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THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE CHURCH IN LIGHT OF
THE PROBLEM OF THE ADOLESCENT UNMARRIED MOTHER

By

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THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE CHURCH IN LIGHT OF
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Statement of the Problem

Every year, throughout this country, and indeed throughout the world, the age-old problem of the unmarried mother persists. The most recent report from the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare gave the total estimate of the reported out-of-wedlock live births for the year 1953 as 160,800 (figured to the nearest hundred.) Of this figure, the vast majority were adolescents.¹ Information from the report has been compiled in the following table.

TABLE I

Number of reported out-of-wedlock live births in the United States for year 1953

<u>Age</u>	<u>Total</u>
Below 15	3,400
15 - 19	61,500
20 - 24	48,000

In all of history these girls have been considered the bane of society. Though general attitudes toward the unmarried mothers have varied from one generation to another, beneath every attitude

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1. Cf. Department of Health, Education, Public Health Service; National Office of Vital Statistics, Washington 24, D.C., December 30, 1955.

has been a sense of disapproval. At times this was so strong that capital punishment was inflicted upon the "guilty girl." At other times the general attitude has been one of sentimentality; nevertheless, underlying it was still the sense of disapproval.¹

This situation was considered a threat to community life, so rigid moral laws were established to protect the sanctity of the family. The unmarried mother has stepped outside the mores of the locale and, therefore, has been labeled "a bad girl," "a fallen woman," or, as in some instances, "a juvenile delinquent." These feelings have kept the community from even attempting to understand this problem.²

Through the social economic changes of the years, especially following the world wars, there has been a breakdown of the "old moral code." Yet the position of the unmarried mother is relatively unchanged.³

Leontine Young, in her book, Out of Wedlock, suggested that the reaction present today is not against the breaking of the moral code but against the pregnancy that results.⁴ In the past fifteen years there has been an increasing interest in this problem, especially in the area of its psychological elements and implications.

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1. Helen Owens, The Unmarried Mother, Her Problems, M.A. Thesis, New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1951, p. 3.
2. Leontine Young, Out of Wedlock, pp. 3-11.
3. Owens, op. cit., p. 4.
4. Young, op. cit., p. 6.

B. The Justification of the Problem

Although investigation of the problem of illegitimacy is being carried on, there is, to a great extent, a complete lack of interest in its spiritual aspects. This is probably due to the fact that psychologists and social workers have felt that Christianity and the church in general have been unduly harsh in their condemnation of the unmarried mother. By this attitude they have contributed to an exaggerated sense of guilt. They also believe that attitude has, to a great extent, caused the strong emotional convictions which seemingly fetter the community's ability to understand her.¹

However true this might be, it would be difficult to say that this was the attitude of Christ.² Yet He certainly taught the sanctity of the family unit.³ The answer to the problem did not lie in His condemnation of the woman.

Psychology has done, and is continuing to do, a valuable work. However, it would seem that the combination of psychological and spiritual principles might be a more effective means of prevention of the problem and of rehabilitating the total personality of the girl.

C. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to attempt to understand more fully the basic issues of the problem of the unmarried mother in order

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 3.
2. John 8:1-4.
3. Mark 10:2-12; 19:3-9.

to determine if there is a need for a spiritual reorientation to life. The study will also attempt to define the responsibility that the church has taken in this area and what responsibility it should further assume.

It would also seem probable that in the course of this study possible suggestions might be found by which the church might be able to participate, at least to some extent, in a program for diminishing this ever-increasing problem.

Because of its magnitude this study will be, as far as it is possible, confined to the problem of adolescent unmarried mothers. In this study the years of adolescence will be considered from the ages of 13 to 25.

The geographical area to be considered will be limited to the New York City area.

D. Method of Procedure

The study will begin with an investigation of the unmarried mother herself, in order to discover her characteristics, causes for her problem, and her particular needs.

Following this a survey will be made of various agencies in the New York City area. If possible, these agencies will be Protestant, Catholic and Jewish. Through interviews with these agencies it is assumed that some conclusions can be drawn concerning the role that the church has taken in the past. From this study conclusions will be drawn concerning the role that the church could take, both in the psychological and spiritual rehabilitation of the unmarried mother,

and in the prevention of this problem.

E. Sources of Data

One of the primary sources for the information contained in this study will be the library of the New York School of Social Work. Theses from that school, dealing with this subject, will be used. Other sources available are the various social work periodicals, as well as the information from recent statistics, and bulletins from various agencies. The few books which have been written concerning the unmarried mother will also be used.

Recent studies concerning the Christian and spiritual aspect of guilt, redemption, psychiatry, etc., will also be a source of pertinent material.

Interviews with local agencies will be a substantial source of data.

CHAPTER I

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

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A. Introduction

In order to develop a concept of the specific needs of the unmarried mother it is necessary to discuss first the general characteristics that she demonstrates in comparison with other adolescents and also with married mothers. This chapter will attempt to give such information, as well as enumerate some of the recent concepts concerning the probable causes of the problem. It will then serve as a standard for determining the needs of the unmarried mother and the means of fulfilling these needs.

B. Comparison of the Unmarried Mother With Other Adolescents and Married Mothers

Before attempting to discuss the possible causes of illegitimacy the question as to whether or not the unmarried mother is "different" from others will be considered. Various assertions have been made to claim that she actually, to some extent, is different from the normal adolescent. Some say she was "born bad," that she was from the "wrong side of the tracks," and others say that she is mentally deficient or at least below average in intelligence; others insist that she is "over-sexed."¹ Implied in all of these assertions is the thought that nothing can be done to help these girls. Her

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 13.

"difference," therefore, releases society from the responsibility of assisting her.

1. The Unmarried Mother Compared with Other Adolescents

In the studies which have been made of the unmarried mother there is a wide variation in intelligence. A curve would show much the same variation as the population as a whole. The largest number of girls are of average intelligence. Their socio-economic and educational backgrounds are from all strata and are representative of a cross-section of the entire population. In these areas the unmarried mother is no different from other adolescents.¹

Physiologically the unmarried mother is also the same as her peers. All adolescents are going through a time of tremendous change which is startling and frequently frightening to them because of their close association to sexual maturing.² That which may be interpreted as being "over-sexed" is often conflict within the home which tends to increase the sex urge.³ From the studies which have been made, the common element in the adolescent unmarried mother is the fact of unhappy dynamic relationships.⁴

Closely associated with this problem is the fact of the emotional turmoil in which adolescents find themselves. They are having difficulty finding a place of their own. They desperately need guidance for the

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1. Young, op. cit., pp. 17-18. Cf. Sarah B. Edlin, *The Unmarried Mother in our Society*, pp. 71-85.
2. Paul H. Landis, *Adolescence and Youth*, Ch. 3.
3. Cf. Babette Block, *The Unmarried Mother--Is She Different?*, National Conference of Social Work Proceedings, p. 279. Cf. also Jane K. Goldsmith, *The Unmarried Mother's Search for Standards*, Social Case-Work, XXXVIII (February, 1957), p. 69.
4. Leontine Young, *Personality Patterns in Unmarried Mothers*, p. 12.

future. Those young people who have healthy, happy homes have a character foundation within themselves. Through their parents they have a supplementary aid in withstanding these bewildering and confusing incidences. However, those adolescents who live in the midst of conflict do not have this stability in their lives.¹

This does not mean to imply that all girls brought up in homes filled with conflict become unmarried mothers, but illegitimacy does seem to be one of the avenues that these girls choose to escape or oppose their particular situation.²

2. The Unmarried Mother Compared with Other Mothers.

There are similarities and differences also between the unmarried mother and the married mother. Miss Block, in her article "The Unmarried Mother--Is She Different?", contends that there is a common element which motivates child bearing.³ This, she states, is "the normal problem of emancipation."⁴ Pregnancy is actually declaring independence from the family. Of course in a normal pregnancy the mother is supported by her family and her husband, and together they share the plans and responsibilities involved in preparing for their child. So, in the ordinary pregnancy there is no emotional upset noted. Miss Block describes the difference in this way:

The unmarried mother, however, has additional complications such as a sense of shame, expectation of condemnation, loneliness, panic, lack of status, need of help in practical

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1. Young, op. cit., pp. 93-95.
2. Edlin, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
3. Block, op. cit., p. 273.
4. Ibid., p. 274.

planning, disposition of the baby, lack of a husband with whom to share responsibility.¹

When the unmarried mother thus exerts her normal desire for emancipation, she is left entirely alone to face all the problems a married mother must face, plus condemnation.

Emancipation alone is not the central problem of the unmarried mother. However, it is the most promising therapeutically because this desire for independence is not unique for adolescents. Miss Young states that emancipation of this sort has its roots "embedded in the powerful emotion of childhood." She further states:

Clearly she is a human being who like all other human beings responds dynamically to her particular life situation, but, also clearly, she chooses one common and specific response, having an out-of-wedlock child.²

It would seem to be the consensus that the unmarried mother, then, is not essentially different from other adolescents, but that she has, for some reason known or unknown to her, chosen to bear an out-of-wedlock child. This is her response to her background. Why does she respond this way?

