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Problems of Sex

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Eugenics

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**"I should have said that
the common foe was Rome"**

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The Catholic Church and Eugenics¹

EUGENICS is one of our contemporary fads. It aims to rid the world of insanity and disease and crime and poverty and to give us a physically better race. It regards the mental and moral improvement of the human family but only as this is regulated by the healthy condition of the body. Indeed from their writings and sayings one is led to infer that eugenists have but vague notions of morality. They are more concerned with the varying social conventions than with the rightness or wrongness of human conduct.

Eugenics is commonly thought of as something new. It is not. Centuries before the Christian era it was current in Sparta. In fact it brought about the decline and collapse of that country. Just as the mah jong that our ladies-of-leisure indulged in a couple of seasons ago linked us up with the Chinese, so our eugenists link us up with the ancient pagans. They have resuscitated the old pagan body-worship and grafted it on to the decadent Christian civilization that the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution have bequeathed us. Because the movement has been sponsored and highly financed by people whose wealth gives vogue to their opinions, it has attracted widespread interest and, sad to say, achieved no little popularity.

For economic reasons eugenists want fewer and

¹Lectures broadcasted over the Paulist Radio Station WLWL, New York City, February 14, 21, 28, 1927.

physically stronger people in the world. To hear them talk, world-progress depends solely on human beings who are wealthy and healthy. Others they reckon drains. Eugenists warn us that if the race goes on increasing the world will wake up some morning to find itself on the verge of starvation from over-population. Besides, they say, the treasures and pleasures of life are limited: nature cannot dispense them too lavishly. Reduce the number of men and women and the individual's chance to share them increases.

The arguments are arrant nonsense but they make many converts to the cause. There is as much probability of the earth becoming over-populated as there is of its wealth and opportunities for pleasure being equally distributed. Someone who knows has said, "The poor you have always with you," and history proves that the Rockefellers and Vanderbilts and Fords and Morgans invariably monopolize one end of the world's seesaw.

It is proverbial however that charlatans never fail to gather an audience, and despite its inherent weaknesses the eugenist program offers something that carries an appeal. In the hearts of generous men and women the patriotic note that the so-called new science sounds and the spirit of altruism and philanthropy that it breathes, find echoes. With baser bait their more selfish fellows are hooked and dropped into the eugenic basket. Their avarice and lust are played upon, and their covetous yearning for a goodlier share of worldly happiness, and their instinctive reluctance to divide with others the riches that they enjoy. With avidity they bite at these inducements.

As adults are only grown babies, and healthy men and women are only healthy infants who have reached

maturity, the practical efforts of the eugenists center on producing a race of prize babies. The little ones of whom superstition and romance have made cherubs, are to be bred like gold-medal stallions and blue-ribbon pups. The eugenist's slogan is "Fewer babies and better babies." To get the fewer babies, our Dorotheas and Raymonds are advised to launch into matrimony late in life or to limit their offspring. To get the better babies, undesirable adults—and that's a nice-sounding term not only for criminals and the insane but also for our struggling poor—are either not to marry or at least not to bear children.

Unfortunately for the eugenists the people about whom they theorize are not mere machines. They are human like themselves. And this common human nature creates an embarrassing situation. Mary and Katie and Peter and John may be poor or malformed or rated in intelligence-tests as high-class morons. Nevertheless the fire of concupiscence is apt to burn just as fiercely in their blood, and the nobler fire of love not to stay smouldering in their souls, as in Stella's and Margery's and Donald's and Clarence's, presumably their intellectual, physical and moral superiors in Millionaire Row.

To offset the difficulty since Mary and Katie and Peter and John must not marry, much less have children, and yet haven't enough altruism or regard even for their own economic or physical convenience to forego the attractions of matrimony, eugenists advocate calling in the Government to further their purpose. The State will legislate and play the policeman. It will see that Mary and her kind do not marry, that the normal outlet for their passion or their love is choked off, and that the craving of their natures for parenthood has no legiti-

mate satisfaction. Eugenists will breed us fewer babies and better babies by legislative enactment!

Professional eugenists condone and many of them would positively legalize abortion and birth control. They sanction easy divorce. They excuse sexual promiscuity. Bernard Shaw one of the high-priests of the cult did not hesitate to write some years ago: "What we need is freedom for persons who have never seen each other before and never intend to see each other again, to produce children under certain definite public conditions, without loss of honor." With eugenists matrimony as a sacrament is a clerical myth and must go by the boards. Free-love is the logical outcome of their philosophy, and the trial-marriage, and the companionate-marriage that Judge Ben Lindsay has recently been popularizing from Denver. Eugenists demand legislation prohibiting marriage to those who suffer from social and transmissible diseases and those with undesirable propensities,—morons, the criminal classes, the tubercular, deaf-mutes and similar unfortunates. They demand the sterilization of mental defectives and habitual criminals. They demand obligatory medical examination under State supervision for prospective brides and grooms. Not all devotees of eugenics will subscribe to the more radical planks in the eugenic platform but on most phases of the movement its propagandists are at one. The band wagon is chuck-full and they make lots of noise.

