

Snippets Again from the Daily Log Book of Ideas

Speaking & Listening

ADVICE between bishops, from St Basil 'the Great' (330-379) to his friend St Gregory Nazianzen:-

This, too, is a very important point to attend to - **knowledge how to converse**; to interrogate without over-earnestness; to answer without the desire of display; not to interrupt a profitable speaker, or to desire ambitiously to put in a word of one's own; to be measured in speaking and hearing; not to be ashamed of receiving, or to be grudging in giving information, nor to pass another's knowledge for one's own (as depraved women their spurious [supposititious] children), but to refer it candidly to the true parent.

The middle tone of voice is best, neither so low as to be inaudible, nor to be ill-bred from its high pitch. One should reflect first what one is going to say, and give it utterance: be courteous when addressed; amiable in social intercourse; not aiming to be pleasant by facetiousness, but cultivating gentleness in kind admonitions. Harshness is ever to be put aside, even in censuring.

The more you show **modesty and humility** yourself, the more likely are you to be acceptable to the patient who needs the treatment.

There are, however, many occasions when we shall do well to employ the kind of **rebuke used by the prophet** who did not in his own person utter the sentence of condemnation on David after his sin, but by suggesting an imaginary character made the sinner judge of his own sin, so that, after passing his own sentence, he could not find fault with the seer who had convicted him. [cf. 2 Samuel 12:1-13]

THE CARE OF SOULS

ST GREGORY Nazianzen (329-389), nicknamed 'The Theologian', friend of St Basil, said:-The art of arts and the science of sciences is the care of souls.

THE COLLAPSE OF A HIGH WALL

THE QUOTE below is a prophecy from Isaiah 30:9,12-15,18 on the fall of Israel. Henry Edward Cardinal Manning (1808-1892), in *The Eternal Priesthood*, applied it to **the tragic fall of a priest**.

For they are a rebellious people, lying sons, sons who will not hear the instruction of the Lord.

Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and rely on them; therefore this iniquity shall be to you **like a break in a high wall, bulging out, and about the collapse, whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant**; and its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel which is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a sherd [shard] is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern. For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. And you would not....

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him!

RELIGION

RELIGION should improve people, if it does not, the defect may be in the religion or in the people or in both.

The vital question is **not** whether a scoffer is a better person than a believer, but **is the believer better or worse than he would be with his religion?**

And also, is the scoffer better or worse than he would be without scoffing? Would the scoffer be improved by religion? It is not necessarily hypocritical to try to be better than you are. Even people who pretend to be better than they are might not be hypocrites: they are simply struggling to raise their standards.

CHASTITY, CONTINENCE, PURITY

from *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, 1980, John A. Hardon SJ.

CHASTITY is the virtue that moderates the desire for sexual pleasure according to the principles of faith and right reason.

In married people, chastity moderates the desire in conformity with their state of life; in **unmarried people** who wish to marry, the desire is moderated by abstinence until (or unless) they get married; in **those who resolve not to marry**, the desire is sacrificed entirely.

Chastity and purity, modesty and decency, are comparable in that they have the basic meaning of freedom from whatever is lewd or salacious. Yet they also differ. Chastity implies an opposition to the immoral in the sense of lustful or licentious. It suggests restraining from all acts or thoughts that are not in accordance with the Church's teaching about the use of one's reproductive powers. It particularly stresses restraint and an avoidance of anything that might defile or make unclean the soul because the body has not been controlled in the exercise of its most imperious passion, (*castus*, morally pure, unstained)

Continence is the virtue by which a person controls the unruly movements of sexual desire or other bodily emotions. It is connected with the virtue of temperance. It generally means the chastity to be observed by the unmarried. But it may also refer to the abstinence, in marriage, voluntary agree upon by both parties or forced by circumstances to abstain from marital intercourse, (*continentia*: holding together, coherence; containing in itself, inclusion, restraint.)

Purity is freedom from anything that weakens or impairs or changes the nature of a being or its activity. Purity of faith means the absence of error or what is contrary to the revealed truth; purity of intention is the exclusion of self-will in the desire to perform the will of God; purity of conscience is the absence of any sense of guilt in the performance of a moral action; purity of morals commonly refers to the virtue of chastity and therefore freedom from wrong-doing in sexual activity, but on a broader level is means the absence of misbehaviour, especially in one's external or publicly recognizable conduct, (*puritas*, clearness, cleanness, uprightness)

PRAYER FOR CHASTITY by St Thomas Aquinas DEAREST JESUS!

I know well that every perfect gift, and above all others that of chastity, depends upon the most powerful assistance of Thy Providence, and that without Thee a creature can do nothing. Therefore, I pray Thee to defend, with Thy grace, chastity and purity in my soul as well as in my body. And if I have ever received through my senses any impression that could stain my chastity and purity, do Thou, Who art the Supreme Lord of all my powers, take it from me that I may with an immaculate heart advance in Thy love and service, offering myself chaste all the days of my life on the most pure altar of Thy Divinity. Amen.

SCHOOL — is it WORK or ENTERTAINMENT?

LIKE SO many things, contraries must be kept in balance: *virtus in medio stat*, "Virtue stands in the middle". Surely, furnishing the empty mind should not be made any more difficult than necessary? Indeed, it should surely be as pleasant as possible. Yet **"entertainment" should be kept as a means to an end**, and not an end in itself. Beware Original Sin!

