Man, Woman, and Child

A Unitarian study of the family and society

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The Social Service Department
General Assembly of Unitarian
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INTRODUCTION

AT THE annual business meeting of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches held in Edinburgh in 1963 the Young People's League moved a resolution urging the need for religious liberals to give their continuing attention to the changing moral standards and in particular sympathetic consideration to the Quaker booklet *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*.

The resolution was passed unanimously but in the course of discussion it was urged that a wider study was called for than that provided by the Quaker report. The Social Service Department of the General Assembly was urged to consider the possiblility of setting up a commission for this purpose.

It was decided to set up a 'Family and Society' Commission and a number of Unitarian men and women with special knowledge and experience of problems of human relationships were invited to serve.

It was felt that the study should cover consideration of the institution of marriage. the changing roles of husband and wife, sex relationships within and without marriage: the moral and religious unbringing of children, relationships of parents and children and of parents and teachers; experiences within the life of the family and the function of the family as a social group.

The work of the Commission, which was divided among four groups, was directed by the Department's Secretary Rev. Arthur Peacock who has also been responsible for editing the report in its final form.

MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD

We are living in a period of rapid social change and many old established institutions in society are being effected. Not least among them is the family. It has been argued by some religious leaders that it is in danger of disintegration; that secular influences are weakening the ties uniting its members, and also its general stability. Against this is the view of some psychologists and sociologists who affirm that the family pattern is undergoing radical change rather than disintegration and that the impact of this will be a strengthening of the family as a social group within the community.

We share this view. Younger marriages, the economic independence of women, family planning, full employment, the welfare services, better housing, are all factors contributing to a new pattern. In this study we have been concerned with the impact of these varied changes both upon relationships within and without the family. Where necessary we offer comment and guidance, especially to those young in years and upon whom the responsibilities of both citizenship and parenthood will fall in the future.

We begin with a look at the present day situation of the young husband and wife.

THE CHANGING ROLES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE

There is a change in the roles of husband and wife and the roles they play in the life of the family to-day although it is not altogether easy to define the nature of the same. In many families the father is no longer the sole financial supporter

of the family and this fact must deeply affect his position. To wives who go out to work to keep the family solvent sympathy is freely given as is also to the children of such families.

Necessity is not the only reason for far more women working than in the past. Many women work outside the home simply because they like doing so. In addition the pressure of public appeals for married women to work, such as those addressed to school teachers and midwives is undoubtedly an important factor in the change. With marriages taking place at an earlier age and most people having their family in the first ten or fifteen years of their married life, the average women is by the age of forty free from the demanding care of young children. And understandably if she has had some special training before marriage is anxious to return to her profession.

The fact of marriages taking place earlier and of married women working occasions two problems which can quite easily disturb husband-wife relationships. In each case the care of children arises. The young mother, as we mentioned earlier, tends to have her children in her early twenties and quite often finds herself having to spend her whole day with a couple of children in a small flat or house. Very often her home is some distance from family and friends. Her husband is away at his job all day and cannot share in decisions she may have to make or relieve her for a little while from looking after the children. If the children become sick or ill a crisis can quickly arise and the mother finds herself unable to cope.

The day nursery can prove helpful. An enlightened Council at Bristol has provided these on the ground floor of flat dwellings where young families reside. That they can be a boon and a blessing needs no emphasis. What does need stressing is that such centres are a priority in many places. Existing policy would seem to be against their extension.

Where the mother who wants to return to her profession is concerned the need is for the nursery school rather than

for the day nursery. Here again official policy is short sighted and not very helpful. We have been told that some parents send their youngsters to the nursery school because of a concern to escape parental responsibility. In general we do not believe this to be true. But if there is the desire to secure the services of married women with teaching or nursing experience either for full-time or part-time work, if young mothers are taking up either professional work or jobs in industry then the community must seriously face up to this problem. Women are no longer content to spend all their lives in the kitchen. They are anxious in many cases to combine their parental duties with a job of work and evidence suggests that in not a few cases they can do this successfully.

Husbands generally to-day are ready to accept this new situation. In some cases the second income is needed to help meet the family budget especially if a house is being bought or there are various hire purchase payments for two or three years. In others the husband realises his wife is a happier women with a job of work to do, and that staying at home on her own or with a young child can be a lonely business. He is ready to accept the situation and to adapt his ways accordingly. These factors mean that in very many cases to-day marriage is seen as an equal partnership of husband and wife.

A visit to a new town where so many young families are to be found provides proof of this. Husbands take their place in the supermarket queue, they do their share of baby sitting and what is more important work out with their wives the family budget. The old situation where the wife had no knowledge or little knowledge of her husband's earnings becomes rare. Social workers meet with it when they come to help problem families sometimes. But the young wives to-day assert themselves and see that they are treated as partners.

In this new situation it is said that it is too early to see the effect which these changes in husband-wife relationships

have on the children. Critics of nursery schools argue that these institutions are wrong since the child's formative years demand parental love and care which can only be found within the home. Against this supporters of such schools claim that those children who attend them gain a sense of security as they mix with the young group in the school, and that very often they reveal as they grow up qualities of leadership.

Social workers do tell us however that problems can arise when both parents are out all day and when neither are at home by the time the child returns from school. Some times children cannot get into their homes, have to wait a long time for their meal or are compelled to play in the streets.

While these are problems brought before us by those who have been involved in their study we feel it desirable to stress that there are wide differences in families and the right of each family to work out its own way of living together must be respected.

SIZE OF FAMILY, FAMILY PLANNING

The decision couples make about the number of children they want seems to be one of the most difficult and responsible decisions husband and wife have to make. People are not often aware that they are making decisions about such matters but from the beginning of time some form of family limitation must have been practised. Had it been otherwise the average family in a fertile marriage would number twenty or more.

It seems true to say that the majority of couples when they marry plan not to have a family necessarily right away. It is important that we see this problem in relation to the changing attitude that years of marriage bring to it. For example an engaged couple who plan to have six children may feel quite differently about the sixth child when they have been married twelve years and have five children.

Every couple who have been able to have a family will probably at some point just not want to have any more children. It is not necessarily a question of economics, though this might be a contributing factor. The time when this point is reached will vary from couple to couple and between husband and wife. This is why we feel these decisions are so difficult and must be individual.

At the same time we feel certain warnings are necessary. Planned delay in having a family it must be stressed can lead to a childless marriage. A couple may find themselves tending to get into a routine, continually putting off a decision and gradually coming to feel that they do not want children or that they have become too old.

Then there is the problem of isolation experienced when there is only one child. We feel young couples should consider very seriously the advantages of children in larger families. They enjoy constant companionship, the growth of friendships and the 'rubbing off of corners'. A large family may bring greater financial burdens and harder phsyical work but there are advantages and these come to be felt in middle and later life. They emerge then in the sharing of many and different activities as the children are growing up or reaching adulthood, in the arrival of grandchildren and the overwidening horizon of the family circle.

Sometimes the advantages of children are only appreciated when it is impossible to have any more and this situation leads to such a comment as 'I only wish I'd had children' or 'I wish I had more children'.

When young couples come for advice they should be made mindful of the loneliness and emptiness which may come later in life through their sole interest and love having been centred on each other or upon the one child.

Before embarking on family limitation young couples should become informed about the varying periods of infertility. The most fertile years are those before marriage, followed by marked fertility during the first year of marriage. Fertility then wanes and couples who have practised contra-

ception from five to ten years must not expect that they will automatically conceive just when they want. There may be a wait of one or two years before they conceive successfully. Lack of this knowledge may lead to unnecessary disappointments for those who have postponed child-bearing until they are more stable financially and materially.

While the waiting periods of contraception can best be learnt from one of the Family Planning Clinics, it should be emphasised that a serious mental strain is imposed by practising the withdrawal technique for any length of time. This is a simple method of contraception, requiring neither special apparatus nor planning, but the effect on the body is severe frustration. The woman loses nature's gift of tranquility, just as she is ready to receive it. The man's mind is too concerned with the precise timing of withdrawal and thus, he, too cannot enjoy it. Full sexual satisfaction cannot result from such acts.

Ministers we feel have a responsibility to see that young couples who consult them or to whom they talk on problems of marriage preparation are made aware of the importance of these matters and directed to agencies where sound advice and practical help can be obtained.

DIVORCE

Divorce inevitably is a painful process. Its cost is too great to measure. It involves emotional suffering and social condemnation for those concerned. For the women it often means financial hardship and for the children not a little tragedy.

Because of these known effects the very discussion of divorce is seldom possible without involving the deepest emotions. Divorce and divorcees are blamed as a result for various social wrongs when in fact broken marriages are themselves only a reflection of personal and social shortcomings. They indicate the inability of two human beings to fulfil their greatest hopes together. Nobody knows exactly

why some families fail. It is clear that not only divorced couples, but separated ones too, need help and understanding in a society which places much emphasis upon the importance of family life.

The divorce laws are still riddled with absurdities. The financial provision for deserted wives and children is frequently hopelessly inadequate. But above all there remains inadequate recognition of the need for a determined attempt to prevent families breaking up before it is too late. In our modern society concern for a stable family life should be proved by the provision of widespread counselling and community services to help couples make the best of their lives together. The work of the Marriage Guidance Councils is directed to this end and the recent proposals for Family Courts and Family Advice Centres are another example which are worthy of support.

