

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

This is the eighth of fourteen installments of "Peace of Soul," the challenging best-seller by Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, leading exponent of Catholic doctrine. By MONSIGNOR FULTON J. SHEEN (Copyright, 1949 by Fulton J. Sheen. All rights reserved.)

Installation VIII Chapter Fifteen

Sex has become one of the most discussed subjects of modern times. The Victorians pretended it did not exist; the moderns pretend that nothing else exists. Some critics place all the blame on Freud; Emil Ludwig in his book, "Dr. Freud," claims that the popularity of Freud is due to the fact that he made it possible for people to talk about sex under the guise of science.

This is, of course, not the total explanation; Freudianism would never have become popular in a more normal civilization. Marx and Freud would not have written in the thirteenth century and would have had a trivial audience in the Elizabethan era; their appeal now is due to the fact that the climate of the world is more favorable for such a philosophy. There had to be a materialist preparation for Sigmund Freud.

Lewis Mumford rightly contends: "Despite the scope Freud gave theoretically to man's deepest subjective impulses, he looked to science alone to effect man's improvement. Unconsciously, he accepted as a final revelation of truth the ideology that was formulated in the eighteenth century, that of Locke-Hume-Condorcet-Voltaire."

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr relates Freud to a reaction against false optimism. "The romantic pessimism which culminates in Freud may be regarded as symbolic of the despair which modern man faces when his optimistic illusions are dispelled for under the perpetual smile of modernity there is a grimace of disillusion and Schopenhauer's source."

It is unhistorical and philosophically unsound to blame Freud for the current overemphasis on sex. Instead of being the creator of the popularity of sex, he was rather its expression and its effect. Far from being the founder of an age, he was its postscript.

There are some faithful disciples still writing who consider Freud's method and his philosophy as absolute truth, they hit hard and instantly resent any criticism, calling it "reactionary" or "obscure." But many others have already changed or abandoned fundamental Freudian ideas, among these are Karl Horney and Theodor Reik.

LOSS OF BELIEF The principal reason for sex defilement is loss of belief in God. Once men lose God, they lose the purpose of life, and when the purpose of living is forgotten, the universe becomes meaningless. Man then tries to forget his emptiness in the intensity of a momentary experience.

There is no surer formula for discontent than to try to satisfy our cravings for the ocean of infinite love from the leaping of finite satisfactions. Nothing material, physical, or carnal can ever satisfy man completely, he has an immortal soul which needs an Eternal Love. "Not by bread alone doth man live."

A second reason for the cult of sex is a desire to escape from the responsibility of living and from the unbearable voice of an uneasy conscience. By concentration upon the unconscious animal primitive areas gullible individuals feel that they no longer need to fret about the meaning of life. Once God has been denied, then everything becomes permissible to them. By denying the ethical in life they have substituted license for liberty.

That is why an age of carnal license is always an age of political anarchy. The foundations of social life are shaken at the very moment when the foundations of family life are destroyed. The rebellion of the masses against social order, which Marx advocated, is matched by the rebellion of the libido and the animal instincts, which the sexists advocate within the individual. Both systems deny responsibility — either because history is believed to be economically determined or because man is called biologically determined.

A third reason for the overemphasis on sex is the modern denial of immortality. Once the Eternal is denied, the Now becomes allimportant. When men believe in immortality, they not only seek the continuance of their spirit in eternity, but also the continuance of their flesh, through the creation of families which will survive them and meet the challenge death otherwise presents. The denial of immortality thus gives death a double mastery, first over the person who denies survival, though he needs must die, and second by leading him to repudiate family life, which is now regarded as a mere hindrance to the pleasures of the brief hour of life.

It is a historical fact that in times of disaster, epidemic, bombings, etc., some individuals who have no eternal values to sustain them, seeing the lease on life about to run out, plunge into orgies of debauchery. It is no accident that the present civilization, which has emphasized sex as no other age has, lives in constant fear of death. Baudelaire rightly pictured modern love as sitting on a skull. When the flesh is given a moral value, it produces life; when sex frustrates morality, it ends in death.

SEX EMPHASIS The predilection for sex is characteristic of a profoundly naturalistic age. Even before psychoanalysis was conceived, one can observe notable signs of such a development. The naturalistic literary school of France — which became tremendously in-



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not just by itself any more than the stomach can exist without food, extends itself in one direction by the acquiring of knowledge at the more we know of the truth the more our personality is developed. The quest for perfection of the self reaches to the infinite. No one has ever said, "I know enough." That is why we hate to have secrets kept from us. We hate this just as much as we hate to be made to know.

TWO APPETITES We escape the limitations of the body in another direction by the expansion of our flesh into the possession of other personalities. A way leads to adoration. In order that his life might be preserved and continued, God implanted two great appetites and pressures in man: the pleasure of eating to preserve the corporal self of the individual; the other is the pleasure of marriage to preserve the life of the race.

The way of perfecting our selves is through the ownership of things. Just as we are free on the inside because we can control our own soul, so we want to be free on the outside by holding possessions our own. Personal or private ownership is natural to man, it is the economic guarantee of freedom as the soil is its spiritual guarantee.

The church teaches that the human person is constantly striving for perfection and is restless until it perfects its mind, its knowledge, or generates its kind of marriage, or assures its economic and security through the possession of things and desires. In each instance the "I" is attempting to find another "I." Because the "I" loves itself it also loves wisdom. It loves the flesh and it loves property.

WHY ABNORMAL? Where then does abnormality arise if these pursuits are natural? How could they cause a psychosis or anxiety or a complex any more than the eye does in seeing or the ear in hearing? If we were animals, these pursuits toward perfection would indeed never cause disturbance, for an animal's desire can be fully satisfied, but man's cannot. No animal is curious about childhood when it sees a plant, nor

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