



## **THE HISTORY OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION**

### **Part Eleven—Pornographers Take the Internet**

By Steve Gallagher

It is hard to believe that just ten years ago there was no such thing as a world wide web. Nobody could have predicted that within a decade, there would be a computer medium for the transmission of information that would virtually connect and run nearly the entire civilized world. Today, over 400 million people have access to the Internet, nearly half of whom speak English. A medium that only began a few years ago now boasts over one billion web sites.

The web officially began in 1994 when Netscape launched it as an alternative information-swapping device. Computer geeks were the first to begin up-linking web sites. Before long, various companies saw it as another way to promote their products and began to host their own web pages. In order to index and locate various web sites, a number of computer companies launched search engines. This was how the Internet was birthed.

Almost immediately opportunistic pornographers became involved as well. As early as December 1994, an organization of men who live or travel in the Far East put up a web site offering information about parties, events, and products that featured Asian women. They didn't have much response until they listed their site with various browsers. Within one week, they had over 15,000 hits.

By the beginning of 1995, there were already 200 businesses selling “erotica services,” including the Playboy Empire.<sup>i</sup> By mid-year, a number of branches of the sex-for-sale industry had begun operating on the Web. For instance, strip clubs began featuring nude pictures of their dancers. Other organizations began advertising prostitution tours in the Far East and South America. Also debuting at this time were on-line introduction services offering mail-order brides from South East Asia, South America and Russia. Of course, sites offering sexual images were the most popular of all. In August 1995 a search on Yahoo discovered 391 adult content sites. A study of one web-browser stated that 47% of the 11,000 repeat searches were for listings with adult content.<sup>ii</sup>

Pornographers began making big money very quickly. Seeing the enormous potential at hand, some entrepreneurs started investing resources into new technology. Seth Warshavsky, founder of Internet Entertainment Group (IEG), was the first to offer e-commerce software, allowing viewers to access adult web sites through the use of secure credit card transactions. This was enormously important because the purchase of sexual images must be quick, secure and private for it to succeed. His company also developed a

new transmission technique that made it possible to view streaming video. Other companies used videoconferencing technology to deliver live strip and/or sex shows.

By 1996, Playboy's site had the 11<sup>th</sup> most "hits" on the Internet, and by the next year was boasting \$2 million in advertising revenue. Another site was receiving 1.5 million hits per day. By August, another search on Yahoo now revealed over 1,600 pornographic listings, an increase of 400% in one year!

On-line smut exploded during the following year. According to one computer magazine, in less than three years after the advent of the Internet, there were now over 10,000 adult entertainment listings.<sup>iii</sup> A company handling credit card transactions said that in 1997, pornographic web sites were bringing in anywhere from \$10,000 to \$1 million per month in revenues. According to Forrester Research, analysts of the Internet industry, in 1997 adult entertainment made \$137 million off the Web.<sup>iv</sup>

From April 1997 through December 1998, the number of Internet users grew from 100 million to 150 million. IEG hit its peak in 1997-98 when they published nude photographs of radio shrink Dr. Laura Schlessinger and offered a private pornographic video featuring popular couple Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee. Warshavsky became dubbed the Bill Gates of the Internet porn business as his web sites alone generated annual revenues of between \$50-\$100 million. Just one of his sites was being visited over 7 million times per day. According to industry analysts, smut sites were now generating \$1 billion a year in revenues.

By 2000, there were over 40,000 web sites with sexual content according to *U.S. News & World Report* (3/27/00). Author Brendan Koerner added, "Nielsen NetRatings report that 17.5 million surfers visited adult sites from their homes in January (2000), a 40% increase compared with four months earlier." Gross revenues were now reaching \$2 billion.<sup>v</sup>

Today, there are over 200,000 pornographic listings on the Internet. *Newsweek Magazine* claims that visits to adult sites comprise one third of all on-line usage. According to Dr. Laura Schlessinger, at any given time 62% of those on the Web are visiting a porn site—the discrepancy probably lying in the fact that pornography viewers tend to remain on one site for lengthy periods of time. She also stated that on-line adult entertainment is now a \$5-6 billion a year industry.

### **Effects on the American Culture**

The question that begs an answer is: How is all of this affecting our nation and even the Christian Church? What does it mean to our society to have at least 20 million men regularly filling their minds with the images of people having sex? What will be the long-term consequences of millions of men viewing pictures of homosexuality, bestiality, sadism, and even child pornography?

