

WHAT THEY ASK ABOUT

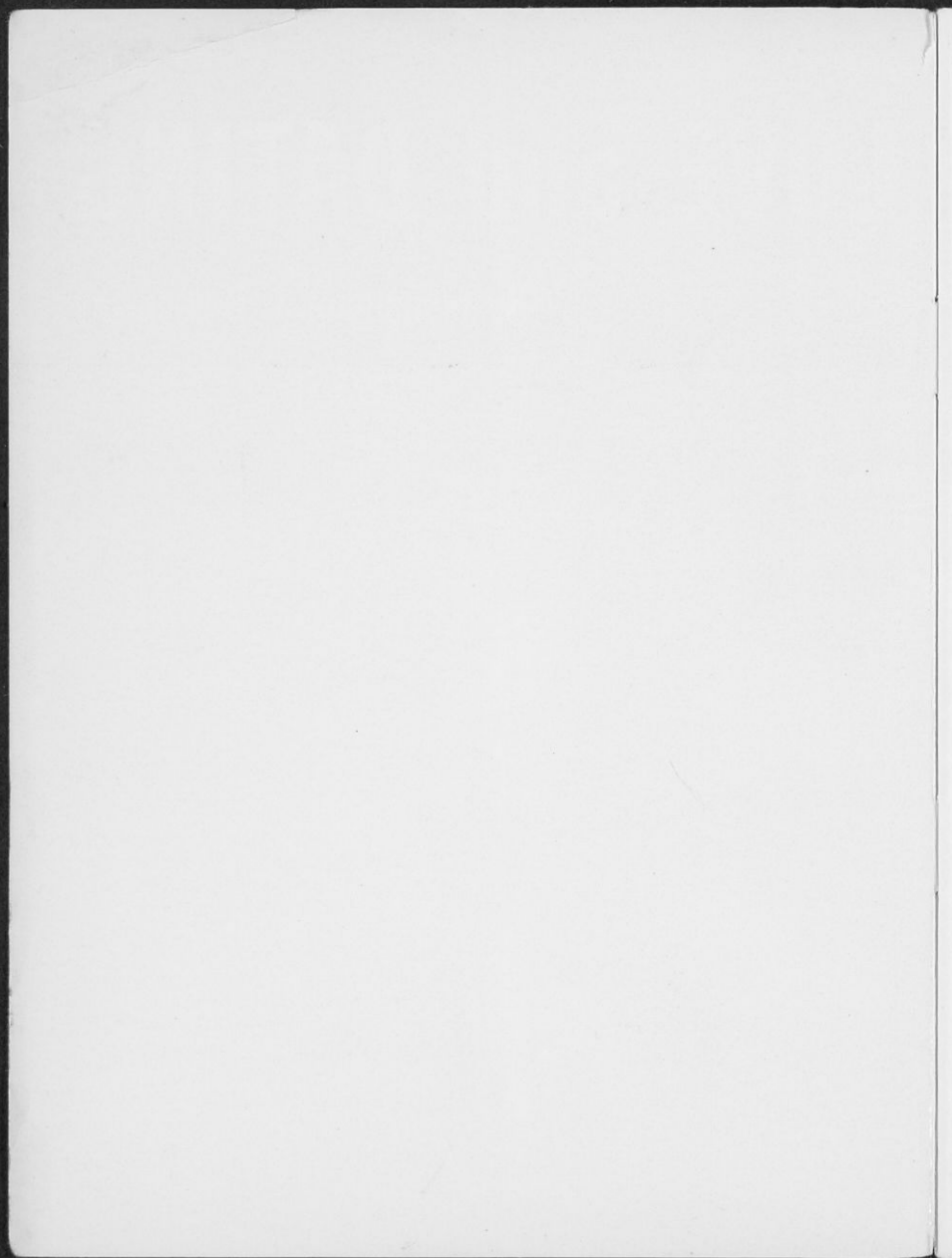
Conway J. D.
What they ask about
love and dating
ADM 6256

LOVE and DATING

By Monsignor J. D. Conway



Love contrasted with infatuation — Love supposes personality — Instructing teen-agers — Playing the field — A boy's first date — Vanity — That kissing problem — Should I quit seeing him? — Beginning young — He doesn't respect her — Time to be home — The divorced convert — Refusing the divorced man — Protestant and Catholic — Invalidly married.



What They Ask About

LOVE AND DATING

By Monsignor J. D. Conway



AVE MARIA PRESS
Notre Dame, Indiana

NIHIL OBSTAT:

John L. Reedy, C.S.C.
Censor Deputatus

IMPRIMATUR:

✠ **Most Rev. Leo A. Pursley, D.D.**
*Apostolic Administrator of the
Diocese of Ft. Wayne, Indiana*
March 28, 1956

This pamphlet is reprinted from
WHAT THEY ASK ABOUT MARRIAGE,
By Monsignor J. D. Conway.