Now what are we to think of it? What has the Catholic religion to say about it? The Catholic Church has never made any formal pronouncement on eugenics as such, though decidedly opposed to many features of the program. Indeed despite a prevalent opinion to the contrary she is most eager for the physical and material im-

provement of the human family. The whole history of her charities proves that she earnestly devotes herself to minimizing bodily ills and extirpating racial diseases. Where she breaks with the eugenists is in her attitude toward their procedure and the means they advocate to diminish the world's suffering. She is whole-heartedly in accord with eugenics of the right sort, but she finds both the spirit and the methods of the modern movement wrong. To her Christian ideals the program reads nauseatingly. Its provisions are socially, morally, religiously offensive. Its outstanding features are at variance with sound Catholic principles. The unnaturalness, beastliness and lust that eugenics fosters are as a stench to her nostrils.

To begin with, the philosophy back of the movement is faulty. Basically, what is it? It is the cult, the worship, of the human body. It is the assumption that the animal part of man is, if not the whole man, at least his better half. The entire eugenic scheme is one of crass naturalism, gross materialism, extreme evolutionism. If God and the spiritual and the supernatural are not rigorously excluded from the calculations of eugenists, they are advisedly ignored. Eugenics knows little or nothing of them, and cares even less.

Man must take care of his body. That is God's law and nature's law. But the catechism emphatically states that he must take even more care of his soul. It is the chief part of man. Whatever leads one to subordinate the more important to the less important is wrong. Whatever puts the intellectual and spiritual secondary to the corporeal is wrong. Whatever disregards the dictates of the natural law and the positive Divine law for a material or physical advantage, however alluring it be, in-

verts the right order of things and is wrong. Caterers to this body cult may well be warned to weigh the ringing question of the Saviour, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26.)

Even from a scientific angle modern eugenics rests on very unstable foundations. It over-emphasizes heredity in our misfits. Diseases thought incurable a generation ago are now, thanks to medical and surgical progress, unquestionably curable. Bodily defects that were thought inevitably transmissible a generation ago are no longer considered so. Moral and character deficiencies depend on a great many agencies besides heredity, ultimately in fact, on the free choice of the individual. If science hardly justifies the assumptions on which the movement is built—some of them are merely gratuitous—much less do experiments warrant the broad conclusions it sponsors.

The law of nature forbids certain people to marry; that is clear. The very fact, for example, that the basis of the conjugal status is a contract and so a deliberately intelligent action, bars the insane and incompetent from matrimony. Again, its primary purpose evidences that absolute impotency is irreconcilable with the contract.

Furthermore the laws of justice and charity must be observed when there is question of marriage. Natural fair play and strict honesty and Christian charity require this. Hence the presence of serious physical defects or innate kinks of character may make it wrong and sinful for a person to marry without the other party to the contract knowing the situation or condition. But mere tainted blood, mere bodily and moral defects do not of themselves deprive people of their inborn right to

a conjugal life, and least of all give the State the right, even though it have the power, to compel them to remain spinsters or bachelors. This is an infringement of a personal prerogative with which no Government may directly interfere.

The assumption that the State is absolute master is one of the fallacies of the whole eugenic movement. The State is for man, not man for the State. Man has rights which belong to him by nature, which owe their origin to no earthly or civil lawmaker. They are God-given and no Government may ever lawfully and directly rob one of them. It is true that if the common good demands sacrifices from the individual he must make them, sometimes to the giving up of his life, as happens in war. But the public danger must be urgent, the need of such extreme measures obvious. They cannot be assumed or presumed. Because one is a deaf-mute he does not forfeit his natural rights. Because one is tubercular or cancerous he does not forfeit his natural rights. Because one is a thief, even an habitual thief, he does not forfeit his natural rights. It is sane and godly to urge the unfit voluntarily to remain unmarried, but compulsory legislation preventing whole classes not prohibited by nature from marrying is radically wrong and un-Christian.

As for laws demanding medical certificates before matrimony, they are not bad in themselves. However their practical utility is problematical. Moreover it must be borne in mind that the utmost freedom of choice as to the examiner should be left to the parties involved and even though the examination show some defect a marriage license may not be denied if the parties are mutually satisfied to contract matrimony.

under the circumstances, except in extreme cases where it is perfectly sure that distinct and serious harmful effects will follow to the State. To prevent a merely probable harm I may not deprive one of a certain right or impede its exercise.

Eugenic propagandists lobby for the sterilization of criminals and defectives. Here again they tread dangerous ground. If his misdeeds warrant it a felon may be legally executed, Henry Ford to the contrary notwithstanding. But if his guilt does not merit capital punishment, the State may not penalize his wrong-doing by tampering with his nature, or sterilize him for the sole purpose of preventing him propagating his kind. And if this be true for criminals, much more so does it hold for defectives. Besides, many a rascal and many a defective has been known to parent remarkably fine children. Feeble-mindedness may justify segregation; it cannot justify more.

