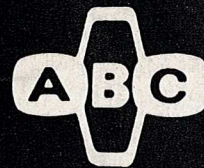


LOVE AND PARTNERSHIP

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An ABC "Plain Christianity"
talk by

RT. REV. J. S. MOYES

Anglican Bishop of Armidale, N.S.W.

LOVE AND PARTNERSHIP

A talk in the ABC's "Plain Christianity" programme, which
was broadcast on Sunday, June 3, 1963 by

The Right Rev. John S. Moyes,
Anglican Bishop of Armidale

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John Stoward Moyes was born in South Australia, where he received his education and was ordained in 1908. He served several parishes in South Australia, and one in England, before becoming Lord Bishop of Armidale in 1929.

He is known throughout Australia and overseas for the books he has written, the missions he has conducted, his interest in the ecumenical movement and his efforts to show how Christianity is related to every facet of public and private life. The services he has rendered to the nation were recognized in 1962 when he was created a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

Over the years he has maintained close contacts with the thought and activities of youth—especially students. From its beginnings he has been closely connected with the University of New England, of which he is now Deputy Chancellor. He has been admitted to degrees of the Universities of Adelaide and New England, the Australian College of Theology, and Trinity College, Toronto.

"Plain Christianity" (now broadcast on the ABC Second Network at 9.15 E.S.T. each Sunday evening) brings to listeners leaders of Christian thought in Australia and overseas. For many years Bishop Moyes has been a regular contributor to this programme.

People need love, need a home, need a loving partner. I speak to you tonight at the close of the Christian Family Year, which has been observed far and wide in several continents. I begin with a brief quotation. "The moral state of the nation is at the base of everything else and in these days there is, among careful watchers of the times, a feeling of deep anxiety". These are not the words of a parson, but of a layman. They were spoken 10 years ago by Lord Samuel (who died recently)—a man recognised as a statesman and philosopher.

In his book, **Belief and Action**, he had written earlier that "it seems likely that in the matter of the family there will develop two contrasted schools of thought. The one will lay stress on freedom, self-satisfaction, enjoyment, will treat sexual relationships lightly, will regard marriage as experimental, will prefer to be childless, or to have a child or two, and will look on the children's interests as secondary. The other school will lay stress upon lasting affections, stability, the home, children, the family system. They will regard the permanency of marriage as a matter of course ... In between the schools there will be many graduations, but fundamentally there are these opposite philosophies and the world must choose between them."

We live in a day when this prophecy has quite significantly come true.

I think it not unfair therefore, to say as the Archbishop of Canterbury said recently in the London **Sunday Times** "that sexual morality is in a mess".

Several remarkable illustrations of this short sentence have been revealed of late.

In the first place eleven leading Quakers recently published their views on sexual morality. They hold (says the **Church Times**) that there is nothing necessarily wrong with fornication before marriage, nor with adultery after marriage, nor with homosexual acts. This attitude marks indeed a break with the traditions of the Society of Friends and also with basic Christian teaching.

The second illustration comes from Professor Carstairs in the Reith Lectures 1962. He criticises sharply the Christian standards of sexual conduct and would seem to blame S. Paul. He holds that our Lord placed more stress on Charity than on Chastity. This is true, but it does not mean He was unconcerned at unchastity.

A third illustration comes from a recent book of Anglican essays entitled **Soundings**. H. A. Williams has written an Essay on "Theology and Self-Awareness".

It is a discussion of the difference made to our understanding of man and God by the discoveries of Freud. Our ideas of ourselves and of God have an analogy in the iceberg: only a little comparatively appears above the surface of our minds.

This new development, he says, of awareness of self and of God calls us to assess anew our moral values. This need not involve a radical change for Christians have always thought of God as love and therefore, self-giving love is a high moral value. Mr. Williams has been accused of suggesting that there are occasions when fornication is right. To me this is a doubtful conclusion from his article, which I shall recall to you later as upholding true ideals.

The fourth illustration comes from real life in our land. After a teenage party, the hostess found a girl's handbag left behind. To find the owner she opened it and found, not only the name and address, but also a contraceptive. She rang the mother and asked could she call for the handbag. "Oh no! the daughter would call". "But there is

something in the bag you ought to see". "Oh yes! I know what you mean. I put it in myself just as a safeguard".