Printed with permission.

Seventh Printing — October, 1962

*All rights reserved. This pamphlet may not be reproduced
by any means in whole or in part without prior permission.*

Deacidified



LOVE . . .

Q. You have written a great deal on the moral problems involved in courtship and dating, and have indicated realistically that these problems are indeed formidable for young unmarried people. What practical, specific steps can these young people and/or their parents and advisors take to help keep these problems within manageable proportions? The passions are pretty powerful; what can young people do to keep them from getting out of hand? Prayer, and what else?

A. Prudence is the word you are looking for: prayer and prudence. This sensible virtue will remind young people often that the basic rule for sane courtship is the same as that for safe driving: Don't rely too much on your brake.

Prudence will determine details of activities and conduct, but it cannot be effective without an honest good intention. The young person who sets out on a date to get all the sensation he safely can has already tied prudence hand and foot; he has reduced a beautiful virtue to calculating sense and restraining fear, which may keep him out of serious trouble, but hardly diminish his sin.

So the first step for both youngsters and parents is prayer: that honest, deep prayer which brings our wills into line with God's will, and makes us really want to do what is right. That takes a lot of prayer, augmented by Mass and the Sacraments.

After that, for parents and advisors, I recommend the following practical, specific steps:

1. Sound instruction on the nature of the problems involved; on the force of human passions, their normality and natural goodness; and the sound reasons, both moral and practical, for restraining them. Let young people be wisely forewarned, lest they learn blunderingly by trial and error. It is evident that this instruction cannot begin an hour before the first date. It must be a long, wise, sympathetic training of concept and attitude.

2. Sane, calm information on the morality of sexual activities and pleasures, so that the young people may know clearly what is right and what is wrong. Rare is the youngster who has such clear and certain knowledge. Most of them are mixed up. And why not? Their parents, who should do most of the teaching, are confused. Religious teachers often impart shining ideals which are impractical; and companions inculcate laxity by their boasting and ridicule. Frankly, we live in a world which holds up no high ideal of chastity, and decries in all its publicity any rigorous efforts at modesty.

3. A definite aim in all instruction and formation of attitudes is to eliminate two conflicting forces which agitate the magnetic field in which prudence must operate, namely: curiosity and fear. A calm understanding of facts can do much to eliminate curiosity; and sound moral knowledge should help eliminate scrupulous fears. The confessor knows that fears in sexual matters do not make a person good; they merely shred vices into uncertainties and make them indistinguishable from virtue. And fears so concentrate attention in anxious indecision that they make the acute moral problems of sex chronic.

4. Parents should try in every way possible to keep the confidence — and confidences — of their children. They will have to be hep — keep posted and patient — show interest and enthusiasm. They will have to take a positive attitude of encouragement and cooperation — reduce the “Don’ts”

to a minimum — help plan parties and entertainment — keep the home an interesting and inviting place. And above all they must show interest in the dated one.

5. Keep the automobile in the garage as much as possible.

And for the young people themselves I suggest the following practical, specific steps:

1. Plan your dates. Have something to do: movies, dances, parties, games, concerts, TV. Maybe even books and arguments — as long as they are animated. But if you want to avoid danger beware of two alone with time on your hands.

2. Cultivate foursomes. Don't be afraid of chaperones — or parents. Don't be afraid of the light. Don't shun the public.

3. When you start going steady, and as occasion demands, have a mutual understanding on things — on attitudes and behavior — on ideals and wishes. Be respectful, considerate, and mutually helpful. Being virtuous in company-keeping is a two-person job; only a team pulling together can do it.

4. Delay that steady company-keeping. Its dangers are inherent. Very few boys and girls can keep steady company over a long period of time without some serious problems.

5. Affectionate caresses are nice little things; but just like harmless bunnies they increase and multiply.

6. Drinking and dating combine to form dynamite.

7. Be careful of imitation. The fact that others do it doesn't make it right. And besides, don't believe all you hear, either in gossip or boasting.

8. Develop interests — individual and mutual. Be good at conversation, athletics, and games that are played in the light.

9. Aim at maturity. Look forward to happiness; be willing to sacrifice present thrills for it. Be responsible; when young

people are trusted alone without supervision, they are expected to use their own good judgment, exercise their own self-control, and not confuse their freedom with license.

10. Remember that an automobile is a vehicle for locomotion.

11. General modesty in dress and behavior — and in conversation — prevents the first sparks which enkindle fires.

12. Don't stay out too late.

13. In the presence of parents it is not necessary to clam up about your dates as though you were invoking the Fifth Amendment.