A further matter no less important relates to the attitude of the Church to persons who have been involved in divorce proceedings and who wish to enter into a second marriage. As is pointed out in the final chapter of this study the attitude of society has changed but that of traditional Christianity remains much the same. Clergy are still encountered who 'earnestly implore those whose marriages are unhappy to remain steadfast to their marriage vows' and who will not under any circumstances marry divorced persons.

We cannot share this view. If after a period of seven years all attempts at reconciliation have failed we feel that divorce by mutual consent should be permitted.

It has interested us to observe that this subject has lately been raised by one of our Ministers who has sought the advice of his fellow ministers. 'What does a Unitarian minister do,' he asks 'when the bond has broken and one of the partners wants to try again'? 'Is the minister to close the door on the possibilities of forgiveness, of a new start being made'?

The minister indicates that when approached to conduct

a marriage service, in which one or both parties have been married previously, he does not hold an inquest but tactfully speaks of the responsibilities and seriousness of marriage. He writes 'I maintain the attitude, as in every intended marriage, that this is something to be entered on seriously and with true affection. If that is there, I am happy. If it is not there, – and how often can I be sure of this – what can I really do about this? I can refuse to marry them. Then what do they do? They go to a register Office. I have driven them from the Church. I have either denied them the spiritual blessing they desired, or (if they merely wanted the glamour and social status of a church wedding) I have forgone the opportunity of bringing to the ceremony the prayerful atmosphere which might impress upon them the sacredness and the significance of the marriage bond.'

He further says 'to deny a service is to block a channel a possible channel for God's word – hardly a minister's function.'

We would hope that this approach reflects that held by the majority of both ministers and laymen in our churches. It seems to us there should be continuous concern among us to uphold an enlightened view of both divorce laws and divorced people themselves. Social condemnation is out of place in society as often the causes of divorce lie in society itself and our liberal religious faith should lead us to take a liberal view of this question.

SEX INSIDE AND OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

Whatever may be felt about current patterns of behaviour it is clear that there must be some acceptable morality to govern personal relationships. They affect society and cannot be entirely a matter for private judgment. It is the absence of such a code that characterises our present time. But there are some generally accepted assumptions and one of these is the importance of monogamy. Experience has led it to be regarded as the best basis for the family and the family

the best basis for society. This is not merely accepted sociological theory. It is borne out by ample evidence.

That delinquency is largely attributable to the broken home is a view many hold; so is the fact that most young people regard a happy marriage as one of their chief aims. Their conception of marriage may differ from that of their parents, and will certainly be very different from that of grandparents. But it will be a richer ideal that they have in mind, one of equality of partners in which, because of a new idealism. there are no rules to follow. It is our conviction that monogamous marriage is not only the best basis for a stable society, but is the setting for the most rewarding experiences that men and women can enjoy.

This brings us to the question of sexual intercourse. Until recently it was taken for granted by serious and respectable people that the only place for sexual intercourse was inside marriage. Some reputable psychiatrists have however advanced the view that chastity before marriage is not necessarily the good thing that it has been so generally assumed by the conventional. Few would advocate promiscuity but some feel that continence is not merely difficult but unnecessary.

It is impossible to estimate the extent of premarital intercourse with any accuracy. In a few social groups it is still customary to postpone marriage until the girl is pregnant. This is taken as a sign that she is obviously worth marrying because a family is a reason for marriage.

But it is of course unintentional conception that causes most heart break to both man and woman. This brings us back to an earlier question. Should we give young people adequate birth control information? Not only factual and theoretical information but the actual means of obtaining it. At present there is only one clinic in London which will give advice to unmarried men or women who are not intending to get married soon.

At the recent conference of the Family Planning Association this subject was discussed and the view taken that advice

on contraception for unmarried couples should be made available at local Youth Advisory Centres and that its own major task was help to the family. This is a view that we appreciate.

We feel though that it must be stressed that premarital intercourse is always accompanied by a sense of guilt and that this may spoil the very pleasure that is being sought from the sex act. The amount of guilt felt by any individual will vary from one to another. The greater the previous moral teaching the greater will be the subsequent harm from an illicit act. Among those with no such teaching there may be little or no harm, but nevertheless full and complete sexual satisfaction is rare in premarital or extramarital intercourse.

As we have indicated there are some psychiatrists who favour intercourse among engaged couples. But it must be appreciated that a loss of trust in the love partner can be the natural consequence of this. When a couple have been deeply in love during the engagement period, and have had the strength of character to abstain, there is born within them a great trust which continues throughout marriage. Each partner will subsequently be able to trust the other, knowing that during the period of intense love and greatest temptation, they did not falter, and that in marriage he or she is unlikely to falter or be unfaithful in the future.

There are those who say that these are days when preaching to the young on these matters will have little effect. We are convinced that we have a duty to ensure that the young have all the accurate information they need. The amount of ignorance and misinformation on sexual matters is still almost incredible. Parents often are unable or unwilling to do the job. Here, would seem is a task for the schools. Young people need help to make them make up their own minds and foster healthy attitudes. This can be done in small groups where with the help of a non-authoritarian leader they can feel free to express themselves and exchange ideas and feelings with their fellows.

In this area of conflict the influence of the Church has

been largely negative. Not until the 17th century do we find the sex relationship regarded as other than an animal act, inevitably tainted with sin. This is not the official attitude to-day but the long heritage of a dogma which associates physical love with guilt is still detectable in much that is said and written ex cathedra. In no realm is this more obvious than in the discussion on homosexuality. Stigmatised by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1953 as a 'shameful vice and a grievous sin' it is still punishable in law by savage and useless penalties. The Wolfenden recommendations remain unimplemented after six years.

To this subject we return later in this report for it has been seriously considered by two of the groups participating in this study. At this point we would stress that a healthy sex relationship rests upon a concern and respect for the other person as a unique individual with his own personality. With this concern must go honesty and an open frankness between partners which does away with furtiveness and self gratification at expense of another. There should be too, an ever growing knowledge, a realisation of and a coming to terms with one's own personality. In the seventh century B.C. it was summed up in the Delphic gospel 'Know yourself' and 'Avoid excess'.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

From the study of problems that are supremely important in husband-wife relationships we turn to those that they develop with their children and to the association of home and school. A consulting psychologist and an educationalist of considerable experience have been helpful to us in our studies and their observations have proved specially valuable.

It is an accepted fact that a child learns more in his first five years than in any other five year period of his life. He learns rapidly, extensively, and indelibly; his mind is eager, his senses alert, and he is ready to be interested in everything. Furthermore, these five years are normally spent in

a very limited environment – his home – and it is his parents and the few adults on the fringe – close friends, relations and maybe a nursery school teacher – who select and determine to a great extent what he shall learn.

Most parents are well aware of this and the majority set out quite consciously to teach certain social requirements they regard as desirable. They teach 'please' and 'thankyou', acceptable table manners, good behaviour summed up in being obedient and polite, telling the truth and not stealing, as well as perhaps the beginnings of number and reading.

But teaching is never a oneway process, a matter of implanting a ready made idea which will take root without further delay. The mind is active. It grasps only what catches its interest, manipulates it according to its understanding, accepts or rejects, develops a thought or leaves it to wither. Parents, are inescapably the child's most influential teacher. During his prolonged stage of dependence the human infant becomes closely bound to them, and particularly to his mother, by powerful feelings of which love is the nucleus.

At first, love to the infant, is necessarily experienced as a material thing. It means simply, food, warmth, comfort. But it quickly becomes more, a state of emotional well being, and this in turn is associated with the idea of what is good. The loving mother, and secondarily, the protecting father, are a little child's idea of goodness. The reverse of these, mother when she withholds her comfort or refuses his demands, father when he is cross or punishing, are the revelation of what is bad and hateful.

It is when a child has turned his first year and begins to be independent both physically and mentally, is no longer the clinging babe ready to be carried around and put here or there, that first real conflicts between parents and children arise. Adults naturally enough, see this rebellion as temper or naughtiness, instead of as a child's first necessary experiments in self assertion.

So it is at this stage that parents begin to teach more

precisely what is good and bad in their eyes. The child learns what will be tolerated and what not, what is praised and what is punished. Stringent parents make these early lessons too harsh and difficult demanding standards of behaviour that little children cannot achieve. They project an image of the world which is threatening and overpowering, so that a child can only cope with it by being unnaturally good, or in some cases by becoming over aggressive in turn.

Indulgent parents, on the other hand, tempt a child, to demand excessively, or to show his power by being capricious and tyrannical. The mature personality who, as mother or father, is understanding enough to be moderate, fosters a relaxed and reasonable nature, equally ready to give to others as to accept from them.

Children do not conform to adult patterns of behaviour overnight. The period from about eighteen months to three and a half years can be very stormy when these adjustments are being made but by the time they are four or five, the major conflicts are resolved. In most cases, by this time, which coincides incidentally with the time at which they begin to spend more time away from home and with other children at school, a child will have formed an ideal image of himself, a close approximation to the 'good' boy his parents talk to him about.

