

CHAPTER NINE

Person to Person Ethics

There never was an age in history when it was so difficult for a person to remain pure and chaste and good as it is today.

That is the first sentence that I wrote to begin this talk tonight; but no sooner had I written it than I began to doubt very much if it is true. The proverb has it that the more things change, the more they remain the same; and the plain fact of history is that it has never been easy to be good and to be pure and to be chaste. So, then, I want to begin by looking at the world into which Christianity came, and to see what the person to person ethic was like in it. I want to take only certain typical incidents and sayings from that ancient world, and it is because they are typical—not because they are unusual—that I take them.

First of all, let us look at Greece. In one of his speeches (*Against Naeaeira* 122) Demosthenes sets out what he takes to be the rule of life. Demosthenes did not say this because he was condemning it, or because it was unusual, but because he was stressing that it was normal day-to-day practice:

We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for the day-to-day needs of the body; we keep wives to be the mothers of our children and the guardians of our home.

In Greece relationships before marriage and outside marriage were the normal practice, an accepted part of life. It is the supreme-ordinariness of the thing which makes it so shocking.

Second, let us turn to Rome. Let us take the case of Messalina in Rome as Juvenal the Roman satirist tells it to us—and remember it is not a Christian moralist but a Roman poet who

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is telling the story, Messalina was no less a person than the Empress of Rome, the wife of Claudius the Emperor. She would, says Juvenal, wait until Claudius was asleep. Then with one maid and a night-cowl over her head she would slip out to her own special cell in the public brothels and serve there as a common prostitute. I quote: "There she stood with nipples bare and gilded . . . Here she graciously received all-comers, asking from each his fee; and when at last the keeper dismissed his girls, she remained to the very last before closing her cell, and, with passion still raging hot within her, went sorrowfully away. Then, exhausted by men but unsatisfied, with soiled cheeks and begrimed with the smoke of the lamps, she took back to the imperial pillow all the odours of the stews' (Juvenal, *Satires* 6.114-132). A Roman Empress delighting to act as a common prostitute—and, just about AD 50—that is the world into which Christianity came.

Third, let us look at divorce in that ancient world. Broadly speaking, there was no process of divorce; all that a husband had to do was to tell his wife to go, for in that ancient world a woman was a thing, not a person, and had no legal rights at all. In the Roman world divorce was staggeringly common. Seneca said that women were married to be divorced and were divorced to be married (*De Beneficiis* 3.16). He said that women counted the years by the names of their husbands rather than by the names of the consuls. Hiberina, says Juvenal, naming a reigning beauty, would as soon be satisfied with one husband as with one eye (*Satires* 6.53,54). Martial tells of a woman who was living with her tenth husband (Martial, *Epigrams* 6.7). Juvenal tells of a woman who had eight husbands in five years (Juvenal, *Satires* 6.230). And Jerome tells us of what must have been the unsurpassable record, the case of a woman who was married to her twenty-third husband, she being his twenty-first wife (Jerome, *Letters* 2).

Fourth, we turn to the Jewish world. There is not in the

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Jewish world the same all-embracing immorality; but the state of divorce was serious. Jesus forbade divorce, except for the case of adultery (Matthew 5.32; 19.9; Mark 10.11,12; Luke 16.18; I Corinthians 7.10,11). The Jewish law was clear. It is stated in Deuteronomy 24.1-4 that a man can give his wife a bill of divorce, if he has found some matter of uncleanness or some indecency in her. The bill of divorce was no more than a single sentence dismissing her and giving her freedom to marry anyone who would have her. Now, of course, everything depends on the interpretation of the phrase *some matter of uncleanness*. And on this in Judaism in the time of Jesus there were two schools of thought. There was the school of Shammai, which said exactly the same as Jesus, that adultery was the only possible ground of divorce. But there was the school of Hillel, and it said that *a matter of indecency* could mean going out with her hair unbound, spinning in the street, talking to another man, spoiling his dinner, speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents in her husband's presence, being a scolding woman (and a scolding woman was defined as a woman whose voice could be heard in the next house!) (Ketuboth 7.6; Gittin 9.10). It is easy to see which school would be most popular, and in Palestine in the time of Jesus girls were afraid to marry because the tenure of marriage was so insecure.