"Sexual morality is in a mess". A young bishop in Sydney some time back made a statement about immorality amongst young people of high school age and was well criticised and condemned by many for his statement. I have spoken to a number of doctors about this, and their reactions make it clear that they are troubled about the immorality prevalent amongst young people to-day and feel that what was said calls for examination rather than condemnation.

And this immorality goes so often with the casting off by youth of the second-hand religious faith they had as children while as yet they have not attained to a first hand faith of their own. They follow the multitude of adults who would call themselves agnostic, but make no real effort to know the "unkown God".

The **Sydney Morning Herald** recently published an article on the decline of the power of the churches in the political realm, an article which declared that politicians hold that the Churchgoing population has fallen very considerably and is probably not more than 10% to 20% of the population. Any increase in Church attendance is mainly of the very young who are sent by parents as part of the process of gaining a code of morality.

All I would say here is that a code of morality—to use a phrase of the late Professor John Baillie—is but a bunch of cut flowers. It has no root in itself. And I have no doubt that the failure in morality (not restricting the term to sexual morality) whether it be any of the seven deadly sins including pride, gluttony covetousness, anger, lust or envy, is directly associated to-day with the loss in many people of a living faith in God. For the opposite of sin is not goodness, but faith.

In the prosperity of our day, it is so easy to ignore God. As was said by a young Denmark woman whom I met in Copenhagen "we don't go to Church, we have everything

we want, we don't need God". This is the practical creed of so many of us. Our lack of a lively belief in God is not the result of theological thought, but of a way of life where things are easy and we imagine we can be as gods and run our own lives. Yet it is unhappily true that failure in morality, not least in sexual morality, has brought disaster to men and nations, more than once in history and it is therefore, a matter of importance that we should look at life as lived to-day and become aware of ourselves and, I hope, aware of God.

What should be the true attitude for us to take? How and when in sexual relations should we give ourselves or refuse. Let me read to you from S. John 8: 1-12.

"Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.

And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him, and he sat down, and taught them.

And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

It is clearly not enough to-day to demand of people obedience to traditional morality, nor to the authority of the Church. We must commend the Christian position to reason and to conscience.

There has been too much legalism in our Church life and this has helped to make people over conscious in matters of sex. Likewise there has been far too much a tendency to look on sex as a thing of shame instead of a gift of God, and to miss the fact that in marriage sexual intercourse, in unselfish love, has a value of its own apart from the conception of children and is one of the greatest joys in life. For complete self-giving includes the whole person, body, mind and spirit—the outward act with the inner love and union is a sacramental fact.

Thus the Christian ideal is not a set of prohibitions, but is positive—not negative—and treats sex not as a thing of shame, but as a sacred fact involving a holy relationship.

For what are the basic facts? Male and female, as Archbishop Ramsey reminds us, the differences of gender, belong to many parts of nature as well as to human life. There is in our human life a division of gifts and qualities between the sexes which leaves man eager for the woman and the woman for the man, where life is normal. Love (the Greek word *eros*) is the desire of the one for the other, as each feels incomplete alone, and each desires to possess and be possessed. Their physical intercourse is the act in which their union is expressed and is deepened. But to make a real marriage the union must be of the whole person, each bringing the offering of his or her whole life and its interests, and abilities and gifts. And where this is so, the love (*eros*) becomes a richer love (*agape*) which in the New Testament expresses the love God has for us—counting us significant and of value and giving us in marriage the privilege and responsibility of creating new life.

Such a married life demands self-control, unselfishness and continuity. It is a state of life which has a meaning and a value not merely for the man or woman, but for their children and for the community in which the whole family lives. Unhappily, to-day there are many who think of sex as merely an appetite of the body like hunger and thirst and (to use words of Bertrand Russell) "sexual intercourse is just like having a glass of water". This is a serious misunderstanding of human nature. It may be that men can think this. It is doubtful if women ever do. Life is a more wonderful fact to them, and intercourse involves their whole personality and creates in them a new attitude to the one to whom they have given their womanhood. It may be this is in part the reason why Jesus Christ was ever tender towards women who had sinned in sex life but in the one story we have (St. John 8: 1-12) stern towards men. For the man is usually selfish—it is the woman who is more ready to give while the man will take to satisfy himself without giving himself.

