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MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PHASES OF SOCIAL HYGIENE*

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PERSONAL and social hygiene in matters of sex are, in very important ways, dependent upon moral and religious training. On the other hand, morals and religion are in important ways dependent upon forces set free by the growth and activity of sex instincts and powers. One of the most significant facts in modern social progress is its recognition of this interdependence of mind and body. We have learned that physical health depends upon peace of mind, hopefulness, courage, and many other things that have seemed in the past to be purely mental or spiritual; and we have learned also that the character of people and the spirit in which they do their work depend upon their health, upon conditions of food and warmth and shelter, things which in the past have been regarded as affecting only the physical man. It is now somewhat out of date to set physical conditions over against moral and religious: every great human problem is more and more clearly seen in this day to involve all these conditions in its rise, and to require thoughtful consideration of them all for its solution. As we face the problems of sex, we must recognize the importance of fresh air, exercise, wholesome food, clean cups and clean towels, and we must also recognize the importance of clean thoughts and high purposes. We must know clearly the facts of biological and medical science, and with them in mind we must touch the springs of conduct in affection and imagination. Our aim must be to achieve that mastery over the forces of life finely expressed by Browning's *Rabbi ben Ezra*: "Nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul."

We may consider, first, how in matters of sex, flesh helps soul; second, how soul helps flesh, and third, how in normal childhood and in youth soul and flesh grow together in mutual help.

The first great outstanding fact is that the physical powers of sex reach maturity in the same years in which the moral and religious instincts are greatly quickened.† If we recall our youth we must realize that, in the years between twelve and twenty, our lives were greatly disturbed and perplexed, and also greatly exalted

*Part of a chapter in a book "The Social Emergency" to be published later by Houghton Mifflin, Co., Boston.

†G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, chaps. XIII, XIV, XV.

and inspired by desires and impulses partly toward the opposite sex and partly toward the service of God and our fellows. In the normal adolescent boy or girl there is a powerful expanding and enriching of sex thoughts and desires and purposes. There is also a rapid development of social sympathy and passion.

We can scarcely escape the conviction that these are not different awakenings, but rather different phases of the one great awakening of the young life as it prepares for the tasks and responsibilities of manhood and womanhood. The part that sex development plays in this awakening has been variously stressed by different special students of the physiology and psychology of adolescence. Some scientists have not hesitated to give it first place and to treat social passion and religious enthusiasm as secondary manifestations of sex energy.* However that may be, we know that each speaks naturally in terms of the other. The religious mystic of the Middle Ages was devoted to the Divine Lover or the Heavenly Lady, and the modern revolutionary is *wedded* to the Cause. On the other hand, the lover naturally adopts the language of religion to express his devotion to the lady of his heart. The water-tight compartment theory of life is in these days thoroughly discredited. We know that the various powers of soul and body are related and interdependent, and we feel sure that the developing powers of sex do have very vital relations to developing powers of moral purposes and religious aspirations.

The youth with full sex consciousness and impulse is normally the youth of abundant energy for moral and religious activity. It seems, therefore, quite fundamental to the right understanding of sex that we consider the body, not the enemy of the soul, but its friend; not a clog upon the spiritual growth of boy and girl advancing into manhood and womanhood, but an important source of energy for the upward climb.

When we turn to the second part of our discussion and ask how in matters of sex soul helps flesh, the need and the fact are clearer and perhaps more urgent. Dante found the souls of the lustful in the second circle of hell, driven hither and thither by warring winds—

“The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on,
Whirled round and dashed amain with sore annoy.”

* Forel, *The Sexual Question*, chap. xxi, “Religion and Sexual Life”; William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, chap. i; especially the first footnote.

Here we have clear recognition of the two great characters of sex impulse, its violence and its fitfulness. In the one character it needs to be subdued that it may not destroy; in the other it needs to be directed that it may build up. The spectacle of wasted manhood and womanhood, of depleted powers in body, mind, and soul, is in history and in present society appalling. It is so oppressive that it has driven many thoughtful men and women to despair. Such pessimism, however, contradicts the history as well as the instincts of the race. In the face of great evils there have always been those who would sit down in discouragement and despair; every great destructive force in human history has daunted some men to the point of inactivity. Yet the evils have been controlled. No man of moral passion and religious purpose can adopt an attitude of passive submission to the forces of destruction. We can admit no necessary evil, or the battle of human progress is lost. We ask ourselves soberly, therefore, how this tremendous outrush of destructive energy may be controlled. The answer is plain. Men have by the agency of fire itself constructed the means by which fire is controlled and domesticated; they have turned disease against itself, and by the agency of antitoxins have conquered it; they are learning to arouse and organize the fighting spirit of men against its own most ancient and fearful expression and are enlisting soldiers of peace in a war against war. Even so the race depends upon the higher affections for control of the lower, and lust is controlled by love.

