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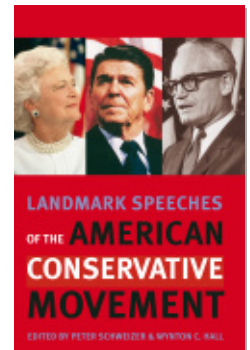
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# Clare Boothe Luce

*“Is the New Morality Destroying America?”*

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MAY 28, 1978

## **Toward a Moral Renaissance**

IN THE PANTHEON OF FIGURES associated with the American conservative movement, perhaps none has lived a more eclectic life than playwright, journalist, congresswoman, and ambassador Clare Boothe Luce. Born on April 10, 1903, in New York City, Luce inherited her parents' flair for the theatrical. Her father, William Franklin Boothe, was a pit orchestra violinist. Her mother, the former Anna Clara Snyder, was a chorus girl. At the age of eight, Luce's parents separated, forcing her to be raised in “genteel poverty.” But her modest financial status would be short-lived, as she would soon soar to the top of the economic ladder. Indeed, Luce, a woman known for her glamour and rapier wit, would always take pride in poking holes in the pretenses of wealth and power.<sup>1</sup>

Following her divorce from her abusive millionaire husband, George Tuttle Brokaw, a man twenty-three years her senior, Luce was awarded enough money—\$425,000 plus education expenses for her daughter, Anne Clare Brokaw—to never work again. But Luce, a woman never accused of sloth, had other plans. She became an editor at *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* before turning her attention to writing plays.

She would later meet and marry Henry R. Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Fortune*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Life*, a magazine that was reportedly her idea.<sup>2</sup> Luce continued writing plays, two of which,

“The Women” and “Kiss the Boys Goodbye,” enjoyed critical acclaim and financial success at the box office.

By 1943, the strong-willed and outspoken Luce was ready to set her sites on another challenge—Congress. An ardent anti-communist and New Deal critic, Luce, a Republican, managed to unseat the Democratic incumbent by 7,000 votes. Having coined famous epigrams like “No good deed goes unpunished,” Luce’s skill as a playwright lent vivacity to her oratory. Moreover, in a male-dominated era, Luce’s unique brand of feminism stood out. As she put it, “Thoughts have no sex.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower agreed, apparently. After campaigning for him in 1952, Ike tapped Luce to serve in his cabinet as secretary of labor. When Luce declined the president’s offer, the former general wouldn’t take no for an answer and instead named her ambassador to Italy. While in this position, her staunch anticommunist position made her a lightning rod for the political Left. For example, while speaking about the relationship between intellectuals and communism, Luce once said, “Communism is the opiate of the intellectuals with no cure except as a guillotine might be called a cure for dandruff.”

Yet Luce’s greatest threat came not from her political opponents, but from the strange illness that befell her while in Italy. The cause: arsenic-laced paint dust that had fallen from the ceiling of her bedroom.

Luce regained her health and in 1964 entertained a short-lived run for the United States Senate. In the years that followed, she removed herself from public life but remained a strong advocate for conservative principles. In 1981, President Reagan appointed her to the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. And by 1983, Clare Boothe Luce received a fitting ending to her Horatio Alger–like life when she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In “Is the New Morality Destroying America?” Luce attacks the moral corruptions of a sexually permissive culture, themes sounded throughout her multifaceted career. Tough, outspoken, and fiercely conservative, Luce’s style of feminism balanced a respect for female independence with an affinity for traditional gender roles and morality. The American conservative movement

has had several leading female lights, but few more rhetorically savvy than Clare Boothe Luce.

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**Delivered May 28, 1978, in Honolulu, Hawaii**

I was honored—as who would not be?—by the invitation to address this Golden Circle of remarkable IBM achievers. But I confess I was somewhat floored by the subject your program producer assigned to me. He asked me to hold forth for a half-hour on the condition of morality in the United States, with special reference to the differences between America's traditional moral values and the values of the so-called "New Morality." Now even a theologian or a philosopher might hesitate to tackle so vast and complex a subject in just 30 minutes. So I suggested that he let me talk instead about, well, politics, or foreign affairs, or the Press. But he insisted that your convention wanted to talk on a subject related to morals.