This ego ideal is the standard which every individual carries within himself little changed throughout his life and it is when he falls short of it even though no one knows about it but himself, that he suffers what used to be called a guilty consience. This early psychology tried to discard, but it has once more been accepted as an inescapable part of our personality development.

Again when standards are high, when parents are satisfied with nothing less than perfection, an individual may be driven through life to overreach himself, and become anxious and guilt ridden. The child on the other hand who has had no parent figure to identify himself with is rudderless and

driven by every chance wind. It is obvious that the closer relationship between parents and children, the clearer and more enduring will be the image of the ego ideal which the child cherishes.

From all this it should be very clear why the first few years of life are so fundamental to personality development and why it has been categorically stated by educationalists, psychologists, theologians, that by the seventh year, a child is irrevocably formed, that his main patterns of thinking and attitudes of mind are laid down for ever. Later influences may appear to change or convert, but they leave the basic self untouched. Thrifty habits of childhood, for example, rarely disappear in spite of later affluence. The all or nothing persecutions of a Saul become the all or nothing propagation of the faith of a Paul. Years of maturity may bring intellectual enlightenment, but the emotional depths run their accustomed course.

Every thinking person recognises in himself feelings which are irrational, puerile and despicable, such as fear or dislike of certain groups or races, prejudice against certain social customs or classes learned in early childhood and still impervious to argument. One of the greatest difficulties in the theory of getting rid of inhibitions which the ego ideal holds in check, is the greater conflict that assails an individual once he is tempted to throw them overboard. This is a truth which may clarify the obscure parable of the man who cleansed his house of devils only to make room for seven others.

Since the relationship between parents and children then, is of such paramount importance in moulding personality, it is evident that what they teach must be equally vital because this too will be inextricably woven into his life, unknowingly and imperceptibly.

It is well known that a child acquires a vocabulary by constant repetition. He learns the name of things by having them pointed out to him – mummy, daddy, pussy, milk, shoes. Similarly, he learns by frequent reference

the meanings of concepts like pretty, big, under, quickly, and in time he learns to apply generic names to groups, women, children, metals. All such learning begins with concrete experience, and so it is with the teaching of astract ideas. Truth, liberty, faith, courage can only be understood through practical example in word or action. 'How kind of Jill to lend you her doll' – 'That was selfish to keep all the best bricks for yourself' – 'Try to be brave while I get the splinter out.'

It is only through innumerable examples of this sort built up over the years that children accumulate abstract ideas, and what is perhaps of greater importance, the many shades of meaning within them. Goodness, for example, comes to mean far more than keeping a frock clean, and courage is understood in other ways than fighting bravely.

But it is important to note that whereas everyone is agreed on what is a concrete thing – a book or a pen – abstract ideas are far more open to argument. Honesty for some children, for example, may be taught as not stealing from a shop where avoiding a 'bus fare may be overlooked. Courtesy may be restricted to one's superiors, generosity to turning out old clothes for a jumble sale.

On the whole, it is the home version that carries most weight. Children who dare not speak properly at home because they are accused of putting on airs, are unlikely to uphold moral principles which find no place there but which they hear at school. Yet it is in the relaxed hours he spends out of class that he will be most ready to talk about these things, bringing home the raw material of his experiences from which will come fruitful discussion. The beastly teacher, spiteful companions can provoke enquiry into questions of authority, fairness, duty, cheerfulness, tolerance.

It is also clear that what is seen as important or desirable to parents must become so to children. 'Whatever you do, call him 'sir' '. 'You'll have to learn to think a little faster and punch a little harder, that's all'. 'You want to shoot

up your hand, put your name down . . .' It is difficult to see how children brought up on such injunctions can learn to be other than aggressive and competitive, or that for them ideas of friendliness or generosity can ever become second nature.

And it is evident that only when we are clear in our own minds as to what is really valuable in life, that we are in a position to give our children a code of conduct against which they can measure any other standards offered them. The integrated personality, that is, the individual who is a whole person and is not torn apart by conflicts, is one who has learned to see life as a whole and not as a series of circumstances in which it is expedient to act now in this way and now in that.

Parents play a part of unparalleled importance in forming this integrated being. In recognising him as a whole person, they are not concerned only with his attainment but with his personal development, and they welcome the privilege of discussing ideas with him which may conflict with their standards but which must none the less be taken into account. If in the course of such arguments, they need to re-examine the roots of their way of life, that is all to the good. If they are well founded, they can only give him fresh support.

When we look at child development in this way, the question of religious education seems to fall into its rightful place, that is in the core of the child's whole being. Its inception derives from his parents themselves in their way of life, their attitude to him and to other people, the emphasis they put on this incident, the regard they have for that person. It is their interpretation which he will listen to and understand, and the composite picture they build up which will determine what is fit and right for him to do.

We may go even further and say that for many years, ideas of God and Himself are built in the image of his parents who first spelled out for him in their tender care, the meaning of love. Until a child has filled himself with ample experience

of this love and the train of blessings that come with it, protection, service, forgiveness, acceptance, he cannot envisage a Being in whom is all perfection.

It is when he grows up in such a family, that a little child finds it easy and natural to say prayers of thankfulness for the world so sweet, for food and beauty, for home and happiness, and in turn makes him capable of giving love to others, so that as he reaches his spiritual stature he understands the giving back of himself to the source of all being whom we name Our Father.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

As has been shown already what the child learns from his parents and the kind of influences met within his home determines his behaviour pattern in an influential way. He can be aggressive, withdrawn, inattentive, sullen or fearful, for instance, because of some fundamental insecurity or anxiety in his home life. He can arrive home peevish, perverse, over-anxious and unhappy because things are not going well with him at school.

Since one of the primary aims of education is to equip the child to take his place in society and one of the aims of a good family to help him grow to maturity willing to play his part in the life of the community, it seems obvious that there should be some co-operation between home and school since both are equally concerned with the child's welfare.

As the recently published Newsom Report says 'Many situations would be helped simply by the schools knowing more of the home circumstances and the parents knowing more of what goes on at school'. It is as simple as that and we would like to apply the statement to Sunday Schools as well as Day schools.

So far as the moral and religious training of children is concerned it is immensely important that Sunday school teachers should feel that they have the support and appreciation of the parents in what they are trying to do. There is

need for conferences between parents and Sunday School teachers to consider aims and basic beliefs of religious education.

But whether week day or Sunday it is obviously to the child's advantage that parents and teachers should learn to see each other's point of view and achieve some kind of integration in their common aim and purpose 'which is to help the child, wisely and lovingly, to grow at his own rate, through each stage of development from infancy and childhood to adolescence and adulthood till he reaches true grown upness, a well rounded stable, mature personality' (Newsome Report).

The well known pioneer psychologists who gave their time and talents to the early work of the Home and School Council had as one of their principal aims that of encouraging parents to come together to learn more about how children grow – not just physically but emotionally and socially as well. This understanding of child growth and development is now an important part of the education course in all teacher-training colleges. It is realised that education is not simply concerned with the amassing of knowledge and with the acquisition of skills, nor even the building of character, important as these undoubtedly are. What matters in the end is how we feel. As far as the child is concerned, it is how he feels inside that determines how he behaves and feeling is the driving force behind all his actions.

How, then, can we learn to approach children with deeper understanding? One way is through Parent-Teacher co-operation, either formal or informal. So far as Sunday schools are concerned there are golden opportunities for contact between parents and teachers if Sunday school is held in the morning, children and parents coming along together, worshipping together as in the case of a Family Church, or certainly at the same time. This is of inestimable value in strengthening the family spirit in church and school, and helping both parents and teachers to see that this is a job which is best done together.

For many young children the first separation from the security of home and parents can be a period of great emotional strain and this can be greatly lessened if the child has had the first experience of separation in the primary department of a morning Sunday school with the awareness that mother and father are still in the same building with him. Many good primary departments allow the mother to stay with the child for a few weeks until he has settled down, and lost fear of being deserted.

This feeling is not so engendered at day school. The building is often big, and compared with the intimacy of home, bare and strange. The playground is noisy and the numbers of children at first overwhelming. The Church is a natural meeting place for old and young. Not so the school, which is primarily an institution for the training of the young. But here again, it helps if contact has been made with the school before the child is officially admitted. Many head teachers allow informal visits, and there are always opportunities for meeting brothers and sisters at the school gate or for watching friends at play in school yard. Most infant schools now take pains to see that the Reception class is as attractive as possible, providing picture books and play materials to capture the child's interest and put him at his ease as soon as he enters the class room.

There are many other sources of emotional upset in the life of the child at school, one of the most serious of which is the 11 plus examination. During the months preceding the examination many children display signs of worry and anxiety, a condition which perhaps all unwittingly, is aggravated by the parents themselves whose own fear that the children may fail the examination and so not qualify for a place in the Grammar school is unconsciously transmitted to their children. Promises of rewards for passing only help to build up the tension as does also the zeal of many over conscientious teachers. The whole system of selection for Secondary education is at present under review, and this is a matter of obvious concern to both parents and teachers.