Another item in the radical eugenicist's bill-of-fare is the quiet putting out of life of human beings who are in pain. The babe that comes to birth crippled or deformed might well be chloroformed; the old man or woman verging towards senile debility and with little ahead but physical suffering might well be painlessly shuffled off the earth. The very suggestion is revolting. It is instinctively unnatural. It ignores facts. More than one club-footed infant has made the world better for his manhood. Milton wrote his immortal "Paradise Lost" when blind. Julius Cæsar was an epileptic.

Euthanasia—that's the technical name of this unsavory dish served up at the eugenic festal board—is based on the false principle that the whole worth of man is measured in brawn and muscle and earning ca-

capacity. Eugenics knows nothing of the real value of a human life, of the beauty and nobility that may be made to surround suffering, of its supernatural aspect, of its eternal merit. It takes Faith to tell men that and most eugenists scoff at Faith. No one merely to shorten physical suffering may deliberately, directly and positively procure another's death. Before God he would be a murderer. Yet it is done, and when the press features it eugenists are loud in its defense, and we have come to a pass, where under their influence, juries refuse to convict those who resort to the nefarious practice. Are cripples brute beasts to be slaughtered at will? Have helpless infancy and old age no claims on our charity by reason of our common humanity?

Let it not be thought that because the Church is not in accord with many modern eugenic methods, she is indifferent to the alleviation of human misery. No institution in the world fosters by precept and practice a higher regard for the human body. Though formed of the slime of the earth, that body, in the light of Faith, is a sacred thing. It is the abode of the immortal soul, is helpmate in meriting heaven. Nay, it is the very temple of the Holy Ghost and at Communion time the living sacramental Christ literally abides there. The Faithful are taught to respect it as something holy. The Fifth Commandment forbids any injury or mutilation of it. The Catholic child learns in his catechism that his body is not to be abused. Catholic manhood and maidenhood are told that purity and chastity are not mere conventions but real, positive virtues; that impurity in any way, shape or form, is forbidden by God and sinful; that there is not one standard of morality for men and another for women; that self-restraint is not an

impossibility but a genuine reality; that though people feel the sting of sensuality and concupiscence they may not so much as entertain a lustful thought without offending God. Freudians of course laugh at these doctrines. But then the world always did think itself wiser than God and the sensuous Herod treated the infinitely pure Christ like a fool!

And as Catholicism instills respect for the human body by word, she emphasizes her lessons by her actions. That body she solemnly anoints in Baptism, in Confirmation and, for its final passing, in Extreme Unction. From the cradle to the grave she sheds around it her choicest blessings. Even when the soul has passed out of it in death, she has it carried with honor before her altar to be blessed and incensed. And then she lays it away in consecrated ground, forbidding cremation, for it has not lost its sacred character. Aye, and she proclaims that it will one day rise again to glory clothed with immortality.

The Church stands unequivocally for a physically better human race and for mankind's social and economic improvement, but her methods are not the worse-than-barnyard practices that eugenists and our physical-culture and nature-worship magazines are advocating. Her methods are the practical carrying out of her Christian philosophy of life, which holds that man's body like his soul is a gift from God to aid that soul in His praise, reverence and service, for which alone men, individually and collectively, have been created.

The Catholic Church and Birth Control

ARTIFICIAL birth control is one of our great national evils. More than any of the other schemes of eugenic propagandists in their fewer-and-better-baby movement, it has inoculated our people with the virus of its poisonous toxin. To bring a baby into the world has grown old-fashioned. Families of six or seven children used to be common: ten and more were not considered altogether extraordinary. But our modern emancipated women have discarded motherhood along with the flowing tresses and hoop-skirts and horse-drawn carriages of their grandmothers' days. A flapper doll or a Pekinese pup can be fondled and handled like an honest-to-goodness baby: either is much less troublesome than a mewling infant.

If our national birthrate is noticeably low it is not that marriage bureaus are inactive or because wedded couples are turning celibates. If Mr. and Mrs. Gold-coast and Mr. and Mrs. Mainstreet have no family, or but a stray child, it is not infrequently because of set purpose they are making a family impossible by contraceptive practices.

There is nothing essentially wrong in people not marrying or in refraining by mutual agreement from their marital relations after matrimony. Neither are men and women to be blamed if nature herself has constituted them sterile. Birth control as a topic of discussion today and as a subject of propaganda and legisla-

tion by eugenists has nothing to do with cases of this kind. By it is here understood the prevention of conception through the marriage act, such prevention being procured either by the interruption of the act itself or by the use of external means, mechanical or chemical. Because of the methods by which it is effected we call it *artificial* birth control, and it is this we are dealing with here in its relation to Catholic philosophy and theology.