Centuries ago in 1813, Sir Walter Scott wrote scathingly in the introduction to his novel *Waverley* of the **indisciplined education** of his fictitious pupil:

While he was thus permitted to read only for the gratification of his amusement, he foresaw not that he was **losing for ever** the opportunity of acquiring habits of **firm and assiduous application**, of gaining the art of controlling, directing, and **concentrating the powers** of his **mind** for earnest investigation — an art far more essential than even that intimate acquaintance with classical learning which is the primary object of study.

I am well aware I may be here reminded of the necessity of rendering instruction agreeable to youth, and of Tasso's infusion of honey into the medicine prepared for a child; but an age in which children are taught the driest doctrines by the insinuating method of instructive games has little reason to dread the consequences of study being rendered too serious or severe. The history of England is now reduced to a game of cards — the problems of mathematics to puzzles and riddles — and the doctrines of arithmetic may, we are assured, be sufficiently acquired by spending a few hours a week at a new and complicated edition of the Royal Game of the Goose. There wants but one step further, and the CREED and TEN COMMANDMENTS may be taught in the same manner, without the necessity of the grave face, deliberate tone of recital, and devout attention hitherto exacted from the well-governed children of this realm. It may, in the meantime, be subject of serious consideration whether those who are accustomed only to acquire instruction through the medium of amusement may not be brought to reject that which approaches under the aspect of **study**; whether those who learn history by the cards may not be led to **prefer the means to the end**; and whether were we to teach religion in the way of sport, our pupils may not thereby be gradually induced to make sport of their religion. To our young hero, who was permitted to seek his instruction only **according to the bent of his own mind**, and who, of consequence, only sought it so long as it afforded him amusement, **the indulgence of his tutors was attended with evil consequences**, which long continued to influence his character, happiness, and utility.

APOLOGETICS for Letters to the Editor...

- **"He governs best who governs least."** Democracy works best if most people are virtuous, at least most of the time. Fewer laws are needed. Therefore, uphold the teaching and practice of religion.
- A south-sea islander reproved a soldier using the thin pages of a Bible to roll his cigarettes: **"If it weren't for the Bible, you'd be in my cooking pot."**
- **"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"** — therefore promote truth, beauty, goodness and God.
- In the latency period before puberty, build up moral strengths **against electronic stranger-dangers** to come.

CHRISTIANS IN A.D. 200 just like A.D. 2012

LIKE other men, they [Christians] marry and beget children, though they do not expose their infants [i.e. no infanticide]. Any Christian is free to share his neighbour's table, but never his marriage bed.

Though destiny has placed them here in the flesh, they do not live after the flesh; their days are passed on earth, but their citizenship is above in the heavens. They obey the prescribed laws, but in their own private lives they transcend the laws. They show love to all men — and all men persecute them. They are misunderstood and condemned; yet by suffering death they are quickened into life [...] They are dishonoured, yet made glorious in their very dishonour; slandered, yet vindicated. They repay calumny with blessings, and abuse with courtesy. For the good they do, they suffer stripes as evildoers; and under the strokes they rejoice like men given new life. [...] yet of all their ill-wishers there is not one who can produce good grounds for his hostility.

This Epistle to Diognetus is by another unknown Christian and found in *The Liturgy of the Hours* vol. II pp. 590-591.

LAY APOSTOLATE on the Open Line Radio and in Letters to (regional) Newspapers

THERE WAS a popular regional weekly which published letters to the editor on every page.

Some wrote letters for the fame of seeing their names in print. Some were content to smack their lips in delight at reading what they knew should be said. Others even wrote to say so.

And a multitude pursed their lips, shook their heads and snarled, and spent whole days typing replies, catty, sarcastic and vitriolic. Fewer were witty and kindly. But smiles, chuckles and grievances keep people going.

Letters on every page ensured a bigger circulation. Local advertisers liked it, too, for it guaranteed that the cheaper advertisements tucked away on more obscure pages would be seen, even if not read.

Indeed, the Guinness Book of Records might have opened a new category for a writer who scored the most letters in a single issue.

Don't aim to convert a belligerent opponent. Rather, aim to neutralize his impact on others with your truth and charity to him. Smother him with kindness and truth.

A Sample Letter: WHY RATE FREE?

(answering an attack on a highly selective Protestant school)

MAYBE CHURCHES and their schools and hospitals are not alone in enjoying exemption from council rates.

Do not public hospitals, gaols, state schools and government offices flourish unhindered by rates?

Non-government and government agencies are alike in that they act for **the common good**. They continue to do so, even if not all want to or need to use them.

All citizens benefit from the moral improvement of the users of churches and their schools and hospitals. The reason: they serve truth, beauty, goodness and God.

Three of the Judaeo-Christian commandments are bulwarks of civilization, namely the sacredness of human life, the purity of marriage and the right to property. Without these, we see the babes and aged murdered; broken homes with broken-hearted fathers, mothers and children; and reduced restraints on theft. Even Hammurabi of Babylon had six of the Ten Commandments nearly four millennia ago.

Unique to the Judaeo-Christian are the commandments against polytheism, idolatry and evil thoughts. These are ennobling, and their origin is hard to account for unless they come as a direct revelation from God.

Churches preach persuasively against hate speech, whereas merely civil laws are used to suppress religious and free speech. Why kill the goose that lays the golden eggs?

Father James Tierney