There is much heart burning, too, in some quarters about the vexed question of School reports. How, for instance, ought parents to read school reports? Ought there to be reports? How much do they really tell us about the child? The most important things about him are not amenable to the sort of measurement which can be recorded in a school report, which may indeed stimulate the kind of competition we are anxious to avoid. There is food for thought here for all concerned.

According to temperament, level of intelligence and type of school many older children are subject to strains and stresses in their school life; fear of not getting a job when they leave school, or of not being able to cope with the problems they will have to face when they do get one, fear of not getting passes in G.C.E. and fear of failure in their relationships with the opposite sex, each is a perpetual source of worry to some young people.

Both parents and teachers can testify to this and it is sadly true that even where sex education is excellent, as in many schools it is, there is no guarantee that knowledge will, of itself, ensure chastity. As we have been so often reminded 'what we know has no necessary effect upon what we do'. Knowledge alone cannot influence behaviour. If we understand more about the emotional development of children and young people we should be better able to help them solve their problems.

So there is very great need indeed for co-operation between home and school. Most parents welcome invitations to come to school and see the children at work. It gives them an opportunity of observing the educational process at first hand, of seeing new methods, of appreciating the skills and difficulties of the teacher, and of discussing their child's progress and sometimes, his problems. It helps teachers also to appreciate the points of view of parents to seek their co-operation over common problems and to inspire their confidence. As is well known many parents are more than willing to help the school in practical and materialways.

Children are helped, too, if there are friendly relations between parents and teachers. Of any school, it is pertinent to ask whether the relationship between Home and School is such as to give the child some continuity of experience and to ensure that no conflict of loyalties exists between the two. Many feel that this is best secured by means of a formal Parent-Teacher Association with proper officers, constitution and programme of lectures. Meetings are usually held in the evenings and there are no children present. This has obvious advantages if teacher and parent wish to discuss a child together. It also gives fathers an opportunity to be present, for few among them are free to attend Open Days and similar functions held in the school session. Moreover, a teacher in charge of forty excited children on Open Day has very little opportunity for serious discussion with parents. Very often the parents too are more relaxed when children are not present. Parent-Teacher meetings provide opportunities for them to come together and discuss their problems not only with the teachers but with each other. Many a mother is relieved of her own anxiety when she discovers that her problems are by no means peculiar to her child.

The winds of change are blowing strongly in both education and religion and it is in the best traditions of our liberal faith that we should become not only widely informed but deeply concerned. Only so may we better serve these children and young people who are at once our greatest responsibility and our brightest hope.

EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE FAMILY

While we have commented at some length on the relationships of parents and children and of their association with school and teachers it has been felt that our study to be complete needs some comment regarding those experiences which are common to all families, such as incidents of birth and death, and which can make for tensions and difficulties

no less than joy and pleasure. Members of the group which considered various experiences of this nature felt there was need to make helpful and practical suggestions.

Experience showed, for instance, particularly in regard to the birth of a child, that though it came at the end of a period of anticipation again and again problems were not foreseen, adjustments within the family were not made, and as a consequence difficulties followed which might have been avoided.

It is possible that the impact of a birth within a family may reflect itself adversely on other members who may bear ill effects for years. The advent of a new baby may cause a young child to feel quite suddenly that it is not wanted and is unloved. It can cause nervous habits to develop such as nail biting or facial twitches or even bed wetting or refusal to eat. Parents can become depressed and frustrated by lack of freedom and the increased responsibility arising from the new situation.

For such reasons as these it is important that the months of anticipation be treated as an opportunity for mutual adjustments and that this fact should be recognised particularly by those who for the first time are raised to the status of mother or father, sister or brother, or grandfather.

The baby's arrival must mean restriction of individual freedom for the parents. Certain hobbies may have to be dropped and replaced by others centred round the home like gardening, home decorating, needlework, cooking, or the cultivation of friendships with near by neighbours. In many cases it will mean loss of the wife's income and a need to look at expenditure carefully in order to make ends meet. Those who, together, have successfully passed through this period of temporary struggle and difficult economics will know that this mutual effort and planning to balance the budget calls for unselfishness and wisdom, and that its achievement brings happiness and pleasure.

Earlier on there was mention of the predicament of many young mothers who felt the need for an occasional break

from their home and children. The value of nursery schools was stressed and a more enlightened policy regarding them urged. But we would add too that worthwhile service can be rendered by relatives and friends and neighbours who will undertake baby sitting so that the young couple may enjoy occasional periods of freedom together. In many instances to-day young people find themselves at a distance from grandparents and other relatives, and arrangements that local communities or clubs may make can prove a boon and a blessing. It is the kind of mutual help that can be given by adults of all ages and of both sexes.

The young mother who suffers from social and intellectual frustration through being left alone all day, and who previously enjoyed chatter with workmates and colleagues, should try to adjust herself before the birth of her child, by finding time to keep abreast of current events in newspapers and by listening to a variety of topics on the radio while pursuing her household duties.

Extra time gained by many labour saving devices should be utilised to increase the time spent with friends and family, to widen her own sphere of interest. In every locality opportunities for voluntary social welfare work exist and mothers of older children by participation in them can gain a sense of usefulness outside of the home. Such work if carefully chosen can be richly rewarding and need not in any way detract from the duties of the mother and the home. The social isolation of which complaint is made can be overcome although a determined effort is needed. Churches could usefully explore the possibility of clubs for young wives for they are needed as much as those for the elderly and youth.

The decision as to whether the baby should be born at home or in hospital will depend on medical and social circumstances.

The couple may live in one room, there may be a lack of constant hot water and the facilities offered by a hospital confinement should be taken advantage of without hesitation.

But the fact remains that from the spiritual and psychological point of view it is undoubtedly true that the home, the pivot of family life, is the best place for a baby's birth.

When the confinement takes place in hospital the mother is separated from familiar surroundings and sometimes frightened by her lack of freedom. The father experiences an acute sense of isolation and the absence of the mother can be an upsetting event for the other children.

The happier the home, the more successful will be the birth in its centre. At such a time though there is need for other members of the family realising that they must help with the household jobs and that it can be no rest for the mother if she has to lie in bed and listen to mean and petty quarrelling. It must be realised too that the family sharing in the work of the home in this way is something that must continue for some time. It is possible, of course, at this period very often to secure home helps who will do the shopping and look after the other members of the family but even so it must be recognised that there is extra work to be done in the home and that each member of the family should try not to upset the daily routine by thoughtless and selfish demands. Paradoxically, it is the first baby that seems so often to be the full time task for once the mother has developed a good routine with two or three children, she has little difficulty in accommodating the others.

Where there are other children they should be prepared for the coming of the new baby. The young pre-school child with his mind centred on himself, and with little knowledge of to-morrow, will need only a few weeks of casual and matter of fact remarks like 'won't it be fun if we have another baby'? or 'This is where the baby can sleep' or 'I hope the baby comes soon'. But he cannot be expected to anticipate the alteration to his life and he will need most care and attention during the first few days of the new baby's life. He must be reassured that he is still loved and is a very important person. When the mother is at home and

he is free to go to her room whenever he wants, this becomes very much easier.

On the other hand the young school child will need preparation over some two or three months during which time the parents must be prepared for curious questions at untimely moments on where babies come from. The child should be told frankly and truthfully, although not necessarily in too great detail. Tales about the doctor's black bag or even heaven should be excluded and an explanation given to show that the baby is the result of the parents love for each other and their desire to have another child like the one they love so much already.

It should be explained that mother is caring and feeding for the baby within herself, and that when it is strong enough to come into the world the baby will be born. This is the reason for the mother needing rest.

If the other children are over eight years old they can with advantage share the exitement from the earliest stage and will enjoy helping with the preparations of the room and especially the cot, in renovating old toys. Girls can master the art of knitting and can make clothes for the baby.

For grandparents the arrival of a new baby in the family can be the opportunity to live again the joys of their own children without the responsibilities attached to it. All the same they do have responsibilities and they, with their experience of children, must passively watch the inexperienced couple learning their way to rear and train a child. They should not interfere unduly and should always remember that a generation has passed since they had their children and that since then our knowledge and understanding has increased. Grandmothers in particular should avoid old wives tales about the pains and hazards of child birth. These are much less than they used to be. However, the assistance of grandparents will be needed, particularly in times of crisis, and their advice and help should be given unflinchingly and regardless of whether their advice is taken in full or in part. The grandparents, often have more time on their

hand, and can then help by playing with and amusing the children and also by freeing the parents for occasional outings.

It is as the whole family comes together, and shares in the new tasks and responsibilities that the arrival of a new member brings, that birth can be such a joyous occasion enriching the common life of all.

THE ELDERLY

Problems that relate to those growing old in years have come up in the discussions of several of the groups for their nature is brought home at so many points. While we all know that growing old is an experience that cannot be escaped from all too few people make preparation for it. The fact that people are living longer and that many people retire from employment in the middle sixties healthy and strong, means that occupying their days is a serious question. This applies particularly in the areas where redevelopment proceeds and young people have moved either to outer suberbs or new towns.

The National Council of Social Service has felt it necessary to set up within its organisation a group to consider the spiritual problems of retirement and in some industrial areas pre-retirement courses are being sponsored to prepare those about to retire for the changed circumstances which they will soon face.

