

towards what is good lies outside the scope of grace, outside the life of Christ. That by taking young love seriously and sympathetically we are not encouraging self-indulgence but urging a deep, if rewarding, asceticism. That all loves are—if taken in the right way—preparations for that love for another in matrimony, which is the total physical expression of human love, or for that higher than physical love, given to all without thought of return which must be the love of the priest and of the religious. We must teach them that God has drawn all things to himself and that his sacred heart is an abyss of love which, poured forth upon all and in all, will—if we correspond with it—make our poor, fragile, human loves pure, selfless, untainted, intense and unafraid.



## THE PERSON IN EDUCATION\*

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**T**HE title of this address may sound to you a little *tough* and abstract, yet it is a good subject for this afternoon's meeting because you are all parents, and each parent has a person, often several persons, your children, in whom you are deeply interested, and for whose welfare and education you are personally responsible, since God has chosen you to co-operate with him in bringing them into being, and in preparing them for their independent life as persons in the world.

Now, I am not a parent and it would be impertinent for me to try to teach you your job as parents in detail. What I want to do this afternoon is to remind you of certain basic principles underlying the true notion of education. Principles are important; without them we can never really understand any problem, and this is a problem it is supremely important to understand thoroughly. The principles I am speaking of are of course Christian principles; they are laid down by the Catholic Church in its teaching. This teaching is notably summed up in the Encyclical

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of Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 'On the Christian Education of Youth', 1929. (You can get it in a sixpenny pamphlet from the C.T.S., and I hope every parent will read it if they have not yet done so.) It is for you as parents to apply these principles to the education of your children, to apply them in your own particular situations and to your own particular problems. This application is wholly your responsibility, though if you are wise you will listen very attentively to the experts when it is a question of the more technical problems of education, and even at times to their views when a judgment on the character and capacity of your children is required.

Let us ask ourselves then two questions: What is Education?—and, What is a person? Out of the answers to those questions we will construct our view of the importance of the person in education. A simple and comprehensive answer to the first question would be: Education is preparation and training for life. Yet that answer is not so simple as it looks. What do we mean by life? We know when it begins; with conception and birth. Does it end with death or does it go on after death? And which is more important, the part before death or, if there is one, the part after it?

The Christian answer to these questions is, of course, that the life that comes after death is the more important, because it is the more real and the more lasting part. It is in fact eternal: deeply mysterious word; and it is in fact perfect: a quite unimaginable condition. It is the ultimate, complete and all-inclusive achievement for which each of us was created by God. Education for life then means, primarily and basically, for the Christian, education for eternity; life with God.

But that does not mean that this life is even relatively unimportant; to think of it in that way, as some Christians have done sometimes, is a very big mistake. Every event and circumstance in this life is of vast importance, because the events and circumstances, the thoughts, ideas and the actions that come from them, that whole complexity of things that goes to the making of a human life, forms the material out of which the character and personality of each individual person is to be built up. The building up depends upon the way the individual person deals with the events and circumstances of life; and upon the way that is done depends the fitness or unfitness of the person for the ultimate destiny of God's design.

And now for the answer to our second question: what is a person? A person is a human being created by God through the process of *procreation*, itself God's handiwork; with the collaboration, that is, of two human beings, the parents. In this way, a person is made by God, for God and in God's image. This image within us in the soul, created at the instant of conception, makes us intelligent thinking beings, and in consequence free, capable of hating; of serving, but also of rebelling. In respect of the physical, animal side of us we are unlike God, a body-soul combination, fused together into a unity which constitutes us as persons. Each person is unique, *sui generis*, compact of soul, body and mind, will and emotions; in an eternal union, which we acknowledge in the Creed when we say, 'I believe in the resurrection of the body'. Each person has his own particular characteristics of temperament and capacity. Each person is himself and nobody else. We say, 'If I were you'; but *I* cannot be *You*, nor *You I*; we are and remain our own incommunicable selves. In the whole of God's complex and wonderful creation person takes absolute priority.

As the philosopher Aristotle said: 'Man is a social animal'; he is destined by a law, rooted in his very nature as a rational creature, to live, not as a solitary unit, but in society. It follows that since he is destined to live in society he must be educated in a society; the family. The notion of the family is fundamental to society as a whole because it is basic to the education of human beings as persons. The notion of the Christian family arises out of the notion of the contract of marriage; again this is a fundamental law of our human nature, and therefore, an expression of the divine will. By Christ's revelation and ordinance this contract is raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, by which a special grace is given, available for a whole life-time, empowering those who are married to carry out their great responsibilities. Marriage then is a life-long union, under grace, of one man and one woman to live together and love and cherish each other. The primary purpose of this union is the procreation of children, a sharing with God in the creation of new human beings, new persons. The love which constitutes the marriage-bond widens, in normal circumstances, into the society of the family; it sets up a further relationship of love, that of parents for their children and children for their parents.