It is, of course true that in every age and generation and in every society there have always been people living in honour and in fidelity and in purity and in chastity; but in the days of the first Christians the atmosphere was such that it can have been no easy task to escape the moral infection which pervaded society.

It is further to be added that the ancient world was riddled with homosexuality. It would be difficult to name one of the great Greeks who did not practise this kind of love—Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and even the great Socrates. The thing had reached such a stage in Greece that when Plato talks of love it is homosexual love he means. The ordinary love of

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women was regarded as low and dishonourable and for a man of culture only the love of a boy was considered worthy. It is a simple fact that of the first fifteen Roman Emperors fourteen were practising homosexuals. It is not for nothing that Paul warned his people against it (Romans 1.26,27; I Corinthians 6.9; I Timothy 1.10). It would be hard for a man in New Testament times to regard as wrong that which the greatest and the wisest practised.

When we look back on those early days, we can see that we are not really called upon to face anything that previous generations have not faced. So then let us look at some of the areas of this person to person ethic.

i. Let us begin by looking at the sphere of the family. Someone has said that what life does to us, everyone of us, is equivalent to dropping us down the chimney of some house at random, landing us in the middle of a group of people, and then saying: 'Get on with these people as well as you can.' The problem of the family is quite simply the problem of living together.

When we study the New Testament family ethic, the first thing that strikes us about it is that in every case it is what can only be called a reciprocal ethic. This is to say that no privilege is ever given without a corresponding responsibility. In the New Testament family ethic the duty is never, literally never, all on one side. So wives have to obey their husbands, but the husband is always to treat the wife with love and with consideration. Children are to obey their parents, but parents are never to behave unreasonably to their children in such a way as to anger or discourage them. Always there is a double duty; never is the duty all on one side (Ephesians 5.21-6.9; Colossians 3.18-4.1).

In the family there are two main relationships. First, there is the relationship of parent and child. On the side of the parent, there are two main things to be said. The first is quite simply that those of us who are parents must always remember that times do change. A certain famous authoress tells how

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once she said to her small daughter: 'When I was your age, I was never allowed to do a thing like that.' And the child answered: 'But you must remember mother that you were *then* and I'm *now*.' There is a *then* and there is a *now*, and they are not the same, nor can they be made the same. The parent has to remember all the time that he cannot keep things as they are.

The second is even more important. When Paul was writing to the Colossians his plea to parents is to avoid treating their children in such a way that the children become discouraged (Colossians 3,21). It may well be that this is the most important rule of family life. The child may come to feel that the parent is always 'going on' at him—and often he is not far wrong. What most human beings, young or old, need in this world more than anything else is encouragement. Benjamin West became one of the great British painters, and he tells us how. When he was young his mother went out, leaving him in charge of his little sister Sally. In the absence of his mother the boy came across some bottles of coloured ink and some brushes and he was determined to try to paint a picture of his little sister Sally. The result may well be imagined; there was ink here, there, and everywhere. His mother came back to the house; she took one look at the mess and she took one look at the boy's attempted picture. 'Why,' she said, 'it's Sally!' And she took Benjamin in her arms and kissed him. And as Benjamin West said all his life afterwards: 'My mother's kiss made me a painter.' If she had done what so many of us would have been tempted to do, there might have been no Benjamin West. Our first instinct to those who are young should be encouragement. We do not realise how much the young person worries with the modern tensions in education and in life. In the 15-19 age-group suicide is the third most common cause of death. And one of the greatest encouragements is simply to treat the child as a reasonable human being. The days of doing a thing 'because I say so' are long past. Anyone will obey more quickly and act better, if he

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does so intelligently, and if he knows and understands why the order is given.