14. The two of you might pray together — and receive the Sacraments in unity of intention.

These rules are mostly for teen-agers, dating or going steady. For those who are engaged problems intensify. My general advice would be: don't get engaged until there is really some prospect of marriage.

Q. Please define what love is, what it means, what it consists of. How can a person recognize true love, and how does it differ (in appearance) from infatuation? How can one be assured that another person loves them?

A. You are asking for a book, not a column. You are asking for answers; you will get a series of comparisons from which to cull for your own conclusions.

Love has many meanings. We will start by eliminating Divine Love, brotherly love, love of parents, and love of dogs. You are obviously not asking about these.

Love is the greatest unifying force in man's nature. It makes the lover seek the loved-one with desire to possess. It makes the lover abandon himself completely to the one he loves. It makes him happy in the possessing and in the giving.

Infatuation - Romantic Love

So love is both selfish and selfless. It seeks hungrily and it gives generously. These two elements are mingled in every human love. But true love must not have too much of selfishness in it, because then it would become love of self, without the gift of self.

Our love is human. So it is an expression of our complete human nature, both body and soul. True love is not of the body alone; nor is it exclusively a thing of the soul. Man loves not as the animal or the angel, but as man. And man is not a composite of two natures in conflict, but the only creature God ever made by union of matter and spirit in one nature and one personality. So man's love, if true, has its roots in the soul while it expresses itself through the senses and emotions. If it is not really a thing of the soul, it is not real human love; if it is only in the soul, it is not the love of a real man.

The union engendered by true love is a joining of soul and body to soul and body. It is a union of two minds and two free wills expressed in physical embrace.

True love is not romantic love. True love loves truth — reality. Romantic love creates the object of its love, in dreams. It is blind — to facts; drugged by false expectations.

True love is not infatuation, everyone knows. But how to tell the one from the other surely and always, no one knows. It is a question of degree, differing in persons. Much depends on character and maturity. Here are some indications:

Love grows and growth takes time. It has to sink its roots firmly into the deep soil of the soul. It is a perennial plant, and these grow slowly. You fall into infatuation. Falling is fast, with acceleration. Falling is uncontrollable, seldom lasts long, and is often disastrous; but it does provide a whooshing, engulfing thrill.

In other words, if you have fallen head over heels, you are probably infatuated. If the thing has crept up on you quietly but thrillingly, you may well be in love.

True love is based on knowledge. It knows well the one it loves, and knows why it loves. It observes. It appraises. It is held firmly by many ties. It can enumerate in detail the points of beauty of the loved-one, the flights of spirit, the qual-

*Love must be deep
fonder love must
know deeply*

ities of soul; the walk, voice, words, interests, and mannerisms. The time of its growth has provided it with varied experiences and memories to enrich its thrill. Infatuation is apt to be swept up in the strong attraction of a few compelling traits. It sees blonde hair, fine face, or fancy figure and forgets all the rest.

Love embraces the whole personality, aware of shortcomings and defects, evaluating them. Infatuation ignores them — as though intensity of feeling should burn them up.

True love is realistic. Its thrill comes from facts. Even its dreams are reasonable and realizable. Infatuation thrives on fancy and fantasy.

2 — True love has as much of giving in it as of seeking. It is centered on the loved one, not on self. It seeks a real union of two as partners. Infatuation would dominate unknowingly, seeing the loved one as a source of personal joy, pleasure and satisfaction.

True love is honest. It does not express what it does not feel and believe. Having fixed its roots in the soul, it lets tendrils grow out through the senses and emotions, where they become words and actions to entwine the lovers into union — in both soul and body. Expressions of love come slowly, sincerely, naturally. They are never forced or faked. Physical expressions, when they do come, have real deep meaning. Infatuation reverses the process. It is born of expression, thrives on it for hasty growth, and may as quickly wither. The meaning is lacking; it is just fun, thrilling.

Love is constant, enduring, even patient when it must be. Infatuation is as changeable as it was hasty.

Love tends to be faithful. Infatuation is apt to flitter.

* Love gives calmness, security, peace, trust and happiness. Infatuation gives thrills, joys, sorrows, jealousies, and uncertainties.

Love gives ambition, inspires work, and leads to honest planning. Infatuation destroys application, appetite, and disposition; and leads to rosy dreams.

Love has ideals, but doesn't over-idealize. Unconsciously

its dreams of an ideal partner are revamped to fit the person loved. Infatuation believes that the person fits its highest ideals. It believes that true love was made in heaven and descended like a ton of electrified dynamite on the predestined mates, chosen inevitably for each other by benign fate.

The physical element is present in true love, strongly present; but it does not dominate good sense and right spirit. Infatuation stresses the sensual.