C. The Possible Causes of the Problem

It has been thought, until the comparatively recent insights given by Dr. Freud, that having an out-of-wedlock child was just something "that happened." Recent studies seem to confirm Dr. Freud's findings that this particular phenomenon is purposeful.³

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1. Block, op. cit., p. 7.
2. Young, op. cit., p. 8.
3. Freud, The Psychology of Women, p. 164.

Miss Young states her convictions as follows:

The girl, unaware of her own urges and wishes, involves herself in a situation where she becomes pregnant without the protection of marriage--and usually without any possibility of marriage--following some precipitating stimulus which may or may not be immediately apparent.¹

Unconsciously the unmarried mother wants a baby, but more specifically she wants a baby out-of-wedlock. For this end she completely blinds herself and is willing to pay an extreme price.

One other fact should be noted before discussing the causes of this action. The mother apparently wants the baby with no desire for the child. She seems to be completely unaware that the baby will grow up into a child. On this basis Miss Young feels that "the baby is not desired for himself but as a symbol, as a means to an end."²

The reason for such purposeful behavior on the part of an adolescent girl can stem only from unfavorable dynamic relationships. Mrs. Edlin states that a thorough study of the problem arrives at the

. . . unavoidable conclusion that the situations are not the immediate result of social conditions, poverty or lack of opportunity for sex education. . . they are examples, rather, of an immature personality seeking what seems to her the most effective way of establishing her individuality by a counter attack on the parents. . . Seen from another point of view, they are. . . the girl's unconscious, repressed drive to attain a substitute for the love which she feels has been denied her.³

Therefore, it is necessary to examine parental relationships in order to come to any conclusions concerning the etiological factors in unmarried mothers.

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 24.
2. Ibid., pp. 25-39.
3. Edlin, op. cit., p. 114.

1. Mother-Dominated Homes

Studies which have been recorded on this particular problem all show that the vast majority of the unmarried mothers come from a home where the mother dominates.¹ The mother, probably never having had her needs adequately met, takes real pleasure in binding her children to herself. This dependence was not used for the good of the children, but to satisfy her own need. Because of the delight in this hold on the children, the mother jealously guards her exclusive possessions and in a real sense forbids any close or happy relationship with the father.

The daughter's out-of-wedlock pregnancy is a direct attempt to "get back" at the mother. Yet her personality pattern has been so warped that, though this act was intended to free her from her mother, her guilty feelings have intensified the mother's domination. Even now the mother's concern is primarily for herself with little concern for her daughter, and for the most part no concern at all is shown toward her husband.²

The girl's attitude toward her mother is one either of deep love and devotion to an infantile degree, or one of intense hate or bitterness. Regardless of which attitude the girl manifests, the effect is the same--an immature, passive dependence upon the mother. This dependence is never satisfied.³ This type of unmarried mother

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 9. Cf. Mary Hill, Some Psychological Factors in Illegitimate Pregnancy, pp. 11-12. Cf. also Catherine Donnell and Selma Gick, Possible Etiological Factors in Unmarried Mothers.
2. Young, op. cit., pp. 40-59.
3. Hill, op. cit., p. 12.

frequently presents her mother with her newborn baby. The gift of the baby may act as a demonstration of a supreme gift of love, or perhaps it is giving the mother something to take her place, thereby releasing herself. If the mother accepts the child, she does tend to relinquish the hold on her daughter. It would seem, therefore, that the baby is merely an instrument to be used both as revenge, a gift of love, or perhaps also as a ransom.¹

The father of the girl is usually completely out of the whole situation, and when the unmarried mother is asked about him she usually has a very hazy idea of what he is like. The mother, probably without realizing it, has successfully separated her daughter from her father.

Because of this lack of a father figure, the girl's relationship to men is usually poor, if there is a relationship. The girl's relationship to the baby's father, if she knows the man at all, is usually brief and casual. The majority of these girls actually tend to be disinterested in the father of their baby. Their main interest is having the baby.

Miss Young describes the personality pattern of this particular type of girl as

. . . more or less possessive, fearful of decisive action, incapable of spontaneous self-expression, over absorbed in their own fears, conflicts, and fantasies. All of them to some degree feel that they have no right to any life, will, or wishes of their own, so that they tend to operate far below the level of their interest and capacity.²

The mother of the unmarried mother, as well as having an

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1. Young, op. cit., pp. 57-58.
2. Ibid., p. 51.

abnormal relationship with the girl, frequently has a view of sex that is distorted and unwholesome. She either takes a pious restrictive attitude toward sex because it is "bad," or, on the other hand, her sex life is careless and promiscuous. Both of these attitudes tend to cause the daughter to have a very unhealthy heterosexual adjustment. Rebellion against the mother frequently leads to out-of-wedlock pregnancy.¹

2. The Father-Dominated Home

The unmarried mothers from the father-dominated homes are fewer, yet they are a distinctive group with characteristics peculiar to themselves. The daughter in this group usually freely declares violent hatred toward her father. She might describe him as a tyrant who is cruel and abusive, especially toward the mother, and also toward the family in general. He is the one who makes absolute commands and prohibitions in the household and no one dares to oppose him. It would seem that this hatred has resulted because of the father's rejection of the love that his daughter had for him. His domination and cruelty probably could be forgiven by the daughter, but his neglect and rejection of her love creates this violent reaction within her.²

The daughter of this father has different motives for out-of-wedlock pregnancy than the mother-dominated daughter. The girl attempts to avenge herself upon her father by deliberately breaking his rules and becoming pregnant.

Another motive that this unmarried mother seems to have is to

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1. Cf. Block, op. cit., p. 279; Edlin, op. cit., pp. 93, 101-103.
2. Edlin, op. cit., pp. 93-95.

avenge herself against a man whom she identifies with her father, the father of her baby. Usually he is married, probably abusive, and in many respects has the same characteristics as her father. This baby, in most instances, becomes a tool by which to destroy him.¹

The personality pattern of this unmarried mother tends to show that in her own eyes she has no value. This inferiority robs her of the feeling that she has any right to love or protection from a man. Her only relationship to men must be one of submission because of his freedom and power, which she jealously resents.² The amount of hatred that she shows would seem to indicate, quite accurately, the amount of self-detestation.

This reaction toward the baby's father does not allow any kind of a healthy, loving relationship to develop between the mother and her baby. One of two courses of action is usually taken by the mother. Frequently the baby is immediately surrendered to an adoption agency. However, very often the baby is kept to be used as a "weapon" against the father of the baby. Mrs. Edlin suggests that sometimes the mother decides to keep the baby because of her desire to love and possess something of her very own. When the unmarried mother realizes her inability to care adequately for her baby, she usually places her baby for adoption.³

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1. Young, op. cit., pp. 60-79.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Edlin, op. cit., pp. 93-95.

3. Others: Weak Personality Structure

Although the various studies indicate that the majority of unmarried mothers seem to fall into the two patterns already characterized, there remains a group of girls who do not fit into either. Their backgrounds and personality patterns are not as definable as those in the other groups. Yet something in their background has disturbed or hindered the development of their personalities.

a. Psychopathic Personality

The girl with a psychopathic personality is characterized by an uncanny desire to dominate in every situation and in all relationships in life, by whatever means possible. Pregnancy to her becomes another means by which she can fulfill this desire. Young describes one particular case in this way:

One cannot escape the impression that this girl derived great satisfaction from the continuous worry and turmoil of her parents and that much of her behavior, at heart, was consciously planned. Through seeming weakness and dependence she dominated them to an amazing extent.¹

This compulsion to dominate seems always to be enhanced by a strong urge to be destructive. She seems to enjoy a very satisfying experience by causing trouble and unhappiness for others.

In general, these girls do not show any particularly strong emotions. They do not seem to have feelings of guilt, anxiety, or tension, and in fact on the surface they appear to be friendly and sincere.

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1. Young, op. cit., p. 82.

Due to this personality structure, little or no feeling is shown for their babies. They are usually placed for adoption immediately.¹

Other available studies do not even refer to this particular problem in unmarried mothers. It would seem that this might be considered a psychiatric problem and, therefore, not one immediately pertinent to case workers per se.

b. Negative Personality

The unmarried mothers who would be categorized as those with "negative personalities" are the girls in which no real personality pattern has ever been formed. Largely because of their background, they have no standards of their own, and show no control over their impulses. Generally speaking, life has little meaning for them. Miss Young describes them as "lost children, bewildered and helpless in an adult world."²

It is probably due to this group of girls that many of the "theories" concerning the causes for illegitimacy arise. These are the girls who come from homes where social-moral standards are low. A good share of them were themselves out-of-wedlock children and have been brought up in social, economic and emotional poverty. Their whole background could be summed up as being unstable and "unmoral." Illegitimacy is merely another one of the many outcomes of such living and is indeed a symptom of a greater problem.³

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1. Young, op. cit., pp. 82-87.
2. Ibid., p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 89.