In the sphere of parent and child, the young person should remember the duty of gratitude. It is the plain fact of nature that of all creatures man takes the longest before he can sustain his own life, and there are long years when, not positive injury, but simple neglect would have killed us. Only love can repay love, and yet it happens again and again within the family that we hurt most of all those whom most of all we ought to cherish. When James Barrie looked back across the years to his relationship with his mother Margaret Ogilvie, he said: 'When I look back, I cannot see the smallest thing undone.' I do not think that I ever met anyone who could say that—but that is the aim. For one of the saddest things in life is to look back and to say: 'If only I had done this or that . . .'

One last thing, in regard to the parent-child, child-parent relationship. A home should be a place from which the child is equipped to go out, and to which he will always return. Some parents find it very hard to grasp the fact that their basic duty is to enable the child to leave them and to live his own life. Smother-love and mother-love can be very easily confused. If we bring up our children in such a way that they are eager to go out and glad to return, then our task will be well done.

ii. The second area of the home and family life is marriage. There is no doubt that for the Christian ethic in its ideal form, marriage is given for life. In the Mark account of the words of Jesus (Mark 10.1-12) no exception at all is made to that rule. In the parallel Matthew account (Matthew 5.32) the one exception is divorce for infidelity.

We have to have a care what we do here. First, we have to face the fact that sexual infidelity is far from being the only thing that can wreck a marriage. It is one of the curious facts of language that the word *immorality* has come almost exclusively to mean sexual immorality. There is many a

person in marriage who is blameless from the legal sex point of view, but who has nonetheless succeeded in making marriage a hell for the other partner. Fletcher quotes a passage from Dorothy Sayers:

A man may be greedy and selfish; spiteful, cruel, jealous and unjust; violent and brutal; grasping, unscrupulous, and a liar; stubborn and arrogant; stupid, morose, and dead to every noble instinct; and yet, if he practises his sinfulness within the marriage bond, he is not thought by some Christians to be immoral (J. Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility* pp. 133, 134).

There are other things than adultery which can kill a marriage and the love which should be in it.

The second thing we have to be careful about is that we do not try to make the words of Jesus into a law, and thus forget that the greatest thing of all is love. We have always to remember that we have to take to any situation the whole of the message of Jesus, not just one sentence from it. I am not thinking of the kind of situation in which two people have entered into marriage without thought and without facing the realities; nor am I thinking of the kind of situation in which the partners in a marriage wish to break the marriage up simply because the initial romance and glamour are gone, and they have not the moral fibre and the staying power to face the routine of the every day. I am not thinking of the kind of situation in which people think of life together in terms of soft lights and sweet music and never realise until too late that there are such things as kitchen sinks, and pots and pans, and crying babies and washing of nappies. Still less am I thinking of the kind of situation in which one of the partners of the marriage allows a relationship to develop which is in itself the way to disloyalty.

But if it should so happen that two people find living together an impossibility; if they have consulted the doctor and the minister or the priest and the psychologist and the psychiatrist; if they have taken all the guidance that there is

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to take, and if the situation is still beyond mending, then I do not think that it is an act of Christian love to keep two such people tied together in a life that is a torture; nor do I think that it is right for them only to be allowed to separate and never to be allowed to try to start again. In such circumstances I believe that divorce is the action of Christian love, for I do not think that Jesus would have insisted that two utterly incompatible people should be condemned to drag out a loveless existence, heartbreaking for themselves and disastrous for their children. Nor do I believe that they should be forbidden to remarry and to remarry with the blessing of the church. Nor do I think that I would wish to talk much about innocent and not innocent parties, for when a marriage breaks up I should doubt if there is any such thing as an altogether innocent and an altogether guilty party.

iii. But now we must come to what is the most difficult side of this whole matter. What has the Christian ethic to say about sexual intercourse before and outside marriage? I think that the situation in regard to sexual intercourse before marriage is more difficult today than it has ever been in history. For that difficulty there are certain reasons.

