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TEEN • AGERS

by Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

A Queen's Work Publication

Love Sex and the Teen-Agers

By

DANIEL A. LORD, S.J.



THE QUEEN'S WORK

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Whether your knowledge comes from a magazine that you read on the subject . . . from the misinformation of misinformed companions . . . from a priest or a reliable physician . . . you the teen-ager demand to know about sex. You have a right to know the facts about sex, the right to know what part sex plays and is to play in your life, the right to be guarded against the wrong kind of so-called sex information, the right to purity based on a wholesome knowledge of sex facts. Father Lord has written this pamphlet for you the teen-ager boy or girl. He has left unsaid nothing that should be said to you and for you on the subject of life and sex.

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

As the title indicates, this is a booklet to be read by teen-agers.

They may pick it up on their own impulse; I shall be glad if they do.

But as the older generation is much interested in teen-agers, it well may be that the booklet will be read by some of the teachers and parents. They in turn may then feel impelled to pass it along to teen-agers. I should much prefer it if the mother and the father of today had the courage—and even more skill than I have—to say directly to their sons and daughters what I am writing. The spoken word has a warmth that the written word can never have. I myself should much prefer to be saying to my friends, the young people, what now I must write to them.

But many a teen-ager has told me that his (and her) parents do not talk to him (and her). As a result he (and she) must be content with misinformation from a dozen sources and half information from even more sources. Regrettably the sources are often poisoned with lies, muddled with false viewpoints, or polluted with vice, adult or juvenile.

So here is a little booklet for these teen-agers. It must of necessity have passages that are frank. Truth remains, I believe, the best guide to virtue.

This booklet is meant for the young people between the ages of thirteen and eighteen—the normal high-school age. It is not a guide to marriage. It is a guide to conduct during the years of adolescence, when the way that young people live and the characters that they develop will profoundly affect their happiness later in marriage—or mean its failure and collapse.

May I pause for just a minute to tell the teen-agers that they have often been badly betrayed? The smart writer in a dozen mediums who says flatfootedly or insinuates cleverly that sex experience before marriage is necessary for happiness in marriage is a plain liar and an elaborate traitor to young people. What he says in equivalent is: The way to a virtuous marriage is through a youth of vice; the guarantee of joy in marriage is sin outside of marriage.

You don't need a lot of words spun into a logical argument to knock these liars flat. All you need are the headlines of the daily papers. Look at the statistics of modern marriage. Many of the men and women who indulged in sex sin and sex carelessness before marriage are the very ones who bottleneck the divorce courts. Indeed I don't find that the smart writers who advocate sex laxity before marriage make notable successes of their own marriages. Theirs is a pretty dismal record of marriage failures—and I could readily name names.

Sex sinners go into marriage with the odds high against them. You can't hope to be a good parent when you have been a bad son or daughter. You are not likely to be a virtuous husband if you seduced your sweetheart... or an unselfish wife if you were a selfish and lustful girl. Happy marriages are found between people who have a high respect for marriage, men and women who have developed into strong adults and have learned the self-control necessary to live together happily. Believe me, you learn none of these things by kicking the sixth and the ninth commandments around.

A really pure young woman becomes a pure mother. A really pure woman is one who knows what purity is, why it is important—and as a consequence deliberately chooses it.

A strong, self-controlled young man becomes a strong, considerate, and trustworthy husband.

Young men and women who were false to God's law are—on an easy bet—going to be false to each other later on.

Besides, God has a way of blessing with the fullness of joy and accomplishment those who live decently. How can young people expect God's blessing upon their marriage when they prepared for it by a selfish breaking and flouting of His law?

The idea of writing this booklet did not originate with me. I wrote it only after I had received from varied people repeated requests to write it. I wrote it because I was told that someone ought to write it and because I was politely assured that my happy years of experience with young people—notably the teenagers—seemed to mark me out as the possible writer.

I hope that those who asked me will not be too disappointed in the result. At best I can prayerfully hope that the booklet

will do a little of the job that so badly needs to be done. I hope it will help our teen-agers.

If anything, the title is too obvious. But I chose an obvious, almost flat title deliberately. No one who does not care to read on this subject will be tricked by a false title. Anyone who reads the title will know exactly what the booklet sets itself to discuss.

Love can be, we know, the most powerful natural force in the world.

Sex is, we glory to recall, God's magnificent creative power shared by Him with His sons and daughters. It is the source of permanent, beautiful union between man and wife, with joy and consolation in abundance.

The Teen-Agers (I use capitals here for honor and emphasis) are the precious human material out of which we must fashion a stronger and better world. From them, as they reach adult years, must issue the children to do God's work for the happiness of the race.

To Mary, who at the age of fourteen understood exactly the meaning of the Angel Gabriel's invitation to motherhood, we humbly dedicate this booklet. Hers is the inescapable example of purity. She is the parent who made maternity the noble Christian profession. Her face has given us the ideal of purity, as her hands have guided generations of saintly boys and girls toward splendid manhood and womanhood. By her motherly care and virginal example she can do for the teen-agers far, far more than can all the books in the world.

May Mary mother the mothers and the fathers of the future.
The Feast of the Apparition of Lourdes
1947

Love, Sex and the Teen-Agers

WHEN you were considerably younger, you began to run into the "don'ts" and "mustn'ts" of your elders.

"Don't eat that candy now; you'll spoil your lunch." . . .
"Don't get yourself dirty; you won't be fit to go to the party."
. . . "Don't stay up too late; you won't grow to your full health and strength."

Older people seemed to stand before you always shaking a finger under your nose. Like the mother in the ancient joke, their attitude too often appeared to be: "Go see what the child is doing; and whatever it is, tell him to stop."

Don't

Soon however, if you were a boy, you got on a football team, or you became absorbingly interested in the victories of your school team. You found out that "don't" had considerable importance. "Don't eat sweets or smoke during the season; they'll knock you flat on the first play of the year." . . . "Don't clip or trip; the referee will put you out of the game." . . . "Don't miss practice; you won't be in the game Saturday."

There suddenly appeared a direct relationship between "don't" and success.

If you were a girl, you heard from beauty experts: "Don't wear shoes that are too tight; you won't be able to dance." . . . "Don't scream too loudly at the basketball game; you'll spoil your singing voice." . . . "Don't eat too much pastry; you'll de-velop the figure of the circus fat lady." . . . "Don't whine or nag; the boys won't like you."

Here again there was a direct connection between the warn-ings of older people and your own happy future.

God's Interest

Very emphatically this is not a booklet of "don'ts." If it were, I should be the last person to expect you to read it.

This booklet is concerned with your success—and more than that: with your lifelong happiness.

I don't think I am being arrogant if I hope that God Himself is interested in the booklet. For it is concerned, you see, with one of God's most beautiful gifts to His sons and daughters. God is the designer and maker of nature, and love and sex are essential parts of human nature. God meant love and sex to make men and women happy. Love and sex were intended as part of the equipment by which we were to be fitted for the glorious work of the world.

The Question of Life

As Catholics—or merely as decent people—you and I are convinced of the importance and sacredness of life. We fought a terrible war because we said that we believe in human life. We fight brutality and any other practices that endanger human life.

Life is the first gift that God gives us.

Life is really the greatest of opportunities: the opportunity to enter the world, to see the glories of the visible universe, to laugh and play, to think and will, to create and enjoy, to grow and develop, to find God's love, and to attain through God's saving grace to the godlike life of eternity.

Even if I didn't have faith, I imagine I should still regard human life as significant.

After all it takes only a little observing to realize the total difference between a human being and the animals to which we bear some surface resemblances.

Merely as a member of the human race I should want that human race to be healthy and happy. I should play my part to make life safe. If human beings proved trustworthy, I should move through life with safety. If I was trustworthy, others would be safe. If they were kind and generous and strong, life for me would be immeasurably simplified. If I was kind and generous, the lives of others would be happier. Just because this was important to all of us, I should be concerned with boys' and girls' developing into decent parents. For I should have to live with their children, you see; and it is easier to live with people who are healthy, happy, clean, honest, and virtuous.

