

Claude, Robert  
- The training...  
ADL 9187

THE  
*Training*  
OF THE  
*Adolescent*

PRACTICAL ADVICE



TO PARENTS

by  
ROBERT CLAUDE S.J.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1952

1952

# The Training of the Adolescent

---

*Practical Advice for Parents*

By ROBERT CLAUDE, S.J.

Translated from the French Third Edition  
by Francis D. Giampino, S.J.

THE PAULIST PRESS  
401 WEST 59TH STREET  
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

*Nihil Obstat:*

JOHN M. A. FEARNs, S.T.D.,  
*Censor Librorum.*

*Imprimatur:*

✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN,  
*Archbishop of New York.*

New York, December 11, 1948.

COPYRIGHT, 1949, BY THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE  
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.  
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

Deacidified



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
I. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ADOLESCENT.....	5
II. THE TRAINING OF THE ADOLESCENT.....	12
A. The Training of His Intellect.....	14
B. His Guidance in Sex.....	20
C. The Training of His Will.....	24
MARY'S PART IN HIS TRAINING.....	38

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I The History of the ...

II The ...

III The ...

IV The ...

V The ...

VI The ...

VII The ...

VIII The ...

IX The ...

X The ...



## *The Training of the Adolescent*

THE training of the adolescent is a vast field, and we cannot hope in a treatment as brief as this to cover all of it adequately. In those parts of the field that are as yet but imperfectly understood we shall attempt to indicate the general approaches in a popular way. Thus we hope to help parents in a delicate undertaking and to enable them to delve more deeply into the problems involved.



The History  
of the Revolution

The history of the American Revolution is a story of a people who fought for their freedom and independence. It is a story of a nation that was born in a struggle for liberty and justice under the law. The revolution was a turning point in the history of the world, and it has shaped the course of human events ever since.

## I. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ADOLESCENT

Someone has written, "Adolescence is an age between two ages in which the heart turns to some mystic land afar." True, this definition is rather poetic, but experience shows it to be quite accurate. An *age between two ages*, one that is neither childhood nor maturity. An age of transition, one on the brink of change, in which the heart *turns to some mysterious land afar*, in which the heart of a young person opens on the myriad prospects of life and its mysteries.

It is an age that is essentially unsettled and that requires of its guide a great deal of patience. More especially it requires a competent knowledge of the workings of the human mind. For the first time, and for a short time only, the mind of a young person is possessed of a vision of the universe in its totality, and it awakens to a more complete view of all the departments of life. The role played by the guide of a young person takes on at this point a unique importance, for the impressions that leave a lasting mark on a man are those he receives in his adolescence.

### An Age Between Two Ages

In the life of man there are two stages in which the progress of nature seems to come to a standstill; they are childhood and maturity. In these two periods the human being seems to be in a perfect state of equilibrium, and lives his life in relatively uninterrupted peace.

Between these two periods of well-being there intervenes a time that is unstable and unsettled, in which a person abandons the child's way of thinking and acting and gropes about in the dark for those of the adult; this is adolescence. Rousseau has called it a second birth.

The adolescent realizes well enough that there is something new in his interior make-up, that he has changed a great deal

since the days of his First Holy Communion, but he doesn't see very clearly just what this change is. So you see what a joy it is for him to meet a friend on the road of adolescence, one who will be his guide along the way!

But remember, he doesn't want anyone to treat him like a child, because he isn't a child anymore. On the other hand he is not yet an adult; and though, when he wishes, he can put on a serious air and act like a man and have a will of his own, it doesn't last. Before long he has become childish and capricious again.

It is just this dual personality that makes the training of the adolescent so difficult and so delicate a task. Treat him like a child, and he balks; treat him like a man, and he is in danger of making serious mistakes. It is your task to help him with great skill to make his "apprenticeship of manhood." And that without seeming to want to impose yourself on his young personality which is all the more sensitive because at the same time it is inexperienced and believes itself all-powerful. You must be, then, less a director and more a companion.

### **The Age of Adolescence**

At what age in years shall we put adolescence? The use of this word is as elastic as the reality which it represents. According to the common understanding of the word, adolescence begins at about the twelfth or thirteenth year; a little sooner for girls than for boys. It ends at about nineteen for the latter. To follow the curve of development: the peaceful equilibrium of the child lasts from about the tenth to the twelfth year, the beginning of adolescence is at about thirteen, the abrupt outbreak of the crisis of adolescence at about fourteen to sixteen years, and the externally more calm end of the crisis at about eighteen or nineteen.

This is obviously but a theoretic classification. In real life these stages succeed one another imperceptibly, except of course, for the crisis itself which sometimes makes such an abrupt

appearance that parents are completely confused. Was it Chateaubriand who wrote, "We go to sleep children and awake men."?

A young person may be adolescent to a greater or lesser degree, and that degree differs with individuals. Juvenile mentality shows itself with an intensity and duration that is quite variable. The crisis comes earlier in some than in others. There is more precocity in warm climates and in large cities. An Oriental of eleven years is physically very mature, and a New Yorker should not be allowed to pass his twelfth year without having some of the facts of sex explained to him. A boy who is thrown into the work-a-day world will find his adolescence cut short, while the normal schoolboy will undergo a longer period of adolescence. The complexity of modern civilization seems rather to prolong the duration of the average adolescence.

In grammar school generally the eighth grade and the preceding period mark carefree childhood. In freshman high we see the first symptoms of adolescence; the crisis comes in sophomore and junior. Senior high and freshman college mark a stage that is calmer but nevertheless critical. Sophomore and junior in high school are properly the years of the crisis; these years confuse parents most. However there is a difference between these two years; the sophomore, closer as he is to childhood, is more open and docile; the junior, more grownup, is also more reticent and wary.

### **Childhood, Pre-adolescence, Adolescence**

Let us penetrate a little more deeply into the heart of the adolescent and take a look at the following three phases of his development: childhood, pre-adolescence, and adolescence itself.

First of all childhood: In certain respects there are more differences between a child and an adolescent than between a child of eleven years and a grown man. Childhood, like manhood, is a period of calm, security, stability, and satisfaction with oneself. Between the ages of nine and twelve even physical



growth seems to undergo a temporary halt, while for the adolescent it takes place at an alarming rate. The latter is **hesitant**, timid, restless; the child moves about in his world with a security that he will never have again, not even in his maturity—this is the age when the child leaps down whole flights of stairs, traces his steps along roof tops and the parapets of bridges, and that quite without accident.

There is no denying that the training of a child requires a great deal of patience, but the task is relatively easy. It is a time of great docility without much initiative or self-determination. Training then is largely a matter of dogmatic instruction: authority has more play than liberty, command more than persuasion, mechanical repetition more than explanation.

But then at about the age of thirteen dark clouds appear on the serene horizon. The child becomes disquiet, irritable; he loses his peace of mind. His face which had been childish and fair now loses its charm. His body is growing tall and all out of proportion, and he no longer has his childhood grace. Until now he had played with little girls as readily as with little boys, but now he has become clumsy and timid in the presence of girls he knew in childhood.

This is the beginning of adolescence. Rousseau has described it: "Its change in temperament, its frequent, violent outbursts, and continual agitation of spirit make the child almost unmanageable." Irritability seems to be the characteristic of this age. Mendousse writes: "Peace of mind, satisfaction with oneself and with others, the habitual dispositions of the preceding age, make way for attacks of melancholy and disquiet of mind, which betray themselves by unexplainable tears, unjustifiable complaints, and aggressive words and actions towards parents and teachers, etc. . . ." It is a time of trouble for the pre-adolescent as well as for the parents.

