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

This is the ninth 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

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Installment IX

Chapter Seventeen

About seven hundred years ago, one of the most learned men who ever lived, Thomas Aquinas, wrote a treatise on the passions which to this day has never been surpassed. Treating of anxieties, he said, "Any idea which is hurtful to the mind does harm in just the proportion that it is repressed. The reason is: the mind is more intent on a repressed idea than if it were brough to the surface and allowed to escape."

This was not a completely new idea even when he wrote, for it was already implied in the Sacrament of Confession, which bares hidden anxieties, thus serving two purposes on the psychological level: it prevents their seeping into the unconscious and causing a complex, and it weakens them because, when they are brought to the level of the will, they can be controlled or even conquered.

The nineteenth century (which was already four centuries removed from the Christian practice of confession and repentance) began to see the terrible effects of the general repression of anxieties, guilt and worries. But the new writers gave a slightly different twist to the old idea that repressions are dangerous. Because God, morality, and the possibility of personal guilt were all denied, the new philosophy affirmed that the repression of passions and instincts was wrong. (It was the repressed idea against which Thomas Aquinas warned.)

FREE EXPRESSION

The new notion said that a man's id and his animal instincts ought to have free expression against the totems and taboos of the old superstitions of moral ity, God religion. This psychology affirmed. Be self-expressive. Religion and morality are destroying your personality. All restraint, authority, and discipline were viewed as harmful to the character. Such a philosophy could not stand up against sound reason.

If a man is really made better and saner because he gives way to his sexual instincts and is uninhibited by the Christian law of lifelong marriage, why should not a man be better because he gives way to other instincts, such as the hunting instinct? Why not organize a "kill your enemy" hunt, uninhibited by the moral taboo of a Fifth Commandment?

If we were logical in allowing the same self-expression to the fear instinct as to the sex instinct, then we ought to praise a soldier who, in the midst of battle, deserts his post, just as some writers now praise a husband when he deserts his wife.

If the repression of the sex instinct is abnormal, why should not the repression of the hunger instinct be abnormal? Why not condemn dieting? No one has yet tried to convince the body cultists that a religious totem and taboo are responsible for a fourteen-day diet.

FALSE ASSUMPTION

This theory of license is founded on the false assumption that a psychological complex can always be cured by giving it a physiological outlet. This is as silly as saying that the way to cure a worry about your debts is to drain the blood out of your heart. The mental and the physical, the spiritual and the carnal are not on the same level.

Actually there are needed for man's development two kinds of activities or expressions: the immanent and the transcendant. One remains within the person, the other acts without. The false philosophy of self-expression admits only the second kind and results in a completely externalized man. A true self-expression perfects the spirit first and then objectifies it, producing culture. Culture always perishes when inwardness of the spirit is lost in the "activism" of externals. Slavery results — a new serfdom quite different from the slavery of earlier ages. For in the old variety man was subject to an external force against his will; in the new slavery, a man is subject to the external through his own egotistic, selfish will.

This brings us the contrasting Christian philosophy of self-expression. Christianity, like modern paganism, believes that repression is harmful, but it makes a necessary distinction. Christianity says that the repression of evil thoughts, desires, and acts — such as the urge to kill, despoil, calumniate, rob, injure, covet, hate — is good for the soul; it deplores the repression of guilt or sin through a denial of the need of confession. And it states that the repression of actual graces, inspirations to a good life and the urge to sacrifice self for neighbor is bad for the soul.

DESIRE OF GOD

Christianity does not believe that the repression of the sex instinct is good. But it does believe in repressing the abuse of these instincts so as to prevent lust in the one case and gluttony in the others. The Church has never taught that man is made up principally of two levels, the conscious and the unconscious; she states that there are three levels, body, soul, and the desire of God. Man is not just a beast, subject to the claims of his animal instincts, he has also ethical and spiritual selves which demand expression according to their natures. But this is not always easy.

Love can be choked and nearly destroyed by other weeds; besides lust, Worldliness is one of these. Politics and economics divorced from the moral law, education without religion—these are some of the manifestations of the worldly spirit, and all of them are harmful.

But non-attachment from the world, as an ideal worth seeking for itself, is not the answer. We cannot say, with Aldous Huxley, "The ideal man is the non-attached man. Non-attached to his bodily sensations and lusts. Non-attached to his cravings for power and possessions. Non-attached even to science and speculation and philanthropy."

The non-attachment of Buddhism or Taoism is not the Christian ideal; though it sounds very noble to say that they who possess are possessed, are slaves to the illusions of life. Non-attachment and unworldliness are vain unless they are regarded as secondary, as a mere means to attain to the primary goal, which is love of God and neighbor.

Chapter Eighteen

We are scandalized at seeing what the release of the subhuman has done to the Fascists, Nazis, and Communists. Yet we have not learned that the same deleterious effects can be present in the individual who, starting with the philosophy that he is only a beast, immediately proceeds to act like one. To just the extent that a man is unmortified in his selfish pasions, it becomes necessary for some external authority to control and subdue those passions. That is why the passing of morality and religion and asceticism from political life is inevitably followed by a police state, which attempts to organize this chaos produced by that selfishness. Law gives way to force, ethics is replaced by the secret police.

