Planned Training By Parents Can Minimize Children's Troubles

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S. J.
Sociology Professor St. Louis University

Our 17-year old son has gone crazy over a girl of fifteen — she looks older, as they all do these days. The other night he was to take her to a dance and return early. He got back at 2:00 a.m., admitted he'd been drinking, and had wrecked the car chasing a boy who had dated his girl. What punishment should we give him? My husband says he can't go out until he graduates. Won't that make him bitter?

You're worried about the wrong problems, Mary. Like many modern parents, you seem to show concern only when the damage is external. Why not stop and ask yourselves what kind of boy you are raising? This incident offers a good occasion to take a serious look at what you are doing.

Raising teenagers these days appears to be left pretty much up to chance. Sensible parents try to develop a plan, and by looking ahead they can forestall some of the most serious problems.

What are some of the areas they should think about? Well, Mary, your letter mentioned several. Let's take this problem of dating. Have you developed any general norms or rules that your children are well acquainted with and which they take for granted that they must follow? It seems very strange that you should have tolerated your son's association with this fifteen-year-old girl.

YOUR LETTER indicates that this girl has been dating for some time, yet at her age she should be home in bed. Doesn't the fact that her parents should allow her so much freedom give you some indication of her training? Besides, there is something unhealthy about an older boy becoming infatuated with such a child. Is he afraid to date girls in his own class at school?

Moreover, the facts leading up to the wrecked car incident point to a trait of character that needs correction. Obviously the girl stood him up on this date, yet he does not seem to have sufficient self-esteem or insight to grasp what has happened, and rather than admit that he has been made a bit of a fool of, he tried to take it out on the other boy. Why not point out to him that he has been "taken," and that unless he develops a little sincere self-esteem, he'll probably have it happen again and again. Some young men never do seem to catch on that they are being used as seconds or stand-ins. It's a poor way to start dating.

Then there is the matter of drinking. Have you discussed this with him, so that he knows your firm convictions? I doubt whether he would have given the shallow excuse that all the juniors in school drink if you had let him know your position clearly. Why wait until the matter comes up? Your children should be made well aware of your attitudes on such problems before they meet them in their lives.

There are other matters, such as use of the car, spending money, type of companions, permitted places of entertainment, number of nights out, and so on, that you and your husband must discuss and work out some consistent plans for handling. In a society offering such a variety of norms and standards, Catholic parents must not simply drift with the crowd, irresponsibly hoping that somehow their children will turn out all right.

But perhaps more important than the tasks we have been discussing, parents must examine what kinds of values, aspirations or life-goals their children are developing. What does it mean to be a Christian in the modern world? What are they going to do for Christ? What vocation are they planning to follow? What qualities and training does it require? Are they developing a sense of loyalty and responsibility? Have you taught them to take "no" for an answer, to be helpful and cooperative around the home and with their sisters and brothers?

NEEDLESS TO SAY, such training requires the united and persistent effort of both parents. You can't do it alone, Mary, and particularly in dealing with teenage boys, your husband must be willing to offer guidance and counsel, rather than just stepping into the picture when the situation is critical.

What punishment should your son receive? A great deal depends on his present attitude. If he is arrogant or surly, you will have to be severe, setting down a strict and absolute regime regulating his social life and studies until he learns to acknowledge your authority.

If he admits that he has acted irresponsibly, he has learned a good deal, and you, or particularly his father, should use this opportunity to discuss his present conduct and future hopes with him on a mature level, for he appears quite adolescent at this point. If he works during the summer, he should of course help pay for the car, but he will want to do that if he has learned anything from this experience.

One final question, won't he become bitter if you are too strict? There is little real danger of such a reaction if you explain the reason for your rules and let him know that his freedom will increase to the extent that he develops a sense of responsibility. The really embittered youth are the delinquents who have been neglected by their parents. Discipline shows love, though it is not always recognized.

Vatican Spurs Bible Study

(Continued from page 1)

tion about the history, civilization, laws, customs and religions of people who lived at the time when the Biblical books were written (from about 1500 B.C. to almost 100 A.D.

Most famous of these discoveries were made at Ugarit in 1928 and Mari in 1933, both in Syria, and a series of discoveries made in caves near the Dead Sea in Palestine since World War II. These finds included stone documents (used before parchment or paper was developed) and scrolls all of which provided important information to fill in serious gaps in knowledge about details of the Old Testament.

These twentieth century discoveries confirmed many Biblical events rejected fifty years ago by "modernists." But the discoveries have also indicated that "literary form" is a basic clue to a right understanding of the Bible, as Father Lagrange taught as early as 1902.

Ancient authors — Hebrew or otherwise — did not write history in the same factual way present day authors do, he said. A reading of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, the Bible's first book, makes it obvious that its author, in describing the creation of the world, gives a very unscientific explanation.

St. Augustine, fifteen centuries ago, realized Genesis was not written to explain "how God made the heavens but how to make man go to heaven."

The Bible's second book, Exodus (which gives its name to our own era's flight of the Jews from Nazi tyranny), records the escape of the chosen people from Egypt, a story which raises everything to heroic size — the good are all saints, the bad are all devils. Statistics given in the book are incredibly high and miracles are as numerous as ordinary events. The author of Exodus is obviously a good writer — he uses hyperbole, exaggeration, a popular figure of speech among ancient people, to dramatize the fact that God provided for the Hebrews when they were in urgent need of divine help.