At about the age of fifteen the conditions described above become more marked, and the child enters into full adolescence. New horizons open to the young heart pregnant with the call of

a far-off appeal that daily becomes more insistent—a melancholy expectation, a mysterious desire for “some land afar . . .”

What is he, what is he waiting for, what does he want? The adolescent can answer none of these questions. He knows neither what he is nor whither he is going; he is in the dark. Then, too, his life is full of shocks and contradictions.

He is fiercely independent, and he resents being ruled. And yet secretly he admires his superiors, wishes to possess their manliness, strength of character, and dominion over him. He loves his family, yet it annoys him. He appreciates family life very deeply. He loves to sit down to a meal at which the whole family is present and finds a real pleasure in spending a winter's evening in the intimacy of the family parlor. Yet he is always running off and leaving the family circle to meet his friends, to go on trips, and to camp out. He is very likely to reply sharply if his parents complain that he is never at home. School for him is a concentration camp, a barracks, a prison. But let some illness grant him a much-desired vacation, and he is soon begging the doctor to allow him to go back to school. And what he will not do in the name of liberty! He is ready to throw over family and school for its sake, for they seem to him to be the trappings of childhood. “I must be free,” he cries, and at the same time hastens to enroll with enthusiasm in some association or other, some fraternity or clique in which he hopes to find a leader to command him, and regulations to chafe him!

This, then, is the confusion, the unrest, the disquiet of adolescence. Stanley, looking back on his youth, writes in his autobiography: “Boys are curious creatures, innocent as angels, proud as princes, spirited as heroes, vain as peacocks, stubborn as donkeys, silly as colts, and emotional as girls.”

At about the age of sixteen or seventeen there seems to be a lull in the storm. But you must beware; the crisis has only become more interior. Physiologically puberty is fully achieved, but mentally it is in the midst of its development. We can distinguish two clearcut periods in adolescence: one exterior, the other interior. Maurice Debesse has written on this subject:

"As varied as the manifestations of adolescence are, its forms may easily be put under two headings: The desire to astonish others, and the intimate expression of self. These two headings correspond in general to the two distinct phases of the crisis. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen the lively desire to be outstanding, to astonish oneself and others is most dominant; it is as if the adolescent sought to distract himself. This is what we shall call the 'extrovert period.' He is very interested in clothes, is careful to acquire 'the correct attitude' on popular questions, cultivates a larger vocabulary and more careful diction; he is attracted by all that is strange, bizarre, unusual, and paradoxical. Some of these eccentricities may stay with him even in maturity, but most of them will leave him at about the age of sixteen or seventeen. Their place is taken by a more interior phenomenon; this is the period of the 'cult of the *Ego*.' It is an affirmation of the importance of self that is now directed not to the world at large, but to himself. It is an age given to pondering in the heart, to mental probing, and young people discover with delight and at the same time with uneasiness the riches of the life of the mind. After the first superficial disturbance, the problem becomes more profound. Then toward the nineteenth year for boys and a little later for girls this intellectual exaltation quiets down, and a new equilibrium begins. This is the solution of the crisis."

### **The Triple Adaptation**

Let us examine a little more closely this mysterious trouble that agitates the adolescent.

He has just left the happy land of childhood and has not yet reached that of maturity; he is on the high seas tossed about by the winds. His whole being, body and soul, is busy adapting itself to the fullness of manhood, and, as every period of transition, it is full of trouble, difficulties, and unrest.

What makes transition painful and complex in this case is the fact that adaptation is taking place simultaneously in three fields: the adolescent is undergoing at the same time a crisis

in his sexual, intellectual, and moral development. His body is being transformed in its attainment of sexual maturity, his intellect is becoming more and more independent, his will is striving to acquire more liberty and freedom of action.

The complexity of the transition is all the greater because the rate of progress in these three departments is not the same. Now there is some development along one line, and now along another; then along all three at the same time. Here it comes to a halt, there it begins again; and for how long we don't know. The progress of the adolescent is extremely unpredictable. Although we can indicate in general the usual lines of development, we can never say for sure just what advance will take place tomorrow.

For a balanced view of the problem it is important never to lose sight of the fact of this triple development.

First of all the *sexual crisis*: This is the age of his first shave, the age when his voice begins to deepen, when the genital organs develop fully, when a young man wonders about the mystery of life, about girls, and when he experiences his first sexual temptations, and perhaps even an early fall.

Then the *intellectual crisis*: His thought becomes more original. If the adolescent is less reasonable, he is nevertheless more given to reasoning; he no longer accepts as Gospel truth what his parents tell him. It is just this fact that is the cause of a good many conflicts with his parents. He wishes to look at the pros and cons of a question, to judge on it as grown-ups do. He begins now to say: "I think . . ." "I believe . . ." "My opinion is . . ." In short he will not allow anyone to dogmatize in his presence, though none the less he himself dogmatizes very often.

Finally the *crisis of the will*: The will, too, begins to assert itself. The adolescent has lost the tractability of the child; he stiffens before authority, and if the latter stiffens in turn, he revolts. He does wish to obey, but he demands that his new-found personality be respected. To the child we can say, "You

must!"; for the adolescent that sort of language is a thing of the past. He expects to be given reasons for the existing order of things, and to be led to posit his own "I ought to . . ."

Foerster, (the great German educator) describes adolescence in its triple adaptation to maturity as, "the general adaptation of the child to all the functions of manhood."

Others speak of this same phenomenon as "the adolescent's summons to life in its entirety."

The child has life indeed, but is hardly conscious of the vital forces that animate him; the adolescent however has a very real appreciation of them. With awe he sees these physical, emotional, intellectual, moral, social, and religious forces arise within him, and all of them must contribute to make him the complete, the perfect man. He comes to know that he is the master of these forces, and thrilling with a sense of power he enters on the great adventure of life.

Of this adventure will be born the personality of the mature man, a personality that is heroic or watery depending on the quality of the adventure. This constitutes the tremendous responsibility of the guide of an adolescent.

The task is all the more heart-rending because the adolescent, proud and self-reliant in his discovery of this new world of his, wants to make trial of this adventure alone.

## II. THE TRAINING OF THE ADOLESCENT

Now that we have sketched a portrait of the adolescent, let us talk about his training. What we are going to say will fill out the sketch and complete the portrait.

We must consider two things first:

### **Atmosphere of Love**

An atmosphere of affection and understanding is absolutely indispensable in the training of the adolescent.

Adolescence is as a flower that is opening upon life, a flower that needs the sun of love for its full blooming. All training of course must be accompanied by kindness, for "more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar." And this is particularly true of the age at which a young person first becomes conscious of love and realizes for the first time the importance of this emotion.

Besides, in the solitude with which he surrounds himself, the adolescent is more than ever eager for the solace of affection. Affection will encourage him to give you his confidence, and without that no true training is possible. The adolescent who is taken to task in a matter of discipline is on the watch for the least kind word, the smallest sign of sympathy, to apologize and admit his fault. However, if he feels that he stands before an indifferent tyrant who thinks only of strict discipline, he freezes into an attitude of obstinate revolt.

Be patient, devoted, affable, and that with a gentle smile.

The love you must show has to be founded on understanding and esteem. Esteem: never forget that you have before you a being who is about to enter on the most serious part of his life, a being whose eternal salvation perhaps is at stake. Esteem him for the magnificent gift of life that God has given him.

Understanding: always give your child the impression that you understand him or at least that you are trying to understand



him. Nothing is more effective in making the adolescent retire into his shell than the impression that he is not understood. He believes that he is interesting, he has a high idea of his own worth, and yet his parents continue to treat him as a child; they seem to be unaware of the harvest that is preparing. Sometimes they make fun of him, or simply smile. How often has that smile, the all-too-frequent recourse of his elders, been the inspiration for secret revolt; how many young hearts has it wounded and even closed irrevocably to all beneficial influence from authority!