Where elderly folk have children or younger relatives their situation is generally less worrying than for those who are by themselves. In most districts clubs and other bodies have come into being catering for the fellowship needs of the elderly. But it is not good for old people to be left to their own company too much and there should be a concern to integrate their social activities and leisure pursuits with those of other age groups. Churches can do a great deal to help in this respect.

There is undoubtedly a great deal of loneliness among elderly people and one of our groups has had before it the question of housing as it relates to the widow or widower and single person living on their own. All too often as the evening years come such people find themselves living in bed sitting rooms in dull and drab residences.

In some areas councils are providing housing for elderly couples so that they may live near to their children but there would seem to be a need for better provision for housing for the elderly person who wishes to live alone. Housing Associations have in some places made it their business to help such people.

Recently The British Council of Churches set up a Housing Trust with support from the Minister of Housing. Its purpose is to encourage churches nationally and locally to organise assocations. Housing for the elderly does not attract commercial interests and Housing Assocaitions can render tremendous help in this field. Some enlightened Councils have erected blocks of single room flats and small bungalows for the elderly. But as yet only the fringe of the problem has been tackled.

Perhaps though the most pressing problem is that of the person who is sick or disabled. Younger members of the family may not feel able because of their own daily responsibilities to help very much. Hospitals are usually helpful to families who are caring for an elderly relative by providing holiday relief. It is for many though a very worrying problem. In this as in other matters relating to the needs of the elderly evidence suggests that it is the person with a small income, living on a fixed pension, who feels the burden most since little thought is given to them and since they very often are retiring in their nature and hesitant to seek community help.

Of course we know that splendid homes for the elderly have been opened in many districts by local authorities just as there are excellent institutions set up by voluntary associations which while providing essential services enable

the elderly person to have their own furniture and belongings around them. But the fact must be faced that many elderly people do not want to live in residential homes and their concern to be treated as individuals must be respected.

It is certain that the situation demands more homes of different types and that the possibility of 'short-stay' homes which could be used experimentally during holiday breaks by an elderly person or couple who might later choose to end their days in the home, ought to be seriously considered. In the course of our study we were deeply impressed by what we saw of old people's homes in Oxford and of the way the elderly folk of the neighbourhood were brought in to share in social activities.

There is need to remove both the guilt feelings of the elderly person who is reluctant to enter a home and also of the younger generation who are sometimes reluctant to care for the elderly at home.

In this field churches have both a special responsibility and a great opportunity.

EUTHANASIA

A problem that concerns many families is that of the elderly person who is suffering from a hopeless and incurable disease and whose days are spent in great pain and suffering. Sometimes in their depressed state the relatives ask that euthanasia might be given so that the sufferer's life may end peacefully; sometimes the suffering patient makes the request himself.

It is an extremely vexing question. Human life is precious and man cannot bring back life when it has gone nor can he give life to an object that did not previously have life. But man can take away life. To do so though is to be brought into conflict with the law. But the feeling certainly gains ground in many responsible quarters that the law should be changed so as to permit the peaceful ending of life for the person dying from a hopeless disease.

The issue is one which all too often is passed aside and ignored but we feel within the churches serious thought needs to be given to it, and not least to the ways and means by which help can be given to those whose days are saddened by the knowledge, that one they love is continuously suffering the agonies of pain.

The dying and depressed patient can be helped with anti-depressant drugs in the same way as any other depressed patient and to allow a hopeless patient to die depressed to-day is a sign of poor medical care. One who has previously been robust and active may suffer most from fears of helplessness and of becoming a burden to others. He can be helped by those near and dear by their showing kindness, sympathy and understanding. The family in this situation has the task of trying to give hope and encouragement and of providing company to dispel long hours of waiting.

They can help by keeping the dying relative aware of day-to-day happenings in the family circle and keeping him so informed that he will retain interest in the affairs of other members of the family and come to enjoy the light chatter about them.

When a helpless patient, already denuded of his faculties is dying, it is futile to prolong life, and medical care should not be wasted on attempting such useless work. But this is altogether different from taking a decision as to the precise mement of death, or of purposively and knowingly arranging for a patient to die. It would be a heavy burden indeed for any person to decide whether or not to end the life of a specific patient. Who is capable of bearing this heavy load? Doctors are called to heal and all their skill is devoted to this end. They cannot and must not bear the responsibility for the decision as to the moment of death. Members of the dying patient's family are too emotionally involved to be able to make an impartial and irrevocable decision, nor would they have sufficient training to perceive the outcome or to determine the amount of pain which is being suffered.

It is an intolerable burden that must be borne by any individual responsible for death and might lead to feelings of guilt for many years to come. It needs to be added in fairness that this fact is recognised by those who advocate voluntary euthanasia and who are pressing for revision of the law. Their object is to enable a person of sound mind, whose life is ending with much suffering to choose between an easy death and a hard one; and to obtain medical aid in implementing that choice.

It was Dr. Millard, a Leicester Unitarian layman who founded The Euthanasia Society which has taken the lead in pressing for a revision of the law. A number of Unitarians and other liberal Christians support it.

The subject is one which raises serious ethical problems and church groups ought to consider them and not be afraid to deal with them frankly.

What emerges again and again when this kind of circumstance arises in a family is that the greatest pain and suffering is experienced by those who have either been caring for or visiting their relative. They become over tired through lack of sleep and long hours of watching and waiting. Here the kind help of friends and skilled nursing aid can give is all important, and there should be concern to see that it is received.

In these occasions of crisis and tragedy that darken for awhile the life of most families none can help more beneficially than the minister and it is with his relationship with the families belonging to his own church, and to those of the wider community where he serves, that we now turn.

THE MINISTER AND THE FAMILY

From the point of view of the church the most important relationship which a family has as a group is with the Minister. Where the Minister is concerned it is a priority of his office that he make the utmost effort to establish good relationships with all his flock.

By good relationships, it must be stressed, is meant something more than just friendly acquaintanceship with the various members. The goal to be sought is one in which each member of a family counts the minister as his friend; the smallest and the youngest being as ready to talk to him as is the oldest.

The view is held within our ranks that present day ministerial training is in some measure lacking and fails to fit the minister for the role he has to play as counsellor, guide and friend to both the members of the congregation he serves and to the wider community in which he lives.

This inadequacy, it is argued, is sensed often by those in quest of spiritual help and understanding and who frequently these days turn to the social worker in time of difficulty rather than to the Minister. The social worker is someone whom they often meet, he has knowledge of the individual's need and they have confidence in his integrity. It has been suggested to us that the individual who senses this ministerial inadequacy feels the same even more if a lay pastor presides over the congregation of which he is a member. There is the possibility that confidences may not be respected. To argue in this way is not only to cast doubts on the integrity of a group of people who render great service to our movement week by week, it is also to miss the essential reason for the social worker being accepted while the Minister is not approached. The help of the former is sought because the person feels sure the officer will listen, he is likely to be sympathetic and helpful. Professional training does not enter into the matter. Experience of life most certainly does.

In this connection it may be useful to remember that the Society of Friends has always maintained a lay ministry and that its Book of Discipline urges the Friend with a problem to share his burden with an Elder in the Meeting. Everything known of this old time practice suggests that its works.

Undoubtedly the ideal family-minister relationship is one where the former turns naturally in any situation of

difficulty, uncertainty or crisis to the minister for help and guidance. This does not demand that the minister must strive to be an authority in many fields but that he should develop the capacities that enable him to become a good listener, to be interested in the strivings, failures, setbacks, and achievements of both the young, the middle aged and the old. A concern to serve his people must not lead the minister to press his services, to probe unnecessarily into people's problems, for that is a quick way to lose their confidence. His need is to equip himself so that he is ready whenever the call for help and guidance comes to him.

All this means that the minister must maintain close personal contact with his people; he must get to know them in their homes. In instances where a minister serves two congregations, or where the congregation is led by a lay pastor, regular visitation may prove difficult. But this situation can be met if the minister or lay pastor seeks the help of a number of church members who possess those gifts that are likely to make them successful in pastoral work. The important thing is to make each church member feel that someone cares; that in the congregation no man is a stranger.

It has been known for a zealous young minister to err when calling on either a sick or elderly member by raising points of theology or religious controversy. There may be times when the member will appreciate this but it is he who should be left to raise the matter. In the main the minister needs to direct the conversation to more general matters so that if personal help and guidance is sought there will be no hesitancy about asking. Sometimes the sick and elderly will appreciate being read to, or being told of prayers and readings used lately at church. Sometimes they may appreciate listening to a tape recording of a service.

As the minister's knowledge of his people deepens so he will come to know how often to visit and what to do when he calls.

In conducting baptisms it is specially important to stress the Unitarian interpretation of the rite where the family concerned has no connection with the church other than that of residing in its immediate neighbourhood. We make no comment here on two other items, – the minister's responsibility in preparing young people for marriage, and his conducting a marriage service involving a divorced person or persons, beyond pointing out that the serious issues to be considered are dealt with elsewhere in this study, and that no one decision is possible.

It is said from time to time that the function of the ministry is changing. This may be true of certain aspects but the importance of pastoral care and concern remains and is not likely to diminish. This is recognised by all denominations and the subject is one that has been frequently discussed at inter-church levels. One development must be mentioned. The University of Birmingham is instituting a post graduate diploma in pastoral studies. Its aim is to give an insight into social and psychological aspects of health, as well as to relate these to theology. The University Departments of Psychiatry, Education, and the Faculty of Commerce and Social Science are co-operating with the Theological Department in training candidates and arrangements are to be made for field work in such places as the Almoners office of a hospital. Once the course is launched it is hoped to include full-time students who may be either post-graduate theological students, ministers or hospital chaplains.

This new course has been described as a breakthrough into an area of training which has been dangerously neglected. We hope those concerned with ministerial training in our movement will bring this development to the notice of ministers and students for its major purpose is not to turn ministers into psychiatrists but to give them a detailed insight into problems which they may ordinarily encounter, and so ensure that they will be better equipped for their pastoral work.

THE FAMILY AND THE OUTSIDERS

The members of the commission who were asked to consider the family as a social group, and its relationship to both church and society, were men and women who are involved either professionally or voluntarily in social work. They felt that this study would be lacking unless there were some comments on the situation of those who all too often live their lives outside the family environment. Such people, of course, belong to families but for a variety of reasons have not maintained their relationships and as a consequence live solitary lives or sad and depressing lives with others facing a similar predicament to their own. 'The outsiders' to use an apt current literary phrase.

They include the mentally handicapped, the ex-prisoner, the sexual deviant, the unmarried mother. Many families in Britain to-day must have some personal experience of people who come into one or other of these categories. Many of their members however have yet to realise the need to show such people that for them no less than for those living within families, there is a real sense of community care.

There is, for instance, the case of those who are mentally handicapped. Some of them though they may be of low intelligence do succeed in making happy and successful marriages. Others, especially the very severely handicapped remain dependent upon their parents. Inevitably problems relating to their care arise particularly as the parents become old and feel the strain. This can be specially so if there is physical disability as well.

Those concerned need a great deal of understanding support from the wider family, friends and society in the every day care and in the difficult situations which have to be faced. There is a reluctance to allow the handicapped person to go from the family home to some institution.

There is a real fear that it may be too large and institutionalised. Finance is a real problem in many cases and the community must recognise its responsibilities by the provision of small residential homes where such people can stay either permanently or temporarily and which are situated near a town so that relatives may have no difficulty in visiting. A wide network of training and occupational centres and sheltered workshops are a priority for those less severely handicapped. They need to be residential in character and small in size. The community must be more ready to welcome them into local life and the churches more alive to the part they can play in helping these men and women to live normal lives.

Valuable work is being done today by the National Association for Mental Health. It provides courses, lectures, and conferences for the general public and seeks in a number of other ways to foster a wider understanding throughout the community of the importance of mental health in relationships of everyday life.

Church premises could be the centre for the local groups of the National Association as well as for clubs and day care centres while members could render voluntary service as baby sitters, or by helping to take the handicapped person to such places as hospitals, clinics and the shops.

In this as in so many other areas of welfare work the service called for is personal but very meaningful for those who receive it.

THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

The birth of an illegitimate baby brings special problems but the little one also brings love which heals many wounds. During the waiting months consideration will have to be given to the baby's future. Should the baby be adopted and taken into a family where a couple are longing for a child and are able to give a home and loving care? Or should the

mother try to keep the baby, forgetting her past behaviour, and the shocked glances of neighbours?

It is not always a matter of free choice. Difficulties of housing, finding suitable work, making suitable baby minding arrangements so complex that often adoption is the only way.

Contrary to general belief illegitimate babies are not conceived mostly by accident. Medical research is now examining the theory that conception never takes place unless an emotional need is present to trigger it off. The mother may herself be unconscious of this need but the study of her life story will generally reveal it. The need basically is for a vital relationship to possess, first the man and then the baby. This need arises usually from loneliness and boredom. A common instance is that of the girl from a large affectionate family who finds herself alone in a big city. There is also the case of someone who is experiencing psychological loneliness and whose emotional needs have never been fulfilled. According to a London School of Economics survey 1955/6 75% of unmarried mothers are themselves illegitimate. The children are naturally more prone to maladjustment of every kind mainly because of their limited family life. The relationship between the two people tends to be over intense and the child has only one psychological pattern on which to model its own behaviour. The dominant pattern is feminine and this explains why so many illegitimate boys become homosexuals, though the girls do not become lesbians.

The attitude of the mother will depend on her attitude to the father. If there is love for him there will be a tendency to over-possessiveness with the child. If there is a reaction against the father, and understandably this is common, then bitterness will be shown to the child. In either case the outcome is not good.

The fundamental needs are clear. The mother's concern to bear the child in safety and peace is a first necessity and must be respected and understood. Relatives must come

to see that this is a time calling for charity in the widest sense of the word and not for criticism nor condemnation. The mother must be left full power of choice to determine whether she will either keep or part with the child. She should not be pressed to make a decision until she is fully recovered from the birth. This presupposes the provision of adequate housing and the means to earn a living. The need here is enormous. There remains too the job of breaking the vicous circle of bastards begetting bastards. This is best done by providing a secure environment for mothers with their children so that they may enjoy as normal an up-bringing as possible.

The more widespread use of shortened birth certificates for legitimate children would lessen the stigma for the illegitimate in situations where birth certificates have to be produced.

A recent newspaper paragraph recorded that a local authority had engaged a social worker who would concern himself with problems of the unmarried father. The understandable feelings of sympathy which are felt for the unmarried mother and her child tend to cause us to forget that in this situation the unmarried father is in urgent need of help and advice. He has to face criticism from various directions, make adjustments to a new situation, come to difficult decisions and these can quickly add up to a mental quandary. At such a time the counsel of a good friend can be most valuable; so often it is lacking.

Where the question of adoption is concerned we feel it desirable to call attention to the narrow policy of discrimination adopted by some societies who will not accept foster parents who are not traditional Christians.

Some years ago attention was directed to the attitude taken by one organisation to Unitarians; more recently Humanists have experienced considerable discrimination being exercised against them and are in process of establishing their own adoption society.

Questions of theology and dogma ought not to enter into this matter. What matters is the integrity of the couple wishing to adopt and their capacity to provide the home life in which a young child may grow up happily, receiving every love and care.

THE TEENAGER

Both the family and society find themselves involved at times in strained relationships with adolescents. Within the family tensions come about because the generations look at life with alien eyes. Youth is full of energy, seeks excitement, enthuses for change and adventure, becomes often reckless and carefree.

Age on the other hand can be both intolerant and impatient, forgetful of the years it has left behind and its own attitudes and past behaviour. Experience leads to caution and passivity.

In society problems come because the sense of group awareness among the young is very real. There is an understanding keeness to do things together, to keep within their own age group and to foster leisurely pursuits in a self centred way that reveals a lack of concern for others. Rights are often asserted; duties are infrequently not appreciated.

Such tensions are not new to our time. Mass communication tends to focus publicity upon them and for the situation to be seen out of perspective. Conflict is confined largely to a minority. Lots of young people learn to live happily with both their own age group and their elders. Many older folk similarly enjoy their encounter with younger folk even if viewpoints and attitudes widely differ. Not a few young people are possessed of a sense of service that leads them into channels of practical work for others.

The religious task was put long ago by the Prophet Malachi. It is 'to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers'.

In many places churches are mindful of this and are facing up to the problem, they are encouraging young peoples' activities on their premises; in other places there should be a deeper concern to meet this responsibility.

THE HOMOSEXUAL

If there is need for a wider charity towards the unmarried mother there is equal need for this spirit being extended towards the homosexual who is stigmatised as one guilty of a grievous sin which the law punishes savagely and with useless penalties. Two facts need stressing. First, it is a characteristic, more likely psychological than genetic, and for which the individual is not more responsible than he is for having an attraction to classical music or an aversion from playing games. What he or she does with this characteristic is another question.

Second, there is the fact that all of us can be placed somewhere on an imaginary scale at one end of which is complete heterosexuality and at the other complete homosexuality. It is customary to regard the 'normal' as those who fall in the half between bisexual and completely homosexual; those who tend to the opposite half of the scale are automatically 'abnormal'. Such adjectives may be justified statistically but they do not carry with them the right to apportion moral censure or approval to either group.

Heterosexual behaviour is normally condoned. Fornication and adultery are not criminal enough though their consequences to society may be far more disastrous than homosexuality, which is a crime. Repugnance or distaste are poor grounds for good law. As the Wolfenden report declared. 'Conviction or instinctive feeling, however strong, is not a valid basis for over riding the individual privacy and for bringing within the ambit of the criminal law private sexual behaviour of this kind.'

It is now some six years since the Wolfenden report

made its recommendations. It is time that their implementation was seriously considered.

A revision of the law as it relates to consenting adult males is a necessary first step. Psychological cures for confirmed homosexuality are rare according to D. J. West's recent study 'Homosexuality'. The only thing to do is to try to help the person to accept his condition and make the appropriate adjustments. Only by help of this kind will these unhappy people no longer keep within their own distinct grouping feeling justified in regarding themselves as outside society.