True love makes no apologies for the loved one; it does not feel ashamed. Infatuation is apt to be embarrassed — before parents, pals, and priests.

True love makes sacrifices; it seeks the happiness of the loved one, and finds its own happiness therein.

True love is based on realities of family, background, education, social position, religion, moral standards, financial situation, friends, interests, and experiences. Infatuation ignores such basic concerns.

You may not know his love, for sure, when he tells you, or when he touches you. But you may know it from his faithful devotion to you, his consideration of you, his thoughtfulness towards you, his concern and his sacrifice, his compliance with your wishes, his honest planning of your future, his sharing of self and experiences with you, his pride and his joy in you, and his peace and happiness with you. He likes very much being with you, even when he is not making love to you.

Q. Did St. Thomas Aquinas say that it was a sin to love an animal, such as a dog?

A. I am not familiar with such a statement; nor can I find it in my *Summa*. But I do find his explanation of the only true and proper object of love: *A rational being*. Animals, lacking soul and reason, cannot be the object of love in the true meaning of the word. Very often they are the recipients of affection; similar to the "love" shown for a new hat or a good beefsteak. Such affection is not sinful, unless it is excessive and unreasonable — like affection for good wine might be.

DATING . . .

Instructing teen-agers —
Playing the field — A boy's
first date — Vanity — That
kissing problem — Should I
quit seeing him — Begin-
ning young — He doesn't
respect her — Time to be
home — the divorced con-
vert—Refusing the divorced
man—Protestant and Cath-
olic—Invalidly married.

Q. Are there any books available for teen-agers to give them information about sex and dating? We have a boy and girl who are just old enough to start dating, and we do not know exactly how or what to tell them. We want them to get started right and know what dangers lie ahead, yet we do not feel capable of giving them information without some outside help. We had no education on such things from our parents but we want our children to be better prepared than we were.

A. Your attitude is perfect. First of all you realize that the education of your children along these lines should come from the parents. And secondly, you realize that it should be done wisely and properly, and you are aware of your own limitations.

Education of this kind is one of the most important duties of parents, and also one of the most widely neglected. Parents can be terrible prudes in relation to their children; and of course children quickly respond with like prudishness. Under these circumstances children develop a sense that certain things are "dirty" and must not be mentioned before their parents. And if these naughty subjects do come up, there arises with them a feeling of shame and tenseness which prevents easy discussion.

If parents are to accomplish anything in giving their children sex instruction, they must build up in them from earliest years a feeling of confidence, ease, and familiarity. They must not evade early questions, or reprimand precocious curiosity. They must impart the right attitude towards sex and birth and kindred vital topics.

This is all easy to say, but often hard to accomplish, especially if our own attitudes on the subject are inhibited or distorted. It is hard to accomplish if we lack the sense of timing, or if we don't know suitable names and descriptions. The names we learned behind the barn are not the ones we should teach to our children.

If you really want to go into this thing thoroughly, I would suggest for your reading "Christopher's Talks to Catholic Parents," by Father David L. Greenstock. It is published in London, by Burns Oates, and can be obtained from Templegate, Springfield, Illinois, for \$3.75. It is filled with good sense.

Otherwise I should not presume to give a bibliography on this subject. I am not sufficiently familiar with it. The "Queen's Work" pamphlet, "How to Give Sex Instructions," by Father P. J. Bruckner, S.J., is rather widely used. And you might find some suggestions in "Talks to Teen-Agers," by Rev. F. H. Drinkwater.

A little book which seems very good to me, and which is directly intended to help parents give instruction of this kind to their children of all ages, is "Parents, Children, and the Facts of Life," by Henry V. Sattler, C.S.S.R. It is published by the St. Anthony Guild Press.

Pamphlets will never be a satisfactory substitute for

parental instruction, but they may supplement it, and are better than no instruction at all. For a sound presentation of the principles I know nothing better than "Modern Youth and Chastity," by Rev. Gerald L. Kelly, S.J. It is a "Queen's Work" pamphlet at twenty-five cents. Father Lord has one in the same series: "Love, Sex and Teen-Agers."

Q. How many fellows should you go out with before marrying one of them?

A. That may depend on how soon one of them asks you. You can't marry one of them as long as he remains unwilling. If you keep going out with too many of them too long, maybe no one of them will want to marry you.

It may also depend on whether any of them is the man you really want to live with the rest of your life.

There should be a normal development in the manner of friendship, company-keeping, dating, engagement and marriage. The young teen-ager who first starts dating is much better off if she will play the field without any close attachment, on the basis of friendship, companionship, fun, and not too much dreamy romance.

Then as she gets older and acquires the wisdom of a college freshman, she begins to narrow down her field, to put a little more realism in her dreams, and even to make them resemble conscious planning.