Well, the invitation reminded me of a story about Archbishop Sheen, who received a telegram inviting him to deliver an address to a convention on "The World, Peace, War and the Churches." He replied: "Gentlemen, I am honored to address your great convention, but I would not want my style to be cramped by so narrow a subject. However, I would be glad to accept if you will widen the subject to include 'The Sun and the Moon and the Stars.'" So I finally agreed to talk if I could widen my subject to include, "The Traditional Morality, the New Morality, and the Universal Morality."

There's another trouble about talking about morals. It's a terribly serious subject. And a serious talk is just one step away from being a dull, not to say a soporific one. So I won't be offended if, before I finish, some of you leave. But please do so quietly, so as not to disturb those who may be sleeping.

The theme of this convention is "Involvement." Now there is one thing in which all Americans, including every one of us here, are already deeply involved. Every day of our lives, every hour of our waking days, we are all inescapably involved in making America either a more moral or a more immoral country.

So this morning, let's take a look at the direction in which we Americans are going. But first, we must begin by asking, "What are morals?"

Morals, the dictionary tells us, are a set of principles of right action and behavior for the individual. The "traditional morality" of any given society is the set of moral principles to which the great majority of its members have subscribed over a good length of time. It is the consensus which any given society has reached on what right action and decent behavior are for everybody. It is the way that society expects a person to behave, even when the law—the civil law—does not require him (or her) to do so.

One example will have to suffice. There is no law that requires a person to speak the truth, unless he is under oath to do so in a court proceeding. A person can, with legal impunity, be an habitual liar. The traditional morality of our society, however, takes a dim view of the habitual liar. Accordingly, society punishes him in the only way it can—by social ostracism.

The person who believes in the traditional principles of his society, and who also succeeds in regulating his conduct by them, is recognized by society as a "moral person." But the person who believes in these principles—who knows the difference between "right and wrong" personal conduct, but who nevertheless habitually chooses to do what he himself believes to be wrong—is looked upon by his society as an "immoral person."

But what about the person who does not believe in the traditional moral principles of his society, and who openly challenges them on grounds that he believes to be rational? Is such a person to be considered a moral or an immoral person?

Today there are many Americans who sincerely believe that many of our traditional moral values are "obsolete." They hold that some of them go against the laws of human nature, that others are no longer relevant to the economic and political condition of our society, that this or that so-called "traditional moral value" contravenes the individual's

Constitutional freedoms and legitimate pursuit of happiness. Others believe that while a moral value system is necessary as a general guideline for societal behavior, it cannot, and should not, apply to everybody. Every person is unique; no two persons are ever in exactly the same situation or “moral bind”; circumstances alter moral cases. These persons believe, in other words, that all morals are “relative,” and all ethics are “situational.” They argue that what is wrong behavior for others is right behavior for me, because my circumstances are different. The new principles of right action and behavior which such persons have been advancing and practicing today have come to be called “the New Morality.”

But before we undertake to discuss the differences between the traditional American morality and the so-called New Morality, let us ask a most important question: Is there any such thing as a universal morality? Is there any set of moral principles which apply to everybody—everybody who has ever been born, and which has been accepted by the majority of mankind in all places and in all ages?

There is, indeed, a universal morality. It knows no race, no geographical boundaries, no time, and no particular religion. As John Ruskin, the English social reformer, wrote, “There are many religions, but there is only one morality.” Immanuel Kant, the greatest of German philosophers, called it the Moral Law, which he said, governs all mankind. Kant compared this Moral Law to the Sublime Law that rules the movement of the stars and the planets. “We are doomed to be moral and cannot help ourselves,” said Dr. John Haynes Holmes, the Protestant theologian.