(a) There is first of all the quite simple fact that the voices which once spoke for chastity no longer do so. Joseph Fletcher, the Christian occupant of a Chair of Christian Ethics in America writes: 'The cult of virginity seems to me to be making its last stand against the sexual freedom which medicine has now made possible' (*Dialogues in Medicine and Theology*, ed. Dale White, p. 141). 'A growing number of church people', he says, 'are challenging fixed moral principles or rules about sex or anything else.' So virginity was only a cult, and is now a doomed cult, and men like Fletcher accept this as inevitable. In 1959 the British Medical Association published a handbook, entitled *Getting Married*, written by Eustace Chesser and Winifred de Kok, and in it there was the following sentence: 'Chastity is outmoded and should no longer be taught to young people.' It is true that in 1959 there were so

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many protests that the book had to be withdrawn, but the significant thing is that it got to the length of being published at all. One of the very significant things today is that, if we may put it so, the defences are being breached from the inside.

(b) There are certain physical facts in the situation. Two facts have come together to form an explosive combination. People mature much more quickly today. Fifty years ago the average age of the beginning of menstruation was seventeen; today it is thirteen. Further, marriage has to be delayed in many cases today, and, when a man is at his most sexually dynamic, he may be a student on a long course which to say the least of it makes marriage imprudent. This is to say that there is the dangerous situation that sexual maturity is earlier and marriage is later.

(c) Third, there are the enormous changes in the methods of contraception and the efficacy of these methods. In this country it was not until 1877 that the thing became an issue at all. In that year Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs Annie Besant published an elementary manual of birth-control and were promptly prosecuted and found guilty, although the verdict was reversed on a legal technicality. It was not until 1921 that the first birth-control clinic was opened at Walworth; it was not until 1930 that the first Ministry of Health clinic was opened, and it was not until 1934 that information was offered, and it was offered only to women suffering from abnormal conditions. This is to say it was not until 1934—and that is a year after I began in the ministry—that birth-control methods were made at all public and then only in the most limited way.

Contraception found its peak in the pill, which is easy to take, normally safe in action and almost infallible in effect. The methods of contraception have been so refined and rendered so effective that it is now not necessary for anyone to have a baby unless they want to.

(d) There is the astonishing prevalence of abortion. Through-

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out the world there is the incredible number of 30,000,000 abortions per year. Even in this country there are perhaps about 160,000. It is a staggering fact that in countries like Belgium and West Germany, which have so-called liberal abortion laws, twice as many babies are aborted as are born. Fletcher has gone to the length of saying that he would wish to see the day when no unwanted and no unintended baby was born (J. Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* p. 39).

(e) There is the enacting of increasingly permissive legislation. There is, for instance, the legislation which permits homosexual practices between consenting adults. There is the easing of divorce; and there was the suggestion that married grants should be extended to students who live together without being married. There is the enacting of legislation which makes it easier to do the wrong thing—and that is always dangerous.

As Fletcher has pointed out, in the old days there were three fears which went far to keeping a grip of sexual intercourse before and outside marriage—the fear of detection, the fear of infection, and the fear of conception (J. Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility*, pp. 88, 89). The fear of conception is taken away by the new methods; the fear of infection—so it is believed—is taken away by the new antibiotics; and the fear of detection will become less and less when the consequences seem less and less serious.

It is then clear that for the modern young person Christian chastity is much more difficult than once it was. What makes the situation much harder is that the church is not speaking with one voice on this. Fletcher quotes the case of Professor Leo Koch of Illinois University. Koch was a biologist and in 1960 Koch was dismissed for saying that premarital intercourse was ethically justifiable. What Koch said was this:

With modern contraceptives and medical advice readily available at the nearest drugstore, or at least a family physician, there is no valid reason why sexual intercourse

should not be condoned among those sufficiently mature to engage in it without social consequences and without violating their own codes of morality and ethics (J. Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility* pp. 128, 129).

And that is Fletcher's own point of view—the point of view of a Professor of Christian Ethics. It would be easy to ask Fletcher to be a little more definite and accurate. What does he mean by *mature*? It is obviously impossible to measure maturity by age. There are many people, who by their birth certificate ought to be mature, and who in fact are unstable, impulsive, insecure and neurotic. One would like Fletcher to define a little more clearly what he means by *by consent*, for it is the most obvious thing in the world that it is not difficult to buy consent. What sounds so straightforward and obvious is in fact full of difficulties.