Knowing the importance of life. I should want life to enter the world with dignity and honor, not in weakness, sickness, and contempt.

Life Starts

So, you see, anyone who has any interest in life itself is bound to be interested in the way that life is produced. The healthy continuance of life depends upon the normal healthy start of life.

The little baby resting helplessly in its mother's womb has, from the very origin of its conception there, the elements with which it will have to work all its days to the very end of its life. It receives from its mother and father either a strong or a weak constitution. Though environment can change a good deal in the child, and free will and God's grace can effect profound alterations, the fundamental equipment of life is what the infant has already received from its parents.

This equipment he, the future boy, or she, the future girl, got through the exercise of his or her parents' love and their use of sex.

Let's go back a bit and trace some of your own well-remembered experiences.

Your Own Experience

There were as a rule happy, carefree days in your past before you became a teen-ager. These extended from the first dawn of consciousness to your consciousness of sex. Sometimes you look back to those days with a little amazement, some amusement, and much wistfulness. For they seem in retrospect very innocent and beautiful days; you hadn't as a matter of fact a worry or a trouble in the world.

How simple confession was in those days! The worries that you had then probably seem very trifling to you today. When first you heard of the Ten Commandments, you knew that there were two at least that you would never have to worry about—the sixth and the ninth. Surely no one ever broke laws that had no interest for you or your little friends.

Boys and Girls Not Together

If you were a boy, you probably despised girls.

They seemed silly and weak. They got in the way when you wanted to play sensible boy games. They snitched on you and cried easily. Indeed you sometimes wondered why parents ever bothered to have girl babies.

If you were a girl, you regarded boys as noisy nuisances.

They were crude and rough. They pulled your hair, especially when you had made an effort to do it beautifully. They played games that seemed to consist chiefly in yelling and pushing people around and covering the players with sweat and mud. The essence of a really satisfactory boy's game seemed to consist in the ruining of clothes. As far as you were concerned, boys were troublesome hoodlums. You ran the other way when they started coming your way.

Simple Confession

Boy or girl, your confessions were probably untroubled, simple things. You seemed hardly to have temptations worth the reporting. You confessed that you had been unkind to your little brother, or had taken your sister's things, or had not been obedient to your parents, or had hurried through your morning and evening prayers.

At some time however a very troublesome experience may have come your way. If for any reason you did not talk it over in confession, and if in memory it still worries you, just tell your confessor what it was in the past that bothered you and still bothers you. He will be glad to help you straighten it out once and for all.

Yet how long ago that peaceful time seems! . . . perhaps all of two or three years!

Boys played with boys. Girls played with girls. Boys' games were entirely different from girls' games. If the school did not provide separate yards for each group, the boys took over one section and the girls another—and each group glared if its preserves were invaded.

Sudden Change

Then almost with a start you realized that things were different.

I am writing all this as if the normal boy or girl before adolescence did not know much about sex or its temptations. Many boys and girls of this age do know. Many have been wisely prepared by their parents to meet and resist temptations. Teachers have often told you that temptations would come and have told you how to fight these temptations. Often people are untroubled by temptations because they understood them before they met them. If you were wisely prepared, much that I have written will be unnecessary for you. If you were not wisely prepared, your problems will have assumed the nature that I now suggest.

Once on a time I taught catechism at our local Catholic boys' home. Sometimes abruptly—say between this Sunday and the next—a change would come over one of the boys. He suddenly started to polish his shoes, quite of his own accord. He washed behind the ears, totally new territory for the sanitary squad. He even put on a tie. I was usually pretty sure that I knew the reason, even if as yet I had not heard her name.

In the experience of all youngsters there suddenly dawns a day when boys become interesting to girls and girls become interesting to boys. Both find that they like to be together. Instead of yelling, "Jiggers, the girls!" or "Oh those horrid boys!" they search or at least stand and wait. Parties are suddenly more fun when they are mixed groups.

Maybe they had played "kissing games" when they were kids, but the games were silly things and accompanied by much giggling on the part of the boys. Now when somebody suggests "kissing games," there is self-consciousness and a little embarrassment—and then a new fervor in the forfeits and less laughter and more reluctance . . . or eagerness.

Temptations

The most surprising and embarrassing temptations begin to bother both the mind and the body. Boy and girl alike experience them, though the boy usually finds them far more intense and insistent than does the girl.

The mind may discover itself plagued with strange, often disgusting, and usually disturbing pictures and thoughts. New and annoying physical temptations trouble and worry the body. The youngster who yesterday was carefree and unworried is today troubled and perplexed. He wonders if something is wrong with himself; he is afraid that mother and father will discover the disgusting thoughts in his mind or guess the sharp impulses that seem bent on throwing him.

Both he, the boy, and she, the girl, wish that things were not that way.

Boys grow enormously curious about girls—not about any one girl, but about all girls, girls in general. In a lesser degree girls grow curious about boys, and they are surprised to learn that the same curiosity will reach out both to very nice boys and to boys who are somewhat tough and—for unknown reasons—dangerous-seeming.

The "Wise" Kid

Then it usually happens that some "wise" kid comes along. Maybe he appeared much earlier and planted ideas that keep popping up persistently, ideas that remain to tease and tantalize after pleasant thoughts and happy experiences have long been forgotten.

At any rate the "wise" kid now looms much larger on one's consciousness. He boasts that he knows all about everything, and he insists on telling what he knows (or what he doesn't really know or knows wrongly) to anyone he can back into a corner.

When you met such a kid, at first he may very probably have revolted and even sickened you. A boy's first impulse is to knock him down and call him a liar. But he is convincing. He keeps repeating that this is the way things are. And he probably makes a dirty crack about his own mother and father and maybe about your parents. You know that he's wrong, or you hope he is, but you don't know the answer.

One of these "smart" kids very likely announces to the boys, "All girls are bad." He says it with such emphasis that, though you know from experience that he is lying, his indictment sticks until you start to regard with wonder and some doubt even the girls you know and liked best.

If the young person has been carefully prepared for adolescence by parents or physician or priest or teacher, he will probably regard the "smart guy," the "wise guy," as a nuisance peddling stale information and giving it out very incorrectly. The "information" he tries to impart seems pretty stupid and inadequate.

The Bad Little Girl

Or there is the bad little girl. Surprisingly enough she often looks very innocent, a trick she learned from pulling the wool over her parents' eyes. But she may have the opposite extreme of innocence—cultivated sophistication. She enters the girls' dressing room at the party and tells a dirty story, relates some experience that shocks the others, or retails something that she has seen or read or that she thinks proves her very wise and grown-up.

The other girls regard her with fascinated curiosity. They are afraid of her, but she makes them feel by comparison very young and immature.

Adolescence

When you went through any or all or more of this, you were just like all other human beings: That period is normal. Almost overnight the carefree youngster becomes the troubled and tempted adolescent. The unworried period of childhood may for some melt into a time when the world is blurred, virtue is questioned, vice seems terrifyingly common, and the whole atmosphere is charged with danger. For others it continues calm and serene. They know that sex is God's creation. They know how to meet temptation. They know that God's protection is with them.

Adolescence is the name that we give this period. It is the age of growing up.

Nowadays that age marks the beginning of what we call the teen-age.

Usually it starts while the boy and girl are finishing grammar school. It hits with almost storm violence when the boy and girl are in high school.

It Will Disappear

For your instant reassurance let me tell you that if you lead a normally decent life, taking your temptations not too grimly and not allowing the dangers to become other than dangers, your troubles and temptations grow swiftly fewer and smaller. Serenity may come rapidly. Life resumes its pleasantly unruffled course. True you will never completely return to the calm of innocent childhood. But then men and women must always worry about a lot of things that children ignore—making money, finding a decent house, health, a job and how it can be best done. So sex is just one of these normal adult concerns.

God is good though, and the intense temptations of adolescence fade if they are not misunderstood, encouraged, or deliberately yielded to. Sex comes under our control—unless of course it is fed and fueled through sin.

