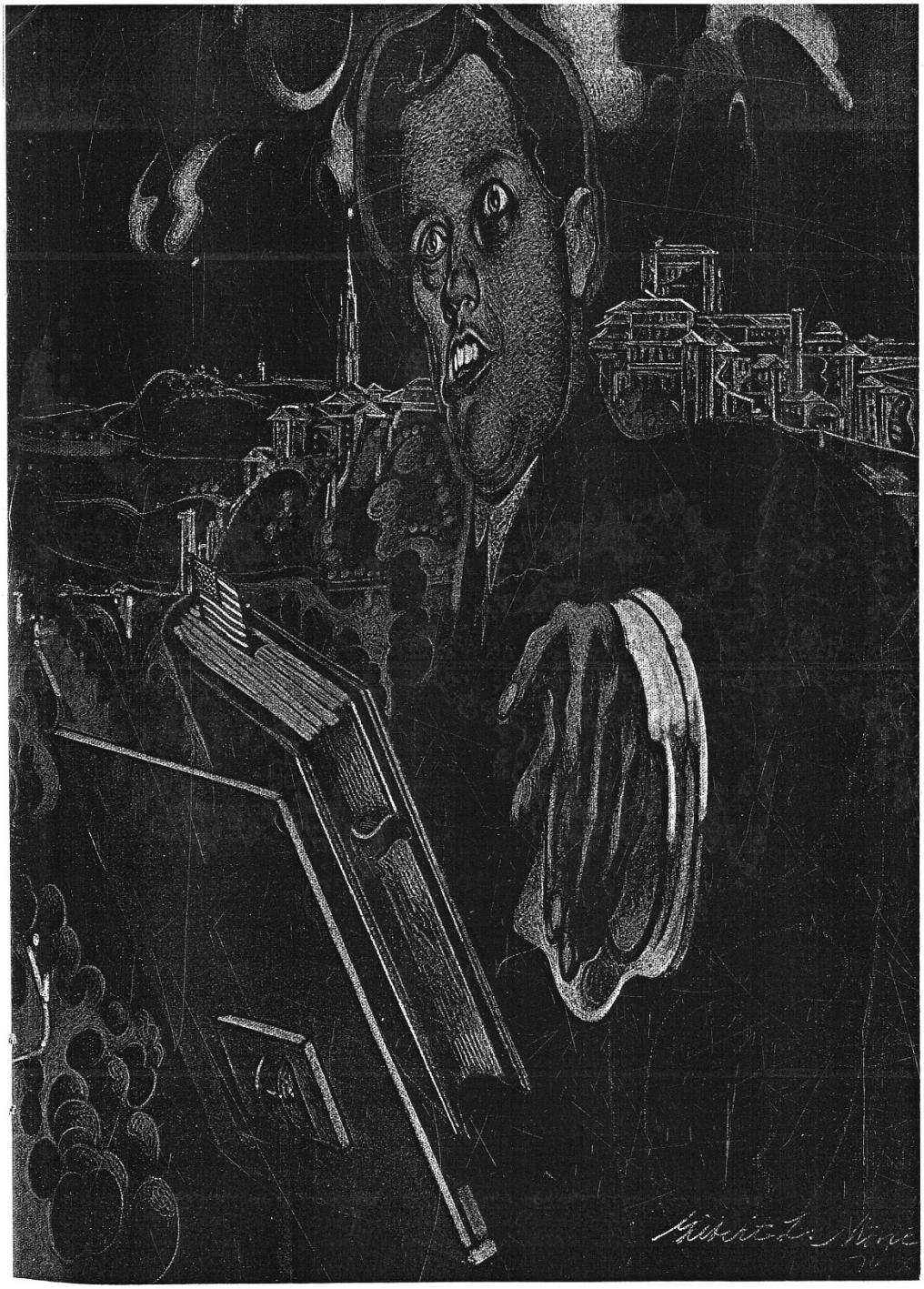


Figure 5. *Playboy*, February 1971, 120.