When we study the history of human thought, we discover a truly remarkable thing—all the great minds of the world have agreed on the marks of the moral person. In all civilizations, in all ages, they have hailed truthfulness as a mark of morality. “The aim of the superior man,” said Confucius, “is Truth.” Plato, the Greek philosopher, held that “Truth is the beginning of every good thing both in Heaven and on earth, and he who would be blessed and happy should be from the first a partaker of truth, for then he can be trusted.” “Veracity,”

said Thomas Huxley, the English scientist, “is the heart of morality.” In Judeo-Christian lore, the Devil’s other name is “The Liar.”

Another mark of the moral person is honesty. “An honest man is the noblest work of God,” wrote Pope in his *Essay on Man*. “Every honest man will suppose honest acts to flow from honest principles,” said Thomas Jefferson.

The moral person is just. “Justice is the firm and continuous desire to render to everyone that which is his due,” wrote Justinian. Disraeli called Justice “Truth in action.” The moral person is honorable. At whatever cost to himself—including, sometimes, his very life—he does his duty by his family, his job, his country. “To an honest man,” wrote Plautus, the great Roman poet, “it is an honor to have minded his duty.” Two thousand years later, Woodrow Wilson voiced the same conviction. “There is no question, what the Roll of Honor in America is.” Wilson said: “The Roll of Honor consists of the names of men who have squared their conduct by ideals of duty.”

If, in an hour of weakness, the moral man does a thing he knows to be wrong, he confesses it, and he “takes his punishment like a soldier.” And, if he harms another, even inadvertently, he tries to make restitution. He takes responsibility for his own actions. And if they turn out badly for him, he does not put the blame on others. He does not, for example, yield to the post-Freudian moral cop-out of blaming his follies and failures, his weaknesses and vices, on the way his parents treated him in childhood. Here I cannot resist mentioning the case of Tom Hansen, of Boulder, Colorado, a 24-year-old youth who is living on welfare relief funds. He is presently suing his parents for 350,000 dollars damages because, he claims, they are to blame for lousing up his life, and turning him into a failure. Adam was, of course, the first man to try to shift responsibility for his behavior onto someone else. As there was no Jewish mom to blame, he laid it on to his wife Eve.

“Absolute morality,” wrote the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer, “is the regulation of conduct in such a way that

pain will not be inflicted.” The moral person is kind to the weak and compassionate with those who suffer.

Above all, he is courageous. Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount. Plautus, a true nobleman of antiquity, wrote, “Courage stands before everything. It is what preserves our liberty, our lives, our homes, and our parents, our children, and our country. A man with courage has every blessing.”

There is also one moral precept that is common to all the great religions of history. It is called the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.” When Confucius was asked what he considered the single most important rule for right conduct, he replied, “Reciprocity.”

The “universal morality” is based on these virtues: truthfulness, honesty, duty, responsibility, unselfishness, loyalty, honor, compassion, and courage. As Americans, we can say proudly that the traditional moral values of our society have been a reflection, however imperfect, of this universal morality. All of our great men, all of our heroes, have been exemplars of some, if not all, of these virtues.

To be sure, different cultures and civilizations have placed more emphasis on some of these virtues than on others. For example, the morality of the early Romans heavily stressed courage, honor, and duty. Even today we still call these the manly virtues, and we tend to associate them with another value we call “patriotism.” In contrast, the morality of the Judeo-Christian cultures of the West have placed their heaviest emphasis on altruism, kindness, and compassion. “Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not charity,” St. Paul wrote, “I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling symbol.” Americans, whose traditional morality reflects the Christian virtues of compassion, donated thirty billion dollars last year to charity. Americans also tend to consider compassion for the underprivileged a greater virtue in politicians than either honor or courage.

Now, if all these virtues do indeed represent the universal morality, than what do their opposites represent? Well, lying, dishonesty, dereliction of duty, irresponsibility, dishonorable



conduct, disloyalty, selfishness, cowardice, cruelty, and hypocrisy represent, of course, the universal immorality.

In passing, hypocrisy, which has been called "the compliment that vice pays to virtue," has been viewed as the height of immorality in all civilizations. "Of all villainy," cried Cicero, "there is none more base than that of the hypocrite, who at the moment he is most false, takes care to appear most virtuous." The English philosopher Henry Hazlitt called hypocrisy "the only vice that cannot be forgiven." Jesus cursed only one category of sinner, saying, "Oh woe to Ye, scribes and hypocrites!" Even the cynic and agnostic Voltaire, cried: "How inexpressible is the meanness of being a hypocrite!"