Let's see what happened and what is happening during this period of adolescence. What took place that so threatened to upset your life's orderly plan?

Well with you and with all other normal human beings the whole thing begins in some important bodily changes. The boy or the girl is at first vaguely and then keenly aware of these changes. But neither the boy nor the girl is sure—unless instructed by wise parents—exactly what has happened. Indeed the stories that young people hear from their companions about the whole process of those changes are likely to be most misleading, often terribly wrong.

New Reactions

The human being, you see, is a creature composed of body and soul; that knowledge is fundamental to any understanding of yourself. So it happens that whatever occurs to the body in some way affects the soul; and what happens to the soul has a powerful effect upon the body.

During this period of adolescence the body goes through the most significant development it will ever know. This change results in a sort of struggle. New thoughts enter the mind, as new experiences occur to the body. The growing body has its disturbing effect upon the mind; the troubled mind affects the peace and serenity of the body.

Little children playing together are usually hardly conscious of the sex differences between boys and girls. Older children are vaguely aware of differences—an awareness that becomes the basis of the dislike of boy for girl and girl for boy.

Now however things are quite different. The kiss they exchanged as children is now charged as with electricity. The girl realizes that the boy is curious about her in a somewhat unpleasant but often provocative way. The boy, perhaps to his possible disgust, finds in the picture of a burlesque actress a hypnotizing power; he looks at it with curiosity—only to realize that by it his mind is disturbed, his body is disturbed.

These new physical reactions may come in response to pictures, stories, suggestions, and sometimes the mere presence of the other sex. Both mind and body seem to react.

They may have reactions during sleep that puzzle them. Sometimes even when they are awake, reactions unsolicited and unprovoked and at the time quite unaccountable trouble them.

Why? What is it all about?

Again we must go still further back to reach the source of our explanation.

The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”

The Main Difference

This blessed event the Church with truthful realism celebrates on the feast of the Annunciation. The Word was made flesh on March 25. The coming Savior had taken up His place in the womb of Mary. Nine months later Christmas came, December 25. The Infant Jesus, now matured to the point at which He would leave Mary’s womb, entered the world as a perfectly formed Infant. But for the nine preceding months the Infant Jesus was within the body of His Mother, as all babies are in the bodies of their mothers before they are born into the world.

The main difference here however was that Christ had no earthly father. By a miracle the Holy Spirit worked upon the life seed in the body of Mary. God remained the only Father of Our Savior, though Mary was in the fullest sense His Mother.

When later on you progress in the study of biology or of physiology, you will find that the explanation that I am giving is perhaps too simple. I am giving here the barest essentials, for I do not want this little booklet to become a medical treatise. Later you can supplement this simple outline with much more complete and satisfactory details.

Let's return now to consider all other babies. For the first months of human life, spent within the mother's womb, the infant is visibly neither male nor female. The life seed from the body of the father entered the body of the mother, to find there her seed. But as the new cell of complete human life swiftly developed, there was no possible way by which to tell a future boy from a future girl. The organs were soon present, but they were all developing inside the little body called the foetus. The sex organs were developing too; they too rested inside the framework of the rapidly developing infant.

Nature's Decision

The first big change in human development takes place when nature reaches the point of decision as to whether this will be a baby boy or a baby girl. If the foetus is to be a boy, the sex organs usually come to the surface. They are, as we say, externalized. They remain for life on the surface of the male body.

If the foetus is to be a girl, the sex organs remain inside the body. They remain for life inside the female body.

So fundamentally the sex organs of a man and of a woman are surprisingly similar. No they are not quite the same. But the clear understanding of the sex organs of one makes clearer the understanding of the sex organs of the other. God and nature, when they determine whether the unborn infant is to be a boy or a girl, appear to settle the question of sex largely either by bringing the sex organs to the surface or by leaving them inside. The organs that are to be male are external; the organs that are to be female are internal. The male and the female sex organs are not identical, but for our purposes here they may be regarded as being essentially very much alike.

Second Big Change

For the first ten to thirteen years following birth, the sex organs remain to a greater or less extent dormant. In many children the sex organs are almost entirely inactive. In others sex manifestations may start early, sometimes very early.

However there is no reason or need for any activity on the part of children's sex organs, since there is not as yet any use for them. The sex organs, you see, are directed chiefly toward the producing of life. What you frequently hear called sex hormones may develop much earlier and determine much of physical growth and appearance and tend to guide the individual growth. But production of life remains the main purpose of the sex organs. And children are not ready for this. Nature and the God of nature would regard it as extremely unwise if little boys and girls six or eight years old became fathers and mothers. They are not yet fit to assume such responsibilities. Remember that word: responsibilities. It is terribly important. How could children care for a baby? How could they possibly provide for the training and education of a child?

So with the sex organs quiet and no possibility of parenthood, the child lives through that carefree period of childhood that we all enjoyed so much. The boy and the girl grow rapidly. Their minds become keener and the better prepared to handle their own affairs. All the while, without in many ways reaching the children's consciousness, their sex organs too are developing.

Sometimes it will happen that this little boy or that small girl is what we call emotionally premature. That means that their sex organs developed more rapidly than is normal and they entered into adolescence very young. In the case of most normal children however the age of adolescence is happily delayed, and they know that untroubled period of childhood peace.

Beginning

We think of boys and girls as children. They *are* children, though all the while they are adults in the making, human beings moving rapidly toward maturity. Someday, sooner than a forward look at the years seems to promise, they will be called upon by God and nature to be parents. So nature has started to get them ready for the responsibilities of bringing new life into the world.

Somewhere around this age the second big change happens. The sex organs may be said to awaken. They appear almost to come to life.

The boy and the girl both get warning of this in the changes that they notice in themselves.

As a rule the girl develops earlier than the boy. That is why often enough girls are apparently smarter than boys in grammar school, continuing to lead in class as long as both are adolescents. That is also the reason that as a general rule women marry men older than themselves. The man is slower to mature, more leisurely in his development.

A girl of twelve is often consequently as physically mature as is a boy of fourteen, and men of twenty-four are likely to think of marrying girls of twenty-one.

You need not bother to be too exact about your mathematical calculations at this point. All I am doing is suggesting the difference in the time of the man's and the woman's sexual maturity.

Physical Changes

During this period of early adolescence the boy notices that his sex organ has developed considerably.

The girl notices the swelling and growth of her breasts.

May we pause for a second on that last word?

It is interesting to realize that the sex organs are all concerned directly with life in its origins and developments. The breasts of a girl are a case in point. God gave breasts to women to be the foundations from which babies were to draw their first food after birth. A grown son can regard his mother with real gratitude. Not only did she give him life, carrying him for nine months in the safety of her womb; but when he was at length born, and when he cried for food, she placed him at her breasts and fed him with food from her own body.

For that reason good men and women regard a woman's breasts with deep reverence. Women's breasts are intimately connected with life. They are the first, most precious, and really sacred source of human food.

Beyond this the breasts of a girl are very closely connected with sex sensation. They are called secondary zones of sex, which means that the deliberate touching of them will tend to excite a woman sexually. Sometimes the mere sight of a woman's breasts will have the effect of exciting a man sexually. Hence even the Motion Picture Code forbids on the screen the display of a woman's breasts or the emphasizing of them through sweaters or the like. This is itself a simple recognition of the fact that the breasts of a girl are sexually exciting.

Other Changes

During this period the boy's voice changes. The church-choir soprano finds that his voice has dropped a full octave in pitch and has bumped down the stairs as it fell. It squeaks and trembles, is sometimes high and sometimes low . . . until it settles once and for all eight full tones—the scale—below the normal voice of a woman.

Yes there has been a change in his throat; but this too is connected with the sexual development in his body. The boy has become a man; even his voice proclaims his new and dignified estate.

And the Girl . . .

The girl at about this time experiences for the first time her monthly flow of blood.