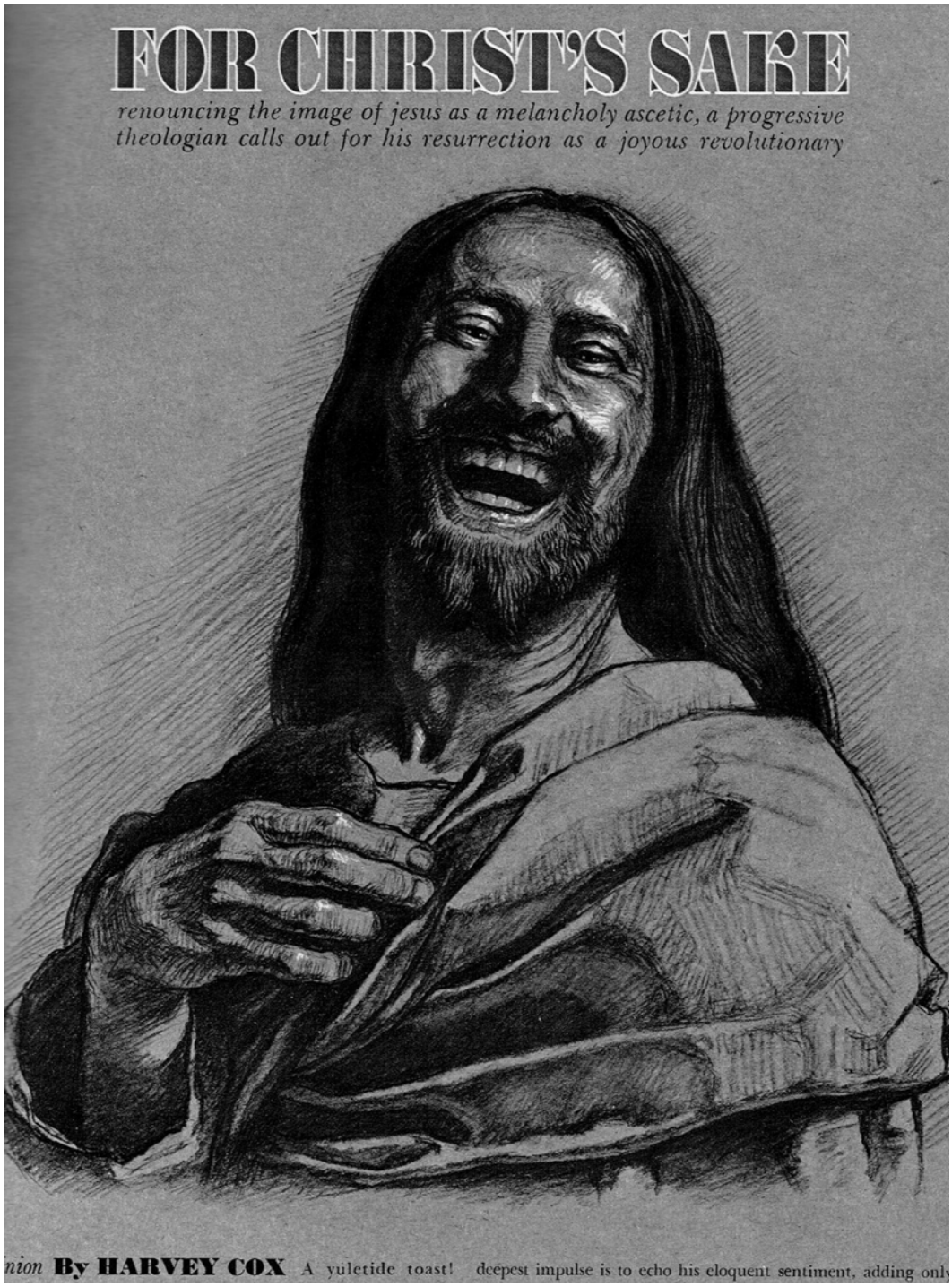


Figure 6. *Playboy*, January 1970, 117.

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