DISORDER WITHIN

The totalitarian regimes are symptomatic of a disease which has also attacked the men and women in countries that are free. It is the disease of disorder within man. Few realize the terrible dimensions of the present catastrophe; they are blinded by the fact that man has made great material progress. The truth of the matter is, however, that man has lost control over himself at the very moment when he has gained control over nature. Because man has lost self-control and denied the spiritual purpose in life, he utilizes for destructive ends the forces of nature which he has harnessed. The atomic bomb is a perfect symbol of the disintegration of the modern personality. Every gain in mastery of the forces of nature becomes a potential danger unless it is matched by an equal gain in man's mastery over his animal impulses.

To just the degree that a materialist psychologist, interprets self-expression as the release of the animal instincts, he contributes to the world's present woe and disorder. Animal-guided men cannot conduct a civilization. They are more at home in war than in peace. We of today can be united against a common enemy through hate; it takes spirit and a common purpose to bind us together when peace comes.

The principal cause of all unhapiness is unregulated desire — wanting more than is needed or wanting what is harmful to the spirit. The modern world is geared to increase our desires and our wants by its advertising, but it can never satisfy them. Our desires are infinite; the supply of any good on earth is finite. Hence our unhappiness and anxieties, our disapointment and our sadness. The only exit from this state is by control of the senses through mortification.

Christian self discipline is really self-expression — expression — expression of all that is highest and best in self; the farmer plows under the weeds for the completest expression of the corn's desire to grow. Self-control, through mortification or asceticism, is not the rejection of our instincts, passions, and emotions, nor is it thrusting these God-given impulses into unconsciousness, as the materialists accuse the Christians of doing.

Our passions, instincts, and emotions are good, not evil; self control means only curbing their inordinate excesses. To take a little wine for one's stomach's sake, as St. Paul told Timothy, is to obey an instinct; but to take so much of it as to forget that one has either a head or a stomach is to abuse wine as a creature of God.

ZEAL OF PAUL

Once the instincts and passions are subject to the will, they can be controlled and guided. The Church does not repress passions when it restrains their unlawful expression. It does not deny emotions, any more than it denies hunger; the Church only asks that, when a man sits at table, he shall not eat like a pig. Our Lord did not repress the intense emotional zeal of Paul; He merely redirected it from hate to love. Our Lord did not repress the biological vitalities of a Magdalene. He merely turned her passion from love to vice to love of virtue. Such a conversion of energies explains why the greatest sinners — like Augustine — sometimes make the greatest saints: it is not because they have been sinners that they love God with their special intensity, but because they have strong urges, violent passions, flowing emotions which, turned to holy purposes, now do as much good as they once did harm.

Someone who turns back to God, as the Magdalene and Paul, welcomes the discipline which will enable him to change his former tendencies. Mortification is good, but only when it is done out of love of God. A "saint" who spends his life sizzling on hot coals or reclining on railroad spikes would never be canonized by the Church.

Asceticism for asceticism's sake is actually a form of egotism, for self-discipline is only a means, the end of which is a greater love of God. Any form of asceticism which disrupted charity would be wrong — this was the mistake of the monk who decided to live only on crusts and upset the whole monastery, turning it into one vast crust hunt to satisfy his idiosyncrasies. Asceticism that makes us less agreeable to our neighbors does not please God.

NO DISCIPLINE

There are many men and women today who never meditate or discipline themselves in any other way. They find that they are cloyed with what they thought would satisfy; they try to make up for each new disillusionment with a new attachment; they try to exorcise the old disgusts and shames with febrile new excitements. They change their partners in love, but their boredom and ennui remain. Their disorders become habit, and a seeming necessity; they allow open wounds in their souls because they deny that there are wounds, or even souls.

What shall these poor, frustrated, psychotic, and neurotic millions in our midst do to escape a creeping insanity and a growing madness? The only answer for them is to enter into themselves, to lift their eyes to the Divine Phhysician and cry, "Have mercy on me, O God!" If they only knew it, a single confession would rescue them by helping them to have their sins forgiven; it would also save them the small fortune spent in having their sins explained away.

Next week: Escapism never succeeds.

WIN OVERSEA SCHOLARSHIPS

En route to attend the Pius XII Graduate School of Fine Arts, in Florence, Italy, are Miss Lynn Lauder (left), of Amarillo, Tex.; Miss Janet LaFramboise (center), of the Detroit Catholic Theatre, greeted in New York by Miss Margaret Passmore, Executive Secretary of the National Catholic Theatre Conference. Both girls have been granted scholarships of $1000 for a year's study in music.

Rural Life Group Opposes Corporations' Land Control

Columbus, Ohio — (RNS.) — Opposition to the concentration of agricultural lands in the hands of a few individuals or corporations was voiced here by rural life directors of 88 Roman Catholic dioceses in this country.

The directors were gathered for the annual convention of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, which opened with a pageant called "The Golden Secret of the Green Acres," presented by a cast of 1,500 persons.