So now we are ready to ask: In what direction can we say that Americans are going? Are we, as a people, going on the high road of the universal morality or on the low road of the universal immorality?

The question is a crucial one for the future of our country. All history bears witness to the fact that there can be no public virtue without private morality. There cannot be good government except in a good society. And there cannot be a good society unless the majority of individuals in it are at least trying to be good people. This is especially true in a democracy, where leaders and representatives are chosen from the people, by the people. The character of a democratic government will never be better than the character of the people it governs. A nation that is traveling the low road is a nation that is self-destructing. It is doomed, sooner or later, to collapse from within, or to be destroyed from without. And not all its wealth, science, and technology will be able to save it. On the contrary, a decadent society will use, or rather, misuse and abuse, these very advantages in such a way as to hasten its own destruction.

Let us then face up to some of the signs which suggest that America may be traveling the low road to its own destruction.

Campus surveys show that one-third of our college students say they would cheat if they were sure they would not be caught. Forty-five percent say that they do not think

that it is necessary to lead a moral life in order to be happy or successful. Sociologists note the extraordinary increase in blue and white-collar dishonesty, such as sharp business practices, dishonest advertising, juggled books and accounts, concealment of profits, and the taking and giving of bribes. These are all practices which rip-off the buying public.

Unethical practices in the professions are becoming common. Honorable members of the Bar are today appalled at the increase of shysterism in the practice of law. A recent Congressional investigation of medical practices turned up the horrifying fact that American doctors, greedy for Medicare fees, are annually performing thousands of unnecessary operations. They are dishonoring their Hippocratic oath by inflicting unnecessary pain on helpless and trusting patients for profit. The public's increasing awareness of the lack of professional integrity in many lawyers and doctors is certainly what encouraged President Carter to make his recent attacks on these two professions.

According to the polls, the majority of our citizens think that politics—and yes, post-Watergate politics—are riddled with graft, kickbacks, pay-offs, bribes, and under-the-table deals. Polls also show that our people think that most politicians have no compunction about lying their heads off in order to get elected. A great number of Americans also question the accuracy and objectivity—in short, the integrity—of journalists. They think that far too many politicians and journalists are hypocrites—quick to expose the “immorality” of those who do not hold their own political views, but quicker by far to cover up the wrong-doing of those whose views they favor.

Addressing Harvard University's graduating class in June, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said: “A decline in courage may be the most striking feature an outsider notices in the West . . . such a decline in courage is particularly notable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression of the loss of courage by the entire society . . . Should one point out that from most ancient times a decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?”

A recent TV documentary about the morale of our volunteer army and our armed forces in Germany was a shocker. It revealed that one-third of our enlistees quit after a few months, finding service in the best-paid army on earth too hard on their heads or feet. One-third of our troops in Germany freely admit that they would beat it out of the forces as fast as they could the moment they thought a war was coming, and that a majority of them felt that they could not trust their comrades in battle. The officer who did the commentary on this documentary said, "What we're getting is an army of losers." The Pentagon has recently told the Congress that quotas for the armed services cannot be filled unless more women are taken in, including into the combat forces. So much for the condition of the manly virtues of duty, honor, courage in America's volunteer army.

Now I am sure that we would all agree that a rise in the crime rate indicates a weakening of society's social fiber. The staggering increase in the crime rate, especially in the rate of violent—and often utterly senseless—crime among American youth is surely a significant sign of moral decay. An even more significant sign is the impotence of our courts to cope with the enormous volume of crimes being committed. For example, of the 100,000 felony arrests made in New York City each year 97,000 or more cases are either dismissed, diverted for some non-criminal disposition, or disposed of through plea-bargaining. The average criminal who is sentenced is generally back on the streets in very short order. Studies show that most defendants arrested for serious crimes—including murder—go free. A society indifferent to the pervasiveness of crime, or too weak or terrified to bring it under control, is a society in the process of moral disintegration.