The attitude of the Catholic Church about the current practice, as about matrimony in general, is settled and unambiguous. She has enunciated it time and again. Marriage with her is a sacramental union Divinely established for the propagation of the human family, the rearing of children, the mutual comfort of husband and wife and as an outlet for passion. To these ends nature has ordained the marital act which in lawful wedlock is not only neither degrading nor sinful but perfectly legitimate, and, for the Catholic Christian in the state of sanctifying grace, has a *quasi* sacramental and supernatural character.

It is the teaching of the Church then that parenthood and the acts that bring it about are holy things. At the same time she does not hold, and never has held, that married couples are obliged to bring into the world an avalanche of babies regardless alike of circumstances and consequences. She does stand though, and most emphatically, for marital chastity and all that it connotes and so she stigmatizes as immoral every artificial method of birth restriction. Onanistic or contraceptive practices, to say nothing of abortion, are irreconcilable with the Catholic concept of matrimony. They can never be justified and without grave sin they may neither be advised nor indulged in. It is a rigorous stand if you

will, but nature and the God of nature both unmistakably tell us that artificial birth restriction is essentially wrong.

It is sometimes said that the Church must keep in step with modern ideas; that with time she too will change her position in this matter. People who talk this way, even though they be Catholics in name, are non-Catholics in spirit. They profess to believe the Church is Divine, yet when she speaks for their guidance, Protestant-like, they set up their private judgment against her authoritative pronouncements. Even the Church, Christ's plenipotentiary though she be, cannot change the moral law. No amount of world-progress will ever justify divorce or abortion or artificial birth control or similar vices. For the Church to face about in principle would mean that the Holy Ghost had been derelict in His care of her, that her inerrancy and infallibility in matters of faith and morals were mere figments.

Artificial birth control is sheer paganism. Scripture says of the idolaters of Solomon's day: "They neither keep life nor marriage undefiled . . . and all things are mingled together . . . forgetfulness of God, defiling of souls, changing of nature, disorder in marriage and the irregularity of adultery and uncleanness" (Wis. xiv. 24-26). Centuries before, Almighty God Himself had branded Onan's act as a "detestable thing" (Gen. xxxviii. 10). He was guilty of one form of this vice.

The practice is an abuse of a natural function. To use the activities nature provides for specific needs in opposition to their manifest purpose is unnatural. The primary purpose of marital relations is the procreation of children. Artificial birth control, whatever its form, deliberately aims to exclude and frustrate conception.

It is a degrading thing. It perverts conjugal inter-

course from cooperation with the Creator into a mere means of animal gratification. Its indulgence leads people to conclude that they are toys for each other's passions. It lessens mutual conjugal respect. No healthy-minded man or woman begins the practice without experiencing a severe moral shock and even though people grow callous from habit they rarely overcome entirely their innate repugnance to it.

Birth control is usually defended either on economic grounds because of the expense of child-bearing and child-rearing, or for reasons of health as a preventative against the constitutional breakdowns repeated child-bearing is supposed to bring on or for meeting particularly difficult physical situations attending maternity. Any other motive alleged in its favor—patriotic, philanthropic or personal—is downright camouflage and mostly a shield for sexual viciousness. We shall say a word of the economic and physical problems associated with raising a family, though in the light of the Divine prohibition of birth control they can have for us only an academic interest.

By way of prelude it should be noted that it is a fallacy to imagine that because religion cannot find an easy solution for certain admittedly perplexing moral tangles therefore the natural law must be thrown overboard. The primary business of the Church is to teach. For a guarantee of her teaching she has the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit. It belongs to economists and doctors and sociologists and the rest of mankind to harmonize their moral theories and practices with that teaching, not for her to adjust her doctrines to their theories.

No one disputes the high cost of living and the almost

prohibitive expense thrown around child-bearing and child-rearing. However, one gets suspicious of economic necessity as a genuine reason for practising birth control, for it is one of the few things for which the high-cost-of-living plea is advanced. It is negligible as a motive for simpler living. Pleasure cars, costly outings, extravagant dress, luxurious amusements are "the thing," even in the families of our workers. Moreover, isn't it a fact that the practice is very prevalent among the wealthy and moderately well-to-do?

It is wrong for people to bring children into the world if they cannot give them a decent chance in life, but this does not mean providing opportunities for leisure and culture that come only with wealth. The economic argument for birth control evaluates life by bank accounts. Poverty is still a virtue despite the way the world looks askance at it. The holy house of Nazareth is still an excellent model for a happy home. Simple living and honest toil and even occasional want are not bad either for body or soul. Many a full life has been lived in a hovel. Our parents and grandparents faced sterner economic problems than confront us but they never dreamed of using them as an excuse for violating the Divine law.

The Church is not unacquainted with the financial difficulties of our laboring folk and of our business and professional men. The clergy know the situation and regret it. Many of them have experienced the pinch of poverty in their own families. Catholic economists have been for years fighting the inequality of our social scale that exacts a higher standard of living from people than their income warrants. They have insisted on the duty of employers to pay a living wage and of the wealthy to

spend their surplus wealth in the relief of economic distress not in extravagant and selfish pleasures. Till this is done there will be no real solution of our financial problems, but meanwhile poverty will not justify men and women before God in the unnatural and Divinely forbidden practice of artificial birth control.