Girls who have never had a satisfactory home substitute seem to fall into this particular personality pattern also. These girls have been rejected by their families and have never had the experience of being wanted or loved by anyone.

Some of these girls come from broken homes where one of the parents was gone because of divorce, separation, or death, and the other parent dominated or overprotected them. They would seem to develop personality patterns that have been previously described.¹

Those who have been rejected are frequently brought up by relatives, sometimes being passed from family to family, or in foster homes. Regardless of how the problem of a place to live is resolved, the basic fact remains that they are unwanted.² These girls have been completely deprived of a sense of belonging and the reality of parents, or even parent figures, who love them. The babies are probably the result of an attempt to satisfy the loneliness which has overwhelmed the lives of these girls.³ They have, however, been so warped that it seems that they have the ability neither to accept love nor to give love, which they so need and desire.

For the most part these girls are unable to make sound plans for their babies. It would be impossible for most of them to carry real and continuing responsibility for their babies, so usually they are encouraged to surrender the babies and plans are made for adoption.

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1. Donnell and Bick, op. cit., p. 20.
2. Young, op. cit., p. 12.
3. Edlin, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

D. Summary

A brief consideration has been made concerning the general description of the unmarried mother. She was compared with other adolescents and married mothers. The facts would seem to show that the unmarried mother is not essentially "different." Her desire to be "emancipated" from her parents is the same as that of other adolescents. However, due to unsatisfactory relationships within the family, this girl has chosen pregnancy to effect this independence.

It is the consensus that the out-of-wedlock pregnancy is not, as it has been thought, "an accident" but it is a deliberate, purposeful act on the part of the girl.

The background and personality patterns of these girls indicate definite similarities. None of these girls had a happy, healthy relationship with their parents. The majority of the unmarried mothers come from homes which have been dominated by one parent, and the relationship to that parent has been a battleground for the girl. The baby is thought of as an instrument for some particular use, rather than an individual who has needs and rights of his own. Because of this, the father of the baby rarely enters the picture at all. It would seem that most of these unmarried mothers want a baby without a husband.

Other etiological factors seem to stem from a weak personality structure. They do not fit into any well-defined categories.

The other general group is composed of those girls who have an essentially negative personality. Their backgrounds are unstable and

insecure due to broken homes or "unmoral" environments that so warp their personalities that they are unable to accept or give love.

The out-of-wedlock pregnancy in most of these cases is probably an attempt to satisfy this need which is so overwhelming and yet seemingly unattainable.

This study does not imply that every girl who is confronted with these various conditions becomes an unmarried mother, but it does contend that an out-of-wedlock pregnancy is definitely one type of response to these situations.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF SELECTED AGENCIES SERVING THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

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A. Introduction

In order to understand the unmarried mother more fully, and to help determine to some extent what the church's role could be in relation to the problem, a survey was made of selected agencies in New York City. The reports from these various agencies are recorded in this chapter.

It would seem that the results of the interviews held, together with the theoretical understanding of unmarried mothers, might serve as a basis for positive action of the church toward the rehabilitation of these girls and the prevention of this problem.

B. The Survey

Of the eight agencies interviewed in this survey, five were selected because they were affiliated with the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Incorporated. The other three were not affiliated with the Federation. One was chosen because it was a Catholic agency, one because it was Jewish, and one because of its listing as an evangelical home. The person interviewed at the agencies that maintained a shelter was the director of the home and had had a number of years' experience with unmarried mothers.

The survey consisted of a series of questions relating to the basic causes of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and the needs of the mothers.

Much of the interview was spent discussing the general philosophy of the agency and how it meets these needs. The spiritual needs were specifically discussed, as well as possible ways in which the church could help in rehabilitation and prevention of the problem.

It was the consensus that one way in which the church could help would be for the leaders of the church to be aware of the services available for unmarried mothers. All of them felt that ministers, and those responsible for counselling in the church, should know what the shelters are like so that they might be freer to refer girls to the care of the agencies. Ruth Butcher, Director of Inwood House, in her paper "Meeting a Desperate Need," says:

There is nothing about which the girls in our maternity home at Inwood House are so consistently vocal as about the need for services being known. They speak frequently of the haphazard way in which they hear of the agency and, indeed, except for certain forward-looking cities and states, there has been little community concern for the plight of the unmarried mother and few consistent and well-planned efforts to inform her, and those who advise her, about where she can find reliable services.¹

For this reason there is included in this report a brief description of the shelter-care given by the various agencies.

1. Booth Memorial Home

The Booth Memorial Home is an extension service of the Salvation Army and it is staffed by their officers.² The interview was with Major Richardson, the resident director of the home, who has worked with unmarried mothers for approximately five years.

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1. Ruth Butcher, Meeting a Desperate Need, (National Association on Service to Unmarried Parents), p. 1.
2. Major Richardson, Resident Director, Booth Memorial Home and Hospital, Personal interview, New York, March 21, 1957.

a. Description of the Home

The home is located in a pleasant residential section in Queens. The building is new and the furnishings are appropriately modern. However, it has quite an institutional appearance because the architecture is in harmony with the adjoining hospital. In spite of its construction, as much as possible is done to create a home-like atmosphere. The girls participate in the routine of the home, each having her particular responsibility in the kitchen, nursery, or in general housekeeping tasks.

b. Philosophy of the Home

One of the aims of Booth Memorial Home is to create an atmosphere which will help the girl to feel at home. The whole tone of the agency is pervaded with genuine Christian love and concern, which thinks of each unmarried mother as an important individual. They consider the girl as a whole person with varying needs and have set up a program which endeavors, to the best of their ability, to meet these needs.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Major Richardson immediately responded to the question regarding basic causes by stating that this is no "black and white" issue. She feels there is actually a combination of many factors that lead to out-of-wedlock pregnancies. It seems true, however, that the majority of girls receiving shelter-care have conflicts within their families. Perhaps these conflicts are not as well defined as present social case work writers are making them, but the fact of these conflicts cannot be ignored. Girls who have been hurt by their families

unconsciously use this way to "hurt back."

Along with these conflicts, Major Richardson declares, many of the girls seem to lack realistic standards. Certain standards are superimposed upon them, yet they see entirely different standards in actual life. Their family background has made them "weak and easily led." Because they cannot go to parents to clarify their confusion about moral standards, and because of their normal adolescent tendency to be free from their parents, they go along with the thinking of "the gang."

Another cause which is quite different from those given above is that some girls "just do not know what they are getting into." Although this occurs far less frequently than some would say, Major Richardson definitely feels that this is a contributing factor.

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

In Major Richardson's opinion, the unmarried mother comes to a shelter overwrought with problems. She is in need of practical planning and physical care for herself and her baby. Far greater than these, however, are her emotional and psychological needs. Usually she feels rejected by her family and has little or no sense of her own importance. Many of the girls have never known what it is to be really loved or accepted for what they are. As well as this insecurity, all of the girls feel guilty; each one realizes that she has done something which society does not accept. While Booth Memorial Home is not primarily evangelical in its emphasis, it is felt that in order to consider the girl as a whole, provision must be made to meet her spiritual needs.

These needs are met in various ways at Booth. The atmosphere of Christian love, kindness and gentleness helps to relieve some of the tensions which are present when a girl comes to the home. It is run as much like a family unit as possible. Each girl is made to feel that she has an important part in the home and that she has a necessary contribution to make. As much as is possible, the girls are encouraged to assume responsibilities in order to help build up their character which, in most instances, is very immature.

Each girl has a social worker who is concerned about her and able to help her make practical and realistic plans for the baby. If the girl is willing, her social worker will help her to understand herself and how she got into this situation. A recognition of the sources of her many problems tends to relieve some of her sense of guilt.

Chapel services are held each weekday morning, and on Sunday there is a regular worship service for the girls. A Bible study group is held once each week. Through these means the girls are confronted with the place of God in their daily lives. They are not necessarily geared toward conversion, but an effort is thus made to teach them of God's love and concern for them.

c. Role of the Church

Major Richardson stated that the church could play an important role in the rehabilitation of unmarried mothers by educating its members to "love and think as Christ." She felt that one of the hardest situations these girls have to face is in the church.

It was suggested that there are possible ways in which the church

could be an instrument for preventing such problems from arising. First, the church must have a vital, attractive program to keep its young people and to bring in others. "Christianity must be made a real, personal, living thing, not merely intellectual concepts that fail when grace is needed." Secondly, the church should help young people to think for themselves. They should discuss their problems together with their leaders, but should not be relying on their ministers and teachers for all their answers. This should be true of social and moral issues as well as the spiritual. It was also suggested that scouting programs with good church leadership should help develop Christian character in these young people who have missed this opportunity in their homes.