### Go Along With Him!

Looking at the problem from another point of view, may we really speak of the *training* of the adolescent? Remember adolescence is the age of self-affirmation, of the exaltation of the *Ego*, of revolt against all authority and all restraint. How may we speak of the *training* of a being who is striving to get along independently of everyone?

First of all this training has its negative side: it must define the errors that are likely to be committed, decide what restraints are excessive and what concessions necessary.

It must also be positive. Rather than a preventative training to be imposed upon the adolescent, someone has happily called it a "pedagogy of accompaniment." Under such a system the parent must follow the development of his child with scrupulous alertness; he must create a home atmosphere that is favorable to the successful outcome of the crisis, and help him find the person in whom he can confide, as every adolescent secretly longs to confide. He must suggest norms to be followed—rarely impose them—in such a way that the young man will think that he has found them himself.

Then too, this training must be highly individualized. For adolescence tends to adopt the originality of maturity, and each adolescent takes a course that is, in some ways at least, different. Therefore the advice that is given must be adapted to individual



cases. This is all the more necessary a precaution in view of the fact that many of the factors of juvenile psychology are as yet unknown to us.

### A. THE TRAINING OF HIS INTELLECT

This aspect of the adolescent's training primarily concerns teachers and those to whom parents confide the education of their children. The task of the parents consists principally in choosing a good school, in following the progress of their children in so far as they can, in keeping informed about the activities of the school, and occasionally comparing notes with the teachers.

Let us consider several special points under this heading:

#### The Independent Inquirer

The child can be impressed by an argument from authority; he delights in questioning his parents, and their answers are Gospel truth for him. The adolescent's attitude however is quite the contrary. He balks when anyone tries to impose an idea upon him; he wants to discuss and thrash things out. No other age is more rebellious before the argument of authority.

The adolescent objects as if by a first law of his nature. Father Janet notes the "obsession with contradicting which is so common among young people that they cannot listen to anything without disagreeing with, denying, or correcting what is said, and that often in a futile, puerile way."

Now this obsession is not purely negative. For if the adolescent is too much given to debate and contradiction, it is because, unlike the child, he wants to find truth by his own efforts without the help of anyone else; by groping in the dark and often stumbling he tries to think for himself. He is undergoing his apprenticeship in the art of thinking.

He becomes enthusiastic over the discoveries in thought that he makes. In his *Critical and Historical Essays* Taine writes:

"Do you recall that age at which you first discovered some general truths, not through the lessons of teachers or by reading books, but through personal effort; they were the eldest daughters of your mind, your most beloved, so charming that no other joy has been able to efface or to equal the memory of the pleasure they gave you? It is at about the age of fourteen or fifteen that these discoveries are made. They may be superficial or even untrue, but what does it matter? Twenty others may have discovered them before us, but what do we care? They belonged to us really and truly, for *we* had found them just as they had, and we recognized no predecessor in the field."

This enthusiasm, this infatuation with his own ideas, with his own discoveries, makes the adolescent prejudiced in his judgments. It is only with great difficulty that he can recognize his error, for "he never hesitates between your accurate opinion and his erroneous one—his is always better."

What are parents to do in the face of such prejudice, such obstinacy? How are they to train a mind afflicted with such a failing? The guiding principle here as always is to avoid head-on collisions, to practice a "pedagogy of accompaniment."

Don't hurt his sensibilities with an irritable "Will you be quiet?" or "Is *that* the way you talk to your parents?" It will only make the conflict deeper. The result will be continual, disagreeable family squabbles, growing irritation on the part of the adolescent, and even revolt. Or what is equally bad, your son will simply become silent and will hide his revolt within him. Then his training will have slipped completely out of your hands.

Therefore your *first* task is to be master of yourself, to conquer your tendency to give in to irritability, and to practice angelic patience. And this is all the more true because all that your son says is not to be taken at its face value, for isn't adolescence the age of the sensational? In his *Confessions of a Child of the World* Musset puts this statement in the mouth of

his hero: "It was enough that a thought be extraordinary, that it shock a man of common sense, for me to make myself its champion."

Remain calm then, and realize that the apprenticeship of independent thought like every other apprenticeship necessarily entails some violence and blunders. Let your child express his mind, but don't allow him to be rude or unjust.

Without hurting his pride, discreetly insinuate the point you are trying to make in such a way that he will think he has come by his own efforts to the conclusion you desire: "Don't you think that . . .?" "Don't we have to admit . . .?"

You will find, too, that if you can talk to him on his own level and make him feel that you understand him and appreciate his struggle for self-conquest, you will be able sooner than you might think to reason calmly and effectively with him. Limit yourself, however, to matters in which you are competent; if you are not, it is better that you say nothing. I know parents who for the training of their children will sacrifice themselves to the extent of plunging into the reading of sports and science magazines in order to be able to discuss these subjects intelligently with their children and thus help them in their struggle for intellectual maturity.

Youth, however, is enthusiastic not only about *its own* thought but about thought *in itself*. Youth is captivated when it discovers for the first time the vast world of ideas. Plato says, "He rejoices as though he had discovered a veritable treasure of wisdom, and he is transported with enthusiasm. There is no subject into which he does not feel himself competent to probe, now oversimplifying, now expanding and distinguishing." Don't let us smile indulgently at this cult of enthusiasm for thought, but let us encourage it and remember the long line of young men who in the course of the centuries have died for an idea.

We must be on our guard however, for this infatuation with

ideas can very easily lack depth. Any one who directs students' study clubs can tell you how the adolescent loves to discuss for the pleasure of bandying ideas about, but when it comes to drawing some practical conclusions, and especially when it comes to accepting some principles of action, that is another matter! This lack of depth makes young people susceptible to the cult of empty words and very partial to the verbal effusions of a Victor Hugo for example.

In brief, be sympathetic with your son's enthusiastic cult of thought, but don't fail to lead him discreetly to real depth of thought. As Franklin said, "From every discussion we must draw some practical conclusion even if this be only to plant a tree."

### Reading

Most adolescents love to read, for a book doesn't contradict them as would an adult with whom they may be exchanging views. With complete liberty they may discuss, accept, or reject the opinions of a book; they feel they have a fighting chance.

It goes without saying that reading is a necessary factor in intellectual training. The student who does not put aside his school books for outside reading will get his diploma—perhaps—but he will never achieve intellectual maturity.

Undoubtedly books for adolescents are rare and almost non-existent. There is a wide selection for children and a vast literature for adults. But the adolescent disdains children's books, and he is not yet able to appreciate and understand those for adults.

How are you going to get information about the many books that make their bid for the attention of young people? Consult teachers and other competent people, but it will be much easier for you if you have at hand one of those excellent book reviews that deals with the problem in conformity with Catholic thought and conscience. There is the semi-annual review of *America*

entitled "*America Balances the Books*" with its section on adolescents' books. The Catholic Children's Book Club (70 East 45th Street, N. Y. 17, N. Y.) evaluates books for age groups ranging from six to sixteen, and will be of help for the major part of the adolescent period. The "Catholic Supplement to the Standard Catalog for High School Libraries" ought to be found in any library, if not, it can be secured from the H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, New York 52, N. Y.<sup>1</sup>

Your son, full of his new-found independence will not always allow himself to be counseled in this matter. Often he will want to read the latest best-seller, and will neglect books of lasting value. Here too, you must exercise diplomacy, though in all firmness. You may take advantage of his desire to have a library of his own by furnishing him with the kind of books that you want him to have.