There is one other phenomenon in our society which has historically made its appearance in all decaying societies: an obsession with sex.

Sex—the procreative urge—is a mighty force. Indeed, it is the mightiest force. It is the life force. But since the dawn of history, what has distinguished man from the beasts is

that he has made conscious efforts to control his lustful impulses, and to regulate and direct them into social channels. There is no primitive society known to anthropologists, no civilization known to historians, which has ever willingly consented to give its members full reign—bestial reign—of their sexual impulses. Sex morals, mores, and manners have varied enormously from age to age, and culture to culture. But sexual taboos and no-nos, sex prohibitions (and consequently, of course, inhibitions) are common to all human societies.

Now the fact that mankind had instinctively sensed that there is a right and a wrong way of handling his procreative energies strongly suggests that there may be a universal sexual morality. And so there is. And when we examine it, we find that it is this very morality that has made all human progress, and what we call civilization, possible. It is the morality that protects and preserves the basic unit of society—the family. The family is the foundation on which mankind has built all his societies. Jean Jacques Rousseau called the family “the most ancient of all societies,” and “the first model of political societies.”

Humans, like all animals, instinctively mate. And the male instinctively protects his mate and her offspring. If this were not true, the human race would have long since perished. For in the entire animal kingdom, there is nothing more vulnerable than a pregnant human female, or a human female giving birth. The human female carries her fetus longer, and her young remain helpless longer, than the females and young of any other species. But although humans, like all animals, instinctively mate, or pair-bond, they are not instinctively sexually faithful. Both sexes are promiscuous by nature. They come together naturally, but they do not naturally stay together. Marriage is a man-made institution. We do not know—or at least I do not know—its origins. They are lost in the mists of time. Marriage probably evolved by trial and error, as the most satisfactory way of both controlling the promiscuous impulses of the sexes, and satisfying the procreative urge in an orderly, uninterrupted basis. Bernard

Shaw wittily remarked, “Marriage offers the maximum of temptation, with the maximum of opportunity.” Marriage is also the enemy of man’s worst enemies—loneliness and lovelessness. In any event, marriage has been the most serviceable, perdurable and, on the whole, popular of all mankind’s institutions.

Thousands of years ago, the poet Homer spoke in praise of marriage: “And may the Gods accomplish your desire,” he sang to the unwed maidens of Greece. “A home, a husband and harmonious converse with him—the best thing in the world being a strong house held in serenity where man and wife agree.”

Marriage customs have varied greatly throughout history. But what we know about the ageless custom of marriage is this: Whether a man took unto himself one wife, or like King Solomon, 1,000 wives, whether he “courted” his bride, or bought her from her father like a head of cattle, once he took a woman as his wife, society expected him to assume the primary responsibility for her welfare and the welfare of their children. The first principle of the universal sexual morality is that the husband should protect and provide for his wife and his minor offspring as long as they need him. In many cultures, the man has also been expected to assume responsibility for his illegitimate children, or bastards, and for the fatherless or motherless children of his near relatives.

The second principle of the universal sexual morality is, in the words of St. Augustine, that “They who are cared for obey—the women their husbands, the children their parents.” St. Augustine adds, however, that “in the family of the just man . . . even those who rule serve those they seem to command; for they rule not from a sense of power, but from a sense of the duty they owe to others; not because they are proud of authority, but because they love mercy.”

In all human undertakings, responsibility and authority go—as they must go—hand in hand. In order for a husband and father to discharge his responsibilities, it was necessary for him to have some measure of authority—let us call it the

final “say-so”—over his family. The patriarchal family has been, up to now, the family pattern of all of the world’s civilizations. It will remain so until the vast majority of women are completely self-supporting.

The third principle of universal sexual morality is that spouses should be faithful to one another. Certainly this principle has always been more honored in the breach than in the observance for the simple reason that the animal side of human nature is promiscuous. But the fact remains that the faithfulness of both spouses throughout time, has been considered the ideal of marital conduct.

You may search through all the great literature of the world and you will find no words extolling marital infidelities.