This apparently mysterious operation of nature often startles and frightens her, and in the beginning it may often pain her. Much of the pain, modern medicine seems to think, tends to be psychic. That means that fear and expectation may tend to amplify the pain. Sometimes mothers are to blame for their daughters' pain at this time. Headachy mothers are often the cause of headachy daughters. If girls hear a great deal about how painful this monthly experience is, they affect the pain—just as dread and fear of a visit to the dentist makes the actual visit to the dentist much more painful than it really is.

Apparently nature meant this experience of menstrual flow to take place once each lunar month, that is, once every twenty-eight days. Because of a number of factors that are induced by modern living conditions, there may be today a wide variety in

the cycle and quite a range of difference in the recurrence of the experience.

But a girl is badly cheated if she allows the crude and cynical comments of older girls or women to mislead her, or if she adopts the unpleasant and disillusioned words by which some girls name and characterize this monthly occurrence. The total experience really indicates that she is growing up. She is now maturing quite rapidly. She is at the point at which it will be physically possible for her to be a mother.

At the time of the menstrual period the womb sloughs off the lining of the uterus or womb. In this way the womb is prepared for the coming of the next *ovum* or egg that will enter. With the flow of blood has been carried away the old *ovum*, since the girl is not as yet a wife or old enough to marry and undertake the heavy responsibilities of motherhood.

The Case With the Boy

During this same period the boy sometimes experiences what are called "wet dreams." Or he has what is known as an erection, the extension of his sexual organ. Here again is simply the indication of approaching maturity. The "wet dream" means merely that within his body has been developing the seed of life, which, since he is not married or ready to bear the responsibilities of parenthood, is carried off during sleep. The unwanted erection merely indicates that his sex organs are reaching a maturity when marriage may be possible—once he is old enough to bear the heavy responsibilities of fatherhood.

All that is happening in the body both of the boy and of the girl during this adolescence is so tremendously vital to the human race, so tremendously significant in its relationship to life that it is impossible to overemphasize it. The small, comparatively untroubled, frequently quite carefree and singularly irresponsible children are now growing up. They are reaching out toward maturity. They are developing in their young bodies the possibility of becoming parents and giving new life to the world.

That is precisely it: They are becoming capable of producing new life.

Within their changing and developing bodies have formed the seeds of life—the human seed, we often call it: Without this seed there can be no children and hence no future race.

All life comes from some sort of seed. We are familiar with the seed that grows into flowers and grains and trees and shrubs. Within the egg of the chicken is a seed which, when it is fertilized, is capable of developing into the little chick. (Just to ease your mind, you are not served fertilized eggs for your food.) The sturgeon roe, which we call caviar, is made up of thousands of little eggs each of which has a seed of life that could have developed into another sturgeon. The bodies of all animals carry this same sort of seed which can through the operation of nature grow into the tiny animals we know as puppies, kittens, calves, colts, cubs.

Human Seed

The essential difference between these other seeds in nature and the seed in the human body is of course the fact that the human seed through the direct creation of the soul by God becomes a human being, a rational creature, a child of God. For this transformation of the seed not only are the father and the mother needed. God Himself cooperates with the father and the mother: He produces the human soul. When the male and the female seed unite in the body of a woman, God is immediately present to create within the union the soul of one of His own beloved children.

So adolescence is the time when there are developed within the boy's and the girl's sex organs the seeds that could become another human life.

Differences

In the case of the boy these seeds of life develop in tremendous quantities and with almost miraculous speed. They are plentiful and prolific. They originate of course in the male organs, on the surface of the boy's body. They must be numerous in order that when the man is married they will be able to meet and give fertility to the woman's seed. But the multiplicity of the boy's seed is in part an explanation of the fact that boys are more inclined than girls to be what we call passionate and are much more easily tempted.

Within the body of the adolescent girl normally just one life seed develops in the course of each month. Since she is not yet in a situation where motherhood would be wise for her, the *ovum*,

or egg, is carried off with the monthly flow of blood. If and when she marries, one of these seeds will in the course of time unite under normal circumstances with the male seed of her husband. When this happens, the monthly flow of blood will cease until her child has been born, nine months from the time of conception.

Because of this single seed the girl may be slower to temptation and more inclined to seek affection. Yet the presence of this seed within the unmarried girl may be a real peril. Nature is ready to receive the male seed. The nature of the boy and the nature of the girl may have something like an unrecognized hankering for love, and they are sometimes carried away by affection into what is a peril to their purity and to their future.

The Girl Protects

It is important to note this difference between boys and girls: The male seeds in the boy are developed in generous and insistent quantities; within the girl one seed is developed only once a month. As a consequence of this, boys are more tempted and girls are normally more calm and untroubled.

In addition the boy's impulse toward sexual expression tends to be concentrated in his sex organs. The girl does not have this experience, for she is more interested in general manifestations of affection; in her the sensations are scattered, and perhaps none of them is violent and strong.

Hence boys who are invited by girls through word or manner to express affection find that they are instead violently aroused and sexually excited. They may be furiously tempted, while the girl remains relatively calm.

In most normal cases the boy is much more fiercely tempted than is the girl. He finds goodness and self-control much more difficult than she does. The seeds within his organs are constant and often insistent.

Good?

Then along comes a girl who regards herself as good. But she likes to feel that she is loved. She wants to know affection. Perhaps she is concerned only with her popularity. So by her way of dressing, by her way of acting, by an indication that she

expects to be treated affectionately, she throws temptation in the boy's way. Often she grows indignant when the very things that she has excited in the boy now cause her annoyance. She blames the boy for a manifestation of passion, which she had carelessly or callously or selfishly brought about.

Girls of this sort are simply making life difficult for boys. In a conscienceless sort of fashion they excite the sexual reactions of boys merely to experience some fluttering emotion of their own or to display their popularity and power over a boy—or boys. Such girls are going to find it very hard to shake off the sins they may cause, the temptations they may arouse, the dangers that they throw in the path of boys.

The bad girl deliberately tempts a boy with immodesty and with a frank manifestation of passion. She is a temptress, an enemy of society and of human life, and the devil's most successful partner. She brings—as her kind has brought—ruin and unhappiness into the world. Because of her life is set back, and human passion becomes a beastly and a terrifying thing.

What Is Immodesty?

A good girl on the other hand knows her own limitations and dangers and watches her own conduct. Then from her relatively safe position she tries to be for the boy an occasion for goodness, never an opportunity for evil. She will not tempt a boy with her immodesty. She will not excite him to sin in order that her vanity may be gratified.

The plain truth is that nothing else more readily excites a boy or leads him to the loss of self-control than does the immodesty of a girl or the temptations that she places in his way.

Already besieged by passion from within, he finds this aggression from without new reason for his own defeat, new cause for his surrender to sin.

What is immodesty?

Let's explain it here rather than define it. It is any conduct, costume—or lack of costume—or speech that is apt to arouse the desire for sexual pleasure. In the concrete immodesty is all too easy to recognize and understand.

On the other hand no boy has any business to rush into situations that are going to be temptations for him. He cannot shift the blame onto the immodesty of the girl. He cannot wash his hands of responsibility by telling himself that the girl should be the one to exercise self-control and practice virtue.

I used above with regard to the girl the phrase "her relatively safe position." Don't let that mislead you. The girl cannot deliberately do anything that will arouse the sexual instincts of a man. She cannot, merely because she is somewhat unresponsive, awaken responses in the boy.

All this is a two-sided business, the boy and the girl sharing responsibilities. If both accept these responsibilities and live as they know they should, their future is pretty safe. If they do not, either or both is responsible in God's eyes and in the judgment of the future.

How Young?

The presence of the seeds in the body of the boy and of the girl makes possible their becoming in the course of time a father and a mother.

For how young a person is parenthood possible?

A great many factors come into consideration here. The climate of the country has a powerful effect on the maturity of boys and girls. As a general rule people in hot climates mature early; in cold climates their maturity is delayed.

Our Blessed Lady was a mother when she was fourteen years old. Recently I met the daughter of a lovely mother from our Lady's own land who, like Mary, had married at fourteen. Juliet, in warm Italy, was fifteen when she fell in love with and married the very young Romeo.

