

'Peace Of Soul' - - - By Monsignor Fulton Sheen

By MONSIGNOR FULTON J. SHEEN

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This is the fifth of fourteen installments of "Peace of Soul," the challenging best-seller by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, one of America's leading exponents of Catholic doctrine.

Installation V

Chapter Nine

By MONSIGNOR FULTON J. SHEEN

There has been no single influence which has done more to prevent man from finding God and rebuilding his character, has done more to lower the moral tone of society than the denial of personal guilt. This repudiation of man's personal responsibility for his action is falsely justified in two ways: by assuming that man is only an animal and by giving a sense of guilt the tag "inorganic."

The excuses are new—the effort to escape responsibility for our sins is ancient. Through the ages, man has always tried to find something to blame besides himself, e.g., poverty, environment, systems of economics, politics, finances, or society in general. But all these failed wholly to convince—they were obviously too unrelated to the person, for all of them are extrinsic.

Recently, the materialists hit upon a new scapegoat—not in nature, nor in society, but inside of man himself, namely his unconscious. The fault was now not in the stars, but in that part of ourselves which could not be held responsible. Furthermore, it was claimed that the trouble could be controlled solely by lifting the unconscious quirk to the level of consciousness through psychoanalysis.

To prevent a misunderstanding, let it here be stated unequivocally: there is nothing wrong, there is even something commendable about a psychological method which cures mental disorders by making the unconscious conscious. And, even apart from true derangements, men may be disturbed by a complex which has no ethical or moral cause; in treating such cases, medical science has a vast area in which it can legitimately operate.

We are concerned and concerned only with methods of treatment which deny all moral responsibility and attack the patient's admission of personal sin and guilt by telling him that the idea of sin induces morbidity or a guilt complex and makes him abnormal.

ALL NICE PEOPLE

Such psychiatrists would make all people nice people, competent in their freedom from guilt or sin. By one magic stroke, the world would be rid of nasty people, or those who recognize they are sinners. This conception shows a shocking ignorance of human nature. The truth is that there is an increase of mental disorders largely because too many people think they are nice, when really they are nasty. This was the message Our Lord drove home in the parable of the two men who went into the temple to pray.

Paraphrasing the story of the Pharisee (who was a very nice man) you can imagine him praying in the front of the temple as follows: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that my friends and adviser has told me that there is no such thing as guilt, that sin is a myth, and that Thou, O Father, art only a projection of my father complex."

"There may be something wrong with my repressed instincts, but there is nothing wrong with my soul. I contribute 10 per cent of my income to the Society for the Elimination of Religious Superstitions, and I do for my figure three times a week. Oh, I thank Thee that I am not like the rest of men, those nasty people, such as the Christian there in the back of the temple who thinks that he is a sinner, that his soul stands in need of grace, that his conscience is burdened with extortion, and that his heart is weighted down with a crime of injustice. I may have an Oedipus complex, but I have no sin."

All the while, in the back of the temple, a nasty individual then and now strikes his breast and says, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Our Lord tells us that he goes back to his house justified.

DENYING SIN
Very harmful effects can follow accepting the philosophy which denies personal guilt or sin and thereby makes everyone nice. By denying sin, the nice people make a cure impossible. Sin is most serious, and the tragedy is deepened by the denial that we are sinners.

If the blind deny that they are blind, how shall they ever see? The really unforgivable sin is the denial of sin, because, by its nature, there is now nothing to be forgiven. By refusing to admit to personal guilt, the nice people are made into scandal-mongers, gossipers, talebearers, and snipers, for they must project their real if unrecognized guilt to others.

This, again, gives them a new

ful will accuse their husbands of infidelity. Such souls finally reach a point where, like Nietzsche, they want to increase evil until all distinction between right and wrong is blotted out; then they can sin with impunity and say with Nietzsche, "Evel, be thou my good." Expediency can now replace morality, cruelty becomes justice, become love. Sin multiplies itself in such a soul until it becomes a permanent residence of Satan, cured by Christ as one of the whitest sepulchers of this world.

Such is the history of a "nice" person, who believes he never sins.

Chapter Ten

Man cannot with impunity break laws of his own nature, the punishment which invariably follows such attempts at rebellion may be most apparent in the psychological order. For example, it is clear that every self-centered person is a frustrated person. Why must this be? It is because frustration results when a natural longing encounters an insurmountable obstacle.

Every natural longing to find satisfaction needs to be turned toward an object, until that occurs, it remains a longing—an inclination for a certain sort of performance. But actualization of the longing can come only through something which is itself actual; the longing, as such, being a mere potency, cannot procure its own satisfaction. What does procure it is the object toward which the potency is ordained.

SENSE OF GUILT

As long as the person remains concerned exclusively with himself, instead of giving himself to the objective world of tasks and duties, such actualization cannot take place and frustration ensues. By violating the law of his nature, man thus brings upon himself frustration and discontent.

Every man and woman alive experiences a sense of guilt when he breaks a natural law. As Seneca said, "Every guilty person is his own hangman." The law of his nature is also a law of "Conscience doth make towards of us all." Instead of calling sin a fiction, it would be truer to call it a friction, a "rubbing the wrong way." Guilt ever unadmitted is a source of many of modern man's psychological ills.

Yet it would be unsound to say that the moral is always behind mental disorders; for it is not. Mental diseases, using the phrase in the strict sense of the term, may have physical causes, such as organic alterations of the brain, disturbances in the endocrine glands, malformations of the central nervous system, and the like.

Here we abstract entirely from all theories concerning the origin of schizophrenia, such as that which holds it due to abnormalities on the "molecular level," and the theory of psychogenic causes of "mild depressive insanity." We are here treating the philosophy of frustration—its origin, its nature, and the wife who loved him, too, sinners may come to an understanding of their wickedness when they understand what they have done to Our Divine Lord.

CHRIST'S CROSS
That is why the Cross has always played a central part in the Christian pictures. It brings out what is worst in us by revealing what sin can do to goodness and love. It brings out the best in us by revealing what goodness can do for sin—forgive and atone at the moment of sin's greatest cruelty.

The Cross of Christ does something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. Everywhere else in the world we are spectators; but, facing the vision of the Cross, we pass from spectatorship to participation. If anyone thinks that the confession of his guilt is escapism, let him try once kneeling at the foot of the Crucifix. He cannot escape feeling involved.

One look at Christ on the Cross, and the scab is torn from the ulcerous depth of sin as it stands revealed in all of its ugliness. Just one flash of that Light of the World shatters all the blindness which sins have begotten and burns into the soul the truth of our relationship to God. Those who have refused to go up to Calvary are those who do not weep for their sins. Once a soul has gone there, he can no longer say that sin does not matter.

Next Week: Examination of Conscience.

Cardinal Griffin Suffers Setback

London—(NC)—His Eminence Bernard Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, has had a set back in his recovery and is suffering from high blood pressure, it was officially announced at the Archbishop's House, Westminster. Doctors have advised cancellation of all engagements.

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A Statement
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