In due time, the right one comes along — we are presuming the ideal situation — things become serious, rivals are pushed out of the picture, and thoughts are turned to such matters as engagement and marriage.

This normal process of development can be seriously upset in either of two ways. The romantic youngster, filled with dreams, and inspired by the movies, may start to fall in love on her first date. She will miss the fun and experience of growing up. She will miss the companionship and the normal educational process of teen-agers. She will fix upon her life partner before her judgment is well developed, while she is too quickly swayed by sentiment and emotion. She will either

marry the fellow now, much too early, or she will continue dating him much too long; and very often this long period of dating may end in frustration and the traditional broken heart, leaving her somewhat on the back corner of the top shelf, where she will have to start her teen-age development at twenty-five or older.

The opposite difficulty is that of the perpetual teen-ager. She continues flirtations, wide popularity, much dating, parties, and the thrill of new conquests, long past the date when she should start growing up. She must prove to herself that she still has what it takes to attract men, and having attracted them, her interest wanes or her indecision is multiplied, and she wants the proof all over again. Finally, in desperation, she will probably pounce on one of them when he leaves himself open to attack, and marry him because he is the most readily available prospect at the moment. She has not developed her own monogamous attitude. She has not developed complete mutual understanding and love with this particular man. She finds herself in the need of making a sudden transition from juvenile playgirl to serious, mature wife and mother in all one great step, rather than in the normal process of growth.

Play the field heartily and healthily, little girl, while you are popular and young, but play it sensibly and strictly for fun. Play it in accordance with the laws of chastity and decency. Don't let your heart get out of your hands. But don't play it too long. You can't be a child forever. Look over your admirers, pick out the ones you most admire. Pick them not for looks or dancing ability, or popularity as a brilliant quarterback. Pick them for good, solid character, honesty, decency, and steadiness. Pick out the men whom you think might be good and interesting enough to be companions for life, and then gradually begin to pick out the one — if you are able to interest him.

Q. I am a Catholic boy seventeen years old. I have a problem and would be greatly pleased if you would give me your advice. I want to go on a date about once every two weeks. I think

if I dated a good Catholic girl that I wouldn't be led into sin, but brought closer to God. There are two reasons why I want to date. One is because I can have something to look forward to. The other reason is because most of the other boys my age do, and I don't want to be different. But my mother thinks I am too young, and she said if I asked any priest, that he would say the same.

A. You are a good boy. Your wishes about dating seem right and reasonable. Your mother may not like me for it, but I must disagree with her. For her consolation, however, not all priests will agree with me either.

Mothers of teen-agers have a problem. They listen to that insistent question: "Mother, may I go out on a date?" And most youngsters use your excuse: "All the other kids do." It isn't a very sound argument, really, but it sure puts mamma on the spot. It implies that she is a tyrant, old-fashioned and unreasonable, trying to make social outcasts out of her children and deprive them of normal pleasures.

Mamma's problem is made more complicated because modern teen-age dating is a novelty in the social order, and there are no clearly-defined rules for judging it. Nor can firm rules be made. Customs differ by locality, and individuals differ even more. It is a local problem and a personal problem.

I am told that in cities children of twelve and thirteen have dates for special events, and by fifteen most of them are dating with some regularity. You live in the country, of course, and there customs are less frantic. But even so, you have reached the acceptable age.

Now do not misunderstand me or mis-quote me. When I say you are old enough to date, I do not mean that you should keep steady company. That is another question entirely, and the rules are different. I think it would be particularly bad for you, who have never dated, to start out going steady — or even dating regularly the same girl. And especially would I warn you about getting romantic and sentimental, and thinking you are falling in love. Have fun, but keep the stars out of your eyes.

Mamma and papa have a right and duty to regulate and supervise your dating. But if they are to do so, they must first understand it. Whether they like it or not, they must recognize it as a social fact. Simply forbidding does more harm than good. Better to encourage wisely — to know the date and know her family — to be friends with her and invite confidence from your boy — to suggest amusements and provide entertainment. When, where and whom your boy dates will depend very much on your attitude and interest.

Modern educators and advice-givers think that early dating is a good thing — and many Catholic authorities agree with them, as long as the dating is strictly for companionship, for a good time, for prestige and for parties — as long as the youngsters do not “go steady” or become emotionally involved.

From my own reading and observance, I am convinced that dating which begins reasonably early and is restricted, at first, to big social events or to very casual meetings, has an excellent influence on the development of personality and character. It gives poise and confidence and social ease. It reduces emotional excitement in meeting and associating with the opposite sex, and helps to adjust to happy, normal relationships. It develops the ability to judge and evaluate opposite numbers, and reduces the romanticism and idealization which make early love so blind. And finally it widens acquaintances, so that in due time serious choices and relationships may develop more wisely.