So also in the New Testament, the Gospel writers follow the freedom used by their Scripture predecessors and use various literary forms too—the poetry of the Magnificat, the pathos of the crucifixion, the triumph of Easter. They did not write with the painful accuracy in detail of a modern cub reporter.

This freedom makes for difference in details, however—as, for example, the number of angels at the tomb on Easter morning or the number of blind men cured at Jericho—and beginners in Bible reading are often troubled by the seeming discrepancy.

If we play up these discrepancies and fail to see the overall truth told us by the Gospel writer, then we miss the whole point of the reading. This "missing the forest for the trees" stunts appreciation of the Scripture message.

Pope Pius XII in his 1943 encyclical on Biblical Studies stated, "When some persons reproachfully charge the sacred writers with some historical error or inaccuracy in the recording of facts, on closer examination it turns out to be nothing else than those customary modes of expression and narration peculiar to the ancients."

He urged Scripture scholars, including lay people, to make extensive use of discoveries made by archeologists in Biblical lands. Except for a "few texts whose sense has been defined by the authority of the Church," the Pontiff said, "there remain many things, even of great importance, in the discussion and explanation of which the skill and genius of Catholic commentators may and ought to be freely exercised."

"This liberty . . . is the condition and source of all lasting fruit and of all solid progress in Catholic doctrine," Pope Pius said.

Freedom, however, has its pitfalls.

To check any present day trends that threaten to repeat the "modernist" debacle, Vatican officials issued their "warning" not to hobble freedom but to pave the way for continued authentic progress in Biblical study.

Following is a translation of the admonition issued by the Vatican's Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office on June 20.

"Through praiseworthy enthusiasm for Biblical studies, assertions and opinions are being spread in many quarters, bringing into doubt the genuine historical and objective truth of the Sacred Scriptures, not only of the Old Testament (as Pope Pius XII had already deplored in his encyclical letter "Humani Generis") but even of the New, even to the saying and deeds of Christ Jesus.

"Since assertions and opinions of this kind are causing anxiety among both pastors and faithful, the eminent cardinals who are charged with preservation of the doctrine of faith and morals recommended that all of those who deal with the Sacred Scriptures either in writing or orally should be warned always to treat such subject-matter with due discretion and reverence and always to have before their eyes the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church and the mind and teaching authority of the Church, lest the consciences of the faithful be disturbed or the truths of the Faith be injured. N.B. — This admonition is published with the approval of the eminent cardinals of the Pontifical Biblical Commission."

Southeast Asia

Red Armies on March, Free World Stalled

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
Society of St. Columban

Saigon—(NC)—Communist bad faith in Laos and Western weakness in Geneva are making the skies darker over southeast Asia. People here in guerrilla-plagued southern Vietnam see the threat from Laos becoming daily more definite.

The communist bad faith, from Moscow to Hanoi to Xieng Khouang, has been glaringly evident since last March.

The Russians delayed for long weeks before agreeing with the British on the text of a message calling for a cease-fire in Laos. (The British foreign secretary and Russian foreign minister are cochairmen of the Geneva conference that brought the Indochina armistice in 1954.)

While the Russians were stalling, their communist allies in Laos were waging war aggressively, with the artillery and munitions supplied by Russian airlift.

At length, on April 24, the joint message was issued with diplomatic fanfare. According to an official British source, the Russians had explained the delay on their part by saying that they had to clear every word with Peking, Hanoi and Xieng Khouang. (Xieng Khouang is the headquarters of the communist Pathet Lao and their allies in Laos.)

All this implied that the communists in Laos and North Vietnam were now willing to have a cease-fire. In fact, they kept on fighting. The Laotian government declared its readiness for an immediate cease-fire. Owing to communist delay, it did not take place until May 3.

About one week later, however, the communists launched an attack on Padong, held by Meo soldiers of the government army. They kept up the attack until the defenders, overwhelmed by imported artillery, withdrew.

The communists have continued to violate the cease-fire with cynical persistence.

Meanwhile the international commission has arrived in Laos to supervise the carrying out of the cease-fire. It has been rendered largely ineffective by communist obstruction.

The commission consists of Indian, Canadian and Polish representatives, named by their respective governments. The Polish members are, of course, communists. They seek to have a rule of unanimity in the commission, which would give them a veto.

The president of the commission, the chief Indian delegate, has asked the Geneva conference to authorize the commission to have its own transportation. Otherwise it cannot go where and when it wishes to supervise and investigate. The Russians will not agree.

THE WESTERN governments seem to have retreated from the position that they held so stoutly in their statements of some months ago.

On April 25, releasing the text of the joint Anglo-Russian cease-fire message to the press in Vientiane, the British ambassador to Laos, John M. Addis, outlined this position. This correspondent was present.

"We have acted on the following understanding with the Russians," the ambassador said. "First, the cease-fire should take place immediately. Secondly, it should be verified by the international commission. Thirdly, the conference will not take place until the cochairmen are satisfied that the cease-fire has been effective."

In regard to Laos, nearly everything, Laotian and Western, military and diplomatic, seems to have yielded before the communists. There are, doubtless, serious reasons why it has yielded.

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