What then are we to say to all this?

i. In the first place, such sexual permissiveness is in fact fraught with very grave danger. The facts are alarming. There are more than 150,000 new cases of venereal disease every year. In one year 37 young people under fourteen contracted venereal disease, as did 235 who were fifteen, and 1,357 who were sixteen. It is further to be noted that the fear of infection has returned, for some of the antibiotics formerly used are no longer effective, because strains of disease resistant to them have emerged.

It is further estimated that of boys of seventeen 1 in 4 has had sexual experience, and of girls of the same age 1 in 8; of boys of nineteen 1 in 3 has had sexual experience and of girls of the same age 1 in 4. Two out of three babies born to girls under twenty are conceived out of wedlock. Every thirteenth child to be born is illegitimate. In certain areas it is calculated that two out of three girls who have reached the age of twenty-five are no longer virgins. It is estimated that from 4 per cent to 6 per cent of men are practising homosexuals and the same percentage of women are lesbians. The divorce rate is running at over 40,000 divorces per year,

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and in the United States 1 in 4 marriages ends in divorce.

These are alarming figures. Permissiveness may be right, or permissiveness may be wrong, but quite certainly it is dangerous—and that is a basic fact not to be forgotten.

ii. No one can study the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament without seeing that that teaching stands for purity and chastity. Fornication, which is sexual intercourse between unmarried people, is condemned at least eighteen times. It is one of the basic demands on the Gentiles that they do not practise it (Acts 15.20). It is not even to be thought of or spoken of by the Christian (I Corinthians 6.18; Ephesians 6.3). Adultery, which is sexual intercourse with a married person other than one's own marriage partner, is condemned at least fifteen times. In Jesus' words it is one of the sins which comes from the evil of the heart (Matthew 15.14).

Often the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8.1-11) is cited as an example of the gentleness of Jesus, and from one point of view so it is. But how does it end? It ends by Jesus saying: 'Go, and *sin no more.*' There is no question of Jesus saying: 'It's quite all right. Don't worry.' There is no question of the woman getting the impression that the whole thing did not matter very much, and that forgiveness was easy to come by, and that she could easily do it again. The demand is: '*Sin no more.*' He leaves us in no doubt that he believed that she had sinned. She was forgiven—but she was firmly told that it must never happen again.

There is no way of making Jesus a supporter of a permissive society. If we support sexual intercourse before marriage or outside marriage, then I do not see how we can continue to call ourselves Christian, for a man cannot be a Christian and flatly contradict the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is one thing honestly to say that we will abandon the demands of Christian morality; it is quite another thing to abandon them and to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are still keeping them.

iii. It is for this reason that while it is right to stress the

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dangers of the permissive society, the argument from danger is not in itself a good argument, because it seems to imply that, if the danger could be removed, if there was no risk of a child, and no peril of infection, then the objection would be removed too. It tends to imply that the objection is to the attendant dangers and not to the thing itself. But, if sexual intercourse before and outside marriage is against the teaching of Jesus, then the thing is not only dangerous, it is wrong in itself—and that is what we are arguing.

iv. Let us go on with the argument. The supporters of the new morality place great stress on the fact that, as they put it, sexual intercourse has two functions—baby-making and love-making. They then argue that, since modern methods of contraception, especially the pill, have next to completely eliminated the production of a child, then there is no reason why the sexual act should not be used as love-making between people who are in love, but who are not married.

v. We may take in here something else with which few will disagree. Beyond all argument the Christian ethic teaches that it is always wrong to use a person as a thing; it is always wrong to use a person simply as the means of gratification or as a way of getting pleasure. Therefore, any act of sexual intercourse which is nothing other than the satisfaction of sexual desire is essentially wrong. That is why a marriage which is based on no more than desire is bound to fail, for the partners in it are basically using each other as things, and not as persons.

vi. Now we come to what is almost the final step in the argument. The sexual act is in the literal sense of the word *unique*. It is unique for two reasons. First, it has a unique potentiality, because through it a child, a new life, can be brought into the world. Second, it is unique, because it does something physically to a woman which cannot be undone, and which means that she literally will never be the same again. The breaking of the hymen is an irreversible fact. This means that there is no comparison whatever between an act of sexual

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intercourse and, say, a kiss. This is love-making of a different kind, love-making with a unique potential and love-making with a unique effect.