Custom too will have maturing effects. For centuries schooling was over at twelve; whereupon a boy was supposed to put on the garments and undertake the responsibilities of an adult. You read of kings who led armies when they were thirteen years old and who were crowned with the full powers of the sovereign at the same age.

Today in hot India and in the South Pacific marriages of boys and girls in their early teens are common.

It is interesting however to note that for those who mature earlier old age comes much earlier.

The kings who undertook the responsibilities of kingdoms and of marriage at fourteen were old men at forty. The child husbands and wives of India are in many cases withered and aged in their late thirties. Swift maturity and the early assumption of the responsibilities of parenthood frequently tend to make people grow old much before what we would regard as their time. A miracle kept our Blessed Lady perpetually at the peak of her maturity.

Late Maturity

In our country and in our age the maturity proper for marriage comes as a rule considerably later.

We do not regard the presence of the seed of life in the human body as sufficient reason for immediate marriage. On the contrary we tend to prolong the happy time of youth. We delay the responsibilities and burdens of married life and parenthood.

I leave it to you to tell me whether you think we do right or wrong by you in this regard.

At least give us credit for good intentions.

We think that the springtime of life is the happiest period of life and that young people are lucky and blessed. As Shaw said in effect in one of his most quoted remarks: Youth is such a beautiful time that it is a shame to waste it on young people. We not only "waste" it; we try to prolong it. We want you to stay young. We are reluctant to see you assume the heavy responsibilities of maturity.

Marriage, you see, is usually the sign of a willingness to accept burdens and responsibilities. Do you want them? Marriage means the obligation of serious work, the acceptance of the worries of parenthood. We prefer you to laugh and play, to have innocent fun together, to stay out of the hard conflicts of life and the ruthless competition of the market and the shop, the pressing problems of money and jobs.

Other Reasons

But there are other than sentimental reasons back of this delayed maturity.

Today young people need more education to fit them for the intricate pattern of modern living.

A young man needs to be carefully trained even to earn a moderate salary.

The young wife of even the simplest tastes has to live in a complicated society that constantly demands training and prepared mind and hands.

Today a young doctor can hardly hope to enter independent practice before he is well past voting age. An engineer needs years of specialized training for his precision work. The whole school system, geared to the elaborate structure of modern living, means protracted years of preparation.

Life was so much simpler in other days that a boy could learn enough by the time he was fourteen years old to be the general of an army . . . and a six-months course in medicine taught a college graduate all he could then learn about being a doctor. Today you do not with hope of success step unprepared and untrained into the intricate pattern of modern living.

When Are You Grown-up?

Men and women should not of course marry until they are grown-up.

If we know anything clearly, it is that a person's physical stature has nothing to do with his being truly grown up. Now and then you read of a child who grows to be a circus giant in size. Often the child's mentality is distinctly limited. There are tremendous hulks of men, wrestlers for instance, whose mental age is about eleven. And the ancient phrase "beautiful but dumb" was coined to fit the woman whose beauty is physically mature while her mind is like that of a canary or a field mouse.

So it can easily be that a boy and a girl have the life seeds within their bodies, are physically quite capable of bringing a child into the world, and yet are totally unready to make a successful marriage, to live in peace with another person, to estab-

lish a home, to found a family, to train children in the ways of graceful living.

The biggest reason for failures in marriage today, the psychiatrists repeat, is the fact that the husband or the wife or both have never really grown up. They have the bodies of adults and the minds and emotions and self-control of children. Whatever their years, emotionally they are still little ones.

What is meant by maturity? Roughly it is that time in life when a person has learned to think, to dominate his conduct by his free will; when he has a sense of responsibility and a respect for rational authority; when he can make wise choices and decide things in the light of God's law.

For the founding of a family and the successful rearing of sons and daughters we need mental and emotional adults. Children, whatever their age, cannot properly train other children, however much younger these other children in point of time.

So people should not marry until they are grown-up.

But when are they grown-up?

You Are Young

For a thousand different reasons you of these days tend to stay young. You do not mature early mentally and emotionally.

Families see to it that the children who are physically quite developed remain dependent upon the families. Father and mother are allowed to make the important decisions. I find the teen-agers surprisingly young in their interests and their reactions. If you mention business or politics or the more serious books, if you talk of the editorial page of the newspaper or the periodical reviews of comment, they shrug you off.

Their biggest interests are play and pretense.

They enjoy and are thrilled by sports—the simulations of conflict and the substitutes for war. They do not want to read history; but they love fiction, which is pretended life. They sit limply through the newsreels and come to life when the feature picture is produced, a story of unreal characters doing things that never happened and that probably never could happen. The annual message from the President bores them to tears; but they

can sit for hours while a crooner sings a fake emotion that he doesn't feel into ears that shouldn't as a matter of reality care a whoop about the lyrical blighted love.

All this may be fun. But it seems to leave the important things of the world to the more serious-minded youth. Young people are not going to be ready for life's vital business until they have developed considerably beyond this "fun."

But I do ask that you stop telling me how grown-up you are when we discuss love, sex, and marriage.

You seem to believe the infantile stuff that is handed you through the movies or over the radio. You stick with a small crowd or clique or club, diffident about going out to meet strangers. And when we ask you if, since you carry arms at eighteen, you shouldn't also have a say in the affairs of the nation by the vote, almost to a last young man and woman you shout an emphatic No!

Stay young. Enjoy the spring of your years. Do the happy and carefree things that make you the charming, carefree people we want you to be

But you can't be young and also grown-up. You can't hold on to the things of youth and at the same time proclaim yourselves ready for the responsibilities of marriage. You cannot keep the gaiety and irresponsibility of childhood and also give the world well-bred and well-trained children.

You Want to Stay Young

Indeed I find that young people are the very ones who insist on staying young.

Again and again I've heard them cry, "But I don't want to grow up."

They have even banded themselves together with a special language, with special costumes, interests, heroes and heroines.

They vehemently demand to be treated as grown-ups—with all the privileges of not growing up. One of the most characteristic marks of our young people is their determination—deep-rooted, and vehemently expressed—not to accept the serious things of life until they can no longer escape them.

The cartoonist of the teen-agers put it in the words of the young girl who in a crowd comments on a companion: "That's the trouble with her; she's always dragging in some perfectly sensible subject."

Postponed Marriages

This deliberate effort on our part to spare you a quick rush into maturity, an effort with which you have most heartily cooperated, has meant that your full maturity has been, is being delayed. Even your bodies continue to shoot up after your sexual powers have developed. People tend to stay young-looking, their features maturing slowly. Certainly the period of adolescence is continuously marked with much physical growth and much more, we hope, mental development and emotional maturity.

So it is that in our modern world, and especially in America, we have tended to postpone marriage. Much of this delay is due to the matter of money. These days people begin to earn their way in life later than their parents and their grandparents did. They remain in school longer, and they take on jobs later. Young people today have a real obligation to get ready as quickly as they possibly can to lead adult lives and to earn the money needed for marriage.

Whatever the reasons, marriage these days tends to be delayed.

Yet despite the postponement of marriage, the sexual powers are there. The seeds continue to develop in the bodies of the boy and of the girl. The organs reach full maturity. There grows within the young people a distinct urge toward love and the exercise of sex. Physically they are not unready for marriage. In marriage the urge would be legitimate and blessed. The urge remains, though marriage is long delayed.

Boys and girls find one another absorbingly interesting.

Boys are surprised to find that, not one girl for any long period nor even one girl at a time, but girls in general prove seductive to them. They learn that the chemistry of their bodies responds to the stimulation of the chemistry of the girls' bodies—even over a distance. To their embarrassment and sometimes to their shame they find that they can be attracted to women whom they actually despise and be drawn powerfully to women in whose company they would be bitterly ashamed.