As for the medical arguments urged by advocates of contraceptive practices and abortion, it cannot be denied that individual cases do present perplexing situations. On the whole, however, dangers to life and health from child-bearing are not so common as some would have us think. Modern science has minimized them. Far more American women go down to a premature grave victims of self-indulgence and careless living than of pregnancy. Yet even perils to health do not modify the moral law. The end does not justify the means. People of this type are to be pitied. But they are like those who because husband or wife becomes permanently insane after wedlock must forego their marital privileges. Were their situation to excuse birth-control practices, divorce or adultery might as logically be defended for the others. Nature's law is made for the mass of humanity. Under it, as under every general law, some individuals will be sufferers; that does not invalidate or abrogate the law. The pangs of childbirth are part of the primeval curse that the daughters of Eve should conceive in sorrow.

There is another phase to this physical argument. Contraceptives themselves induce unhealthy and hurtful effects. Their use affects the entire system and almost always, if indulged frequently or for long, brings on dangerous nervous and psychic reactions. Sometimes nature is tardy in meting out retribution: eventually it

comes. Then too God cannot be left out of the accounting. Birth-control addicts make a fool's bargain. In the end many of them lose the one or two children they are willing to bear or find themselves sterile when they want offspring.

So well recognized are the social dangers associated with contraceptive practices that most of our States prohibit the dissemination of birth-control propaganda. Yet its vicious advocates are persistently and sometimes effectually lobbying for it in our legislative halls. Thanks be to God, the New York legislators have not allowed themselves to be deceived by the specious pleas of the eugenists. Meanwhile, however, their movement is active and relentless. Their publicity is enabling people to dispense with marriage altogether.

One of our greatest social ills is sexual immorality among young unmarried people, even among the pupils in our schools,—and all because of what our eugenists are doing. A generation ago young people warily and comparatively rarely indulged in sexual relations. The risks were too great. Today, fully informed about contraceptives, some of them by their own parents, and deterred neither by fear nor shame, boys and girls still in high school unabashedly give themselves over to sexual vices, and at times their very teachers have been known to sponsor their carryings on. Periodically the press lets the public in on the magnitude of the evil. One shudders to think what the domestic lives of the rising generation will be when the time comes for them to marry.

Of course all that has been said of birth control applies even with greater reason to positive abortion. It is downright murder. In its malice it out-Herods Herod.

The Innocents that he butchered got to heaven. The innocent that is wantonly slaughtered in the maternal womb is robbed of all opportunity for baptism and Paradise.

The program of the Catholic Church for married people is simple; many think it is brutally simple. Do they wish not to offend God? Then they must either live a normal conjugal life and submit the issue with its economic and health problems to His providence, or they must practice self-denial in their marital relations. It is the program dictated alike by right reason and Divine Revelation. No other may be conscientiously adopted.

In many cases either alternative calls for courage, but there are plenty of living witnesses to the truth that to those who seek first the kingdom of God all things else, even health and material advantages, shall be added. God's economic providence in the homes of the righteous is not imaginary. It is a comforting reality.

As for self-control, some moderns deny its possibility. These merely betray their own sexual weakness for it is a common fact—whether spontaneously assumed or imposed by circumstances: sometimes it is very protracted. Others admitting its possibility, question its advisability. They argue that the effort it implies is unhealthy and that the reactions on the nervous system are bad. They forget that the experience of warriors, athletes and those whose work exacts unusual expenditures of energy proves that abstention from sexual relations is a source of increased physical vigor. Where the effects of repression are harmful the reason not unfrequently is that while there is abstention from marital acts there is no genuine control of sexuality itself and no serious attempt

to avoid occasions that stimulate and inflame the passions.

No one can hope effectually and harmlessly to control the sex instinct unless will-power and character have been developed by habits of self-denial along other lines. People are being taught that to inhibit any urge is harmful. It is a pernicious doctrine, which not unlikely partially explains the recent frequency of suicides among the young. One of the big drawbacks of our public educational system is that self-denial is rarely and never systematically taught. Growing to maturity satisfying every whim, our boys and girls can never hope to be masters when they must control the strongest of their passions. Catholic pedagogics insists on continual self-denial and the whole ascetic system of the Church prepares our young people for just such emergencies.

Men especially must learn this self-control. Marriage is no license for them to make beasts of themselves. In the Christian dispensation a man's wife is more than an animal and she must be so treated. Marriage is not merely a breeding contract. A decent respect for the feelings and health and desires and financial and social status of one's wife is an integral part of the practical Catholic's program.