Love, therefore, is the basis of the society of the family, as it is of the wider family of Christ's mystical body. It binds the family into a unity, and without that unity it will disintegrate. But it is necessary to understand well the meaning of love. In the world in which we live the very nature of love is misconceived and, in consequence, often degraded. We hardly dare sometimes to use the word, and when we use it we do so self-consciously, so uncertain have we become that its true meaning will be understood. True human love is not grounded upon sentiment, feeling, emotion; it is rooted and grounded in will. Loving, at its very roots, is something done by the will, not primarily by the feelings. This loving, which is essentially an act of the will, produces normally deep emotion, and this is sometimes mistaken for the source of love. It is not. A love where emotion rules the will is a false and distorted love, for the basis and motive power of true love is the unselfish willing of the good of the person loved. This willing of good may well have to be carried out in opposition to feeling and inclination, because good is that which is right, and right is that which accords with the will of God. We are apt to forget, in talking of love that by Christ's precept we can and should love our enemies, concerning whom we can, normally, have no emotion of love. Love then can continue even when the emotion of love has departed, or as more often happens has, in the process of years, gone very deep into the personality, so that, though there, it exercises its influence unnoticed, and only when its presence is taken away by death does it make itself felt by its absence.

It is sometimes said of a mother that she has a favourite child, and loves that child more than her other children. That, if she is a good mother, is not an accurate way of speaking. She has a greater affection for one particular child maybe; but her love for each of them is *equal* and *impartial*; her attitude and actions towards her children are not governed by her affection, which may be unequal, but by her will, and her will must will each their own particular good, quite irrespective of her feelings. A mother who lets her particular affection for one child allow her to discriminate in its favour to the disadvantage of any or all of the others is not loving her children truly, and the result will breed jealousy and division within the family.

This love of parents for their children, rooted in the will, is

the mainspring of family life, and the foundation element of the education of the human person. The family is the God given theatre, as it were, in which this education takes place; from babyhood to childhood, from childhood to boy or girlhood, from boy or girlhood to adulthood and independence. Parents lay the foundation of love in marriage, and that is the basis upon which family life must be built; throughout, parents are the responsible agents of this education. Love in this sense is neither soft nor sentimental, which is not to say that it is not a matter of deep sentiment and feeling, but it is a product of authority and obedience; it can be stern and strong, disciplined on both sides by the will; the loving will which imposes and the loving will which accepts. That is the key to all true education.

Hence the main function of love is to strike exactly the mean between authority and freedom. The determining factor in every kind of society is this right balance. Too much authority leads to frustration and rebellion; we have only to think of Hungary to realize this. Too little leads to licence. Freedom is the inherent right of the person to be what his capacity and endowments destine him to be. It is essentially the property of the person. Authority exists to guide and implement freedom to find the right channels in which those capacities and endowments can flourish and achieve their proper scope. What those channels are depends, in the circumstances, on all sorts of conditions; for the proper scope of any one person can never be rightly achieved at the expense of that of another. This is why authority is necessary in every society and most of all in the society of the family.

For the society of the family, like every other society, exists to promote the welfare of each of its members in and through the community, and that welfare can only be secured in the community by an authority of which the correlative is obedience. But authority in the family must be intelligent and loving authority if it is to secure intelligent and loving obedience. For, in the long run, true obedience is not an imposed obedience; unless it is willingly accepted it is not obedience at all, and when it is accepted it becomes self-imposed. So we come back always, in education, to the person. The intelligence and love of parents will create insight into the character, temperament and psychological make-up of the child, and will guide and help it to form its character by intelligent love, in such a way that what is taught

with parental authority will be accepted and become integrated into its character as it grows to maturity.

I said at the outset that I was going to remain in the region of principles and not try to teach parents their business in detail, but I cannot resist pointing out two dangers in the education of the family. Experience as a schoolmaster has taught me that they are very real. They are both dangers which spring from love of an unbalanced kind. One is the danger of the over-dominant authority of parents or a parent, often arising from a desire to protect the child from harm or of making it conform to a preconceived ideal of the kind of child the parents would wish to have. This does not allow scope for the free and individual growth of the personality. If you have a strong, not to say dominant, personality (and this applies as much to schoolmasters as to parents), beware of imposing it on the young and immature in such a way that they acquire for a time your personality, and their own remains static and does not develop. This may happen unconsciously on both sides, and it requires humility and self-knowledge in a high degree for the adult to become aware of it and prevent it. The result, if it is not prevented in time, only begins to show as adolescence advances or even later. The influence of the strong personality will perhaps be withdrawn or it loses its power as the child becomes more mature. The void within caused by the failure to develop independent outlook and judgment, owing to the strength of the imposition of another's, then becomes apparent, and it may well result in stresses and strains, if not in permanent mal-adjustment.