Quite good girls are surprised to discover that they find boys' interest in them flattering. A natural or developed modesty may make them at first rebel against what they regard as a dubious admiration of their figures. Yet should modern pagan customs seem to encourage immodesty, they find themselves conforming. They can sense the male reaction to their scanty clothes. They first determine to pretend that that reaction does not exist, then to harden themselves against it, then to court it, and finally to strive to win it. Then there is the gang spirit. Young people feel that they must do what they think others do—or they'll be out of the gang.

Tug of War

Though for a thousand adequate reasons young people today do not marry, the urge of young men and women toward one another remains. They find love springing up and the thought and possibility of sex expression becoming tempting. Their minds are more and more invaded by thoughts of love and marriage. They want to love and be loved, and they are torn between the obligation to live unmarried and the desire to be married or to act as if they were married.

The temptations and mistiness, the worries and bad tempers, the fumbblings and uncertainties, the disturbed minds and upset emotions that characterize adolescence all come out of this situation: The germ of life is within them, yet they do not marry.

Substitutes

It is easy and pleasant to find the substitutes for love and sex that can fill the adolescent years happily and safely.

We have long sponsored sports for both our boys and our girls. Sports can absorb much physical energy and be a great distraction. They take up emotional vigor and give the body a physical exhaustion that is extremely good for it.

Boys and girls are given a healthy and innocent social life in wholesome surroundings where they can find pleasant companionship, where they can talk together, eat and drink together, dance together, and learn the social arts from one another.

School brings them a variety of interests and duties, in class and outside of class. Studies are difficult and absorbing. The

recreational and athletic life is satisfying. Boys and girls associate as friends and companions, happily busy and innocently engaged in joint enterprises as they move along in their education and their development to the time when they will be marriageable men and women.

Temptation Is Natural

Yet all the while there is bound to be some sort of temptation.

If we recognize its natural character and its positive value in the training of character, it can be regarded, not as a worry, a curse, or a peril, but as an opportunity and a blessing.

Let's see how that works.

The boy and the girl have reached a point where the life seed is constantly being created within them. They have physically developed sexual organs.

Yet they do not marry.

They themselves may see financial or educational benefits in not marrying too soon.

Nonetheless they are troubled.

Their minds are disturbed by thoughts and imaginings—some neutral, some evil in possibilities—by curiosities and desires that point toward marriage and the expression of love and the fulfillment of the sexual urge.

Marriage Is Right

Please understand first of all that the desire to marry is a very good thing.

It is really a noble inclination to enter the first of all human societies, the family, and with another Catholic to receive a great sacrament. The thought of a peaceful home and the joy of finding a career in family and parenthood are inspirations to fit oneself for this career. Planning ahead to be a good husband or a good wife and an excellent parent is distinctly praiseworthy.

Anyone can realize at once that this is quite different from deliberate thoughts and desires for the sex relationship.

You see, the thought is the springboard to the action.

The desire, when it is complete and deliberately entertained, needs only opportunity for it to become a reality.

If a person long desires and dreams about something, you may be sure that, given the opportunity, he will want to experience it.

So if a young person thinks about the sex relationship and imagines himself or herself in its enjoyments, there is every reason to fear that desire may grow too strong to be controlled. Since marriage is still long out of the question, he may well attempt the thing about which he dreams. For that matter he may go out to make the opportunity if an opportunity does not offer itself.

Good or Bad

It is important to realize that in themselves thoughts about sex are neither good nor bad.

Our Blessed Lady in her conversation with the Angel Gabriel indicated that she understood the significance of sex. Our Blessed Lord had to move among sinners, had to see the sinful as well as know the good and the virtuous. Doctors must fully understand all that is connected with sex and its varied consequences. The priest goes into the confessional only after he has been trained to instruct and guide and forgive and cure all types of sin, even the worst.

So too a married man may think of his wife in the most intimate way and, when he is absent from her, dream of life together with her. There is no sin in this.

A young person may find that thoughts concerning sex have a way of coming unbidden to his mind. In themselves these are, as I have said, neither good nor bad. For growing people they are however dangerous. The boy and the girl are young; their experience with self-control is limited; the urge toward love and passion is a new thing with them. To allow the thought to remain, to dwell upon it, much more to nurture it, to turn it into an active desire is to court real danger.

However the young person may wisely regard the presence of such thoughts as a sign of growing maturity. Children are

not so disturbed. The arrival of such thoughts means: You are approaching the adult state; the life seed is in your body; someday, and not too remotely, you will be ready for marriage and the responsibilities and rewards of parenthood.

Why Wrong?

But why is a deliberate thought about or desire for the exercise of sex wrong?

Why, for that matter, is it evil to experience passion and sex outside of marriage?

Once more we come to the fundamental reason: because sex, love, and passion are concerned with the production of human life. Human life is infinitely precious, created by God, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Anything that imperils its safe entry into the world couldn't possibly be right. Deliberately harbored impure thoughts and the desire for sex actions lead to actions that imperil life. Impure actions, the exercise of the sexual function outside of marriage, violently imperil the origins of life.

Hence they are wrong.

God's Reward

Let's go back over this a little more fully.

We can ask why it is that love and sex are pleasurable experiences.

God is very generous with us, His children. He never asks us to do anything for Him without giving us the certainty of reward. That reward comes often enough right here in this life.

Here is a simple case that illustrates what I mean.

You need to exercise in order to care for your body properly and to develop it and bring it to full and useful maturity.

God doesn't prescribe a series of health exercises. He does not hand out a "Decalogue" of setting-up stunts. Not at all. He gives you the pleasurable instinct for games and sports. You love to toss a ball around. You enjoy walking in the sun. You throw yourselves vigorously into the exercise of dancing. You

swim in the surf, go mountain climbing, ski, skate, play tennis or golf. If you asked yourselves what you are doing, you would reply, quite rightly, "We are having fun." If God were asked what you are doing, He could with equal right answer, "My son and my daughter are building up their bodies for fine uses."

God makes exercise full of enjoyment as a reward to you for your taking exercise and thus safeguarding your health for His work.

Pleasure in Food

Food is necessary for the health of our systems. Without food we should soon shrivel and die. But God does not hand us our food in tasteless capsules, nor does He order us to report to the doctor once a week for a shot of food in the arm. Instead He gives us all the delights of food and drink.

We eat our food and in the process build up our strength. The more we enjoy our food, the more likely we are to have full, rich health.

I am safe in betting that when you sat down to your Thanksgiving dinner last year you did not deliberately say, "Now I shall build up my health as God commanded." What you probably said was, "Oh what a wonderful dinner!" You ate. The food you ate went to restore lost tissues and build new ones. You rose from the table, abounding in food and health. For the care you took of your health, God had actually repaid you with all the joys of good eating.

If people did not have the God-given joy in games, they would take little of the exercise necessary for health. If they did not find food delicious, they would soon let their bodies starve and would find themselves unable to do God's work.

The Parallel

The parallel is easy to draw.

God wants children. The task of bearing children, of educating and training them are heavy burdens. God says: "If you will give me children, I will repay you with the joys and pleasures of love and sex."

So God has placed in love deep peace and affection, joy in the company of another, stimulation and inspiration.

God has attached to sex the satisfaction and ecstasy of passion.

The whole process is a close connection between work done for God and the reward that God gives for that work.

Thus:

The life germ develops in the body of the man and the woman.

Each finds in himself (herself) an urge toward the other.

Beyond that physical urge they recognize that they have tastes in common and mental and spiritual compatibility that will last after passion dies down.

They know they are in love.

As always happens with love, there follows the desire for union.

They realize that the highest physical expression of their love will be the communication to each other of the rights to their bodies, the exercise of those rights perhaps resulting in the joining of the seeds of life.

They marry, unite, and accept the possibilities, responsibilities, and burdens—together with the joys and the privileges—of parenthood.

And as they exercise their love and express their passion, God pays them back with the joy and happiness, physical satisfaction and mental peace that now are theirs.

They give God sons and daughters. God gives them their reward in the joys of marriage, the delights and satisfactions of love.

What of the Teen-Agers?

What has this to do with the teen-ager?