2. St. Faith's House

St. Faith's House is an independent, non-sectarian home for unmarried mothers. The interview was with Mary Frances Smith, the director of the home, who has been working directly with this problem for ten years.¹

a. Description of the Home

This shelter is a large, old home in a residential town in the outskirts of New York City. It has a very home-like atmosphere. The girls participate in the upkeep of the house. St. Faith's differs from the other shelters in that it usually does not accept girls into the home until they are seven months pregnant, and the girls must remain

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1. Mary Frances Smith, Executive Director, St. Faith's House, Personal interview, New York, March 22, 1957.

in the home two weeks after delivery to care for their babies.

b. Philosophy of the Home

Although St. Faith's does not condone out-of-wedlock pregnancies, its general philosophy is to use this situation as a means of helping the girl to understand herself and others. The psychological benefits derived from child-bearing are not denied this girl because she is unmarried, but they are capitalized on and used for her development.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Smith feels that it is impossible to categorize possible causes for out-of-wedlock pregnancies. "They just can't be put down to chapter and verse." However, when one generalizes there does seem to be an element of unhappy parent-child relationship in nearly all the cases. Most of the girls come from homes where they have either been rejected or overprotected. Some girls are having difficulty finding themselves and their place in the world. Whatever the reason may be, something is definitely wrong.

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

The immediate physical and medical needs are met by the home and the hospital with which it is affiliated. The greater emphasis is placed on the less apparent but more dynamic psychological needs.

Each girl has her own caseworker whose responsibility it is to help her make realistic plans for her baby and to help her understand herself. Through this kind of counselling it is hoped that the girl will be helped to find her place in the world. The case worker guides the unmarried mother to understand her situation, to appreciate it, to help resolve some of the problems precipitating this act in her life, and

to prepare her for the new experience of life that she will be moving into as she leaves the shelter-care. Through her relationship with the case worker the girl comes to realize that this person is genuinely interested in her. This experience in itself has therapeutic value, for in many instances this has been a lacking element in the unmarried mother's life.

Classes about pregnancy and childbirth are held regularly at St. Faith's to help these girls develop positive attitudes toward their pregnancies. These classes allow the girls to share their feelings toward pregnancy and in a very real way tend to lessen the tensions which they might have developed.

The spiritual needs of the unmarried mother are considered as well as her physical and emotional needs. They have a chapel service every Wednesday evening at which time a local pastor is invited to participate in the program. The ministers are chosen on the basis of their understanding of the problem and their ability to help the girls "find their own use of religion." The girls are free to have private talks with the ministers if they choose.

c. Role of the Church

Miss Smith feels that one of the best ways the church could act in a rehabilitative way would be to provide healthy social experiences for its young people. If this type of program were carried on, the girl could more readily find a place again in a heterosexual group which, if true Christian living were demonstrated, would be genuinely concerned for her. This does not imply that they would even necessarily know of her previous problem, but that they would, as a

matter of course, readily accept her into the group.

As far as preventing this problem is concerned, it was suggested that the church could help in two general areas. First, in teaching a way to "live together;" and secondly, to help develop and strengthen the character of its youth.

It was felt that this teaching could be accomplished in young people's groups, but that there were other areas in which this teaching perhaps was even more important. This would be in marriage and family counselling. It was suggested that the parish worker have a good understanding of the importance of the family and what it should be so that through her visits she might recognize problem areas and perhaps be able to give practical help, or be able to refer them to someone who could give this help. Another suggestion was that young people's groups should be developing self-responsibility within the participating individual. This development of one's character would lead to self-discipline, which would, in essence, prevent this problem.

3. Guild of the Infant Savior

The Guild of the Infant Savior is a Catholic agency for the shelter-care of unmarried mothers. Although it is under Catholic auspices, girls of other religious affiliations are welcomed. The interview at the Guild was with Adele D. Henritze, Executive Director, who has been working with unmarried mothers for twenty-four years.¹ She is a case worker and is not a member of the clergy. She is a devout

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1. Adele D. Henritze, Executive Director, Guild of the Infant Savior, Personal interview, New York, March 21, 1957.

Catholic.

a. Description of the Home

The Guild of the Infant Savior appears to be just another residence in mid-Manhattan. In this home a type of family life is shared. The girls each have their jobs about the house and are expected to lead as normal a life as possible in the shelter of the home.

b. Philosophy of the Home

The underlying philosophy of the Guild would seem to be a religious one. They are "mindful of the Divine command to love one another and thereby fulfill the law of God."¹ To do this they have provided a home where a girl in need can "relax and be loved."

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Henritze feels that the vast majority of unmarried mothers were "emotionally sick." These girls, from childhood on, have felt emotionally rejected by their families. However, Miss Henritze did not feel that these girls could just be classified and then treated, ipso facto. Although family conflicts are a common element in almost all cases of unmarried mothers, there are other contributing elements which must also be considered. One of these, Miss Henritze contends, is "pure moonlight."

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

Of course the home is set up to take care of the unmarried mothers' immediate physical needs. Because of the feeling that most

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1. Brochure of the Guild of the Infant Savior, p. 4.

of the girls are emotionally sick, there is a necessary emphasis on social case work. Each girl sees the case worker who, as much as is possible, tries to be a "good mother" to the girl. "Their work is geared toward helping the girl to face her pregnancy, to plan realistically for her baby, and to return to her community a better adjusted person."¹

One of the major needs is to get rid of the guilt which in varying degrees affects all of the girls. To a great extent the burden of the problem rests with the case worker. If she helps the girl to get a "good look at herself and her family" and thereby understand some of the reasons why she is in this situation, theoretically much of this guilt is relieved. Association with other girls with the same problem also helps to take some of the stigma that she herself has associated with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. This, too, helps to overcome some of these guilty feelings.

The spiritual needs of the girls at the Guild are definitely kept in mind. It maintains a "religious environment" in a way that girls may be able to use religion to help them through this difficult situation. Mass is held every Sunday in the chapel at the Guild. Attendance at mass is optional. Every few months a Day of Recollection is held. This is a type of all-day conference. Mass is held in the morning and the rest of the day is spent in quiet meditation, conferences with the priest, in lectures concerning the Catholic Church and Christian life. There are also discussions regarding questions

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1. Guild of the Infant Savior, op. cit., p. 2.

the girls might have about faith and life. Participation in this day is also voluntary. The girls who have participated have found it very helpful. All the spiritual counselling at the Guild is done by the clergy.

c. Role of the Church

Apparently in the Catholic Church there is no real problem concerning rehabilitation, for usually the parish in general is so large that no one is aware that an out-of-wedlock pregnancy has occurred. But apart from the local parish, the Catholic Church as a whole has seen illegitimacy as a problem, one for which it must have resources. To care for the unmarried mother during her pregnancy--physically, psychologically and spiritually--would seem to be one of the greatest roles the church could play.

Miss Henritze felt that the Catholic Church was somewhat behind the Protestant church in youth work, but she felt that this might be a way to help prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies. However, she felt that counselling young couples regarding family life might be a positive step in the prevention of this problem in the future generation.

4. Heartsease Home for Women and Babies, Incorporated

Heartsease Home is an evangelical Protestant shelter for unmarried mothers, independent from denominational affiliation. The members of the controlling board belong to various Protestant denominations. The interview was held with Mildred Wolfertz, Resident Director, who has worked with unmarried mothers for six and one-half years.¹

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1. Mildred Wolfertz, Resident Director, Heartsease Home for Women and Babies, Inc., Personal interview, New York, March 22, 1957.

a. Description of the Home

Heartsease Home is a comparatively small house in a residential area in Manhattan. It functions, in every way possible, as a large family unit. The girls help with household responsibilities and quickly assume their roles as members of the family. During their stay at Heartsease the girls carry on as normal a life as possible.

b. Philosophy of the Home

There are two basic underlying principles which guide the work of Heartsease Home. One of these factors is that there is a common need for everyone to be rightly related to God. The other is that the unmarried mother is in desperate need of love and understanding. The Home recognizes that God has commanded them to help meet these needs.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Wolfertz does not feel that there is a "cut and dried" answer to the question of what causes out-of-wedlock pregnancies. She agrees that the greatest number of unmarried mothers come from homes where there is definite conflict. At times this conflict is more obvious than others; nevertheless, problems in the family can be found in almost every case. Many times these girls do not receive love and affection in their homes and so they seek it outside. However, Miss Wolfertz feels there are definitely other elements involved.

One possible contributing factor is that some girls simply are not aware of the "facts of life." That is, they do not know how the opposite sex reacts to situations in which they might not react at all. Before they realize it, dormant sexual desires have been aroused and

they are unable to prevent further action.