It can be said to be love-making at its peak. And such love-making ought only to be engaged in when people are totally, completely and utterly committed to each other. It can only rightly happen when people are so totally committed to each other that they have become one new person (Genesis 2.24; Matthew 19.5). The Old Testament uses the verb *to know* for the act of sexual intercourse. Adam knew Eve (Genesis 4.1). It is an act of complete and total mutual knowledge which can come only with complete and total self-giving. If it is less than that, it is not so much wrong as tragically less than what it ought to be. It is not the expression of a moment of passion, however intense; it is the expression of a permanent commitment, and only the willingness to enter into commitment gives the right to enter upon that unique act.

It could be put in this way. Whatever we say about the two functions of sexual intercourse, the love-making and the baby-making, it remains true that the biological reason for the sex instinct is the begetting of a child. That is why it was ever given to us. This is the very economy and arrangement of nature. Therefore, even when it is an act of love-making, it may properly only be engaged in by those who would gladly and willingly use it to beget a child, even although at that particular moment it is not their intention to do so. It is the expression of a commitment of which a child is the symbol and the proof.

It thus becomes clear that the great fault of premarital sexual intercourse is quite simply that it demands privilege without responsibility; it demands rights without commitment. This is why sexual intercourse is wrong even between people who say that they are so much in love that marriage is certain and that they are only anticipating what will in any event happen. We know too well how in the uncertainty of life even such a love can somehow find an interruption and

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even such an anticipated marriage may not take place. The utter commitment is still not entered on and therefore the unique act is wrong. The ultimate commitment must be fully there before the ultimate privilege is given and taken. Even if such a view involves self-discipline, it leads to the deepest satisfaction in the end. There is something tragic in making that which is sacred commonplace, and that which is unique ordinary. There are things—and these the greatest things—whose value only fully comes when we do not take them until the time to take them has fully come.

There are still certain other things to say. There are few nowadays, except in the Roman Catholic church, who would question the use of methods of birth-control within marriage. No one would wish to go back to the nineteenth century, when Charles Dickens' wife, before he left her, had ten children and five miscarriages in rather less than twenty years. But today the problem faces us as to whether methods of birth-control, and in particular the pill, are to be made available to those who are not married. We have already made it clear that we believe that for the Christian who will accept the Christian ethic sexual intercourse before and outside marriage is wrong. For the Christian, therefore, the question does not arise. The Christian girl will neither want nor use the pill before marriage. But, if a girl were to come to me, and if she quite deliberately refused to accept the Christian ethic of sex, if she said that she intended to have sexual intercourse before marriage, I would argue with her, I would plead with her, I would pray with her, I would do all that I possibly could to persuade her to accept the Christian way. But if at the end of the day she would not listen, if no matter what I or anyone else said, she insisted on going her own way, then I would make the pill available to her, for I think that anything is better than to bring into the world an unwanted child. I think that those who oppose this are often illogical, for such people do not often insist that the older-fashioned instruments of birth-control should be withheld from the

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unmarried. In principle, there is no difference at all. If one is withheld, all should be withheld. But, if I cared deeply for someone, and if in spite of all I could say that someone refused to accept the Christian view of sex, and proposed to engage on it before marriage, I would wish to do all I could to save her and to save the child who might be born from the tragic consequences which could arise, and for that reason I should make the best methods of birth-control available to her.