I know that all this talk of self-control and trust in God sounds like nonsense to the world at large. But that does not make it untrue. Catholics understand when they plight their troth that marriage is no sinecure but they know also that it is a sacrament, that God will enable them to fulfill their obligations, that His grace will strengthen them to rise superior to their difficulties. And they know further that they may have additional grace for the asking in Holy Communion. If they must

suspend their marital relations, they will; if they must trust their economic situation to God, they will.

The early Christians had to choose between apostasy and a bloody death in the arena. Present-day Catholics are not subjected to this ordeal. However, they must often do things equally heroic. Not the least of these for married people living in an atmosphere that converts pagan practices into domestic virtues and gives itself over to an orgy of birth control, is to prefer economic distress or relentless self-denial to contraceptive practices.

Self-abnegation is the alpha and omega of all right living and the sum total of the Catholic Church's teaching on birth control. Whoever will not deny himself what is sinful—and contraceptive practices are grievously so—cannot be Christ's disciple. And he who is not with Christ is against Him.

The Catholic Church and the Sex Problem

THE country just at present is surfeited with sex. Society is out-of-joint on the subject. A philosophy of life that considers the sex urge as the great dynamic force that keeps the world moving has brought it to pass that practically all life is interpreted only in terms of sex. Everything is made to pander to the sex appetite. The daily press reeks with scandals, bookshelves are full of pornographic filth, showhouses are little better than dens of iniquity, the theaters have grown to be so putrid that even those who make no pretense of moral ideals can scarcely stomach them. The lid is off. The revelry of sex is at its height. The sky is the limit or more truly the depths of hell. Boys and girls that should be growing to Christian youth and maidenhood have no ambition nobler than to be sheiks and flappers. Drinking parties and dancing orgies and petting and necking are the order of their days or rather of their nights, for they know no curfew. They admit no restriction on the books they read, the topics they discuss, the places they frequent. It is the jazz age, the era of flaming youth! Yes, youth is aflame with the fire of concupiscence and those who have started the conflagration are the very men and women who should be passing on to our young people the highest moral standards.

In the beginning God made the sexes but the sex

problem was not coeval with His creative work. The same differences that distinguish men and women today characterized Adam and Eve. But in them there was no lusting of the flesh against the spirit. Like their other animal appetites sexual tendencies were wholly subjected to reason. They walked naked about the garden of Eden but concupiscence did not bother them. It was in the upheaval of nature consequent on their sin that they first experienced its sting and felt ashamed of their nakedness. The sex problem arose at that moment. In one or other of its variant forms it has intrigued the race ever since.

The problem is a decidedly human one. There are sex divergencies among the lower animals as with us but dogs and cattle and poultry have no sex problem. Unerringly they follow their instincts. But the very faculties that elevate man above the brute creation afford almost unlimited capacity for the abuse of his appetites. And they have been abused. The long catalogue of sexual vices of which people are today the slaves and the almost total perversion of ideas as to the place the sex principle ought to occupy in the human economy, prove this.

The sex urge is a fact and as God's gift for the integrating of man's animal nature there is nothing improper or wrong in it any more than there is in his innate appetites for food and sleep. Its purpose is also evident. Divine Wisdom might have planned other ways for propagating the human family. He chose the present economy. He differentiated the sexes. He set in human nature the sex urge and associated with its satisfaction a sensual pleasure that would facilitate its proper use.

Reason and Revelation both dictate that the sex appetite must be regulated. In the last analysis then, the sex problem is one of adjustment. The Catholic program for bringing this about is a simple but radical one. It consists in the cult of purity in all its aspects both in and out of the marriage state. The ultimate cause of moral degeneracy is sin. It can be counteracted only by virtue.

Perhaps the best background from which to appreciate the wisdom of the Catholic Church in her attitude toward the sex problem is afforded by the habit of thought of the world at large about it. To begin with, it is generally taken for granted that purity and morality are mostly conventions. Catholicism practically stands alone in relating them to supernatural life or eternity, and in defending the objectivity and unchangeableness of the moral law. Even matrimony has lost its sacred character and permanency. Men and women have come to think next-to-nothing of divorce. The Divine law has been supplanted by degenerate social standards. Don't shock society! Don't hurt your health! Don't get caught at anything! These "don'ts" have been substituted for the "thou-shalt-nots" of the Decalogue.

How far a-field Mr. Averageman is in his moral judgments may be gauged from the fact that the "model" senior in one of our nearby universities did not hesitate to confess quite recently, while priding himself on neither smoking nor drinking, that he saw nothing wrong in petting or necking, and that "The Captive" was a proper play to witness, though the metropolitan police were on its trail and Mr. Geo. J. Nathan did not hesitate to characterize it as "the most subversive, corruptive and potentially evil-fraught play ever shown in the American theater."

Another evidence of the popular habit of thought about the problem is the position sex-hygiene teaching has come to occupy in the public schools. It is assumed that informing adolescents about sex matters and especially about the evils of sexual indulgence, will develop in them a rational attitude toward the subject. Within the last ten or fifteen years courses in hygiene, physiology and biology, have been almost universally introduced into our elementary or secondary school curricula as a medium for sex instruction. Early and complete knowledge about sex matters is advocated for all. Naturally enough since the public schools as at present constituted cannot correlate the pupils' studies to morality or religion, the whole emphasis of this sex teaching is placed on its physical aspects.