While it is true that the “sins of the flesh” have always been more readily forgiven to husbands than to wives, all human societies have taken a very harsh view of men who seduce—or rape—the wives or daughters of the men of their own society.

When the Trojan, Paris, ran off with Helen, wife of the Greek King Menaleus, Greece fought a seven-year war against Troy, to protest the seduction and abduction of Helen. King David’s abduction and seduction of Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, scandalized his court. It also caused that God-fearing monarch great agonies of repentance. In passing, King David’s repentance produced some of the world’s greatest poetry—perhaps, an early proof of Sigmund Freud’s theory that all the creative works of man—all his art, poetry, architecture, even his proclivity for money-making, political power, and Empire building, are *au fond*, sublimations of his consciously or subconsciously repressed sexual desires.

The fourth, and most important principle of the universal sexual morality is that moral parents, in addition to supplying the physical and emotional needs of their children should educate them to become moral adults.

“Train up the child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it,” says the Bible. John Stuart Mill wrote, “The moral training of mankind will never be

adapted to the conditions of life for which all other human progress is a preparation, until they practice in the family the same moral rule which is adapted to the moral constitution of human society.” In the universal family morality, parents who neglect, abuse, or desert their young or who fail to train them to become moral citizens are bad parents.

There are several other aspects of the universal sexual morality which should be mentioned. Although incest is natural among all the lower animals, and has correspondingly also made its appearance in all human societies, none has ever considered incest moral. Even in most primitive societies incest is viewed with horror. The 3,000 year old story of Oedipus Rex is the tragic story of the “guilt complex” of a man who slept—albeit accidentally—with his own mother.

History does tell us, however, that sodomy, homosexuality, and Lesbianism—virtually unknown in the lower orders—have been widely practiced, though seldom condoned, in all civilizations. But history also tells us that wherever incest, perversion, or martial unfaithfulness have become rampant, and whenever sex becomes, as we would say today, “value-free,” the family structure is invariably weakened; crimes of all sorts increase, especially among the neglected young; and then more or less rapidly all other social institutions begin to disintegrate, until finally the State itself collapses. Rome is perhaps the most famous example.

In the time of Christ, when Imperial Rome was at the very height of its wealth and power, when the brick structures of the old Roman Republic had all come to be faced with gleaming marble, Rome had become a city obsessed with the pursuit of sensual pleasures. The Emperor Augustus Caesar, seeing the breakdown of the Roman family that was consequently taking place, tried to shore up the institution of marriage by passing laws making divorce more difficult and increasing punishments for adulterers, rapists, and abortionists. It was already too late. Those monsters of inequity, perversion, and violence, Caligula and Nero were already in the wings, impatiently waiting to succeed him, and to hasten the decline and fall of the Empire.

So now let us come to “sex” in America. There is no doubt that what most Americans mean when they speak of “the new morality” is the “new” sexual morality which holds that “anything goes” between consenting adults in private—and that almost anything also goes in public. The English critic, Malcolm Muggeridge had America much in mind when he wrote, “Sex is the ersatz, or substitute religion of the 20th century.”

The social results of this new American ersatz religion are best seen in statistics most of which you can find in your Almanac. Today 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce, separation, or desertion. The average length of a marriage is seven years. The marriage rate and the birthrate are falling. The numbers of one-parent families and one-child families is rising. More and more young people are living together without the benefit of marriage. Many view the benefit as dubious. Premarital and extramarital sex no longer raises parental or conjugal eyebrows. The practice of “swinging,” or group sex, which the ancients called “orgies,” has come even to middle-class suburbia.

Despite the availability of contraceptives, there has been an enormous increase in illegitimate births, especially among 13 to 15 year-olds. Half of the children born last year in Washington, the nation’s capitol, were illegitimate. The incidence of venereal diseases is increasing. Since the Supreme Court decision made abortion on demand legal, women have killed more than six million of their unborn, unwanted children. The rate of reported incest, child-molestation, rape, and child and wife abuse, is steadily mounting. (Many more of these sex connected acts of violence, while known to the police, are never brought into court, because the victims are certain that their perpetrators will not be convicted.) Run-away children, teen-age prostitution, youthful drug-addiction, and alcoholism have become great, ugly, new phenomena.