A great deal. Love and passion in their varied expressions are intended by God to be His reward to the husband and the wife who agree to undertake the burdens of parenthood.

It can happen that boys and girls discover the possibility of experiencing these joys and pleasures outside of marriage. To

a greater or less degree the sexual organs respond to impulses once the seed has begun to develop.

So the evil boy or girl says: "Good! I will accept this pleasure, even deliberately excite it in myself or in someone else or in both of us. In our case it will have nothing to do with the origin of life. We'll see to that. It will be purely a selfish thing. I will accept these rewards of parenthood, though I am in no position even to think of doing the work of a parent."

I feel sure that any honest young person would say, quite candidly, "That looks to me like a form of theft."

Theft

And so it is.

The precious seed of life is sometimes wasted.

Passion is excited without any intention to help God create life.

Young unmarried people act as if they were married and were beginning the preliminaries of the creation of a child.

So while love and passion inside of marriage are beautiful, outside of marriage they become theft and a kind of perversion.

Love and passion bind a husband and his wife close in the unity of the family. Love and passion give them a united career as possible parents, serve as the basis on which to build the home securely for both—with peace for the man, affection for the woman.

Outside of marriage love and passion can be totally selfish gestures. The man and the woman cannot be united and should not be united. The thought that children might result from the union probably appalls them.

No family is started, no home begun, no career initiated. There is, not peace, but disturbed minds; not security, but insecurity; not affection, but selfish lust.

All this is what makes sex outside of marriage a dangerous and an evil thing.

All this is the reason that sins against marriage are sins against life, and these sins are sins against the whole human race.

Preparation

An adult is, as we suggested before, a fully developed person.

He has trained his hands so that he can command their services. He is not constantly stumbling over his feet. He has prepared his mind to handle problems and to solve them. His voice is firm and steadily pitched; it does not go skyrocketing up or diving down or scattering in a shower of squeaks.

He has a mastery of his emotions. He does not shake in uncontrolled fears or explode in wild rages. Unlike the baby he does not grab for food or the diamond pin. He can see food without becoming a jaguar; he can drink without gulping.

He is in other words a person in command of himself.

He is mentally, physically, emotionally mature.

The period of adolescence is the period of general preparation for life.

The physical developments of adolescence are in the case of a man or a woman destined for successful maturity accompanied by mental, emotional, and spiritual developments. During that period of adolescence the small boy grows to be a fine priest or an honest businessman; the little girl develops into a pure sister or a noble nurse. Both follow the line that leads to consecration to God or to success in marriage and success in parenthood.

How they develop at this time of adolescence is the guarantee of their future. Happiness follows their ripening to strong, full characters.

Here Is Self-Control

A young person does not learn to use love and sex by using them. He learns to use love and sex by deserving to use them.

Only that man becomes a reverent, strong, affectionate, and satisfactory husband who has been a reverent, strong, respectfully affectionate and trustworthy young man. It is the pure, sweet, strong young woman who develops into the virtuous, loving, and peace-giving wife and noble mother.

The one real way to wreck adolescence is to give way to passion and give free rein to sex. This is the road to the destruc-

tion of will power. This is the way to make of the emotions wild horses and untrained jungle animals. This is the method by which young people lose the possibility of being trustworthy or of deserving trust from or in others.

The premature use of sex, the wasting of the seed, may of course have bad physical and mental effects. They may weaken and debilitate the body. They disturb the mind and fill it full of unhealthy images and a residue of worry and confusion that may later result in disorders of emotion and mind.

Here Is Strength

On the other hand the young people who keep themselves pure steadily grow strong. Emotions are servants when we have mastered them; we are slaves under the lash of emotions when they have mastered us. No other discipline is more likely to produce a self-controlled, secure, well-developed person than the schooling to that calmness that masters the impure thoughts that enter the mind and puts down with certainty the inclinations that rise in the flesh.

That essential quality of trustworthiness shines forth in the whole character of a young person who can be trusted to resist opportunities to sin and certainly trusted never to be the incitement of sin in another.

Youngsters who are constantly releasing their emotions, displaying love and affection in careless fashion, actually arousing their passions again and again may find that they can no longer control their passions. Their passions become, as the ancient poets often expressed it, like wild beasts that have trapped instead of having been trapped, that control instead of being controlled.

Such young people can say no to temptation only with frightful tearing and agony.

The slightest thought or desire seems likely to trip them up.

A suggestive picture in a magazine sends their imaginations racing wildly after sin.

The evil story told by a chance companion sets their emotions in a whirlwind that blows them about for perhaps days.

Any opportunity for sin pulls them irresistibly toward sin.

They live between temptation and remorse, between the desire to sin and the fear of sin's consequences, between self-excited urges and self-accusing recriminations.

Not much of a preparation for strong manhood or strong womanhood, is it?

What of Emotions?

Yet it is important to remember that the most violent sinner can reform. With the grace of God people have turned from evil practices to repentance and the virtuous life. But how stupid to build up passions that must with terrific effort be reconquered, to slip into vice that is so hard to get rid of, to adopt practices of which one must later be totally ashamed.

Emotion is one of the most beautiful gifts of God. Emotion makes possible high poetry and good music and patriotism and mother love and affection and the creative arts and the appreciation of beauty.

...But not emotions that run riot, whip the possessor into states of confusion and wild desire, and tear peace to shreds.

...Not emotions that become hunters of innocence and betrayers of the future.

...Not emotions that make of the person's life a series of shipwrecks.

A love of good food may be the sign of high civilization; the inability to control the food and drink appetite creates the drunkard and the glutton.

A cultivated man experiences cultured thrill as he looks at a great picture or a piece of beautiful jewelry; the same picture or piece of jewelry will create in the kleptomaniac or the thief an emotional excitement that will cause his fingers to twitch and his lips to slaver.

The Liar and the Boaster

A man who has a strong natural temper may become a powerful leader of men when he has made that temper serve him and his high purposes; each time his temper slips control and causes him to curse, strike, rail, do cruel and ugly things, he is weakened, and he becomes less the master of his passion. He no longer controls his temper; his temper controls him.

When evil boys brag about how many sins they have committed and how many girls they have tricked or persuaded into the loss of innocence, only the very immature and stupid adolescent thinks them mature or strong or developed. Their careless boasting about passion and conquests merely proves that they are in the cruel grip of their own emotions. Sin drives them to things that they know are wrong. Their selfish greed for sexual pleasure makes them abuse their creative powers, waste the precious seed of life, and harm their own bodies and souls and the bodies and the souls of the girls who were intended to be the pure mothers of the race.

Controlled Emotions

The whole of a satisfactory and happy life depends in a kind of way upon the control of emotions. Emotions make wonderful auxiliaries of the will; they can beat the weak will to a brutal death.

You are desperately afraid of a man who cannot resist the urge to drink . . . who is cruel and brutal . . . who flies into what we call an ungovernable rage . . . who strikes first and thinks afterward.

You are even more afraid of the woman whose desire for drink makes her neglect her family and stumble into the gutter . . . whose tongue is nagging and scandalous . . . who has given such rein to her greed that she is a confirmed shoplifter . . . who like the incredible women guards of nazi concentration camps delights to beat and torture and make others suffer.

Closely Tied In

Yet history and experience show that all emotional control can be tied in closely with the control of the sexual urge. Because this urge is so strong, strength is developed in our conquest of it. A man who has tamed a lion is not afraid to try to train a cat or a puppy. A man or a woman who has brought the sex urge under reasonable control finds the other passions almost easy to handle.

But men who are passionately sexual and who indulge that passion recklessly are often men whose other emotions are wild

too. Frequently they are cruel, brutal to women, contemptuous of children. They drink much. Their tongues are ugly and dirty.

On the other hand the man who has learned to control his sex instincts is a man you can trust. He has mastered his emotions rather well. He will not abuse your trust or make life too difficult for you.

A pure woman is a gentle, sweet, gracious lady or a strong heroine whose very presence makes life happy and pleasant for those around her.

Let's Grow Up

So the young person who begins to feel the sexual instincts can realize too that now as never before—and never again—is the chance to grow up.