The theory is wrong. The practice is damnable. It is a grave psychological error to imagine that mere knowledge gives moral power. All degenerates know that disease follows indulgence but does that keep them straight? It may make them cautious; nothing more. Knowledge only begets evil unless a right conscience and a chaste conscience be simultaneously aroused, and the will trained, and most of the State Constitutions make it impossible to form the conscience or discipline the will. Better sanitation may be the outcome of public sex instruction but not more morality. "God" is the crying need for young America, not biology and physiology and hygiene! Exposition and description of the merely physical side of sexual matters is both useless and harmful when it comes at a time when the will is still weak, the imagination flighty and the passions unruly.

A third common error abroad about the sex problem which on the one hand explains somewhat its persistence

and on the other indicates how most people envision it, is that in many quarters it is taken for granted that sexual restraint is impossible, that the appetites cannot be controlled, especially by the young. A certain amount of unlawful sexual indulgence, provided it be moderate (whatever that may be), is openly advocated by many as useful and necessary. Prostitution and the principle of the double standard both have many defenders. On the score that familiarity with the human animal will check passion the cult of the nude is being fostered. Self-assertion is the slogan of the day and youth is being trained to place no inhibitions to its tendencies. With young women becoming emancipated and birth control propaganda helping them to evade the natural effects of their indulgence which is always sinful, they too have let down the barriers. Countless foolish folk are ensnared by the sensuous axiom that one's wild oats must be sown and that the process will afford a rational solution for sex difficulties. As well expect the brain to function more alertly because it has been burnt up with fever. Moths don't fly about the flame without being scorched and youth is not going to have sex flashed upon it at every turn and then keep pure. The orgy of sexual experience into which a pagan world would plunge the young may give us penitent Magdalens and Augustines but it will never produce a race of chaste men and virginal maidens. When the world tells youth that it can't keep pure and that it must sow its wild oats it is foisting on them a damnable falsehood.

As different from all this as day is from night is the Catholic Church's dealing with the sex problem. In the very first chapter of Holy Writ she finds the inspired truths on which her theory about sex is grounded. "Male

and female," we are there told, "God created them." And again, that He gave the commandment "Increase and multiply." And further, "Therefore shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." These are not three distinct, unrelated facts but different facets of the same fundamental truth, the Magna Charta of the whole sex problem. Even apart from God's revealed word nature teaches the same great truth and complements it by telling us that faculties are to be used for the purpose for which they were created and in such a way that that purpose shall not be thwarted.

Out of this nucleus Catholicism derives its first practical principle and absolute law in sex matters, that all and any indulgence except in the manner and circumstances under which it was intended by God, is a mortal sin. No exception can be admitted to this rule. Therefore self-abuse is wrong; therefore fornication is wrong; therefore adultery and incest and sodomy and birth control are wrong. God's positive commands which say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery . . . Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (Exod. xx. 14, 17), are but a confirmation of these dictates of nature. So too the words of St. Paul: "Know you not . . . that neither fornicators nor adulterers nor the effeminate . . . shall possess the kingdom of God" (I Cor. vi. 9).

In the interpretation of these and similar scriptural texts and in the application of her fundamental principle about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of sexual pleasure, the Church has due regard to the science of psychology. If fornication and adultery and sodomy are wrong and sinful and to be avoided, then whatever disposes or leads to them is dangerous and sinful and to be avoided. There

is an essential connection between the beginning and end of men's moral actions. Unlawful sexual indulgence is the logical and almost infallible outcome of improper thoughts and words and looks and familiarities. Hence these too must be avoided. Christ Himself condemns an unholy glance as practical adultery (Matt. v. 28).

The Catholic catechism begins therefore at the beginning and says quite unambiguously that the Sixth Commandment forbids whatever is contrary to purity in looks, words or actions, and the Ninth Commandment forbids all wilful consent to impure thoughts and desires and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh. One must not attend immodest plays or participate in lascivious dances or read books or gaze at pictures that stimulate the passions, and the more direct and immediate and certain the stimulation the graver the obligation to shun what arouses it. The general principle underlying this teaching is that occasions which tend to excite the sexual appetite must be avoided.

From the dawn of reason the Catholic child is taught that sin is the greatest of all evils and that impurity is a sin; moreover, that there is a terrible sanction for the violation of the Divine law and an eternally magnificent reward for those who live virtuously. It is taught too that all that it has, body and soul, comes from God, and that one day it will be accountable for the use that has been made of His gifts. Modern psychologists say that to motivate a child by fear is wrong but the Church is still old-fashioned enough to credit the word of the Sacred Writer that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and her twenty centuries of experience that it is also the beginning of purity.