Thus sexual intercourse before marriage is not true living—for neither can give the whole self though the woman gives much more than the man. It may be said, a young couple may love each other very deeply and be tempted to anticipate the full fellowship of marriage. Is it not true to say that if the man loves his sweetheart really, he will say 'no' to himself for her sake? Many a man has done this in a long engagement. The idea that sexual experience is the best training for readiness for marriage is a tragic fallacy. It no more helps the complete relationship required in marriage than paddling ankle deep in the surf enables a man to give himself to the deep water and to swim therein.

The essence of lust is the attempt to snatch value for myself from someone else, using the physical appetite to this end. But true love means a self-giving that will not exploit one's partner. And the self will not want to give itself unless the partner wants to receive, and give fully in return. Of course what I say applies to Christian men and women. We are wholly committed to Jesus Christ and

united to Him. Hence it is impossible that we give ourselves to any other except He approve, and in the way He can approve.

To-day there are many people whose marriages have broken down, there are many who have sexual relationships before marriage, or with no intention of marriage, or outside marriage committing adultery. And there are many who when their marriage has broken, seek a new partner.

"There are many people in the modern world" (said the Archbishop-elect of Perth in a recent article) who have got adrift from God and so see no point in moral standards, and have been wounded in their sex life". This happens within the state of legal marriage as well as outside it. And it is important to realise that the act of unfaithfulness which follows on possibly months or years of unhappiness, may have had its beginnings in a failure in self-giving of the "innocent partner". The marriage cannot live on sex alone, but the unreserved giving of each to the other is a most essential part of married life and includes the willing act of sex. To-day there is a real outbreak of sexual desire and activity amongst us. Is it that we are more lustful than our forbears? I doubt it. But it is a bad sign in our national life, comparable with the uprush of sexuality in the decaying Graeco-Roman world.

It may be rather due to the frustrations of to-day, to the insecurities and fears which beset people, to the lack of significance which many feel in their work and their human relationships. Here is a realm in which they seem to have power and fulfilment. It may well be a search for achievement, for domination, for enjoyment, and adventure in fellowship, in receiving and giving.

But it is never fair. The woman pays, and unlike the satisfying thirst by a drink, the satisfying of desire stirs new desire. Life is only complete when we give—not when we take.

What then can we do? For no one who knows his own heart and inner life would ever speak as I have to-night to

condemn his fellows. Here is an area we all share, an instinct common to us all. Is it to be a slavery or a creative opportunity? Is it to be used to heal or to hurt?

Is not much of our frustration to-day and our search for doors of escape due to our obsession with possession, trying to build ourselves up not by character and giving, but by the things we have, rather than what we give?

This is trivial isn't it—not the life that makes great homes or great nations. Is it because we do not face ourselves! "Self-awareness" as H. F. Williams puts it, "has its own cross from which most of us shrink, namely the fear, hatred and guilt of what is buried in them. I pass through this involvement with my unknown and often alienated self, through the Cross and passion to the glory of resurrection. This opening will result in something of enormous value—the instinct to be myself, to give expression to what I am, from which flow all the highest achievements of human life, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are good, of which the greatest is the capacity to give myself away in love". Where there is no sense of God—men lose the sense of reverence, for themselves, their fellowmen, their women folk.

People become means to ends—lust, lust for power, for wealth, these things bring misery, exploitation and war in their train, and the end is not merely hovels, but graves. A non-moral world in the end becomes a man's world where women are but toys and life does not matter. It is good for us to-day to look again and remember that behind the world of things, is the world of persons who use the things that science supplies, but should never use each other.

We shall only learn this when we see God who "so loved the world (of men and women) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life". And it is that eternal life that is the source of the morality we need to-day.

Let us pray,

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; Grant us, we beseech thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Visit we beseech Thee, O Lord, our homes and keep far from them the snares of the enemy. May Thy Holy Presence dwell in them to keep us in health, holiness and peace and may Thy blessing be upon us evermore. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