The convention here was the first held by the Conference outside a strictly rural area, and marked the first time that attention was given to the close relation between agriculture and industry in a "Christian economy."

ACCORDING TO the rural life directors huge corporation farms, capitalized on a nominal basis and claiming tax exemption because of contributions to charity, are socially objectionable.

They warned that public resentment was mounting at the efforts of large farming corporations to acquire tax-exempt status on the ground that their proceeds went for charitable and religious purposes.

"OUR COUNTRY, since its foundation," the directors said, "has subscribed to a philosophy of economic life which encourages widespread ownership of productive property and stands opposed to monopolization of productive enterprise, except in those few instances where the common good makes this manifestly necessary."

The directors held that the organization of farming corporations often "constitutes unjustified competition with family-type farmers" and "tends to exclude smaller owners and families from participation in productive agricultural enterprises."

Bishop William T. Mulloy of Covington, Ky., told the convention that every Catholic diocese in the nation could count its strength in the number of its flourishing rural parishes.

"Because the family on the land is always the source of our population strength, and because the family on the land holds within its grasp the future of the Catholic Church in America," he said, "it becomes of major importance that more and more Catholic families remain on the land."

NEA Blamed For Blocking Federal Aid

Toledo O., — (RNS) — Federal aid to education is not being obstructed by Roman Catholics but by an "intransigent group within the National Education Association," according to Bishop Karl J. Alter of Toledo.

Speaking at the dedication of a wing completing the $1,000,000 Central Catholic High School here, Bishop Alter said the NEA group "refuses to allow any legislation to pass if equal benefits are granted to Catholic parents and their children."

He said that under present circumstances there was no least possibility of securing support for Catholic schools, but added that this was no reason why Catholic parents and their children should be deprived of the ordinary social benefits which should be attached to citizenship.

"It should be emphasized," he said, "that our scholastic institutions are not established in opposition to the public tax-supported schools. We recognize the need of a system of free and universal education and we join wholeheartedly in its support."

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War Memorial

A few more lines from Monsignor McMahon . . . "Yesterday I visited the wonderful Armenian Cardinal at Bzommar in Lebanon. Near East friends built the Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows, Comfortress of the Afflicted, there as a memorial to our war dead, and the dear Cardinal is elated. During the summer he had 75 Sisters of the Immaculate Conception there, adoring the Blessed Sacrament at this altar of American benefactors day and night. Two whole days of adoration each week were for these benefactors. How proud I was of our Near East friends and what they have done. These Sisters of the Immaculate Conception are all over the Near East, teaching school, guarding orphans, etc. They need much help. A deposit in MARY'S BANK, or 300 dollars for a burse for a novice, making a missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception your own adopted daughter, will be as rare gold. A Mass stipend for one of the Cardinal's missionary priests will help much."

FORGOTTEN

To make sure no one will be forever forgotten the Church has this month of the Holy Souls. Remember your own. But remember especially those whom none claim for their own . . . the most abandoned souls in Purgatory. They need Masses.

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GIFTS EXCHANGED

Busiest counter in the shop after Xmas. You liked your gift. But you needed this other thing so much more. We don't have an exchange counter. But we do find needs we'd like to meet at once. If only we had the unattached means to do so. That's our "STRINGLESS GIFT" idea. We'd like to surprise some missionary with an unexpected Xmas answer to a late appeal. But we need "free money," our Stringless Gift.

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JACOB'S LADDER

Jacob is a seminarian in his first year of study. Six years lie before him on the ladder of prayer, discipline and study that climbs to the priesthood. And then each day he will mount the steps of the Altar of God to offer sacrifice. The climb involves another cost . . . money. Each year of climbing costs one hundred dollars. That Jacob doesn't have. Perhaps you want to give him a lift up the ladder that leads heavenward, for you and him together.

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SCHOOL DAYS!

Slanting rain, sloshing puddles, slithery mud. That's the "Winter Scene" at Camp St. Joseph on the outskirts of Beirut, a Catholic camp for refugees. It grew like Topsy. One thousand people live in very much air-conditioned tents. They slop through the camp streets, with cold and hungry stomachs, to assist at Mass in a tent with unrestrained running water. And School is held out-of-doors. Monsignor McMahon dreams of a permanent Chapel-School, with removable partitions, where Christ and His priest and His children may come together to pray and to learn. It's a five hundred dollar dream. But we're handing it over to that "Dreamer of Divine Dreams," St. Joseph. It's his camp. And he knew that country, its weather, its problems. The Refugees will supply the labor. St. Joseph must find the money.

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A LEG OR A WING?

For a lot of people in the world that will not be the problem on Xmas Day. It will be much simpler, food or hunger. To help solve the problem we're trying to send over as many food packages as possible. Each package means ten dollars. Each ten dollars means so much less hunger in the world.

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WHAT'LL I GIVE?

If you're puzzling over that gift problem, maybe we can help you. Our Gift Card has become a very popular choice among the friends of the Near East. It's attractive. It's convenient. It's much appreciated. Write for our descriptive booklet on this card.

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