Nor is this the higher affection that, in the practical experience of men, has controlled and transformed animal passion. Thousands of fully sexed men have, through the centuries, turned their bodily and mental energies so fully to devoted service for God and their fellows as to rise above the clamoring demands of physical appetite, in the vigorous terms of the New Testament making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God's sake. This is a hard saying, and the experience it treats of must always be confined to a small number of men; yet it goes far toward demonstrating a general possibility, and it should effectively dispose of the "necessity" argument, by which men often excuse their vicious practices.

One thing more should be said on this subject of control. Not only are the higher, more spiritual affections the most effective masters of the lower; they are the *only* effective masters. Public reprobation can do much, but it is ineffectual with large numbers of relatively unattached members of society, and it is impotent against secret vice. Motives of cautious fear are always weak with

full-blooded and generous youth, and they are likely to become weaker with all men as medical science discovers ways to prevent or escape the most obviously fearful consequences of sexual license.

A familiar phrase comes to my mind, as no doubt it comes to yours, "the expulsive power of the higher affections;" yet I think that phrase is not quite suitable. It is not a question of expulsion. It is not wholly a question of control; it is mainly a question of direction. What we need to-day with boys and girls for the solving of the sex problems is to direct those energies, which in their false direction are destructive, into right and healthful ways; that is, we need to socialize and elevate that affection, which in baser forms has aspects of ugly animalism.

As one of the solutions of the problem of control it has been proposed to separate the sexes in the adolescent years. From my point of view, this would defeat our object. In the association of boys and girls during the adolescent period, we may enlist the higher affections for the control and the direction of the powers that are set free by sex impulses developed in that very period of life.

What happens in the experience of the normal boy? In this period of early adolescence he finds within himself a wonderful quickening of mind—impulses, feelings, longings that he does not understand. These impulses, feelings, longings, perplex him, it may be for years. They reach out vaguely, blindly toward the opposite sex, sometimes in a perverted way, but oftener naturally and honestly. Then the young man falls in love. At once his more or less vague, cloudy, incoherent, formless feelings and purposes are concentrated, directed, and fixed in devotion to a young woman whom he idealizes, almost deifies. That is the first stage in the natural directing and forming of sex powers and impulses toward social, moral, and religious ends.

In the third place, we may consider how, in matters of sex, the flesh and the soul may grow together in mutual help. The essential facts and the vital importance of the sex life appeal to the developing boy or girl in four great relations—in relation to father and mother, in relation to the strength and grace of his or her own body and mind, in relation to his or her future family, and in relation to society in general. These appeals come in successive periods and open the way to healthful instruction and guidance from childhood up to manhood and womanhood.

Sex questions first arise in the child's mind in connection with parenthood. The first things a little boy or girl needs to know is

that the young life is sheltered and fed during long months in the mother's body, and that the father had a share in that life. Is it not amazing that in this twentieth century we find many girls twelve years old and over who do not know that their father had any share in starting their lives? I knew of a girl nineteen years old, a student in college, who did not know that a man had any essential part in bringing children into the world, but supposed, when any question of illegitimate childbirth was raised, that possibly God punished a bad woman by sending her a baby before she was married. It is little short of criminal that many girls are allowed to reach adolescence with no sex thought or image clearly in their minds except such as they have received directly or indirectly from animals. If boys or girls knew from the beginning that a part of the father's life and a part of the mother's life united to form the beginning of their lives, the question of sex would begin on a plane where there were religious, moral, and spiritual associations, and an atmosphere of love and holiness. These young people could then see the facts of sex clearly instead of through the mists of prurient fancy and suggestion as they see them now.*

The next information and guidance needed by our boys and girls concerns the influence of sex upon their own development. The objection is continually raised that it is not well for little children to have sex thoughts emphasized in their minds. But at present no boy or girl grows up and plays among other children, or hears talk on the streets, or goes to work in factory or store, without hearing these facts emphasized day by day, emphasized unhealthily and distorted shamefully. We propose simply to have the emphasis shifted and lightened, for it will be lightened if the facts are given truly and in right relations.