Along with the presentation of these truths and the

basic motives for right living, the Catholic mother and the Catholic priest and the Catholic teacher foster in the little one the sense of shame and the holy virtue of modesty. The Church is no apologist for prudery, but shame and modesty are nature's own signs of genuine purity and its protection, and they dictate a careful guard of the senses, a check on incipient liberties and the avoiding of the occasions of sin. Self-denial is also emphasized and the character and the will strengthened by habitual discipline.

To inspire high ideals of modesty and self-denial the Boy Christ and His Immaculate Mother and the saints are held up as patterns to be imitated. To crown her training toward purity the Church offers the child through her sacramental system the positive physical supernatural help of grace to sustain its virtue or to retrieve it should it unfortunately be lost.

As adolescence comes on with its added problems and dangers, the Church meets it in the same four-fold way: new principles of action suitable to the changed conditions are laid down; additional virtues are emphasized; more models for imitation are presented; the frequentation of the sacraments intensified. Here the value of the Catholic dogma of confession shines forth conspicuously. The adolescent finds there, at the most critical period of life, counsel, direction, advice and encouragement, and it comes to him from one whom he knows to be Christ's representative, and it carries with it Divine authority. What is immensely more, the adolescent knows that if his appetites unfortunately do master him for a moment, the priest in the sacrament of Penance will literally absolve him from his sin and afford strength that will bring victory in a future temptation.

As regards the enlightenment of youth on sexual matters when that becomes necessary, Catholic pedagogues have their own notions as to whom the information is to come from, and how it is to be given. On the one hand they are mostly agreed that this instruction is not to be through public classes in sex hygiene, and on the other that very little if any insistence is to be placed on the purely physiological side of the subject. Ordinarily it belongs to the parent, the teacher or the confessor, as individual circumstances warrant, to give the information needed. Moreover, it is the high moral significance of things sexual and the responsibility connected with them, that are to be stressed, not its physical aspects.

Perhaps no one is better prepared for sexual enlightenment when it is opportune than the Catholic child well-instructed in its catechism. From the time it could lisp it has been speaking the language of sex. The keynote of the "Hail Mary" it has been taught to say daily is the Divine maternity, and the repetition of the story of the Virgin Birth and the Immaculate Conception will have awakened a knowledge of its own conception and birth and its own sweet mother's maternity. Its catechism and its prayer-book and the readings it has heard in church on Sundays, have familiarized it with a vocabulary that connotes clearly even very heinous sexual vices. The step to the understanding of their ramifications when the time for this knowledge arrives is an easy, natural one, and it carries neither jar nor shock, much less does it afford any sexual stimulus.

The Catholic approach to sex enlightenment is not through biology which can speak of it only in terms of the barnyard but chiefly through religion which raises

it to the supernatural plane and presents it in terms of the immortal soul. The chivalry of youthful reserve, the sweetness of maidenhood, the beauty of parenthood, the sacredness of matrimony, the sanctity of the human body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, the grandeur of virginity,—these are the different chapters in the Catholic textbook of sexual hygiene. Instead of dragging chastity down to a mere health precaution or a convention the Catholic religion erects it into one of the noblest virtues.

If the proof of the pudding be in the eating, then there can be no doubt but that the theory and practice of the Church is psychologically and pedagogically sound. It works! The catalogue of chaste youths Catholicism offers for the imitation and emulation and inspiration of young manhood and maidenhood are exhibits that no judge or jury passing on the question may impugn. An Agnes and an Aloysius, a Cecilia and a Stanislaus, an Aquinas and a de Sales, a Joan of Arc and, in quite recent times, a Theresa of Lisieux, tell the beautiful tale. Today, though the flood-gates of vice have burst to deluge the land, Catholic young people of both sexes are not hesitating readily to pledge themselves to lives of perpetual virginity and celibacy in our seminaries, convents and religious houses. Modern philosophers may analyze and psychoanalyze as they list, but these young Catholic idealists are made of the same stuff as the rest of mankind only they have proven perhaps more apt pupils in the school of holy purity.

Yes, the Catholic system works. Tell a child that impurity is a sin and that sin has a terrible sanction; school it in Christian modesty and build up its character by self-control; set before it ideals and exemplars

of heroic chastity; fortify it with the graces that come from confession and Communion, and pure young men and maidens are bound to be the result.

Bold as the claim may sound, only the Catholic Church today has any sane, consistent policy about sex. She alone offers the adequate natural and supernatural motives and the actual sacramental helps that make for the attainment of chastity, for she alone holds to the realities of sin and hell and heaven and of a Redemption by the God-Man who not merely preached purity but through His Church gives men the power to incarnate it in their own lives.

If with the Catholic Church the world puts the fear of hell and the love of God into the hearts of our young people; if it holds up for their admiration and imitation not sheiks and flappers but the saints and heroes of Christianity; if it stresses the philosophy not of sensuality but of the spirit, of eternity not of time, then but not till then, will it settle the sex problem.

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