The other danger comes from the opposite quarter and is, I suppose, in these days more common. It springs from parental love too influenced by sentiment and too little directed by intelligence and will. It is liable to be capricious and over-indulgent, and fails, in so far as it does fail, by not giving consistent and unvarying support to the gradual and even growth of the character and personality. The result is that children tend to be 'spoilt' by it, as the saying goes, and to the extent that they are spoilt they are being unfitted, as persons, for the life in society for which education in the family should be preparing them. They subsequently have to learn in the hard school of life basic disciplines which should have been learnt at home.

The period of adolescence, as we all know, is the difficult period,

and it is the time when the greatest insight and understanding is called for. Adults must realize, first of all, what is actually happening. There is a debatable land between childhood and adulthood. Childhood means complete dependence upon adults for love and security, and the maturity of adulthood brings complete independence. In adolescence the debatable land between is being crossed, and the crossing may be a long and difficult journey. It is the half-and-half period in a person's life, half child and half grown-up, alternating sometimes bewilderingly. The young person undergoing this change and experiencing these alternations is puzzled, irritated and upset by the confusion and contradiction within himself that results. The greatest patience is needed in dealing with this period from the moment its onset is realized. The greatest allowances must be made, and the greatest tact used to know when to treat the adolescent as a grown-up, and when as a child. The parent or the schoolmaster who succeeds perfectly in this is a genius or a near-genius.

Enough has now been said about this almost inexhaustible subject, the education of the person in the family. We pass now to the part played by the school in that education, and the relation of parents and family life to school life. And first we must emphasize that the importance of home and family is supreme, and remains supreme in the education of the person all through the school period. There is really no substitute for home, and one of the things a school cannot do adequately is to provide this substitute. It has to try sometimes, unfortunately; its efforts are often much better than nothing, but only very rarely can they be said to be wholly successful. In talking about the home we have not said much about religion. That is because at the outset we made it quite clear that the whole set-up of the Catholic family, and of any Christian family, must be religious. For the very basis of it is love; its authority is the exercise of love and so is its obedience, and both the authority of parents and the obedience of their children have their origin in love of God. Love of God means obedience to God's law and God's will, in every department and ramification of life. Nothing can escape, as it were, from the will of God, from his law which governs our lives. There are not two areas in them, one devoted to the service of God and another, a larger one, devoted to day-to-day living, scarcely connected with God and religion at all. Religion is not

a department of life; it penetrates it through and through; everything life contains is subject to its influence and must be guided by its dictates.

As it is in the Catholic home, so it is in the Catholic School. This is their common ideal. The Catholic school is an extension of the Catholic home. It does not take over the authority or the influence of the Catholic home, it aids and supplements them. It introduces the children who are its pupils to a wider extension of society and a wider extension of knowledge, such as the home cannot, of its nature, provide. In consequence through its wider society, and through its extended teaching, it shares in the building up of the person; in wisdom, knowledge and character, the foundations of which were laid in the home and which remain in the home. The school and the family must therefore work in complete co-operation. The authority of the school does not, and may not, override the authority of the family, and the obedience of the school is simply an extension of the obedience of the home. In the Catholic school the spirit and atmosphere should be that of the family, but given a wider scope than that of the family in the imparting of knowledge and the training of character; in the building up of the whole person. The relationship of love, which subsists between parents and children, a mutual love that penetrates the whole society of the family and binds it into a unity, should also subsist in the school between teachers and pupils. For all true education in school and in family depends for its success upon this relationship; only love can teach successfully, the love of person for person. A love dominated by emotion is blind; a love whose source lies in the will, however intensely emotion may add to its driving power, is able to penetrate by sympathy and understanding into the mind of another and so find its way to the heart. This of course is a Christian principle, a truth inculcated by the teaching of Christ himself: 'This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you.'

That is why we Catholics fight for our schools, and why Catholic parents, where they can, are prepared to pay for their children's education in independent schools, because they know that in independent schools these foundation principles of Christian education can be put into practice with the maximum of freedom possible. Here you see we are back at our basic principle of true education. Religion is not just a department of



life, it is the very groundwork upon which the whole of life is built up, and it must determine the quality of everything in life. You cannot tackle any problem of human life, social, educational, business problems, buying and selling, making and marketing without getting back to questions of right and wrong, honest or dishonest, good for human life or bad for it, without finding that ultimately the solution of these problems is governed by God's will and God's law. Similarly, and for the same reason, you cannot teach any subject, history, language and literature without realizing that they must be approached and judged by certain standards and values, standards of good or bad. In the end you will find that the source of your standards must be found in God's will and God's law; the law he has revealed and the law he has laid deep in the nature of the things he has created. In teaching history, language and literature you are teaching life, how to live and how to live wisely, with the wisdom given by God. What is true of teaching history, language and literature is equally true of mathematics and the sciences; if they are to minister to human life they must have, behind their teaching, a true view of human life.