It is hardly possible to leave this subject without a word about sex education. It is here that Christianity got off to a bad start. We have already had occasion to mention Gnosticism, which was a way of thought deeply ingrained into the Greek mind. It came from a deep suspicion of the body, and from the idea that, if a man could only be freed from the body, life's problems would be solved. It painted a picture of a world which from the beginning had been made out of bad stuff. It did not think of a world made from nothing, but a world made from material which in its very essence was faulty. Of such a world the true God could not be the creator, and so the Gnostics believed the world to have been made by an inferior god, ignorant of, and hostile to, the true God. If that is believed, then the world and all that is in it become evil. If matter is evil as such, then the body is evil as such. And if the body is evil as such, then all the body's instincts, and especially the sex instinct, are evil. This was originally a heresy, but it left its mark on the Christian church. Always the church has been suspicious of the body, and therefore sex has always been looked on as a kind of wicked thing. This meant that it was never spoken of; it was a kind of unfortunate necessity. There never was any sex teaching, for sex was something at best to be whispered about in corners, or to be made the subject of a smutty joke. This attitude still lingers.

It always was a wrong attitude, and today it is not only wrong, it is also highly dangerous. The sex instinct is a God-

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given instinct, implanted in us by the Creator. It is something entirely natural, and an integral part of human life.

Knowledge of sex must be taught. It must be taught quite objectively. Its mechanism must be taught, for only then will its dangers and its glories be realised. It is high time that the day when young people got their knowledge of sex through furtive whispered conversations and through dirty stories came to an end.

It will, I believe, better be taught on two levels. On the physical level it will be better taught at school, for often the teacher can speak freely of that which is embarrassing to the parent, and there are some things which are more easily taught in a group. Factually the school is the place for the teaching of sex. But the home is the place where the greatness of purity and chastity and fidelity can alone be taught. Let the school teach the facts, and let the home teach the ideals. It need not be an exclusive division. Often the good teacher will transmit the ideal, and often the good parent will already have talked with the child. But here is somewhere where school and parent can really co-operate.

It is often objected that the child will try to experiment with the new knowledge that he has gained. For a few years it could be so, for at the moment we have not yet escaped from the situation in which that which has been so long secret is being unveiled. But, given time, and no very long time will be necessary, such teaching will become a normal part of the child's life in which healthy knowledge will take the place of unhealthy curiosity, and there will be a far better base to build on, a base in which the dangers are known, the facts realised, and, if we teach rightly, the ideals glimpsed.

If ever there was a time to uphold the standards of the Christian person to person ethic this is it. It is now that the Christian light should be shining like a light in a dark place. The plain fact is that the church has lost the very reason for its existence, if it pursues a policy of conformity to the world.

The world wants the church to be the church. Some years ago *Punch* had a cartoon. It showed the padre walking out of an RAF mess, leaving two officers behind. The one officer turns to the other and says: 'I can't stand this unholier than thou attitude.' The world may not agree with a church that insists on being different—but it will respect it. But it will have neither respect nor use for a church which is always trying to conform to the world. B. K. Price writes: 'The Swedish Lutheran church is to set up a special commission to reconsider a pronouncement made in 1959 which branded premarital sexual relationships as sin. A spokesman said that the commission would study whether this pronouncement should be modified in view of a widely-discussed demand that the church align itself more closely to "reality"' (R. H. Fuller and B. K. Price, *Christianity and the Affluent Society*, p. 116). Fuller and Price were writing in 1966, and I do not know the result and verdict of the commission; but to align the church to the world, in the name of aligning it to reality, is the quickest way to suicide for the church.

There is a letter from C. S. Lewis to his brother (*Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis, p. 177) in which Lewis tells of a visit to Oxford of Charles Williams. Williams was a close friend of Lewis, and Williams fanatically loved and worshipped purity: Lewis writes:

On Monday Charles Williams lectured, nominally on *Comus*, but really on chastity. Simply as criticism it was superb—because here was a man who really cared with every fibre of his being about 'the sage and serious doctrine of virginity', which it would never occur to the ordinary modern critic to take seriously. But it was more important still as a sermon. It was a beautiful sight to see a whole roomful of modern young men and women sitting in the absolute silence that can *not* be faked, very puzzled but spellbound . . . What a wonderful power is the direct appeal which disregards the temporary climate. I wonder if it is

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the case that the man who has the audacity to get up in any corrupt society and squarely preach justice or valour or the like always wins ?'

It may be that what the church needs to get the people back is not compromise, but a message of uncompromising purity.