Another suggestion from Miss Wolfertz is inconsistent Christian living in the home. Because of the evangelical nature of Heartsease, quite a number of girls come for shelter-care who have been brought up in evangelical homes and churches. Almost without exception the girls have been exposed to "superficial piety," to "negative living with nothing to take its place." As children they heard their parents talk "Christianity," and yet were equally aware of their incongruous lives. This resulted in dual standards which they, during adolescence, were quick to disregard.

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

The physical and medical needs of the girls are met through the shelter-care and also through association with a nearby hospital. However, the unmarried mother has many problems other than the physical which must be met.

The staff at Heartsease feels that these deep psychological problems should be handled by a case worker. However, the whole tone of the home is geared to meet the more noticeable emotional needs. First of all, each girl is made to feel that those at the home are interested in her personally. She has come into their family and they love her and care for her. A definite effort is made to assure the girls that they are not censured, and to demonstrate to them real Christian love and understanding. Through this general attitude a trust begins to develop within the girls.

Usually the unmarried mother is confronted with fears concerning labor and delivery. Because of this, classes are held with the group

to prepare them for these coming events. This also helps to relieve some of the tensions which are so prevalent at the time of their admission to the home.

The spiritual needs of these girls are considered to be of great importance. (This is not to imply that this need is any greater than any other adolescent's spiritual need. It is the philosophy of the home that all have this spiritual need.) It is a concern of the home "not to reach the girls simply on an emotional basis due to predicament." However, they feel that a spiritual reorientation is necessary for rehabilitation of the "whole girl." Miss Wolfertz feels that it makes "all the difference in the world for the unmarried mother to know that God is interested in her and in her baby." If these girls learn to trust God there is an unparalleled comfort in being able to commit their children to God. Along with the general atmosphere of the home, these needs are also met in more specific ways. Every day after breakfast they have family devotions. These are aimed at developing the practical aspects of Christianity. They also have chapel on Sunday morning and a Bible study discussion group once a week.

c. Role of the Church

Miss Wolfertz feels that the church should contribute to the rehabilitation of unmarried mothers by accepting them back into their fellowship "as if nothing had happened." In this way the church could carry on, to some extent, the emotional support that was begun in the home.

The first step in helping to prevent this problem is to adequately understand the problem in all of its aspects. The church could also help

by developing healthy attitudes toward sex and sex education. This would imply that the church provide leaders with whom the young people could be free to discuss all types of adolescent problems.

5. Inwood House

The interview at Inwood House was with Ruth Butcher, the director of the shelter.¹ She is also the present chairman of the National Association on Service to Unmarried Parents. Inwood House is a member of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

a. Description of the Home

Inwood House is a large but inconspicuous home in the heart of New York City. It comfortably shelters a group of about twenty-four girls. Each girl has her own room and is responsible for its care, as well as the regular household task to which she is assigned. There are many planned activities available for the girls in the home. These activities include sewing, crafts, and other types of recreational facilities. Participation in these is not compulsory.

b. Philosophy of the Home

The underlying philosophy at Inwood House seems to be that they have recognized the unmarried mother as one who is overwhelmed by rather common problems and who is in desperate need of help. They consider it their responsibility to be available to give practical services and counselling to all who come to them.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Butcher is convinced that there is no one or basic cause

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1. Ruth Butcher, Executive Director, Inwood House, Personal interview, New York, March 22, 1957.

for out-of-wedlock pregnancies. She feels that the causes vary from a "temporary unhappy maladjustment to chronic maladjustment due to the home." "Growing up in itself is hard," and undoubtedly contributes to the high percentage of adolescent unmarried mothers. However, the greatest instance of illegitimacy occurs where there are "family problems." To quote from a recent paper of Miss Butcher:

The why becomes complicated, leading into all the perplexity of individual adjustment--emotional problems of long duration, or subtle or temporary difficulties within an otherwise well-adjusted girl.

The youth of the girls throws some light on the problem, suggesting the complexity of factors in growing up and in the first period of adult independence. "Then even in the wisest and happiest families it is sometimes difficult to help young people build their own standards, judgment and controls, it is not surprising that in homes which have been broken or in which there is tension, discord, neglect, or excessive domination, there should be found a higher incidence of the problem.¹

Because of the wide range of causes, Miss Butcher was very emphatic about the fact that there is, therefore, "no a priori solution."

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

The practical needs, a place to live and good medical care, are provided first for the unmarried mother. However, the psychological needs are considered her greatest needs. The unmarried mother always feels guilty. She has failed herself and her family and has thereby lost her security, happiness and self respect. Miss Butcher feels that this problem causes the most acute suffering in our society.

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1. Butcher, op. cit., p. 2.

Though it perhaps is no different from other problems, the results of it are extremely traumatic.

Counselling provided by Inwood House is intended to help reduce these pressures and tensions, first of all by helping the girl do realistic planning for the baby. Then, if it is possible and the girl is interested, the case worker is available to help her with her more fundamental problems.

The tone of the home is geared to overcoming the guilty feelings that are present in the unmarried mother and to help her back to security, self-respect and happiness. This is accomplished in several ways. The counselling, of course, helps in self-understanding. The other workers at Inwood also contribute by showing the girls respect and understanding. Group living with others who have the same problems has a "diluting" effect.

The spiritual needs of the girls are definitely recognized at Inwood House, but they are considered quite separate from their other needs. They have a Wednesday night service held by a minister from a nearby seminary. It is not compulsory that the girls attend the service, but it is usually well attended. The minister is available for spiritual counsel if it is desired by any girl. They are also encouraged to attend Sunday morning services at any of the local churches.

c. Role of the Church

Miss Butcher made several suggestions as to the role of the church in regard to the problems of the unmarried mother. The first suggestion concerned referring the girl to an agency. Although only a small percentage of girls are referred by their ministers, Miss Butcher

feels that the minister and those in positions of counselling in the church should be aware of agencies available to give help to these girls. It is felt that a lack of knowledge of agencies of this sort, as well as a lack of real understanding of the problem, may cause wrong counsel to be given which might probably have "life-time repercussions." A girl needs other bases for marriage than the fact that she is pregnant. If the minister or members of his staff had more understanding of the problem and the available resources for dealing with it, they could give her reassurance and help her practically, emotionally and spiritually.

Rightly understanding the problem would also enable the minister to work more effectively with the family. Frequently they will turn to their pastor, even if the girl does not go to him for counsel. Helping the parents to understand their daughter may be a vital link in her rehabilitation.

Miss Butcher feels that the greatest contribution of the church would be to "increase its understanding of the unmarried mother without diminishing its high regard for marriage."

6. Louise Wise Services

Louise Wise Services is a Jewish agency affiliated with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. The interview was held with Esther Levitt, department supervisor of the counselling service of this agency.¹ She has worked with unmarried mothers for ten years.

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1. Esther Levitt, Department Supervisor, Jewish Girls' Service, Louise Wise Services, Personal interview, New York, March 25, 1957.

Shelter-care is a part of the service of the agency, but since it is housed in a separate location it was not visited.

a. Philosophy of the Agency

The basic philosophy of the Louise Wise Services seems to be that there is always deep underlying cause for out-of-wedlock pregnancies. It is their feeling that whenever possible these causes must be discovered and treated in order for rehabilitation to take place.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Levitt stressed the fact that there is "no sharp demarkation" between groups of girls who are unmarried mothers. Though there may be elements of similar circumstances, there are many contributing factors in this problem which defy classification. However, Miss Levitt did make two general statements regarding out-of-wedlock pregnancies. First, "There is no such thing as an 'accident'." That is, all out-of-wedlock pregnancies are deliberate, though the fact of this intention may reside in the subconscious. Secondly, and this might well be included in the first, "There are always underlying causes."

More specific suggestions were also given by Miss Levitt. Probably the largest group of girls have conflicts in relation to their mothers. Some of them are "acting out a neurotic relationship with the mother." In these cases, the pregnancy itself is sometimes curative. At times the girl seeks someone who will be interested in her and give her the love and affection she has lacked in her home. In these instances the punitive father becomes a "new parent."

At times this problem is caused "unwittingly" by the parents. They do not understand adolescence and, therefore, do not know how to handle them. It is a difficult age because the adolescent wants his independence and yet wants and needs dependence upon his parents. "These young people want adults to control the impulses they are afraid of." Overpermissiveness is as bad as overprotection for both cause adolescent revolt.

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

Miss Levitt considered the psychological need to be very great; yet there are more practical and pressing issues that must be taken care of first. Shelter-care is provided if it is desired, and the girls are counselled to help make realistic decisions regarding their babies. Each girl has a case worker who helps her think through various problems and possible solutions, and tries to help the unmarried mother make a "decision she can live with." Throughout her pregnancy, the case worker gives the girl the support she needs and, if the girl desires, she begins to work with the mother to help her to understand herself and this situation. Unless the girl has a definite character disorder, she has guilt feelings which the case worker also tries to allay.