Adolescence is the normal time for boys to get interested in girls and girls in boys. This normal trend should be expected, understood, encouraged and guided.

Q. Is it a serious sin for a young woman to stand before a mirror and fix herself up before she goes to a party?

A. If she doesn't, she will probably look like sin. The sin of vanity might be involved in excessive anxiety to look attractive. Simple vanity could hardly be a serious sin.

Q. Is it a sin on the girl's part if a boy gets passionate while kissing her?

A. It is if she knows his state and intentions and lets him keep kissing her — a mortal sin. And if he is a normal boy he is certainly going to get passionate if he keeps on kissing her intently — no matter what his intentions. And what are your own reasons for letting him kiss you?

This kissing question is the big problem of modern youth. Not that modern youth is different. A kiss does much the same for Joe and Jane as it did for grandpa and grandma. But customs have changed and Joe and Jane have more opportunity for uninterrupted petting and pawing. And attitudes have changed, so that these youngsters find things socially quite acceptable which would have fairly shocked the oldsters.

What is right about it all? The rules are fairly clear, but the application of them is not easy. Not easy for the realistic moralist. Less easy for the ardent youth. I just read a pamphlet which makes it all neat, black and white, and I thought that the view must be wonderful from that ivory tower. It tells you girls never to kiss any boy until you are engaged to him, and then to do it briefly, discreetly, and with maidenly restraint. I cannot question the author's doctrine or idealism, but I wonder about his psychology.

One of the difficulties is that practice has fouled up the rules, which seem to have become theories for moralists to juggle in their musings, but not practical for teen-agers. Passion seems always a new discovery of each generation. Old-fashioned parents knew so little about it that it is strange their children were even begotten.

Actually passion remains the same and the rules do not change. But even to optimistic observers today, the Sixth Commandment seems to be more honored in the breach than in the observance. But the rule is there, strict, harsh, and clear: It is a mortal sin for unmarried people to seek deliberate sexual pleasure, either partial or complete.

Confusion often arises in conscientious souls in determining what is sexual pleasure. There is sensual pleasure closely akin to it which may be legitimate, though often dangerous. Probably modern youth's fault is going in too much for the

sensual without realizing that it rapidly becomes sexual.

When two youngsters, out on a date, park their car and set out to kiss and pet, let us not mince words; the pleasure they seek is sexual and sinful. Of course they have no intention of going too far, but they want to get all the pleasure they can up to that receding danger point. And morally they are already going much too far.

But what about the affectionate little kiss of friendship? To the eternal gratification of boys, girls are just too blamed affectionate and motherly and sentimental. They simply feel warmly loved and wanted while the boy gets other potent thrills. If the girl realizes the provocation she is giving him — as you do — she is guilty of cooperating in his sin.

What is a poor girl to do these days? If she pets, she sins. If she doesn't, she fears that horrible female oblivion: no dates. My pamphlet makes it all very clear. The worthy boy soon becomes disgusted and disillusioned with the girl who gives him her kisses; and goes back in bright idealism to make a bride of the one who stood him off with a chaste smile. Her kiss, when she does give it, is a sacred symbol of her refined and faithful love — and you can't help wondering if the bright idealist finds it quite worth taking when he gets it. A kiss is a sacred symbol of both love and lust. And between boy and girl it seldom symbolizes the one without intimating the other.

The only answer I can give is that a woman's attraction is still her total personality, her ability to lead a man on without gratifying and tempting. It is maddening, maybe, but often matrimonial. And in this her sexual attraction is only one factor — the most powerful, maybe, but not unique. She interests him by being interested in him, and by being interesting to him. She intrigues him with her beauty and neatness, her intelligence, wit and cleverness. She lulls him with her capability and sympathy. She is loving — and latent with unrevealed prospects. She's an all-around girl; and she keeps him around, if she wants him. She doesn't have to hold him tightly. He just sticks. (Yes, from up here the view is wonderful.)

Q. You answered by question about my boy-friend's becoming passionate while kissing me, but I still have a problem. What am I to do? Should I quit seeing him entirely?

A. No general answer can be given. The answer must be tailored to fit each individual case. If you are not particularly interested in this boy-friend — if you are not apt to fall in love with him — if he is not the one you think you might seriously want as your future husband, and he persists in trying to use you as a means of arousing his passions, then you should give him the brush-off politely. If prospects are much more serious and promising — if you think he might be just the one, then you should try to make him behave. You probably can, if you will. But if he continues to get out of hand, then the problem needs a re-think.

If you are already in love, or engaged — which does not seem to be your case — then different problems arise. Vigilance, restraint and careful modesty are needed to control the situation, to permit love's proper expression and growth while keeping passion under control.