The question of the adolescent's reading is often a very trying one; in any case it always requires a great deal of attention on the part of parents. They must exercise discreet and tireless watchfulness.

### **The Formation of His Conscience**

Parents also have a role to fill in the training of the moral intelligence of the adolescent. There are three points we ought to cover:

First of all it is your job to help the adolescent to get to know himself better. Here more than anywhere the ancient principle is full of meaning, "Know yourself." Incidentally there is one method that turns out particularly poorly: to ask a young man questions in the hope that thus he will bare his soul to you. This is the wrong approach, since at heart he is really quite timid, and moreover knows himself but imperfectly.

---

<sup>1</sup> The recommendations made above are American equivalents of the sources cited in the French original.

Ask him questions and he only becomes embarrassed and tries all the harder to guard his secrets.

What you must do is describe the adolescent to himself. In retreats for young people the retreat master gets the most rapt attention when he traces the psychological portrait of the adolescent. For he desires intensely to know himself but dares not ask. He is marvelously happy when he learns what he has secretly desired to learn, and he receives with great avidity any light that is thrown on this vexing subject.

Then you must realize that the child is dominated, before all, by the *external* aspect of morality. Isn't it true that what troubles the child more than the fault itself is its consequences: punishment, scolding from its parents, shame, being kept in, a bad report card? The adolescent however has begun to realize that the moral order exists independently of his superiors and that it is a part of his very being.

Teach this attitude to your son. Of course, you must accustom him to accept the consequences of his acts like a man, but above all get him to be sorry not so much for the unpleasant results of his faults as for the fault itself. For a fault is a failing of the *will*.

Finally the child is unduly impressed by the sanctions his little world invokes on blunders like disorderliness or neglect of studies, in which often enough there is no malice of the will. Therefore you must direct the attention of your adolescent to *interior* faults. They tend to pay little attention to them, though they are far more important than the little failings of the classroom; I mean they should become more conscious of failings like jealousy, envy, animosity, selfishness, rivalry, hasty judgments, and in general of all the interior sins contrary to the virtue of charity.

It is very interesting indeed to present a student with a list of his classmates and ask him which of them he likes and which he dislikes. This little experiment is likely to make him think twice—and not without some surprise—about his habitual



interior disposition toward his companions. You can go a step further with it: "Look for the causes of your dislikes." Then, again with surprise, he discovers that side by side with reasons based on mere physical appearance there may be an unpardoned word, a rivalry, some jealousy, and always selfishness. This introspection will make his conscience more sensitive to interior faults.

Also direct his attention to the secret motives of his actions, to his *intention*. Teach him to judge actions not by their external appearance, but by their interior motivation. Three boys may be very faithful to their school work but for reasons of different value; the first may work hard because pride prompts him to do so, the second out of fear of punishment, and the third may study because he loves God and knows that He wishes him to do his duty.

## B. HIS GUIDANCE IN SEX

### Explanation of Sex to the Adolescent

Now we must face the problem of his information on sexual matters. It is above all the formation of a strong will that makes any training in chastity possible at all.

Initiation in groups to the facts of sex is forbidden by the Church and by right reason. The initiation of the individual adolescent is primarily the obligation of the *parents*, but often enough, because they find it embarrassing, they pass this duty on to the priest, or much more unfortunately, leave it to chance acquaintances. This delicate task can usually be accomplished only by someone who knows the individual very well.

In this matter the child ought to receive an answer to any question which is bothering him. To keep back information by dodging embarrassing questions or by clothing procreation with mystery can give a young person a false conscience that may stay with him for the rest of his life; experience has taught



us that only too often. From the very beginning the child must recognize natural functions for what they are.

Suppose the child does not ask any questions, at what age are we going to initiate him? The answer to this question is often very difficult. There was time when it was commonly felt that a boy should not pass his senior year in high school without being initiated; today however this must be done at the latest when a young person is about fourteen or fifteen. In our times children pick up much more information because of such features in our civilization as the radio, the movies, newspapers, freedom in conversation. It is obvious then, that it is not necessary, and can even be dangerous, to wait until a child shows some interest in these questions.

Some say that we ought not act too hastily in this matter, and that we ought to wait as long as possible before we "deflower" the virginal soul of a child. First, we take exception to the use of the word "deflower." Then, we must never lose sight of the constant menace today of bad or thoughtless companions who will speak about sex in a way that may be indelicate and very easily disastrous. Besides, it is better that a child be acquainted with the facts before the period of temptations or the troubles of puberty. The child who is having no trouble will receive this knowledge very calmly, and when temptations do come, the adolescent will have the information that will prove one of his greatest sources of resistance. On the other hand the "shock" of initiation is more dangerous during the critical age of temptation.

We put the age at fourteen to fifteen. Circumstances may demand an earlier initiation, for example a new baby in the house, or the necessity of a child's frequenting dangerous places, etc.

Parents must shoulder their responsibilities and in doing so, they can count on the grace of God. It would be an offense to good sense and a failure in duty to observe in this matter a policy of absolute silence.

### Method

Like many other parents, no doubt you are worried about how to go about this task. You will be able to find good suggestions in the many pamphlets that are printed by reputable Catholic authorities on the subject. One of them is: "How to Give Sex Instruction," by P. J. Bruckner, S.J.<sup>2</sup>

Some do not care to use pamphlets, but prefer a more direct method. How then to go about it? After getting the essentials clear from some good pamphlet, the following suggestions may be of help.

Before all else you must make sure that this initiation takes place on a lofty and religious tone. Mothers can usually accomplish this without difficulty. Emphasize more the magnificent role God has given to parents than the physical conditions of reproduction. The use of the Gospel, as we shall point out shortly, will accomplish this very nicely. Thanks to this precaution, during the rest of his life the notions of birth and love will normally keep this original imprint of the pure and the divine, and this will be a sizable factor in times of temptation. If, on the other hand, the initiation were made without this precaution or by a bad companion, these notions, stained from the beginning by the material or sordid perhaps, could mar his life forever.

At times it is necessary to explain the whole thing at once; more often it is preferable to take it step by step: First make him aware of the problem, then explain the role of the mother, and then that of the father. This last step is by far the most difficult to handle delicately, and you must rather *prepare* the adolescent to *understand* it than try to *explain* it.

Ought you at this point to bring in the *whole* problem of chastity? It seems inadvisable to mention the faults against chastity just at the moment of initiation, for this would detract from the tone of the pure and the divine that we spoke of.

<sup>2</sup>The pamphlet recommended above is an American equivalent of the French, "L'initiation des enfants à la vie" by Pierre Dufoyer.

Yet it seems very important to explain the problem of chastity in clear terms, with an eye to its relation to marriage, and not in a vague and general way that makes no reference to the conjugal act. In a matter such as this, where scruples can so easily find their way, the principles involved must be clear from the very beginning. To act in any other way is to risk planting the seed of scruples and even sin in his life for the future.

In this initiation be very straight-forward in handling the question of chastity. Your language should be such that the adolescent can easily and by himself correlate this new and important information with all that he has heard and will hear on the subject of chastity and its opposite. There is no necessity for, rather there is definite danger in, describing or even mentioning the names of all the various sins of the flesh. The parents or the confessor can speak of them when they in some way touch the life of the adolescent.

### Through the Gospels

It is not at all extraordinary that children discover the facts of sex through the text of the "Hail Mary": ". . . and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." This is the grace of God. From the very beginning the notions of reproduction enjoy a religious tone.

A fine method of initiation is to use this sentence and proceed with the Gospel story. You can read the child the appropriate texts and explain them to him.

The use of the sacred text, like the whole of the initiation, must be done with infinite tact. Otherwise Gospel texts of the highest spirituality will be stained forever with harmful physical sordidness, though your aim had been just the opposite—to purify from the beginning sexual concepts in an atmosphere of the highest spirituality.