Over the years, a number of disturbing facts have emerged about habitual pornography users. Pornography promotes:

- Sexual addiction and promiscuity.
- Unhealthy attitudes about sexuality.
- The dehumanization of women as sex toys.

- The rape myth, that women actually want to be raped.
- Sexual relationships apart from love and commitment.
- Selfish indulgence and isolation.
- Aberrant and bizarre sex.

One can easily see how the moral fabric of a society will quickly unravel as increasing numbers of its people are affected and driven by such thinking. What is even more frightening is the prospect of the future of our nation. It is an undeniable fact that children by the millions are becoming involved in pornography—just because of the ease of finding it on the Internet. Even before there was a World Wide Web packed with sexual content, both national commissions on pornography (1970 & 1986) concluded that boys age 12 to 17 is one of the largest consumer groups of adult material. How much more true is it today, when most kids go on-line either at home, at the home of a friend, at school, or at the library? In fact, some experts believe that 70% of pornography ends up in the hands of kids!<sup>vi</sup>

According to National Public Radio, nearly a third of children age 10 to 17 (read boys *and* girls) said that they had seen a pornographic web site. In 2000, *Time Magazine* stated the number to be even higher: 44%. According to a study done by Symantec Corp., 47% of children had received spam linking them to pornographic web sites. One unknown source states that the average age of exposure to pornography has now become nine years of age! “Finding porn on the Web is easier than researching for a homework assignment, one fourteen year-old told MSNBC. “What kid can’t type in “porn.com?” It’s constantly being blasted at (us) from all directions.” A fifteen year-old girl from a Christian family said, “Most of the time, I stumble upon the porn sites. For instance, I was looking for pictures of elephants for my aunt and I stumbled upon pictures of women having sex with animals, not a pretty picture.” What will our nation be like when these children—so corrupted during their impressionable years—become adults?

The Church has not been immune from this moral disaster either. Surprising as it may be, studies and polls have shown that the percentage of Christian men viewing pornography is the same as that of nonbelievers (33%). In an online poll of 10,000 Christians implemented by Focus on the Family in November 2000, 47% stated that pornography had been a problem in their home. According to a poll conducted by *Christianity Today* in 2001, 44% of pastors acknowledged that they had visited a smut site.

Scriptures indicate that as the Second Coming approaches, the level and intensity of evil will increase significantly. We have certainly witnessed that during the past forty years. As the world around us grows increasingly darker, the need for purity and holiness amongst rank and file Christians has never been greater. And yet tragically, it seems that the level of decency among Christians is also plunging at an astonishing rate. Little wonder then that Jesus predicted that the last days would be a time when the love (*agape*—Christ’s love) would dissipate. Paul predicted that believers would be “lovers of self... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.” (II Timothy 3:2-5) Could we be witnessing the great “falling away,” predicted by both Jesus and Paul?

There is little doubt that Internet pornography has taken a terrible toll on the American public. Only the Lord knows what lies ahead for this once great nation. One thing I do

know is this: we cannot expect the unsaved to turn the tide. If large numbers of believers are willing to participate in something as evil as pornography, what hope do we have for the future?

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<sup>i</sup> M.W. Strangelove, "Internet advertising review – The Internet has hormones," *Selling Sex in Cyberspace, The Internet Business J.*, p. 10, Jan. 1995.

<sup>ii</sup> S. Connor, "Pornography most popular subject for Internet searches," *The Independent – London*, Sept. 13, 1995.

<sup>iii</sup> *Inter@ctive Week* survey results, "X-rated sites pace online industry," *Chicago Sun Times*, 24 June 1997.

<sup>iv</sup> "Surfing for sex," *The Guardian*, May 14, 1998.

<sup>v</sup> Much of the history of Internet porn detailed in this article comes from an article written by Donna M. Hughes, *The Internet and Sex Industries: Partners in Global Sexual Exploitation for* Technology and Society Magazine, Spring 2000.

<sup>vi</sup> American Family Association web site: ([www.afa.net](http://www.afa.net))

**Steve Gallagher** is the founder and president of Pure Life Ministries. He has dedicated his life to helping men find freedom from sexual sin and the abundant life in God that comes through deep repentance.

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