Now the trouble about the set-up of our English education, from the universities downwards, is that this fundamental principle of Christian education has been, not openly rejected, but quietly laid on one side. The reason why this has been happening in the course of the last hundred years, is that many of those most concerned in education, in our universities and State schools, and in independent schools too, if we except our Catholic schools, are in doubt about the fundamental meaning of human life. Does life end with death, and if not, do we know anything about what lies beyond death? The Christian answer as we have seen, is that far the most important part of life is that which follows death. That is where the human person, God's creation, will achieve the fullness and perfection of life. This life therefore is a school in which we are educated for our true life and it is of paramount importance how we are educated while we are at school in it. But if there is no life after death, or if we are exceedingly doubtful, in the event of our survival, what sort of life it will be, and whether what we do here has any bearing upon what we shall be there, then obviously it is best to confine our education and its principles to what happens to us here, and

to disregard a hypothetical future life altogether. The result of this has been that an educational system has grown up, based not on sound principle but on opportunism. The main consideration has been, not what kind of education will conduce to the formation of the human person into a *good* man or woman, knowing the purpose of human life, and wise in dealing with it as a whole, but what will conduce to the formation of a *successful* man or woman, skilled in building a life here, which suits his or her immediate circumstances, but which is not particularly relevant to human life as a whole, and still less to any possible life that may come after it. All this of course is only the tendency inevitable where there is no definite and final purpose to aim at. In spite of this the evolution of our educational system, though sufficiently chaotic in its aims and ideas is still, thank God, productive of much good.

I have dwelt upon the defects of our educational set-up because not even our best Catholic independent schools can altogether escape from its influence, a by no means wholly bad influence; and where there are dangers in it our independent and other schools can do much to guard against them, by their whole outlook and approach, by the Catholic philosophy of life with which, like the Catholic family, they must be permeated. Still there are possible dangers, and it is here that the close co-operation between parents and school authorities can be of great value. We all know the strong criticisms that have been levelled at the eleven plus selection system for the Grammar Schools, and the unwise pressure that is inevitably put upon young children to make them winners in the education race in that particular quarter. So much truth is there in the criticisms, and so much damage to young children does arise from this system, that educational authorities, on all sides, are beginning to look around for ways of modifying it. It is not so generally realized that the General Certificate Examination at ordinary and advanced level is open to something of the same sort of criticism, and so are the State Scholarship Examinations. The fault begins with the Universities. There is now tremendous and growing competition for places in them, and the standard of the entrance examinations is being steadily raised; with the inevitable result, the examination system being what is is, that immature minds are likely to be crammed with information while the critical faculty, much

slower to develop, is relatively and in some cases almost completely starved. This does less damage to the very clever children who are often able to take the cramming in their stride while the critical faculty develops of itself. It puts pressure, however, on the rather less clever and on the slower moving mind, often of considerable depth, but with less power of formulating and expressing; and this is bad for proper development and may be permanently damaging to the balance of the personality. It may prevent them ever becoming fully mature and integral persons.

Our Catholic schools are fully aware of the danger; they do all in their power to minimize it. But parents can do a great deal to help them, by realizing that if the school refuses to enter a child for a scholarship or other distinctions, for fear of this kind of damage by over pressure in cramming for examination results, the school must be supported and not criticized. It is taking the right course in the long run, even though its short-term results may be nil. Schools, since they are run by human beings, can be tempted, like human beings, to over-emphasize short-term results in the shape of examination successes, without paying sufficient attention to the likelihood of doing harm to the personality as a whole. Parents and parents' associations can do much by their co-operation with the school to lessen the real danger of this.

The danger may be briefly summarized as follows: knowledge and wisdom are not the same thing. Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, or the capacity to live rightly. It is of course far more important than knowledge; the man of vast knowledge may and sometimes does make a mess of his life because he lacks wisdom in using his knowledge. The whole set up of modern education, with its over-emphasis on examination results, tends to exalt knowledge to such an extent that it leaves little scope or energy for the much slower and less visible process of developing the true wisdom of a mature and balanced judgment about human life. Yet it is all important that school and family life during the growing process should lay secure foundations for the development of wisdom, upon which all the superstructure of knowledge can be safely built.