Here are some of these passages taken from the first and second chapters of St. Luke:

*The Role of the Mother: The message of the angel to Zacharius:* I, 7.—They had no child; Elizabeth was barren, and both were now well advanced in years.

*The annunciation to Mary:* 31.—And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call him Jesus. 36.—See, moreover, how it fares with thy cousin Elizabeth; she is old, yet she too has conceived a son; she who was reproached with barrenness is now in her sixth month.

*The visitation:* 41-42.—No sooner had Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, then the child leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost; so that she cried out in a loud voice, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 57.—Elizabeth's time had come for her child-bearing, and she bore a son. II, 5-7.—With him was his espoused wife Mary, who was then in her pregnancy; and it was while they were still there that the time came for her delivery. She brought forth a son, her first born. . . .

*The Role of Father:* I, 34-35.—But Mary said to the angel, How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man? And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the most High will overshadow thee. Thus that holy thing which is to be born of thee shall be known for the Son of God. (Also the whole passage of St. Matthew which deals with St. Joseph's anxiety when he sees that Mary is pregnant. I, 18-25.)

### C. THE TRAINING OF HIS WILL

I will! magic words that make the whole being of an adolescent quiver and cause profound reverberations within him.

What is the will? The power of the soul to decide freely according to the lights of its own intelligence, or more simply, the power of mastery over one's own acts.

Mastery of self has two facets: a defensive facet, liberation, and an offensive facet, realization. Liberation: the will bursts every bond and overturns every obstacle that keeps it from realizing its ideal. Realization: availing itself of all the powers it now enjoys, the will puts them to work to realize its generous dream. In short it says no to the enemies of its ideal and yes to its friends.

### Training in the Power to Say No

The training of the will has two aspects and the first is the training in the power to say no. To every adolescent the following situations strike a familiar cord:

It is five o'clock, time for my French homework. It certainly would be nice to settle down in an easy chair and read a comic book, the *Bat Man* say. I say no to sloth.

I love fried potatoes—there is nothing wrong with them!—but I've already had more than enough of them. I'd like to eat some more . . . but no.

In the schoolyard the day after vacation everybody is telling what happened to him during the holidays, but I don't have anything to tell. I get a great idea for a wonderful story of which I am the hero. The story is a pure fiction of the imagination, but what does that matter. To lie is better than to keep quiet and feel like a fool. But I say no to vanity.

I catch a classmate, who is a particular rival of mine, red-handed. I could fix him very neatly by starting quietly to spread the story all around! . . . I say no to jealousy.

Then from deep within me, very deep, comes a bad feeling, so bad that I can't really describe it. Sometimes it is a regular tornado that looks as though it will carry everything

away with it. I stand and face the storm and cry: "No, neither tribulation, nor agony, nor persecution, nor hunger, nor peril, nor the sword can separate me from the love of Christ."

Teach your son then to say no to the passions that come from within him: sloth, softness, sensuality, pride; to say no also to the bad example of his friends: their conversations, their places of resort, their deeds, books, the movies. When he is with a crowd and suggestions are made, it is always a great deal easier to say yes than no. Teach him also to say no to the forces in the world that try to wear him down: to stand hunger, cold, fatigue, sickness, defeat, loss of loved ones and this stoically, without letting himself be discouraged, but rather drawing energy from the trial itself.

This training through severity toward self may seem rather negative, but it is particularly effective with adolescents. Aren't they especially susceptible to the idea of combat, of victory and defeat? You will obtain near impossibilities from them by presenting the objective to them under the guise of a battle to be won, resistance to be maintained. This is because on the point of their independence they are extremely sensitive. You can start a veritable war within them if you but throw out to them the taunt that they are slaves to their passions, to the influences of others, to the forces of this world that try to wear down their powers of resistance.

### **An Ideal**

It goes without saying that you can't be satisfied merely with training your adolescent son to say no. To deny oneself (and thereby make oneself free) is still but a negative step in the training of the will. Through the powers of his soul thus liberated the adolescent must build, must realize something grand, heroic. This heroic ideal is defined by Vigny: "a dream of youth realized in maturity."

Are you anxious to have your son forge himself a will of steel, a heroic will? Inspire him with an ideal. First an ideal



for his moral actions, then one for his intellectual life. If your son limits his efforts at school to "just getting by," his whole life may be mediocre. Fortunate indeed is the adolescent whose mother and father require a great deal of him, and who, at the same time, know how to praise him for the progress he has made while pointing out yet higher objectives at which to aim.

Of course you must not ask the impossible of him; this will end only in discouragement. Therefore—as happens not infrequently—it is unreasonable for a father who had always been first in his class to demand the same of his son.

Yet the ideal must be placed as high as possible—"in the stars." The higher the ideal the more attractive, inspiring it is. There are potentialities in the soul of adolescence that remain forever dormant simply because parents fail to make them actualities. "It is amazing," says Father Plus, "the number of impossible things resolute people succeed in doing."

These adolescents of ours are just waiting for us to ask a lot of them so that they can discover all the secret forces that are in them and can feel that they are masters of the world. Boussuet has said that "their sanguine hope is absolutely without bounds." They thrill to the challenge of difficult virtues; they love words like "all," "absolutely," "completely," and all-out standards like: "One gives nothing unless one gives all." John Berchmans as an adolescent said ingenuously, "I want to become a saint," and he did. When they begged Guynemer (the great French ace of World War I) to spare himself: "Take a rest, there is a limit to what a man can do!" He replied, "Yes, a limit we've always got to try to pass!"

Every young person will respond nobly to these lines of Claudel: "Don't believe those who tell you that the purpose of youth is to have a good time. It is not made for pleasure, but for heroism."

By skillfully and persistently proposing the magic of an ideal and by faithfully following the arduous path it points out



you will fortify your son against the great temptation of adolescence—one that must decide the rest of his life—the temptation of a bourgeois, mediocre attitude toward life. There is a time in the life of every adolescent, when after the call of the heroic has been followed for a time, he begins to hear the deceptive and unhealthy invitations to a life of ease and pleasure, “in slippers by the fire.” This happens at about the age of sixteen. How often the young man of the Gospel comes to mind in this regard! He was eager for a heroic life, but he went away sad because he did not have the courage to sacrifice riches and the conveniences of life. I’ve often pondered over this with a heavy heart as I watch some young man avoid my eye and go away sad, because after having shown a desire for a noble and difficult life, he forsakes it all for a mediocre life of ease. The adolescent truly decides his own destiny.

### Aids

What means are we going to use to keep this ideal alive? Companions, reading, and some moral guide will be of great value.

Diplomatically direct your son’s attention toward young people who are energetic, hard-working, good-living, and loyal. For all these qualities presuppose men of strong will and an environment which favors it. Biographies of energetic men will also give him a preference for hard work and a dislike of easy-going ways. What monuments to heroism the missal offers us each day with its saints, its virgins, its martyrs, with the Blessed Virgin Mary and Christ the Leader, divine exemplar of all the virtues. What magnificent, energetic words, like those spoken by Joan of Arc: “I will go, even if I have to creep there on my hands and knees.” “Cut my throat if you wish, but I will say what I want.” “When I say that I do not wish it, I mean that I do not wish it!”

In the formation of his will nothing can take the place of the living word of a priest—often this will be his confessor—whom the adolescent has chosen as his moral guide. To brave

the difficult storms of youth, your son needs this guide. He needs him for the training of his character and for the solution of the numerous problems that will arise with the dawning of adolescence: that all-over feeling of ill-at-ease, his first sexual temptations, difficulties with his parents, his vocation, his friendships. . .