Let these principles guide you: (1) You must not seek sexual thrills or satisfaction with your boy-friend or fiancé. That is a serious sin. (2) There is no company-keeping without some danger to chastity. But the more serious that danger becomes, the more serious must be your reason for continuing the company-keeping. You may not encounter serious dangers to chastity, just for the sake of a casual date or a pleasant friendship. You may face such serious dangers, with proper precautions, for real love and future marriage. (3) You are not directly responsible for your boy-friend's attitude and motives; but charity forbids you to give him scandal or to offer him enticingly the occasion for sin.

Q. What do you think of girls who go with boys at a young age and kiss? Is it a sin?

A. Customs of modern youngsters are mysteries to me. For that matter the youngsters themselves are mysterious. Mod-

ern girls of 14 show such a mixture of maturity and childishness, of knowledge and simplicity, of frankness and artfulness, of sweetness and orneriness that you must love them happily while you swear quietly at them in desperation. And boys of a similar age would be better if they just skipped a few years.

Dating, I am told, is a modern phenomenon by which boy meets girl, and vice versa — with little emphasis, we hope, on the vice. It is preliminary to company-keeping, which in turn leads to going steady; and from there on I get really mixed up —and often they do too — in a succession of pins, class rings, diamond rings, and plain gold bands.

Since dating, in the modern sense, is a new custom, it has few established social standards to guide it. Social patterns and controls do not become well defined in a generation or two, especially when trends are confused by such novelties as movies, parked cars, TV; jazz, swing, and be-bop; experiments in prohibition; uncertain habits of eating, drinking, and home-living; and a couple of world wars.

Consequently, there seems to be much disagreement between youngsters and their parents, between moralists and sociologists, between mamma and grandma, as to the advisable age, frequency, and manner of dating. However, though inveterate traditionalists may shake their heads in doubt and clack their tongues in criticism, our modern custom definitely does sanction early dating, though there may remain variations on the manner and frequency of that dating.

Sociologists tell us, with all the familiar modern words, that early dating accustoms young people easily to each other's company, overcomes hampering shyness and bashfulness, aids proper social adjustment and personality development, gives poise and balance, reduces the emotional excitement of meeting and associating with the opposite sex, broadens experience, gives prestige and a social standing, with confidence and a sense of security, provides a wider acquaintance from which to choose friends and, ultimately, a mate for life.

To this list parents will certainly add that early dating creates some intense problems in the home, causes worries

to mom and dad, and provides a few precocious problems for the youngsters themselves. Moralists are sure to point out the dangers and temptations, and their warnings should not go unheard, because passions are real and youthful control lacks prudence and experience. And all of us may wonder if too much early dating does not contribute to the nervous restlessness, the insatiable uncertainty which we sense in adolescents. Blame it not too much though; they could well absorb profusely from our own frantic flounderings.

As I understand it, this dating business (for novice teenagers) is supposed to be something quite different from going steady. Dates are for fun and for parties, for dances and movies and picnics and games. There is not supposed to be much of love or seriousness in them. You play the field and take your chances, make your conquests, or sit dolefully by the telephone. You endure the drips and the dopes, and try to avoid the squares; and you find some smooth and terrific.

Now what about that kissing business? Certainly early dating should be free of necking, to say nothing of serious petting, which is practically immoral for anyone this side of marriage. Kissing customs vary, as do the kisses themselves. But in any clime, or cling, serious intense kisses are a preparation for something else, which you kids should not be preparing for until several years hence. Things prepared too early can become stale, or overdone, or spoiled.

Girls say that the boys expect them to kiss; and boys say that the girls expect them to demand it. And neither wants to be found wanting in such important social accomplishments, though both would rather not be bothered — right at first, anyway. And when the kiss is taken or given, naturally no respectable adolescent wants the manner of it to betray childish inexperience or timidity. And the movies have shown them how.

My own opinion: early dating is a social fact; let's accept it. It has its dangers and problems, but it also has its blessings. Rather than wasting our time in stubborn opposition to it, we should try to solve its problems and lessen its dangers, try to regulate it, define its manners and stabilize its customs.

My own advice to my questioner, a girl of very young age, who never expected that she would stir up such a long column by her innocent question: go out on dates, but in the beginning make them rare and special—like a prom or a big party—or make them casual and fun—a coke or a game—and play the field, with care. Talk your dates over with your parents before and after; they are awfully old, but they understand more than you think, and they love you and want you to be happy. And when it comes to kisses, save them. As a moralist I would find it hard to justify them now; they might well be a sin, and may be more of a sin than you think. Later they will have more meaning, be worth more, and you will have reason to justify them and keep them from being sins.