The relief rolls are groaning with women who have been divorced or deserted, together with their children. The mental-homes and rest-homes are crowded with destitute or



unwanted old mothers. These two facts alone seem to suggest that American men are becoming less responsible, less moral, and certainly less manly.

Homosexuality and lesbianism are increasingly accepted as natural and alternative “lifestyles.” *MS*, the official Women’s Lib publication, has proclaimed that “until all women are Lesbians, there will be no true political revolution.” By the same token, of course, until all men are homosexuals, the revolution will be only half a revolution. In passing, the success of the lesbian-gay revolution would end all revolutions—by ending the birth of children.

But the most obscene American phenomenon of all is the growth of commercialized sex and hard- and soft-core pornography. In the last decade, hardcore film and print porn, which features perversion, sadism, and masochism, has become a billion dollar business. It is a business which is not only tolerated, but defended by the press in the sacred name of “freedom of the press.” One would find it easier to believe in this noble reason for defending the filth that is flooding the nation if the newspapers did not reap such handsome profits from advertising and reviewing porn. In my view, newspaper publishers who carry X-rated ads are no better than pimps for the porn merchants. Billy Graham may have been exaggerating when he said “America has a greater obsession with sex than Rome ever had.” But he was not exaggerating very much.

Now when we examine the “new” sexual morality, what do we discover? We discover that the new sexual morality comes perilously close to being the old universal sexual immorality, whose appearance has again and again portended the decline and fall of past civilizations. Jane Addams once said, “The essence of immorality is the tendency to make an exception of myself.” The principle on which the new sexual morality is based is sexual selfishness, self-indulgence, and self-gratification. Its credo is I-I-I, Me-Me-Me, and to hell with what others call sex morals.

In the 1976 Presidential campaign—for the first time in American history—the moral condition of the American

family became a political issue. Candidate Jimmy Carter gave the problem particular stress.

"I find people deeply concerned about the loss . . . of moral values in our lives," he said. And like Augustus Caesar, 2,000 years before him, he fingered the cause quite correctly: "The root of this problem is the steady erosion and weakening of our families," he said. "The breakdown of the family has reached dangerous proportions." Candidate Carter also saw the relation between good government and weakened families. "If we want less government, we must have stronger families, for government steps in by necessity when families have failed. . . . It is clear that the national government should have a strong pro-family policy, but the fact is that our government has no family policy, and that is the same thing as an anti-family policy."

It is far too late in the day to review the curious ideas Mr. Carter put forth in 1976 for the steps the Federal Government might take to strengthen the American family, except to say that they largely consisted in programs for more rather than less government assumption of marital and parental responsibilities. In any event, very little has since come of Carter's promise "to construct an administration that will reverse the trends we have seen toward the breakdown of the family in our country." The truth is that very little can be done by government to shore up the family, although a great deal can be done and has been done to hasten its collapse.

But the real cause of the breakdown is the abandonment, by millions of people, beginning with husbands, wives, and parents of their interior devotion to the principles of the universal morality. To ask what can be done to reverse the trend is to ask, what can the individual members of society do? The answer is—everything.

When Goethe, the great German poet, lay on his death-bed, an old friend asked him what farewell message he had to give to the world. Goethe replied, "Let every man keep his own household clean and soon the whole world will be clean."

If not every American, but just every other American man and woman were to begin today to keep their own households clean, this process of moral decay would immediately be halted.

It is certainly not too late to hope that this will happen. There are still millions of good people in America who try, try, try to remain faithful to the American version of the universal morality, and who also bring up their children to remain faithful. These Americans constitute the true “Golden Circle” of our country. If they will try to strengthen and enlarge that circle, by only so much as one virtuous act a day, a strong and happy America will make it safely into the 21st century.

## Notes

1. Albin Krebs, “Clare Boothe Luce Dies at 84: Playwright, Politician, Envoy,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1987.
2. Ibid.