It is very necessary then, that you get your son in a diplomatic way to really want to choose a spiritual director or a *regular* confessor to whom he can open himself without reserve. You must however, leave him perfect liberty of choice of the priest, for confidences cannot be forced. Be assured that your son *is* looking for and really desires a confidant, even though, because of his sensitiveness on the point of his independence, he wishes to choose the man himself.

"To keep alive in you the faculty of strenuous living, each day give it some disinterested practice," says William James, the psychologist. We shall point out here some of the setting-up exercises of the will for adolescents. They are details, of course, but they will give parents many opportunities to make their sons conscious of the law of exertion. The repetition of small acts will form great and noble habits. Of course it is unnecessary to tell parents that no number of reminders to be energetic will have any effect if parents themselves do not first set the example.

(a) The spirit of discipline: he must submit himself voluntarily to the prescribed order of the day whether in his home or at school. He must be on time, especially for meals.

(b) A real zeal to do his job well: he must make war on the "just as good" attitude, the job left incomplete, done superficially or indifferently, or neglected entirely.

(c) The care of profiting practically each day by the many occasions offered.

*His physical life:* Have him get up at a definite time every day, wash with cold water, take deep breathing exercises; cleanliness of nails, ears, teeth, clothes attended to every day.

He must eat some of everything put in front of him, not smoke; learn to grin and bear fatigue, little knocks and bruises, illness; get to bed at a reasonable hour.

*His intellectual life:* He must exercise his memory, speak distinctly, articulate his consonants, write correctly, dot his i's and cross his t's; watch spelling; keep his room neat as well as his papers, books, clothes; always finish whatever he has begun; work, books, games. . . .

*His social life:* Be on time for his appointments, put himself out for the sake of others on the train, on the stairs, everywhere and in everything; lend what he has willingly; be obliging with a smile. . . .

### **Stoicism and Divine Grace**

It might be objected here that the training of the will outlined so far, especially the training through denial of self, has the unsavory traces of pagan stoicism, that it slights divine grace. There is some foundation for this objection but our method supplies the correctives necessary.

We must be aware of the fact that the adolescent is much more impressed by the notion of stoical force than he is by that of the gentle help of God's grace. Manly force, simple, firm, even strained, in full possession of itself has a tremendous attraction for him, while sentiments that are sweet and humble are suspect. He is at the stage where a young man has just discovered many hidden forces within him, and is setting out to conquer the world and thinks that nothing is impossible for him. So, why pray? It has been observed that stoicism is a malady of many youthful moralists. It is too, the most prevalent moral attitude among adolescents gifted with any originality of thought.

Let the adolescent go through his experience with stoicism; it will ennoble him and give him power to run the race. But before long, in the second lap of adolescence, he will be able to put his finger on the weakness of the stoic philosophy of

life, which is the weakness of the human will when left to itself, without the help of divine grace. After the hour of stoicism will come that of grace.

It is at just this moment that his guide must step in to keep the adolescent from losing heart, and above all, to convince him of the important role grace and prayer must play in his life. Ideas and doctrines do not really penetrate the mind until they had been relearned in the school of experience. This is why the guide of a young person must be continually on his guard to seize upon just the right moment to plant the seed of truth in the soul of his spiritual child.

The adolescent is then in a period that is worthy of our fullest sympathy. He is reliving that very human experience of St. Paul: "It is not the good that my will prefers, but the evil my will disapproves that I find myself doing. Pitiabie creature that I am, who is to set me free from a nature thus doomed to death? (God answers:) Nothing else than the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vii. 19, 24-25.)

The adolescent arrives at a vivid realization of the doctrines of grace and prayer through what he has seen of his own weakness. The will of man is feeble; experience has made this only too clear. He feels more and more urgently a need in his soul: If only some divine power could transform me and make me what I ought to be! This divine power is waiting for him; it is God's grace; this transformation will take place, and it is through prayer that it will happen. Through prayer and grace, God, with His life and All-powerful Will, enters into man, permeating him and mysteriously fortifying his will. Armed with this divine power the adolescent can cry out with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him that strengthens me." It is in this way that his dream of omnipotence can be realized.

What part are parents to play in this discovery? We are dealing here with the formation of the religious consciousness of a young person. Let us make it clear that the role of

---

parents here is quite limited. It belongs essentially to the priest and in particular to the spiritual guide.

Parents must watch over externals of the adolescent's religious life: Mass, Confession, Communion, morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals. . . . Parents must be especially discreet here; their preaching must be chiefly *by example*. There are parents who make the sacrifices necessary to attend daily Mass before work principally to train their children to do the same.

We cannot over-emphasize the role of the Eucharist in the training of the adolescent. It is the "bread of the strong."

Insist with severity on Sunday Mass and the Easter duty. Do not tolerate except for a good reason absence from daily Mass if it is required by his school.

On the other hand be very careful in all that concerns Confession and frequent Communion. When occasion permits mention the usefulness, and even the necessity, of regular Confession and Communion for a man who is going to amount to something. But please, don't organize anything like a "family night for Confession." These enforced Confessions have caused moral disaster for more than one young person.

It is fine to have every one in the family go to Sunday Mass together, but let each one be free to go to Communion or not. If you wish to encourage your children to communicate, you must be content with the very real efficacy of good example. If unfortunately you see that one of your children is abstaining, do not harass him with questions; do not ask him even a single question about the matter. If this happens frequently, go to his school, find out about his companions, his books, where he spends his time; often enough his attitude will change. If not, pray; let the priest to whom your son goes know about it. But by all means leave him freedom of action in this delicate matter.

If the whole family says its evening prayers together—and we cannot exaggerate the wonderful value this has for

him—do not neglect to include in them a short time of silence for examination of conscience. It is a great exercise for the training of the will!

Finally every adolescent should make at least one closed retreat. Such a retreat will permit him to do some thinking in retirement and silence on the problems of his adolescence, and to lay the foundations for a life of manly activity and will power. Countless youths have come away after these three days of recollection and prayer completely changed. Pius XI has said: "In these remarkable spiritual setting-up exercises the will becomes strong and vigorous" and young people come away "vigilant and capable of unholding the cause of God." It is becoming customary to have two closed retreats in the course of high school, one at the end of sophomore and the other at the end of senior year. It is a fine practice, because they coincide with the two periods of crisis in adolescence.

### Chastity

Let us consider here two special topics: temptations against chastity and the first love.

Many parents get particularly worried about this matter of sexual temptations. Two things disturb them especially: They know that such temptations can prove to be of serious harm to the soul of their growing boy, and because the boy himself, rather secretive from his fourteenth year on, becomes even more so about this delicate matter.

What can parents do? Their hands seem to be tied. They can pray of course, and they can watch his reading and the way he spends his time. Can they do anything more?

The big mistake is to make the problem of chastity a problem apart, and to fail to look at it in the place it takes in the general training of the will. If your son is active, he has a much better chance of staying pure. If he is inactive, I would worry about his purity. Make him then a man of activity, and the rest will be easy.



After all chastity is a victory of soul over body, a decisive triumph of the *will*. Every time the adolescent takes a stand against weak-kneed giving in to self, a battle has been won in the war against impurity. He must practice a certain austerity of life, at table, in his comforts, in his amusements; he must perform generously his duties as a student. In this he is going against softness, greed, laziness, and every kind of sensuality, and to some degree he is avoiding sexual temptations, or at least enabling himself to conquer them more easily. For he is on the alert and ready to take action to defend the rights of the soul against the demands of the body.

This is what educators mean when they say, "The attitude of a young person toward sex is the product of his whole training." Archambaud explains this: "Everything is a pitfall to the weak will. Every form of laziness, softness, dishonesty, and even indifference exposes the youth to impurity and makes his fall easier. Every kind of activity, effort, frankness, generosity, enthusiasm is a great help to his purity. One young man may be saved by hard work, another by a horror of lying and dissimulation, another by a love that has already found its way to his heart, another by divine charity or the call of a vocation, a great many by regular habits of piety. It isn't a question of finding one simple remedy, but of utilizing all the positive, constructive powers of his being. The heart of the truly pure is one in which nothing can take precedence over the quest for "the better thing."

To sum up, watch over his reading and the way he spends his time, but above all get him to love activity and to despise softness and easy-going ways. See to it that there is a certain austerity in his life, and make him fulfill the duties of his state in life generously.

### **His First Love**

Adolescence is the age of first love. The first sentimental stirrings can come very early, often enough at the threshold of adolescence.

It would be a great mistake to dismiss the whole thing as "mere puppy love." This phenomenon must be taken seriously; it is part of the awakening to life and involves the whole personality of a young man. It is a very important factor in his future development.

Just as its occurrence is a normal thing, so too, it is normal for the adolescent to attribute tremendous importance to it. A boy is a man in the making, and love plays a leading role in the life of man.

Father de Buck has written very wisely: "The adolescent recognizes the first love as a total, powerful affirmation of himself. . . . He will cling to it desperately, as he clings to his own personality, to the inalienable right he has to be himself fully and freely."

We must realize what serious issues are at stake. If this first experience with love goes awry, all of the love life of the man of tomorrow will suffer. Here, more than anywhere, the adolescent needs guidance.

You've got to watch over the first love very carefully.

Let's be frank about it, parents often have a mistaken attitude in this matter. Either they do not see that their son is all taken up with a passion that is completely new, or they don't realize the danger that a young man is exposed to because of this psychological phenomenon: danger of harm to the soul, to studies, and to the development of his personality.

We must realize too that the sexual element is not preponderant in most cases of first love. Sex however, as well as all the other natural tendencies, has its place here.

Yet, however well-intentioned a young man may be in his heart of hearts, he is always in danger of making a serious mistake because of the essential weakness of human nature and his own inexperience. Concupiscence, that tendency to evil in man, is always ready to corrupt a love that was chaste

in its beginnings. Rashness, which is a part of adolescence, is incited by this novel and essential human experience, and thinks it can trust without danger to its own resources. Above all the secrecy with which a young man loves to clothe all his doings is a menace. Then there is the other party, the object of his affection, who may be the cause of serious trouble.

But how are you going to guide him during this first love?

Above all, try to keep his confidence. Be careful not to act as though his first love were a sin, or to initiate him at this time to the problems of sex; this should have been done already. As a rule it is unwise to permit this affair of his to go on; sometimes it will have to be permitted or at least tolerated.

But don't try to crush it brutally. Make your son realize that you appreciate the great importance he places on this psychological event in his life, but that love is too lofty a reality to be experimented with at such an early age and before God intends it. Recall to him the ideals we spoke of before: mastery of self, the sacrifice of Christ the Redeemer, the necessity of preparing himself worthily for a marriage blessed by God. It is easy to understand how in this matter the youth's spiritual guide will play a leading role.

If, in certain circumstances this love has to be tolerated, parents should rigidly oppose every kind of dangerous amorous manifestation.

### **Training in the Use of Liberty**

Let us end this chapter by saying a few words on training youth in the proper use of liberty. For many parents this is one of the most perplexing problems of adolescence.

Adolescence is the stage at which the personality asserts itself, and conflicts with one's elders ensue. "It is at this time that the new-found self-assertion of the child, who has up

to now been so docile, collides head on with the newly assumed tactics of the parent who, before he began to be faced with these disquieting attitudes on the part of his son, had always been so indulgent. This is the time when parents and children run the risk of getting into one of those terrible, deep-seated misunderstandings that sometimes are never cleared up. Occasionally they appear in the form of open rebellion, but more often in the form of that silence and reserve that seems to fall like a wall between the two and prevent forever any real understanding. Often too in the form a continual exchange of biting criticism and hostile remarks. . . ."

"Adolescence, the age between two ages" will have nothing to do with absolute authority, and yet is still incapable of a wise use of liberty.

It is a critical period of transition that demands careful guidance. "As with nations so with individuals, emancipation must be gradual; absolute despotism must be followed by some nascent form of constitutional limitation and then fuller liberty in larger and larger measure," Spencer has said. Your son is at an age when some nascent form of constitutionalism is most suitable, some compromise system of transition between an authoritarian regime and a "liberal" regime.

Treat him then as a person whose feelings are to be respected, as a person not yet completely formed, but as a person. Always demand respect and obedience from him, but temper your demands in accordance with what you know of his personality. Appeal to his reason, to his conscience, to his sense of responsibility. Treat him like a man who is responsible for his action by praising him when he does well, and reprimanding him for his faults.

It is a dangerous thing to refuse young people a certain legitimate exercise of their liberties. Human nature cannot take sudden changes in stride. A boy whose life, all through high school, has been regulated for him in the smallest details can-

not without danger be turned out to face the world with all its temptations—made more attractive to him because of his new infatuation with liberty. The very constraint under which he lived until but yesterday makes him want to exploit to the full his new liberty. By a kind of constitutional regime, then, which you are constantly adapting to the changes that occur in him, you will be able to guide your son successfully from the close supervision of childhood to the liberty of adulthood.

In these matters young people at times show an astounding amount of good judgment in regard to their own limitations. I remember one study club of high-school juniors who were discussing this question, "Ought there to be some one to preside in the study hall?" Of course their first answer was a unanimous and spontaneous "No!" Yet after reflection they arrived at this conclusion: "In prep school there should be, but not in college." "And what about for yourselves," they were asked. "Without one," they answered, "we would start out seriously enough, but we'd soon begin to 'cut up.'" . . . adolescence, the age between two ages.

Foerster has something very helpful to say about the adolescent's attitude toward authority: "Is the adolescent really opposed to authority? Except to an overbearing attitude on the part of authority, only in appearance. . . . This time of life wants moral guidance and help more than any other. The adolescent wants to follow the adult, but nevertheless he wants to follow him in his own way and on his own initiative. He does not want to be tied to his mother's apron strings, and does not want to be ordered about in a curt, humiliating way. In Ibsen's play, the "Lady from the Sea" says to her husband as she returns to their home, "I am coming back to you now Hal, and I can, because now I am doing it freely and on my own initiative. Every young person is in a position to use these same words to any teacher or parent who has dropped despotic authority in time. Of course, the adolescent must learn to take without question an order of things that he is incapable

of judging. At the same time he must learn to contribute actively to that order and not remain forever the hereditary enemy of the very principle of order. Such a warped attitude will ruin his character and deprive it of all the disciplinary value of the training received. It is imperative—and people do not worry about it nearly enough—to spiritualize discipline, to make it interior. I mean, to show young people the truly marvelous results they can effect in the development of their character, and even for the salvation of their souls, by a constant endeavor to *accept voluntarily* the disciplinary measures that are imposed on them by competent authority.

### Collaboration

In conclusion we must recall that this work is one of collaboration among *all* those who have a hand in the training of the adolescent.

Parents and teachers must get together and talk over their observations being careful to keep the rules of a wise discretion. This kind of cooperation will be of especial advantage to those parents who are novices in the art of training a growing boy or girl. This may be the first time they have had to handle the adolescent and his problems, while the teacher has all kinds of experience in the field. School publications will be of great help in keeping parents well informed.

Adolescence is also a critical period in the physical development of a youth. Regular medical examinations are advisable from the time when growth first begins to take on the typically adolescent characteristics until it has stopped. Some schools have a bi-annual medical examination with parental permission, and have found it to be very profitable.

A word about such formative organizations as the Boy Scouts and Catholic Action in the training of the adolescent: in as much as they are perfectly adapted to the psychology of the adolescent and call on his initiative and sense of responsibility, and develop in him a spirit of social service and



---

devotion to a cause, they are indispensable. You want your growing boy to get interested in, and devoted to, some cause.

It is up to you never to let this great work that is yours become merely an amusing experience in practical psychology, but always to make it a work into which you put your heart and soul. It is also up to you to see to it that this task does not interfere with your duties to the rest of society and especially to the other facets of your family life.

### MARY'S PART IN HIS TRAINING

The training of a human being is a divine thing. Divine because of the nobility of the end proposed: to form men and true sons of God. Divine, too, because without the help of God such a lofty task is impossible.

Among the helps that God gives, the Blessed Virgin Mary takes a prominent place. Your boys and girls should have frequent recourse to her, and you parents as well.

#### Mary and the Adolescent

First of all inspire in your son a real devotion to his heavenly Mother.

All men need Mary, but the need that the adolescent has for her who must guide him from childhood to full manhood has a special call on her attention.

The adolescent is at the age in which the body comes to its full stature and is quite willing and anxious to get along without help from anybody, but also at the age in which the soul discovers its weakness. It is for this soul of his that the young boy wants the help of a mother. True, he has his earthly mother, but a certain shame has come over him lately and prevents him from talking to her about some intimate things, some very intimate things. He calls on another Mother, the mother of his soul. The time has come to point out to him Our Lady of adolescents.

What are those weaknesses of his soul? They are many: there are storms and anguish and often the first shipwreck. Then from his heart comes the cry that is heard on battle fields at night, "Mother! Mother!" For the first time the adolescent experiences human anguish and at the same time confidence in the divine help which is the reward of his childhood prayer: "Remember, O Most Gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. . . ."

Isn't this too the age of great enthusiasms, when the heart yearns to give itself entirely to Christ the King? But the adolescent feels very hesitant on the paths that lead to the Leader. To learn to live the life of full manhood that Christ has destined for him he needs a guide, and that guide is Mary. She understands so well the ways that her Son walked, the difficult ones and the easy ones, the sad ones and the joyous ones. She will take her new son by the hand, and guide his steps as she guided the baby steps of her first-born Son in Galilee long ago.

Then too, beneath his mask of self-sufficiency the adolescent hides distress and a profound desire for tenderness and affection. He does not dare confide this secret pain to his earthly mother; that would be to admit to her that her love is not enough for him. Gropingly he seeks tenderness and love, a love that has nothing of the vulgar in it, nothing gross or impure, a love that is "less a thing than the perfume of a flower." This is the providential time, show him now the All-Pure One, the Immaculate One, Mother of Fair Love.

In the novel *Le Grand Meaulnes* which has been received with such widely divergent estimates, the author, Alain-Fournier has described quite perfectly the disquiet of soul of those less than twenty. The story of this fictionalized autobiography is as follows: One day during his adolescence Meaulnes saw, or rather dreamed he saw, a girl whom he loved with a chaste love. All during his youth he searched for her, but he could never find her. None of the women he ever met compared with the woman his adolescent heart had dreamed of.

When Alain-Fournier who has no particular religion speaks of this search for the ideal woman envisioned by his pure adolescent heart, he remarks in his journal: "I wonder if all this will not end in a triumph for the Virgin Mary?"

So the struggles of every adolescent who remains faithful to the voice in his troubled heart cannot but end in the triumph of the Virgin Mary in that young heart.

### Mary and Mothers

Mothers too ought to turn to the Virgin Mary, to the one who in that hidden life at Nazareth stood by her Son so wonderfully from the very beginning of His childhood till the fullness of His maturity at the age of thirty.

Many mothers have confided their anguish and soul's sorrow to me as a priest, their anguish because of the new phenomena that trouble the lives of their children, their sorrows because of the silence and coldness of their growing boy, because of his lack of affection. Confronted with this selfish indifference on the part of their sons, many mothers have thought sadly to themselves, "It seems as if he does not understand how much I love him!"

The mother of many a fifteen-year-old suffers a real martyrdom. Her adolescent child has lost the candor of childhood that she loved so much, and now is jealous of his confidence. He puts on the mysterious, forbidding, and even cruel mask of the grown man. His brusque and harsh answers tear the womanly heart of his mother. His caprice and moodiness will often throw a cold chill over a meal she has prepared so lovingly. His conduct, so strange and alarming, his faults of character make her worry for the future. He wants more and more to get away from his home; he is careless and thoughtless about the way he does it.

Yet the mother must keep silent about the suffering this causes her. Why tell him? To make him feel remorse? If he loved me he would understand!

More than from this harshness, a mother suffers because she feels that her child is growing away from her to lead his life by himself. Until now her life had been joined intimately with that of her son, and now that sweet intimacy is disappearing little by little, and leaving her with an empty feeling in her heart.

Of course for the adolescent's own sake he must lead his life by himself, away from his mother. "He must increase, I must decrease." That sweet love she felt when she rocked her baby in her arms and enjoyed his intimate presence, must pass and give way, through sacrifice, to a truer love.

It is hard, but it must be. Now is the time to turn to Mary. Hasn't she too known these same sorrows? After a wonderful and unique intimacy of thirty years she saw her Son leave her to lead His own life without her.

Simeon predicted this sorrow for her, and she experienced it at the very beginning of Jesus' adolescence. It was when she lost Him at the Temple. Have you mothers ever thought about how harsh the Holy Child was to His Sorrowful Mother that day?

He left His parents. It wasn't they who lost Him, but He who lost them. After three days of anguish they found Him: "Son why hast Thou treated us so? Think, what anguish of mind Thy father and I have endured searching for Thee." (Luke ii. 48.) Why have You treated us like this; why have You made us suffer?

And what was the answer that the most thoughtful of sons gave His frantic mother? A harsh answer—I almost said the answer of an adolescent: "What reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?" (49.) Why were you looking for Me? That answer must have been truly a sword that pierced the heart of Mary. And are we to think that Mary understood the divine meaning of the words her Son spoke? No, for the Gospel says at once—"And they did not understand what He had said to them." (50.)

And what reason does Jesus give for His harshness—which even seems to be selfish? "I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father." He must lead His own life; He has a mission to accomplish and for that reason He chooses to abandon His Mother. At that time Mary underwent a terrible

trial: Did Jesus doubt her love, her fidelity, or even her courage? No, she was ready to follow Him anywhere!

No, Jesus did not doubt His Mother. He loved her, and when He left her He loved her more than ever. More than ever He wanted to work out the Redemption of the world together with her. But He must work according to *His* views, and these are not our poor, narrow human views. For the salvation of the world He wished to suffer heartbreak, abandonment and complete dereliction throughout His life and His Passion and Death. For the salvation of the world He asked His Mother to bear the same heartbreak, the same dereliction. He chose to suffer alone, and He invited His Mother to suffer alone so that their painful separation might unite them more closely in the plan of Redemption.

You mothers too must bear with courage your own separation from your son; it is for his good. You must be resigned to losing the pleasure and sweetness of keeping him always near you. It is only at this price that your son can play the part of a man in life. And by it you will merit for him the graces that will make of him a man and a Christian, for it is this that is really closest to your heart. By this sacrifice his life's work will also be yours, and your physical separation will truly become a spiritual union in this life and in eternity.

Mothers of this earth, in your sufferings, turn to your heavenly Mother. She is in truth the Mother of all mothers. What your motherly hearts suffer she suffered before you.