Will you be less popular with the boys? I think not. You need not be a prude, or carry on a campaign. Tease them, keep them hopeful, but make them miss . . . and wait.

Q. Several of my friends were talking and this question came up: When a boy and girl go out together and the boy does not respect the girl but tries to do the girl wrong and commit sin with her, who is committing sin if the girl does not consent willingly? Some of the folks think that it is not a sin if nothing happens.

A. If a girl goes out with a boy in good faith, believing that he is a decent young man, and then he tries to force his attentions upon her and to lead her into sin, she finds herself in great danger, but is not guilty of sin unless she willingly consents to his immoral approaches, or to the suggestive thoughts, desires, or sensations which may be aroused within herself. Of course she must ward him off, discourage him, show her disapproval and unwillingness, resist him—even walk home if necessary.

All this is true for the first date which they have. If she goes out with him a second time, she is not nearly so innocent. She knows what she is getting into. She places herself

in danger willingly. She is guilty of sin before they even go out together. Her reluctance is more apparent than sincere.

Q. To end a discussion would you please give your opinion of the proper time a girl out of high school (18 or 19 years of age) should be home from an ordinary date.

A. Prudence warns me to stay out of this controversy. So much depends on custom, circumstances and personalities.

The young girl should definitely take into consideration:

1. The wishes and advice of her parents.
2. The routine of her home and the convenience of her family.
3. The character, intent, and conduct of the young man.
4. The dangers of sin or scandal.
5. Her personal reputation.
6. Her duties of the next day; her health and disposition; her need of sleep.
7. The time requirements of the party or entertainment offered.
8. The careful avoidance of dangerous loitering in lanes or limousines.

Eight P.M. is too late if any portion of the time was used for sinful purpose. Two A.M. might be occasionally quite proper if all circumstances justified it.

Q. A young non-Catholic girl is legally married and divorced. Later she becomes a Catholic, fully understanding that she may never be able to marry again. Is she now permitted to go out on dates with single men? She is waiting for the Church to investigate the validity of her first marriage.

A. Married women may not have dates with single men. This girl is married. She must behave as a married person

should. If she can't have dates with her own husband, let her stay home with her books and canary — or her television set — or let her go to the show with her girl friends.

Q. If a divorced man asks me for a date, should I tell him, in refusing him, the reason for my refusal?

A. I think it would be best to do so. Do not be offensive, but tell him kindly — and tell him firmly.

Morally speaking he has insulted you by asking for the date. But he probably intended no insult. So you need not be offended.

Telling him the reason for your refusal will usually be the most charitable way of dealing with him. It is better than making him think you don't like him personally. It will also remind him of his position as a married man.

Q. Should a Protestant girl date a Catholic boy and vice versa?

A. If they are wise and wish to avoid the problems of mixed marriage, they will avoid the early dates and company-keeping. Usually these are easy to avoid, but as friendly attachment develops into love, separation becomes increasingly difficult. Finally love will push them to the point where problems and dangers will have little meaning in the face of emotion. They will answer all objections, even their own, by the supreme argument: "But we are in love."

If my answer were directed to the Catholic, I might remind him of the moral obligation of avoiding such dating. I would not be the storming tyrant who declares that every such date is a mortal sin, or even a venial sin. But if he would listen, I would review briefly with him the obligation of avoiding the occasion of sin — and dating a non-Catholic is just that; a possible occasion of various sins. Good, careful, honest thought must weigh the dangers and the reasons.

Q. I have been dating a person who was baptized in the Catholic Church, received his First Holy Communion, and then later

quit the Church. He married a Protestant outside the Church. I thought he was separated from her, but now I find that he is still living with her. I am wondering how I should confess it? Must I stop seeing him?

A. This man is not validly married, of course. But you had better stop dating him or you may find yourself a corpse. Even if you don't stop a slug, your reputation will be all messed up. And even if you got this man, what would you have but trouble? If he is now unfaithful to the first woman, he will probably be unfaithful to the second also.

Your manner of confessing depends upon the sins of which you have been guilty. I judge that you have done nothing contrary to chastity. So there may be nothing really serious to confess. Just stay away from him.

777313

12 BOOKLETS ON MARRIAGE

Love & Dating

*Keeping
Company*

Marriage Cases

Engagement

Rhythm

*Marriage
Outside
The
Church*

*Modesty,
Chastity,
& Morals*

Birth Control

*Marriage
(Catholic &
non-Catholic)*



Marital Life

*Mixed
Marriage*

Divorce

These booklets give you more than 200 answers to the most commonly asked questions on marriage.

For high-school religion classes, discussion groups and home libraries.

\$1.25

PAYMENT WITH ORDER PLEASE

AVE MARIA PRESS

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA