

## The Religious Formation of Boys

*From old Newsletter n. 109, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1992, before the attempt to abolish male and female!*

**I**T IS a great evil for boys to become brutes or wimps. In the past, **brutishness** was more common than **wimpishness**. Brutishness was simply passed on from one generation of males to the next, partly by neglect and partly by the imitation of brutal adults. The wives and children of brutes suffered immensely.

The family and the peer group, for better or for worse, were, and still are, powerful influences on the young. Formerly, schools aimed to be extensions of the home: teachers saw themselves as acting on behalf of parents, *in loco parentis*, but now they sometimes act as **change agents** on behalf of secular humanists, often unwittingly, without any realization that they have been programmed to do so. Moreover, even in the home the TV and video box constitute **stranger danger**, (to use the new jargon of child abuse).

### UNISEX

Since 1975, government policy has been more and more guided by the particularly virulent secularism of the **feminist philosophy**. Schools have become more and more committed to a **unisex upbringing** and a **unisex outcome**. This is not just government schools but often Catholic schools, too. One would have thought that, in a scientific age obsessed with institutionalized education, the truths of biology and psychology would have more impact, not to mention history, experience of life and common sense...

### THE FEMINIST BOY

A unisex upbringing tries to make boys as like girls as possible — and vice-verse! Or to meet half way, as hermaphrodites. A sissy boy was once rare — but no longer, and his new name is wimp.

Wimpish men are increasingly common, and rise to high places of influence and power, as long as they profess the feminist philosophy of unisex. Real women despise them: wimps do not complement their femininity in the way real men do. Wimps are bad for marriage and family. Nor is it just in secular society that they abound, either: the Church has been infiltrated!

The feminists abhor, so they say, violence, but actually, they induce it, at least in the long term. Partly as a bi-product of their treatment of boys, and partly by their plans for "women's liberation," the unisex upbringing often brings out brutishness in girls. It is scarcely progress to have more women in gaol.

### BIOLOGY AND ORIGINAL SIN

But biology is assertive, too, and original sin very influential. In the outcome, we have not only a new breed of wimpish boys but, paradoxically, an increase in the number of **brutal boys, girls, men and women**.

Perhaps it was to be expected, this violent reaction of the savage feminist attack on masculinity, and on fatherhood in particular. Perhaps it is also due to the new abhorrence for discipline, including the abolition of corporal punishment for boys. Perhaps

it's due to contempt for God and His grace and the facts of original sin. Perhaps it's due to the studied lack of graciousness, manners, courtesy and chivalry. Perhaps it's for all these reasons.

### CRUELTY

The cruel facts remain. In 1992, brutality is on the increase: cruelty of all kinds, such as abortion, suicide, murderous driving, robbery under arms, bashing for self-fulfilment, rape, incest, drugs, hatred of parents... not to mention the refined forms of violence such as school sex education, self-worship psychology, fornication, adultery, contraception and all the other abuse of the body and the person contrary to the good God's plans for us.

### THE CHRISTIAN GENTLEMAN

It more urgent than ever for a great effort to help boys grow up into Christian gentlemen.

Neglect in the upbringing of boys has been a common failing on the part of their fathers down the ages. Nowadays its called a **permissive upbringing**, by which is meant indifference... "I don't care what you're like; just do your own thing; do it your way..."

Part of the vocation of a mother has always been to get a father to fulfil his vocation towards their sons. Part of the vocation of all women *should* be to civilize the brutishness of men, not just helping them practise self-control and self-restraint, but to overcome their male laziness. Thus a wife often has to prompt her husband to practise his vocation as a husband, to help with the menial tasks, a vital part of a man's consideration for a woman, and a very necessary example to their children.

The mothering of boys (and girls, too) includes involving them in the chores: washing up, helping in the kitchen (and learning to cook!), making beds (properly!), keeping their own rooms tidy, gratitude for every meal and everything done for them.

Virtue — its root meaning, by the way, is **strength** and **manliness** — is not half way between the extremes of brute and wimp. Rather, the virtue of a Christian gentleman stands far above the evils and transcends them.

Therefore, one ideal for boyhood is to avoid both brutishness and wimpishness and become a Christian gentleman. Masculine strength should be cultivated, self-controlled, and placed at the service of God, family, wife, mother, women, humanity...

This won't happen by accident, but needs discipline and grace. Grace is supernatural, from God, through Sacraments and Prayer; discipline is natural, from parents, and those who act for them, and essential for counteracting the remaining effects of original sin. If you don't know what the preternatural gifts are, you need the *Catholic Family Catechism Apostles' Edition* nn. 58 and 69 and its notes.

Father James Tierney



## Ideals for Boys from Anglican authors

**Richmal Crompton** was the pen name of Miss Richmal Lamburn, the author of the famous William books, from 1922 to the latter 1960s.

The daughter of an Anglican clergyman, she persevered as a devout church-going Anglican throughout her virtuous life.

The next five paragraphs [except for words in square brackets] are quoted from her biography, *Richmal Crompton, The Woman behind William*, by Mary Cadogan, Unwin Paperbacks, London, Sydney, 1987.

In her adult novels [of which most people have never heard], the speeches of some of her characters draw on the Grail mythology as a symbol of idealism in the context of wartime sacrifice [in the first World War]: 'We all felt we could die for our ideals — we were crusaders, we were the knights of the Holy Grail,' [...] 'the splendour of idealism and self-sacrifice and comradeship and courage...'

In 1924, Richmal Crompton spent a holiday in Paris. That she was bowled over by the beauty of the Roman Catholic Mass which she attended at the splendiferous church of Sacré-Coeur is clear from her account of it in her travel journal:

"Boys and young men in church in Paris: There must be a touch of devotion and piety in boys and young men in England untapped and wasted. All the natural chivalry and devotion repressed by training [she is referring to the English *public* schools, i.e. private schools open to the public]. It blazed forth at the call of war [1914-1918]. To many it was a religious war needing a religious fervour. As the rich idle young flocked to the Crusades in the old days to sacrifice ease and luxury and comfort and life — so would the young do now if modern life made any calls on it, if the idealism of youth were not allowed to die unused. Religion is too much repressed. Our clergy are too fond of trying to pose as men of the world."

And, referring to the Roman Catholic Service: "That is how God should be worshipped — with light and colour and music. The wonderful beauty and intimacy of the exquisite little shrines with their blaze of candles like so many stars of hope and their band of apt and silent worshippers — the utter abandon and lack of self-consciousness of the worshipping — unmoved, unconscious of the staring and curious tourists who pass by."

In the Sacré-Coeur experience, one sees glimpses of Richmal's religious passion, which is normally quietly contained within her Anglicanism.

**Ernest Raymond** was an Anglican clergyman, a chaplain in World War I with the British army at Gallipoli. Later, he resigned from the ministry and wrote novels with clerical or religious themes.

One of his greatest books was *Tell England*, first published in 1922, and its edition of 1925 was the 23<sup>rd</sup> reprint!

On the troop ship taking them to Gallipoli, the young subalterns fresh out of school asked their Anglican padre, a high church priest, "What are we to believe about the Mass?" The narrator (the story is written in the first person) describes his answer: "Padre Monty told us. He told us strange things for us to hear. We were to believe that the bread and wine, after consecration, were the same

Holy Thing as the Babe of Bethlehem; and we could come to Mass, not to partake, but to worship like the shepherds and the magi; and there, and there only, should we learn how to worship. He told us that the Mass was the most dramatic service in the world, for it was the acting before God of Calvary's ancient sacrifice; and under the shadow of that sacrifice we could pray out all our longings and all our loneliness.

"Now, come along to daily Mass," he pleaded. 'Just come and see how they work, these ideas of worshipping like the shepherds and of kneeling beneath the shadow of a sacrifice. You'll find the early half-hour before the altar the happiest half-hour of the day. You'll find your spiritual recovery there. It'll be your healing spring...'

"You boys are hero-worshippers and there's nothing that warm young blood likes better than to do homage to its hero, and mould itself on its hero's lines. In the Mass you simply bow the knees to your Hero, and say, 'I swear fealty [=loyalty].' I'm going to mould myself on you."

Further along, says the narrator, "Monty opened with a preliminary bombardment in which, in his shattering style, he fired at us every argument that ever had been adduced for private confession, 'the Sacrament of Penance', as he startled us by calling it. The Bible was poured out upon us. The doctrine and practice of the Church came hurtling after. Then suddenly he threw away theological weapons, and launched a specialized attack on each of us in turn, obviously suiting his words to his reading of our separate characters.

"Confession is simply the consecration of your own natural instinct — the instinct to unburden yourself to one who waits with love and the gift of forgiveness — the instinct to have someone in the world who knows exactly all that you are..."

"Christianity from beginning to end is the consecration of human instincts. The Christ-idea is the consecration of the instinct to have a visible, tangible hero for a God. The Mass is the consecration of the instinct to have a place and a time as an Objective Presence, where one can touch the hem of His garment and worship. And confession is the consecration of the human instinct to unburden your soul; to know that you are not alone in your knowledge of yourself; to know that at a given moment, by a definite sacrament, your sins are blotted away, as though they had never been."

The narrator continues, "His victorious contention, by its very impulse, carried its colours into my heart. I yielded to his conviction that Catholic Christianity held all the honours."

Monty then switched his *argumentum ad hominem* to the other young man: 'Don't you think,' he asked, 'that if you've gone the whole way with your sins, it's up to a sportsman to go the whole way with his confession? And everybody knows that it's much more difficult to confess to God through a priest than in the privacy of one's own room. It's difficult, but it's the grand thing; and so it appeals to an heroic nature more...'

"The two cardinal dogmas of my faith," said Monty, 'are, the Mass and Confession."

Not bad for an Anglican, and an improvement on catechesis within some Catholic circles in Australia.

## POSITIVE THINKING

Catholic schools might well adopt the vision statement of some independent Protestant Christian schools in Victoria: *To serve the Lord in the world according to the gifts God has given.*

The role model for boys growing up is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, of course, the model for Christians of both sexes; He is specially the model for boys growing to Christian manhood, to become Christian gentlemen. The apostles, especially Sts Peter & Paul, are also a tremendous help to boys, just as St. Joseph is for husbands and fathers. Hence another means of gaining this grace is the study of the Sacred Scriptures and the reading of the lives of the Saints. Start with St. Luke's Gospel and Adventures of the Apostles (i.e. the Acts!).

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