At the shelter there is a Rabbi who is available to talk to the girls regarding any spiritual needs. He holds a regular Friday night service at the home for the girls who are interested. Religion is not superimposed at the home, but they do "use it constructively" when possible. Miss Levitt feels very definitely that "religion belongs in the synagogue."

b. Role of the Church

Miss Levitt feels that the church should have a better understanding of the actual problem of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and thereby "let up on this 'Scarlet Letter' attitude." This would probably enable the church to offer help to the parents who also have problems and are in need of help.

Miss Levitt also suggested that the church might be an agent for training young people for the responsibilities of parenthood. She said that she feels that "parenthood is the most important and most difficult profession in the world and no one gets any training for it." Perhaps the church could help correct this situation.

7. Washington Square Home

The Washington Square Home is a non-sectarian shelter affiliated with the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. The interview was held with Margaret Murdock, Resident Director of the Home.¹

a. Description of the Home

Washington Square Home is a large home-like establishment in a residential area in the heart of New York City. It provides a pleasant living place that enables the girls to carry on normal life as much as possible.

b. Philosophy of the Home

Washington Square Home functions as a highly democratic and progressive home. It is the conviction of the agency that the principal

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1. Margaret Murdock, Resident Director, Washington Square Home, Personal Interview, New York, March 19, 1957.

contribution they can make is to strengthen the character of the girl.

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Murdock feels that though no hard and fast rule can be set up to "pigeon hole" every unmarried mother, there are common elements which tend to group the girls in "categories." These categories, however, are necessary to help in the broad understanding of problems.

It is Miss Murdock's contention that the vast majority of unmarried mothers have damaged character traits due to destructive interpersonal relationships within the family unit. The largest group of these girls come from homes that have been dominated by the mother. The next largest group occurs where the father has dominated the family scene. Then there is a group of girls who have psychopathic personalities. Though this is a convenient classification and is one that is valid for general use, Miss Murdock also feels that there are some exceptions to the rule. One of these is the fact that "lonely kids get together," find comfort, understanding and oneness because of similar problems. Pregnancy often results. However, even this shows some lack of love and understanding in the home.

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

The first need considered is that of physical care and adequate planning for the baby. The shelter is a fulfillment of this need and each girl has a case worker to help her reach realistic decisions regarding her baby.

Miss Murdock feels that every girl comes into the shelter with a "damaged ego." She has cut across her own standards, her family's standards and society's standards, and she is very much aware of it.

Another problem is that for the most part, due to conflicts in the family, the girl has never developed a healthy opinion of herself. Her self-awareness is "all out of kilter" and it has been for a long time. Therefore, the entire functioning of the home is directed to build up this "damaged ego." She is encouraged in every way to think for herself, to assert her feelings, and to learn to take responsibility for herself and others.

One means of accomplishing this at the Washington Square Home is the house meeting, held once a week. This meeting is extremely democratic. The girls elect a house chairman who acts, then, as assistant staff. They decide together about household responsibilities, assignments are made, and the chairman sees that they are carried out effectively. This group makes house rules, organizes and plans special activities, and generally "irons out" problems arising about the home. The girls are encouraged to air their complaints here and they are discussed with a view toward solution.

Most of the household tasks are the usual ones involved in all group living, but Washington Square adds one responsibility which does not occur in any other shelter. At this home one of the unmarried mothers is always on "door duty." This is to help develop her self-confidence and to help her over the fear of meeting people from the "outside." This practice may be questioned by other shelters, but it is an outworking of the basic philosophy of the home.

Group therapy is another important phase of the functioning of the home. A social worker, trained in group therapy, guides the girls in the discussion of their common problems.

The case worker's responsibility in this situation, beside helping the girl in her planning for the baby, is merely supportive. Deep psychological probing is all held off until after the baby has been delivered. Then, if the girl chooses, the case worker will help her with the more fundamental problems.

Miss Murdock feels that these girls do have guilt feelings. However, at Washington Square the whole problem is handled as a mistake and it tends to take away from these feelings of guilt.

The spiritual needs of the girls are neither stressed nor ignored. It is suggested that they visit the churches of their choice for Sunday worship, and every two weeks they have a discussion group with a minister from a local parish.

c. Role of the Church

Several suggestions were made regarding the role of the church in relation to the problem of the unmarried mother. The first was that the ministers and leaders of the churches should be aware of the real basic causes of the problem. This will enable them to give more understanding to the girl, to the family, and eventually to the congregation. In this way, the church could be "constructive" in their contribution to the rehabilitation of this girl.

Another suggestion was that the church is responsible to teach its families about the needs of its children. They must be taught that "love and affection are as necessary for their children as food and clothing." And families must realize that this love and affection must be consistent. Sudden spurts of love, or outward signs of love, are not sufficient to give the security that is so needed. In this way the

church could reach the basic problems involved in this situation.

The church has too long been "treating the rash instead of the disease."

8. Youth Consultation Service

Youth Consultation Service functions "as a non-sectarian and professionally-run social agency, operating under the auspices of the Episcopal Church of the Diocese of New York."¹ Its services are limited to adolescents, ages 14 to 25. Although they render service to adolescents with all types of problems, about half of their case-load is unmarried mothers. At the present, this is merely a counselling agency and girls desiring shelter-care are referred to homes in the area. The case work is usually continued by Youth Consultation Service. The interview was held with Miss Marjorie Mac, Case Worker in the Uptown Branch of Youth Consultation Service.

a. Philosophy of the Agency

The underlying principles of Youth Consultation Service are broader than the other agencies. They recognize the girl as a total person with physical, psychological and spiritual needs. Their scope is wider than this, however, for it is interested in helping the family as well as the girl. In this agency help is also available for the "presumed father."

(1) Underlying Causes of the Problem

Miss Mac feels that causes for out-of-wedlock pregnancies cannot be generalized. There are various reasons for it. However, one thing

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1. Brochure of the Youth Consultation Service, p. 2.
2. Marjorie L. Mac, Case Worker, Youth Consultation Service of the Diocese of New York, Inc., Uptown Branch, Personal interview, New York, March 25, 1957.

is certain: "An out-of-wedlock pregnancy always indicates that there is a breakdown somewhere." Every youngster knows that it is not right to get pregnant out-of-wedlock, and the fact that they become pregnant shows that the problem is something more basic. The roots of the trouble, in many of the situations, can be traced to the home where "the death of one or both parents, divorce, separation, chronic illness, or continuous friction may have caused an extreme reaction."¹

(2) Specific Needs of the Unmarried Mother

One of the greatest needs of the unmarried mother is to understand herself. Usually this girl does not think much of herself. The usual personality of the unmarried mother can be described as passive, generally "good" and searching for someone who is interested in her. She is in need of a clear concept of herself--an idea of herself as a person. She needs to know that she has a right to likes and dislikes, that she has a right and responsibility to stand on her own two feet, and that she, as an individual, has intrinsic worth.

Along with this feeling of personal inadequacy she is overwhelmed with anxieties and fears and distrust, "and the one thing they have in common above all else is profound unhappiness."²

With these things in mind the case worker tries to help the youngster understand herself and thereby adjust to herself and others. The case worker tries to help the unmarried mother be realistic in her thinking. She helps the girl to face her problem and to look at her

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1. Brochure, Youth Consultation Service, op. cit., p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 2.

life from a new perspective.

When girls are too deeply disturbed or distrustful to respond favorably to an individual relationship with a social worker, group therapy is sometimes used. This is an informal approach, using group activities or discussion. Through group therapy these girls may begin to trust girls with similar problems. Sometimes group therapy opens the way for the case worker to resume her work with the girl.

Miss Mac feels that an out-of-wedlock pregnancy is a moral issue and, because in the broadest sense our moral values are spiritual values, she feels that there are spiritual implications in this problem. There is a chaplain associated with Youth Consultation Service who functions as an integral member of the agency.

b. Role of the Church

Miss Mac feels that the churches can contribute to prevention of the problem and to the rehabilitation of unmarried mothers by more fully understanding the problems and supporting the agencies whose function it is to help these girls. The Episcopal Church has done this in the Youth Consultation Service.

Another function of the church would be to work directly with families to help them, on the whole, to become better adjusted. The church has a unique way into family life and it should be used to help them live happier, better lives.

C. Summary

This survey of eight agencies serving unmarried mothers has indicated that there are deep problems within these girls which are fre-

quently overlooked. All of the agencies agree that these problems cannot be narrowed down to one basic cause. However, there are common elements in the majority of cases that help to give some understanding of the problem. The most common element is that the vast majority of unmarried mothers come from homes where there are unhappy family relationships. These serve to give direction for treatment and prevention.

The homes are no longer institutional in nature but are as family-like as possible. In most instances, case workers are used to help the girl make practical, realistic decisions about her baby and, if she desires, to help her with more fundamental problems. The spiritual needs are recognized and met in various ways by all of the agencies visited.