THE EX-PRISONER

The causes and results of crime are bound up with the family and the individual's back ground, his parents and early home life, the formation of his own family, can cause a person to be turned to or be confirmed in the criminal way of life. Once a crime has been found out and the person sentenced, a vicious spiral circle begins. Help has to be given by the State to the wife, children suffer through the father's absence, and as a consequence an over-burdened mother relationship can develop. On release the man finds it terribly difficult to re-adjust himself to his family and society again. Easily he can become a wandering outsider and down and out.

As the various aspects of the problem are looked at it is shown to us again that a wretched situation can be prevented often if only the individual can be convinced that somebody cares.

This is shown very compellingly if the position of the frequent offender is considered. Such men are usually down and out and have no settled home. When such men are released from one of our big city prisons at the early morning hour of 7.30 a.m. there is no one generally to meet them. Such contacts as they may make are likely to be with old friends who all too quickly can lead them back in their

old ways. Their possessions are limited to the clothes they are wearing and to such things as were found on them when arrested. Often such a man has no more than the half crown given by the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society. His difficulties can be accentuated by the fact that he finds himself in a district which he does not know and dressed in clothes worn in the summer of his arrest and wholly unsuitable at the time of his winter release, or vice versa.

We can here only cite the problems that this type of offender comes up against and of which we feel many people have no grasp at all. There is opportunity for men and women belonging to churches helping in an individual way through participation in the work of one of the voluntary agencies concerned with prison after care. It must be realised that the work like that for the mentally handicapped calls for some preparation and can occasion many heartbreaks. There are schemes for the preparation of voluntary workers and we urge those who feel they can render service in this field to take advantage of them. Those whose conflict with society takes them behind prison walls must come to know that they are not 'outsiders' to those within the Churches and that towards them exists a sincere concern to help them make a happier job of their lives.

THE ALCOHOLIC

The alcoholic thrives best in a small group of fellow sufferers who can by 'group therapy' learn to sort themselves out with one another's help. The rehabilitation of the alcoholic requires not only the treatment of himself as a disordered personality, but the re-integration of himself in society, and the reorientation of society towards him. There has been established recently the National Council on Alcoholism to correlate all that is being done up and down the country and to bring together for common counsel action those working in this field. Again this is a situation calling for sympathetic understanding rather than criticism and

condemnation. The alcoholic is the compulsive drinker and there is a line to be drawn between him and the heavy drinker.

Not for one moment would we suggest that we have covered in this study every aspect of human relationships as they find expression within family life. Our major concern has been to focus attention on the most serious problems challenging society at this time and to suggest where there is need for further thinking and also social action.

It was remarked in the early pages of our study that the family was regarded as an essential unit for the well-being of society. The Church is a social group and is like a family. Moreover its interests are rooted in man's need of man and therefore human problems are directly its concern. All age levels are to be found in its membership and it is probably the only social institution of which this may be said. This makes it a supremely important instrument for combatting many of the distressing problems of our society and of helping those who are suffering from life's strains and stresses to cope more effectively.

We who are members of a Church find in the weekly service something to which we can cling. 'The outsider' in effect does not have any type of family and it is our essential function to provide this even for people who do not share our liberal theology.

THE CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE

One of the groups sought the help of a theologian who has given much study to problems of sexual ethics.

As his paper reflects views personal to him rather than group thinking, it is presented separately for the reader's serious consideration.

It is well to bear in mind in any discussion about marriage that wherever there is law marriage is a legal institution and that its obligations and duties are secured by a civil contract and partly controlled by it. The civil contract does

not say anything about love, or about the bearing and rearing of children, or about the pain of possible divided loyalties or about 'those whom God has joined together'. Whether God has joined them is, practically, outside the orbit of the law.

Anyone can get married, God or no God, so long as the sanctions of the law are contracted and obeyed. With such a personal contract involving so much in plain practicality for the ticking over of society and state, the law must bind and control. This fact is sometimes blurred over in current discussion about the marriage institution.

At the moment the law is based upon the concept of a presumed life-long relationship between husband and wife, with certain modifications which have been added in recent years. Any different relationship, such as that each partner should have the right to enter into extra-marital relationships, would involve a change in the civil contract, if such relationships were regarded as socially responsible.

If they are regarded as otherwise, if they are to be clandestine or permissive between individuals, then proposals for extra-marital relationships should frankly declare this. Immense social moral issues are involved, but apart from these the marriage contract is involved as well.

A society with a marriage institution based on a life-long partnership between husband and wife cannot sanction any drastic change without altering the law in relation to it. This is rarely recognised in proposals based upon what is designated love as contrasted with law. Sooner or later any widely accepted relationship based upon love has to be institutionalised, that is, made a regulative and recognised part of society and this at some point involves law.

Any proposed change that does not recognise this situation is running off into some romanticism that will not bear looking into from the point of view of stringencies and disciplines that usually go with love. Even if charity rather than chastity is to be accepted as a regulative principle then most certainly if it became socially acceptable the law would have to step in at some point to support, if not to

protect, the possible victim of such charity. The latter can have its victims no less than chastity.

It is a good binding directive to recognise that in discussion related to marriage in a socially permissive way that something so entirely unromantic as law must sooner or later enter in. And law takes little account of heartbeats, or the suitability of persons entering into the marriage contract. It can only take heed of the contract itself.

But the institution would be absurd if it were no more than a legal contract, and if no emotions were involved outside anything that the law could regularise and protect. Even in a marriage in which love played no obvious part there must be somewhere hovering in the background some hope of a satisfying relationship which would give a degree of fulfilment to those signing the contract. This is the expectation anyway and the social convention behind it. It is at this point that the emotional basis of marriage as distinct from the legal basis is found, and there would be no legal basis without a real or an assumed emotional one, for there would be nothing to legalise.

Civilisation has much to say about this. At the present time indeed it has rather more to say than religion. It has to be recognised that nothing changes more drastically under the impact of civilisation than the exterior forces of religion. That civilisation should change is now accepted almost without question; that religion should change is, conventionally, very much questioned. Yet if the values of civilisation are shot through with religious meaning, and our assumption is that they are – then if civilisation changes the formal axioms and applications of religion are likely to change also.

In the concept of marriage and all that moves around it in a social and personal way there are depths of human emotion seeking release and transformation that are bound to have their effect upon the religious sanction. Marriage is a creative transaction. It is subject to success and failure. It has possible cruelties, dissonances and frailties built into it as well as joy and transformation. It involves personal freedom,

surrender, sacrifice, and all indeterminate powers of human forces that belong to the act of creation.

From the concept of marriage arises much that is ultimate in society and it would be foolish to assume that the final form or contract has been reached. In any case civilisation as it is realistically understood to-day does not assume this. For good or ill civilisation is creative. It is marching into change as never before. Personal relationships are shifting every day and with them the marriage concept changes too. This is more clearly seen if it is supposed that social forces are grounded in moral realities.

Moral realities prompt religious questions and sooner or later are involved in religion; that the sanctions of religion change in their impact need not be a matter for surprise. They are sought in the light of eternity and it would be odd if conduct were not discovered in a new manner in that light.

It is a fact of moral concern that a man can always discover new channels and opportunities for life, and that behind this fact in religion is the assumption of the eternal light. Creation does not take place in a vacuum either but in the belief that there is something beyond creation demanding the purposive act. There is all the difference in the world between axioms and sanctions of religion and the eternal light from which they are derived. And it is obvious that the sanctions and axioms are changing within the changing forces of civilisation.

The concept of marriage in its involvement with the sexual act is an instance of this. In the last thirty years it has changed profoundly in its meaning and psychological realisation, and religion has now sanctioned this. The change, although perhaps with a different emphasis, has been partially accepted in the Roman Catholic Church. A change in cilivisation is responsible for this. Some form of population control is generally regarded as desirable to-day. But apart altogether from this intellectual estimation of the result of intercourse, there is a whole set of social values and needs which impose some limit on the size of the family.

If abstinence is to be the vital controlling force then within contemporary circumstances men are asked to live as they have never lived before. Abstinence is to accomplish what death and disease did in the past. This may be a reasonable alternative, but it has to be seen to be reasonable. The nature of the sex act, as it is regarded to-day, is likely to make the alternative entirely unreasonable. Indeed, the alternative, because of the change in the nature of civilisation, is entirely new in relation to any past experience. It is certain that the official Christian standard in this matter, vital to the meaning of marriage, will have to be adjusted to moral perceptions caused by a change in civilisation.

Further, not so long ago the very word morality in its popular usage was associated with sex. It still is in many minds. Indeed it was the euphorism for sex. This traditional Christian usages has almost been abolished among intelligent persons. The impact of modern psychology has had much to do with this and in particular the discoveries of Freud in regard to the unconscious and infantile experiences.

Until the middle of the 19th century sex was regarded as original sin. The very act of begetting a child stained it with sin and it had to be cleansed by baptism. Such fantastic beliefs have been largely swept away by modern man's reflection upon his own experiences discovered within new circumstances of knowledge and behaviour. The total forces of civilisation have changed through new pressures and new moral endeavours and estimations.