Considering now the period of puberty, we find additional needs, for no boy or girl reaches puberty, under ordinary conditions, without knowing that it brings the possibility of fatherhood and motherhood, brings the possibility of that process that we call fertilization, in which the life of plants and animals begins. The boy or girl who reaches this age has a right to know what fertilization means, and what fertilization implies; has a right to the simple biological facts which will tell him the relation between the life of the parents and the life of the child, the mysterious relation in body and mind that we call heredity. The beginning of the socializing of sex energy and sex power depends upon recognition of the

* F. W. Foerster, *Marriage and the Sex Problem*, chap. iv; especially section (d), "The Educational Significance of Monogamy."

fact that this power that develops in the young man and young woman at puberty is not to be used for selfish gratification, is not primarily a source of pleasure, but has a very direct relation to the health, intelligence, and happiness of others. This relation may be enforced by a simple study of succeeding generations of flowers and the ways in which forms, colors, and sizes originate and are handed down from generation to generation in wonderful variety. Or it may be illustrated from an observation of the beginnings of sex in infusoria; how tiny animals in stagnant water grow to full size and each divides simply into two to form a new generation; how this simple asexual process continuing for several generations results in growing weakness and old age, steadily decreasing size, steadily decreasing vitality, until there comes a time when one infusorian unites with another. There sex begins. That union of two individuals is required to restore youth, to refresh vitality and energy, and to produce greater variety in the forms of life. When a boy or girl knows these simple facts, he is better able to understand the power of reproduction than he can possibly be if they are not before him, or if all he has heard has been ceaseless reiteration of the pleasures of selfish indulgence of sex appetite.

Finally, when the boy and the girl come into later adolescence and face manhood and womanhood, they are ready to know some of the larger social aspects of sex. They are ready to know of the diseases brought on by perverted sex habits; of the frightful waste of those who give themselves to licentiousness, the frightful waste of strength and youthful energy not only in those that actually go down, but in those that survive. More than that, seeking right relations of themselves to society, they need to know the social aspects of sex. The young man needs to know what it means for a woman to bear a child; he needs to know the social and economic dependence of the pregnant woman and of the young mother, so that he may realize what the power of fatherhood means in the actual work of society. I cannot imagine any man talking glibly of the necessary evil, or of man's inability to control sex passions, if he knows the social facts of sex. Any young man who knows even a part of the burden his mother bore for him, if he has a spark of manhood in his being, is surely fortified against temptation to selfish indulgence. If, beyond that, he can see the relation of the home to society, the relative steadiness and dependability of a worker with a wife and children, who bears the home burdens in a man's way, as compared with the floating, homeless wanderer who walks our streets; if he knows these central facts and the dependence of the home upon the

faithfulness of the man and the presence of the man, if he has a spark of patriotism in his heart, he must realize in his thought and in his practice the necessity for the socialization of that passion which, though it begin in individual and selfish forms, issues in such fateful social consequences.

My closing word is one which seems to me most significant of the true, the beautiful, the victorious way out of so much discouragement and so much crime—that is the word “consecration.” That word includes two essential ideas, the ideas of sacredness and co-operation. The problems of sex will never be solved until the sacredness of sex is recognized, for sex is vitally and indissolubly bound up with the two greatest facts that you and I know. The greatest fact of the organized world around us is life, the greatest fact of the spiritual world into which we lift our souls is love, and the beginnings of life and the beginnings of love are in sex. No boy or girl will readily understand what life means except as he has some clear, wise teaching about sex; no boy or girl will fully understand what love means except through recognition of the dignity and worth and purity of the fundamental facts and powers of sex.

COLLEGE TEXT-BOOKS IN BIBLE AND RELIGION

The report of the Joint Commission on College Curriculum and Bible presented at the Cleveland convention was published in *RELIGIOUS EDUCATION* for December. The outline of Curriculum there proposed on pages 457-458 has been adopted by the Methodist Book Concern, which now has in course of publication a series of text-books based upon this curriculum.

The course in Old Testament History is being prepared by Professor Ismar J. Peritz, of Syracuse University; that on New Testament History by Dr. Harris Franklin Rall, President of Iliff School of Theology; that on the Bible as Literature by Professor Irving F. Wood, of Smith College; that on Israel's Social Institutions and Social Teachings of Jesus and the Prophets by Professor Theodore Gerald Soares, of the University of Chicago; and that on the History, Agencies, Principles and Methods of Religious Education by Professor F. H. Swift, of the University of Minnesota. The volume on the Development of Religious Ideas has not yet been assigned.

The three volumes first named—Old Testament History, New Testament History, and The Bible as Literature—are expected to be in readiness for use in colleges at the beginning of the college year in 1914.