Each agency gave some very practical suggestions as to what the role of the church could be regarding the problem. The main emphasis was on the need for a better understanding of the causes of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and the resources available to help these girls. Suggestions were also made regarding youth activities of the church and family counselling. These would seem to be effective means for rehabilitation and also prevention of this problem.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN MEETING

THE PROBLEM OF THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

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A. Introduction

In order to understand the role of the church in meeting the problem of the unmarried mother, a study has been made of the problem. The first area of study was general and rather categorical. It was based primarily on the written consensus of social workers who have done recent research in this field. The second area of study was limited to personal interviews with eight agencies in New York City that render services to the unmarried mother. These interviews, to some extent, corroborated the data gathered in the first area. They also gave new insights into the problem and information concerning the way in which agencies deal with the particular needs of these girls. From these interviews suggestions were received concerning the role of the church in meeting this problem.

The primary concern of this chapter is the role of the church in meeting this problem. It is an attempt to show that the church has a unique opportunity to meet the problem of the unmarried mother, both in the realm of prevention and rehabilitation.

To accomplish this, an analysis will be done of the first and second chapters to focus the problem. A general description of the responses of the social agencies and the church will follow to determine if there is any way in which they might augment each other's activities

to effect a more complete rehabilitation. The remainder of the chapter will attempt to demonstrate wherein the church has a unique role in meeting this problem.

B. The Problem of the Unmarried Mother

In the study of the unmarried mother it has been brought to light that one of the major common elements in the cause of the problem is conflict within the home.¹ These conflicts cause anxiety within the girl which, in turn, results in this anti-social behavior. Wayne

Oates refers to anxiety in this manner:

Anxiety is a reaction of tension to threats to the self-hood of an individual. . . It manifests itself at different levels of meanings in terms of the way it becomes conscious to him in his attempts to identify and deal with his painful uneasiness of mind.²

Frequent questions are asked concerning this thinking, for there are conflicts to a greater or lesser extent in almost every home. With this as a basis, the problem of the unmarried mother, and other asocial problems, should be much vaster. Oates answers this question somewhat by differentiating between what he calls the "anxiety of grief" and the "anxiety of sin." The essential difference is in their sources.

Usually both of them arise out of disruptions in interpersonal relationships, but the disruption in the case of grief is rooted in love and in the case of sin is rooted in hostility and fear. Furthermore, grief has its source in a yearning movement toward and with persons, whereas sin is derived from an antipathetic movement against persons or a

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1. Cf. ante Ch. I, p. 1; Ch. II, p.15.
2. Wayne E. Oates, *Anxiety in Christian Experience*, pp. 9-10.

recalcitrant withdrawal from persons.¹

In both cases, conflicts resulting in anxiety are present; however, the one is supported by basic security of genuine love, the other is not.

Though there are undoubtedly other more superficial elements involved, knowledge of the more fundamental elements tends to give sounder grounds for genuine understanding. This would also lead to more appropriate help for the unmarried mother.

Some of the other causes suggested are: over-permissiveness, as well as over-protection in the home; lack of realistic standards; weak personality structure; lack of healthy sex attitude and adequate sex education; difficulty finding their place in the world; temporary unhappy maladjustment.² These causes result in definite personality characteristics and give rise to definite needs in their lives. The majority of the girls are described as being "weak and easily led," "unable to stand on their own two feet," and with no realistic concept of themselves.³ Usually they are considered to be exceptionally "good girls." Almost all of them are overcome with a sense of failure and guilt and are generally distrustful of others.

One of the most obvious needs of the unmarried mother is to develop a realistic concept of herself. This can only be accomplished through one who has understanding and who demonstrates it with genuine love and affection toward her as an individual. She needs, also, to have

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1. Oates, op. cit., p. 74.
2. Cf. ante, p. 15.
3. Cf. ante, p. 38.

a sense of belonging and worth, and freedom from a sense of failure and guilt.¹

The problem of decision concerning the baby is paramount at the time. However, if this is adequately handled it is actually secondary to the psychological problems involved.

These causes, with their resultant characteristics and needs, comprise the problem of the unmarried mother.

C. The Response to the Problem

The problem of the unmarried mother demands a response. As with other problems, when the need has been seen, action follows. However, this particular problem carries with it such a stigma that for many the need has been obscured. Probably due to this, the church has been slow to understand the unmarried mother. Yet possible answers to the problem might lie in the church as well as in the social agencies.

1. The Response of the Agencies

Agencies have responded by setting up shelters to meet the immediate needs of the girls. There they try to give the unmarried mothers love and understanding and support. Through intensive study a more adequate understanding of these girls has been gained. Because of this insight, case workers have been able to help the unmarried mother to understand herself. When this has been successful, she has gained self-respect and a feeling of worth that in turn develops her character and self-confidence.²

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1. Cf. ante, p. 37.

2. Ibid. p. 38.

Most of the agencies interviewed feel that this psychological handling of the problem should relieve the overwhelming sense of guilt. If the unmarried mother can be helped to understand the problem, it is felt that her sense of guilt will be diminished, if not completely removed. The case worker tries to avoid later outcropping of guilt due to the decision regarding the baby, reaching her goal by encouraging the girl to make practical, realistic plans on the basis of her love for the baby.

The question arises as to whether or not this particular care does offer adequate release from guilt. This is difficult to answer for it would require a wide-spread follow-up study of unmarried mothers. One follow-up study has been conducted. There were fifty-four in the group studied. A sufficient amount of time had elapsed since they had left the shelter for developments in lives to become apparent. Thirty girls had since been married. Dorothy Levy's report regarding this group reads:

A satisfactory social life was described by the majority of married women who were interviewed. They were mainly involved with their families, friends, community and church activities. Only three women said they had no church affiliation and did not attend church.

Of this group, twenty-four had told their husbands of their out-of-wedlock pregnancy before marriage, one husband had learned of it later, and five did not know about it.

In the rest of the group, thirteen were single, eight were separated from their husbands, and three were living in common law

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1. Dorothy Levy, A Follow-up Study of Unmarried Mothers, p. 5.

marriages.

No evidence was given that any of the women had been stigmatized because of this out-of-wedlock experience, and "the majority of the group appeared to have made an adequate social adjustment."¹

In this report no mention was made regarding a sense of guilt. It should be assumed then that for these fifty-four girls there was no outward manifestation of guilt during this period. However, the limited number cannot make this valid for all unmarried mothers. The question as to whether psychological care is adequate for release from guilt still remains open.

2. The Response of the Church

The church has responded to this problem in several ways. At first it was with censure and judgment, then with sentimentalism and tolerance.² However, with the church's increased desire to understand and utilize psychological skills and techniques, these attitudes are being replaced by the constructive attitudes of redemptive love. Seminaries have incorporated psychology and psychiatry into their curricula, and increased understanding of various types of problems have therefore developed. Most of the people within the local churches, however, are not aware of these advances. As a result the people, for the most part, retain old attitudes and regard all unmarried mothers as sex delinquents.³

In many ways the church has made a positive response. There

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1. Levy, op. cit., p. 7.
2. Young, op. cit., pp. 2-6.
3. Ibid., p. 11.

are pastors who visit the shelters for religious services and who are available for spiritual counsel.

The Episcopal church has set up a non-sectarian agency, the Youth Consultation Service. This agency helps solve all types of adolescent problems. Through the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Incorporated, the church may support these agencies which devote themselves to the care of the unmarried mother.

Questions may arise here, too. Is it enough that pastors understand the problem of the unmarried mother and use the available resources for her need? Is it enough that agencies are supported by the church? Or is there a specific way in which the church, as God's instrument of redemption, can constructively contribute to the rehabilitation of the unmarried mother? Lewis J. Sherrill, in his book entitled Guilt and Redemption, states:

Guilt, anxiety, and hostility, that trio of destroyers, arise in the most dynamic relationship when those relationships are suffused with Eros love. They may be disposed of in a dynamic relationship when Eros love, empty-handed love, is transcended by Agape love, the love which sets free.¹

D. The Unique Opportunity of the Church

The church has unparalleled opportunity in meeting the problem of the unmarried mother because of its unique redemptive mission and because of its unique relationship to the family and its youth.

1. Its Unique Mission

The church has been ordained to a ministry of redemption. The

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1. Lewis J. Sherrill, Guilt and Redemption, p. 159.

people who comprise the church should be filling its role as a community of people who know the love of God, "and are letting it flow out of their lives into the lives of their fellows."¹ Then the church would be the place where the rehabilitation begun by a social agency might continue. There the unmarried mother could find love and understanding, freedom from guilt, a place to belong and from which to begin life anew.

2. Its Unique Relationship to the Family and its Youth

The church has a relationship to the family which is found in no other organization. Almost all families, at least to some extent, consider the need of their children's relationship to God. This is demonstrated in the observance of infant baptism in some churches and in the dedication of infants in others. Therefore, at the very beginning of family life a relation with the church has been established. In many instances this is a means by which parents are brought into the church. This particular opportunity is unique to the church.