A further instance of change is provided by the unamended Marriage Service in the Book of Common Prayer. This states that 'Marriage was ordained as a remedy against sin and to avoid fornication that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry'. This estimation of the marriage concept no longer exists. The whole notion of sin in relation to the sex act has undergone a revolution. It may well be one of the greatest social revolutions of the contemporary world, and it is one not brought about by the Church but in spite of it. The attitude of the Church has been forced

to change not because of its inner insights but because of the inevitable pressure of moral forces outside itself.

Yet all the poignancy and power of sexual forces remain. So much in the realisation of life's values upon these forces being lived within spiritual purpose and realisation. The legal basis only channels for social purpose a psychological and spiritual fact.

What is the nature of this fact?

It is that this major exploration is now taking place, and of course occasions concern. Men cannot live without adjusting themselves to the inner mystery of the world in which they live, and to all the infinities given to them by the mystery. Love is the basic fact of the marriage contract and love of its very nature demands congress with the mystery and its infinities.

Love for some people is the gateway to them, and whether that is or should be the full fact of religion, nevertheless love of its very nature demands some passionate alignment with infinite forces beyond itself. For love is one of the deepest and most passionate joys of human existence. There could be no existence, sooner or later, without it. Yet it contains within itself the possibility of the deepest suffering and the most extended sacrifice. In this sense marriage enters into the deepest realm of the mystery and the revelation of the infinities. It discloses that joy and suffering are intertwined in the very depths of human existence. Or that at least one of the consequences of innermost joy shall be the readiness to receive suffering if it ever comes with the same passion of giving that makes joy possible. And this readiness which belongs essentially to the very nature of love stands always at the brink of the mystery hidden in the Universe, made articulate in religion, that joy and suffering are saved and redeemed by each.

In this sense the marriage contract is not a contract at all. It is a step into the mystery of human existence. In this sense it joins with the mysteries of birth and death, both poignantly encountered in the marriage contract, in that

the actual fact of birth and the actual fact of death are hardly facts at all. They extend themselves into mysteries of emotion that cannot be made merely factual and concrete.

The human being as it were takes on the marks of infinity through what is happening to him. He is not living simply with a fact but with an event that plunges him into all the emotions that end in religion. He is thrust into the need for reflection upon the gift of life and the meaning of it.

Marriage must therefore always be concerned with truths which enlarge the person, and forces him to be enlarged, otherwise the price of being diminished will have to be paid. Choices in these circumstances become more poignant and real. Love is not the easy gift that is so often portrayed. It can be withheld. The tragedy of its loss or unfulfilment can be encountered. The greater the demands of the spirit the greater the possibility of loss. All this is hidden deep within the nature of love and is as far removed from sham romantics as the pop song from the major musical experience.

Chastity is connected with this. And it is well to note that the wisdom of the young in this matter can be very deep wisdom indeed. The young encounter the world with only a few years behind them and with a moral passion that believes the world can be subdued. No rationalist account of conscience or moral insight can ever destroy the wonder and the essential aloneness of youth entering into the challenges of moral spiritual conduct. It is out of this wonder and aloneness that youth derives its passion, heroism and wisdom.

Chastity on this level of experience is the withholding of something to give it to love, or it is the expectation that love, will take, and is waiting to take, the supreme forces waiting to break out into joy and sacrifice.

Chastity is the anticipation of love on the highest levels of giving, joy and sacrifice. It is the anticipation of the inner sacrament of marriage the ultimate bond of communion that makes two become one and extends the nature of their

personalities to embrace the whole meaning of existence. It has been clouded over by repressions and the dark forces of religion. Its truth and justification have been sought in emotions and teachings that have little relevance to its real meaning and power. Behind chastity lies the joy of giving, and the preparation to encounter the wonder of joy and suffering on the highest levels of shared emotion. In the very depths of the full emotional life chastity is to be found. To obscure this truth by the many complications, of the sexual life, or by the supposition that there can be no regulative power save the giving and receiving of pleasure, is to deny that there can be a harmony of fulfilled emotion between the living personality and the living demands of essential mystery in life.

It is one of the difficulties in all thinking and feeling about the many emotional facts connected with marriage that there is always the temptation to codify and make absolute insights ultimately true in themselves but subject to all the variations of the human condition. The human condition is changeable. Persons have to find their abiding place in situations that seem to offer them neither peace, tranquility or fulfilment. The supposition of the marriage contract is love, but many marriages take place without love or without love in one partner. Chastity can be known as it were in the bones of youth but it would be mere theological blindness not to acknowledge that there are both personal and social conditions where chastity cannot bear the strain which is so frequently placed upon it.

The marriage concept has to be seen from afar. It belongs to the mystery of existence. It can lift people to the noblest heights of fulfilment and can disclose to them the secrets of living. But there are situations, all too human, where this attainment of the heights is not possible.

There is the tragedy of broken personal relations for love walks in dangerous places as well as in the home of uttermost security. There is the tragedy of lost love and the making do when love has departed. There are all the dusty answers

waiting for the soul. And it would belong to the nature of love realised, in what can be called the sacrament of marriage, to move within all the compassions of charity. The fulfilled life ought to be able to extend to the unfulfilled, comprehension and understanding, and not deny its own insight to the complications and tragedies of others.

It is the very nature of marriage as outlined in these pages to be so secure in itself that it can extend this security to others. The interior love, unthreatened in itself, can extend itself to others. It can be the master of new situations as they arise outside itself, and find new social solutions for them without creating barriers of moral probity between those who break the code and those who adhere to it. Moral probity, of itself is not likely to create the barriers but, harsh standards of theological religion, unable to adjust itself to what may well be called religion in depth, are more likely to do so.

It is likely to be this religion of depth as comprehended in the New Testament stories of the women taken in adultery, the women who annointed Jesus' feet, and above all the abiding story of the lost sheep, which will find itself able to create new forms and concepts in a changing civilisation. As has been stressed earlier this has not yet been done and religion has hardly penetrated into the change.

Divorce, for instance, is not yet included in any acceptable way in contemporary religious attitudes. Yet it must be clear that if religion could sanction what civilisation is already in a dramatic manner sanctioning a new element of probity and spiritual security would be introduced into what is in effect a new situation. It is not likely to be easy for religion to penetrate into this new situation. It means a new kind of thinking outside the traditional theological concepts. Perhaps it means a new theology.

Here and there new thinking has begun and already there is a dim realisation of the possibility of a new relationship between traditional religion and what has been called the new morality. There is of course no new morality. The

interior springs of the moral life are likely to abide any forms of social change. Therein lies the security of the change. But the abiding springs, creatively new in themselves, are likely to force and form new relationships as new possiblities of personal relationships become disclosed in social life. The whole idea of a civilisation and all its values being fossilised in one particular theological form is crumbbling under the living moral facts of a new society. The external moral theological standards of a medieval society, or for that matter a Victorian or Edwardian society, no longer responds to certain creative moral ideals in the present. They no longer clothe in any glowing or vital way the new language of the inner moral contract of marriage, or the compassion and understanding that are now so frequently built into the marriage relationship.

It is probable that the contract of the law awaits in terms of change any new religious insight that can be created. Law too can be fossilised. True, it has to see the trees before the wood, and deal with situations as they actually are and not as imagination would like them to be. Yet even so there are already concrete situations, such as homosexuality, abortion and perhaps bigamy, all with their impact upon the marriage contract, that perhaps should be lifted out of the range of what is called crime.

Religion could ease the burden imposed by law, sometimes necessarily imposed, because religion has not created the social relationships or recognised or sanctioned the social relationship in which the law need not be operative.

Behind all the problems of the marriage concept as presented to religion lies the new problem of the pluralistic society. There is in effect not one sexual morality but a number. Just as religions are becoming conscious of living in a world of a number of religions so men are becoming conscious of living in a world of a number of sexual moralities. Any given civilisation to-day is likely to hold troublous and conflicting moral standards. What choice, if any, shall the individual make?

The whole man is involved, the whole man faced with the destiny of living. No sexual standard can be divorced from any idea of what life is for. Here enter all the challenges and the consumations of the religion. Marriage is an adventure of conduct as well as conformation to what has been found to be socially real. Marriage takes within itself a formidable life of the spirit into the unkown. This has become emphatic to-day. It is no longer quite a religious or social convention, within a plurastic society, it is a challenge and faith of the spirit. In some ways in all serious marriage, where its spiritual implications have been thought about, there is now this act of faith.

This way of life is better than that – why? Into this question enters the adventure of the spirit. Something more than social or religious custom, or the sanction of the law, is required for this adventure. Marriage must in this sense touch the mystery and the infinities that have been alluded to in earlier pages. Marriage in this sense – there can be other senses – is a dedication of the spirit to truths and realities beyond it – itself. In this new sense the form as a form is broken down, and what remains is the bare awareness of the spirit in all that is asked for it.

In this realisation of the contract is the sacramental fact. This fact grows from the awareness of the awakened spirit, living in faith, and not from something arbitrarily and inconsequentially given by an outside mediated force.

This concept of marriage will live and penetrate into the pluralistic society when its force and spiritual triumph is disclosed in fulness, heroism and charity of living. The mere shell of a contract, merely as a contract, no matter how formed, is likely to break under its power.