There was a time when religion was a unifying element in family life.² Through the years this has changed. Although the church has been close to the home, it gave up its important place in the home almost without resistance and began to take over the religious education of its children. However, again the church has begun to see the necessity of the family unit within the organized Christian community.³

Perhaps without realizing it the church's renewed interest in the

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1. James A. Pike, *Beyond Anxiety*, p. 102.
2. Paul H. Landis, *Your Marriage and Family Living*, p. 17.
3. Elizabeth S. Force, *Your Family Today and Tomorrow*, p. 364.

family may be an element in the prevention of the problem of the unmarried mother in the future. Studies in the fields of "asocial" behavior (alcoholism, juvenile delinquency) have led the investigators back to the family for the interpretation of the basic problem. The unmarried mother must also be seen in this light.

The Parent Education Committee of the Protestant Council of the City of New York has become aware of the lack of effective parent education at the local church level. The need was described in this way:

All denominations and many ministers and church workers recognize that if children are to enter fully into their rightful Christian heritage, the Church must help parents achieve the understanding skills necessary for creating a family climate conducive to the steady growth of Christian personality.¹

This group has seen the need, has an effective method, but lacks Christian leadership to carry out such a program. They have, therefore, set up a program to provide a way for the Directors of Religious Education to acquire specific knowledge and skills needed for them to lead effective discussion groups with parents in the local church.²

The program will be developed against a background of the concerns of the Protestant family and will be based upon the recognition of the family group as a Christian fellowship, but it will not be oriented exclusively toward "teaching religion in the home." It will be concerned with the totality of family living, in all its physical, mental and spiritual aspects.³

If the church is not effective in meeting these needs, other groups

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1. Mimeographed Report, "A Program of Training Christian Educators for Leadership of Parent Discussion Groups," The Protestant Council of the City of New York.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

will quickly take over the responsibility. Here, too, the church should be aware of its unique ministry. Family love is an amazing force that can overcome all sorts of obstacles and conflicts. The church has at its disposal the power of Agape love which transcends all other love. Agape love not only maintains mutual love, understanding and respect within the family, but also brings the family into direct relationship to God.¹

This type of program would seem to be a definite, positive step in the prevention of the problem of the unmarried mother.

Another positive step has been taken by the church in relation to its youth. Youth Directors are being educated specifically for their responsibilities. Through active youth programs much can be done to help in the prevention of the problem of the unmarried mother. Most youth leaders can recognize characteristics which are potentially negative, and can help the youngster in many ways. Taking a genuine personal interest in the girl and helping her to develop trust in someone is probably the first step. Then helping her to take her place in the group, to think for herself, to take responsibility, will help to strengthen her character and will help her to get a more realistic view of herself. While this cannot take the place of the inadequate home, the power of redemptive love cannot be underestimated.

More and more churches are using camping as part of their planned program. Camping, especially when religious objectives are considered,

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1. Pike, op. cit., p. 102.

has inestimable value. For example, the American Camping Association objectives in 1947 were:

- (1) development of self reliance, insight and resourcefulness through direct experiences of group living;
- (2) development of spiritual growth through an appreciation of the higher values of life;
- (3) development of new skills, appreciations, and knowledge of how to live in the out-of-doors;
- (4) development of a keener joy and zest for life;
- (5) development of new leisure-time activities high in carry-over value;
- (6) development of a sounder personality;
- (7) development of physical, mental and social health.¹

Of course, camping in itself is not the answer to the problem, but these objectives for the development of the camper parallel the areas of lack of personality development that has described the unmarried mother.²

The Social Action Committee of the Middletown, New York, Council of Churches is experimenting with a city-wide youth education program. This program is an attempt to put sex education into its broader context of life so that it is seen as it relates to life as a whole. Luther Woodward of the New York State Mental Health Commission feels that there is enough evidence to show that "there is a decided relationship between sexual behavior and the amount and kind of sex education which young people have had."³ His opinion would indeed commend this program. Here, too, and perhaps unwittingly, another positive step is being taken in the area of prevention of the problem of the unmarried mother.

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1. Clarice Bowman, *Spiritual Values in Camping*, p. 36.
2. *Supra*, Ch. I & II.
3. Luther E. Woodward, "The Bearing of Sexual Behavior on Mental Health and Family Stability," pp. 206-207.

E. Summary

In this chapter an attempt has been made to focus the problem of the unmarried mother and to evaluate, to some degree, how her problem is being met by the social agencies and by the church.

It was felt that the church had a unique place in augmenting the care given by the various agencies. One of its greatest contributions should be the ministry of redeeming love. On the basis of this agape love it was felt that the church had a unique ministry in the prevention of the problem, as well as in the rehabilitation of the girl.

It was discovered that, perhaps inadvertently, the church has begun programs which will be extremely helpful in meeting the problem of the unmarried mother. The recent consideration of the Protestant Council of New York regarding parent education was used as an example of this. Other examples of positive steps to meet adolescent needs, to help in the prevention of the problem, were: specialized training of youth leaders; use of good camping programs; and sex education in its broader concept of life.

CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The main object of this thesis has been to understand more fully the problem of the adolescent unmarried mother and, in the light of this understanding, to discover the opportunity that the church has in meeting the problem.

First of all a general study was made of the adolescent unmarried mother. Through the study it was found that she was not unlike other adolescents in most respects. She was having the same turbulent problems that others were having regarding their relationships to their parents. To effect her emancipation, however, this girl became pregnant out-of-wedlock. Usually this type of a reaction is more deep-seated than adolescent emancipation.

A study was made of recent research concerning the unmarried mother. Because of its purpose to give a general understanding of the problem, three rather rigid categories of unmarried mothers evolved. It should be re-emphasized that these categories are for the convenience of understanding the problem and are not necessarily to be used to "pigeon-hole" each individual girl. These categories were the result of compiling common elements from the cases studied. These elements all seemed to lie within the dynamic relationships of the home.

The largest group of unmarried mothers come from homes which are mother-dominated. Usually this mother had neurotic tendencies and, in turn, did not have a healthy relationship with her husband, nor did she

allow her daughter to mature beyond a rather infantile relationship with herself. The next largest group came from homes which the father dominated. These also caused conflicts and hostilities in the girl. By far the smallest group was comprised of those girls who were pre-
psychopathic in nature or whose personality structure had been so weakened by "unmoral" living that they had what was described as a negative personality. It was the feeling of the authors studied that in almost every instance the pregnancy was deliberate. (It should be made clear that the unmarried mothers studied were not sexual delinquents.)

In the second chapter a survey was reported of agencies who render services to the unmarried mother. These interviews tended to corroborate the information in the first chapter, but each one interviewed was very emphatic that such a cut and dried classification was impossible. There are always a combination of factors involved for each girl. All, however, pointed back to the home as the place where such conflicts begin, resulting in behavior which is so against our social mores. Suggestions were made at the various agencies regarding possible causes. Some of the suggestions were: lack of realistic standards; sense of rejection or overprotection; lack of love; lack of healthy sex attitudes and adequate sex education.

The unmarried mother was characterized in several ways. Some said she was "weak and easily led;" others said that she was "passive, generally 'good'." All of the agencies felt that the unmarried mother was overwhelmed with guilt and a sense of failure. Her needs were commensurate with her problem. The agencies suggested that, apart from

her physical needs and those regarding the baby, she needed individual love and understanding; she needed help to understand herself and her family. In most of the agencies these needs were met by the staff and the girl's case worker. The agencies as a whole were concerned with the spiritual life of the girl and each made provision for this aspect of her life.

At each agency questions were asked as to what they considered the role of the church to be in meeting this problem. Helpful suggestions were offered by each one. The major emphasis was that pastors and leaders accurately understand the problem. In this way they may interpret it to families involved in this problem, as well as to help establish healthy, constructive attitudes in their congregations toward this problem in particular. Other suggestions were made regarding the work of the church with families, especially training them for parenthood. More adequate youth work was also suggested as a means of prevention of the problem, and possibly as a means for rehabilitating the unmarried mother.

With a clearer understanding of the problem of the unmarried mother and her particular needs, it was easier to evaluate what the church's opportunity is in this problem.

In the third chapter it was discovered that the church, almost unconsciously, is moving to help in the prevention of this problem. One way is through its renewed interest in the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the family. Another was through its youth work, especially as it takes pertinent problems of youth and broadens them with the whole scope of life.

Probably the most significant outcome of the chapter as it considers the role of the church in this problem is the fact that the church has at its disposal an element that is unique from all other agencies, namely, redeeming love. How unfortunate it is that though this unique Gift belongs to the church it is so lacking in the Christian community! It would seem that in the area in which the church could offer the most, it is offering the least. The unmarried mother should be able to find her ultimate needs fulfilled in the midst of a group of believers who can demonstrate to her, and point her to, the redemptive love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

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