Self-control is almost a sign of growing up. Disciplined minds, trained hands, graceful feet, a cultivated voice, emotions under control—these mark and distinguish the real adult.

There are millions of men and women who never come to maturity. They are, whatever their years or their stature, emotional children. An impure thought throws them into a dither. An impure story gets them all excited. Any improper suggestion causes their emotions to race toward compliance. No wonder they cannot make a success of their marriage. They are simply emotional children.

Sometimes I am convinced that impure temptations of the mind are allowed by God in order to give us a chance to train ourselves in self-control and self-mastery. It was for this purpose, one of my friends assures me, that St. Augustine was allowed impure temptations of the mind. It is the strong person who can promptly put aside an evil mental image and start his mind thinking about something fine. Only the well-developed person can smile at a temptation in pity or disdain and walk steadily down the path of manly or womanly virtue.

Such Nonsense

You can see how tragic and absurd is the widespread attitude that passionate and uncontrolled men are manly and that impure women are brave and daring.

There is nothing easier than to yield to a temptation. There is nothing very brave about taking the leash off one's sexual urge, regardless of consequences.

If this were brave, then it would be bravery on the part of the soldier who "had the courage" to leave the battle front because he had a date with a girl, or on the part of the cashier who "had the nerve" to rob the till in order to buy his sweetheart a fur coat.

This kind of courage is the courage of criminals; this kind of manliness is the manliness of thieves.

Lucky the woman who marries a man who has learned self-control. He will be considerate in his love and gentle and affectionate in his passion. He will give her happiness without fears and emotion that is noble, strong, and inspiring.

Lucky the man who marries a girl who when she comes to him is pure, virtuous, strong, trustworthy, who has been true to God before marriage, as she will be true to her husband during their life together.

Natural Stimulants

There are certain things that the youngest adolescent recognizes as designed by God and nature to stimulate the sexual emotions. Inside marriage these are all blessed by God. Indeed it is important for Catholics always to remember that between a man and his wife there can be no sin except the deliberate prevention of life.

These things, which we instantly recognize, were designed to excite the passions and arouse the sexual emotions. Though they are not the sexual act itself, they tend to prepare the way for the sexual act.

The kiss may be one of these preliminaries to passion.

In itself the kiss is no more necessarily sexual or passionate than is a handshake. We Americans are a little amused when we see bearded French generals kissing the soldiers on whom they pin medals. Mothers kiss their children. A father may even welcome with a kiss a returning son. The kiss of peace is an ancient sign of friendship and unity of souls.

Usually the attitude of a girl toward a kiss is somewhat different from the attitude of a boy. A girl loves affection and is a little afraid of passion. She enjoys being admired. So to her the kiss seems to indicate that she is attractive to some boy, and she finds in a kiss the manifestation of his affection for her.

Nature's Intent

With a boy the attitude is different. He may first kiss a girl calmly and peacefully when he says good night, and the whole experience may seem quite harmless. But if he continues to kiss her, the warmth and intensity grow. In no time at all he is likely to find himself hot and excited, the sexual urge rising within him, and strange but unmistakable yearnings manifesting themselves in his body and his soul.

Under the influence of his emotions the girl is aware of the same emotions rising in herself.

Nature, you see, designed the kiss to do exactly this.

Many of the warm-blooded peoples are very realistic about the whole matter. The Latins do not permit a young man and a young woman to kiss until they are married. The kiss, if it is permitted at all, is given on the girl's finger tips or on her cheek. The Latins seem to work on the assumption that the kiss can easily stir a man to passion, arouse his sexual instincts, and make for fierce temptation. They know that the kiss is the natural way by which a man and a woman indicate their great desire for the union of their love.

The Embrace

The embrace may be somewhat the same as the kiss.

Again in itself the embrace is natural. Thus a mother hugs her baby. The father of the prodigal embraced his son and held him close in his arms. Mothers and daughters sometimes embrace in the intensity of joy. Soldiers after victory or athletes after the winning score will hug one another fiercely—and quite harmlessly.

The embrace is in itself a symbol of emotion, as the kiss is an external sign of inward feeling.

But the embrace can definitely be something worse.

It can be the sign and opportunity for union, the closest possible union, between a man and a woman. Nature so designed it. It brings the man and the woman so close that the passing of the seed of life is easy and natural.

As a consequence and as a part of the general flowing plan nature designed the embrace of affection and love to excite both the man and the woman. It was meant to be stimulating. The sexual urge responds to it with vigor and promptness.

Let's be realistic. Here are two young people moving toward the time of marriage. Within them the seed of life has fully matured. Out of deep affection they allow themselves long and fervent embraces . . . and they sin.

For what happens?

If there does not result a strong reaction and an emotional excitement with possibly the desire to go further than the embrace, I think that you and I would agree that their emotions are more than a little below normal. Wouldn't you doubt whether they were made to the pattern of young people likely to be deeply affectionate husband and wife?

It Goes Like This

Young people are supposed to be hot-blooded.

Their emotions were designed by God and nature to rise swiftly.

They are moving rapidly toward marriage, upon which will rest God's blessing for their exercise of close sexual unity.

When they give themselves the privileges of close embraces, they are asking their natures not to respond. They are trying to hold their natural emotions strongly in check. They are doing the things that nature meant to be exciting, and they are hoping and trusting that in some mysterious way their instincts will not follow nature's destined course. Though they are outside of marriage, they are acting like married people. . . . And this is serious sin.

For nature is strong, and the sex urge is powerful, and passion at their age is a young and vigorous and insistent thing,

and their control is weak and undeveloped, and they may not excite themselves sexually if they do not want to fall into serious sin.

Tantalus

For them to indulge in the close embrace and to hope that nothing further will happen is foolish—and a little cruel.

It is somewhat like leading a hungry man to a table covered with food and then telling him that he might look but not eat.

It is much like Tantalus within constant sight of drink with which he cannot slake his thirst.

It is asking a man who knows that he has a strong urge to steal constantly to handle unwatched money and yet to be strictly honest.

Yes it can be done... it has been done... but seldom by young people, in whom passions are strong and vigorous. Their sexual urge is too vivid and compelling. The consequences are often sheer torture to the boy and worry to the girl.

If such embraces are continued, they are likely to spell trouble—and a possible or probable fall.

Nature can be pushed only so far.

Is It Love?

Young people are smart indeed if they learn early to distinguish between affection and love. Affection between young people can be sweet and dear. They can know real love only when they are fully adult and completely grown-up.

The sexual urge is not love. It is only a sign that one may soon be capable of love.

Excitement and physical reaction are not love. The animals feel this to some extent.

Love is not a transient and selfish thing. Love is a strong, lasting thing. Love is, not the basis for a "crush," but the foundation for a family; not a spice of life, but a start for a new life; not something greedy, but something generous and self-sacrificing.

Decent and wholesome love moves toward marriage and responsibilities.

Casual and dangerous "love" has no thought of marriage and is quite irresponsible.

Decent and wholesome love wants most of all the happiness of the other person.

Lust has a way of wanting only self-gratification, at whatever cost to the other person.

Easy Habit

Kissing and embracing—or, to use your words, necking and petting (the terms change with every generation)—easily grow to be habits.

Indeed they have a way of spoiling one's enjoyment of more normal and wholesome things.

They are a little like heavily spiced foods, which kill the appetite for the good, substantial things that are necessary for health.

You have known boys and girls who, no matter how much the fun, regard the evening as a failure if it did not include passionate kissing and embracing.

The boy wants it from every girl he goes out with.

The girl comes to expect it. She may school herself to dodge it. She may for a long time try the tactic of distracting the boy. Then she begins to wonder whether she is attractive to him. So she endures the necking and petting patiently. And finally she too looks for it eagerly—to the exclusion of much else that is good and wholesome.

It's a bad way for young people to get into.

My personal feeling is that all this necking and petting kill untold opportunity for good times and make these premature manifestations of love the sole form of fun and enjoyment.

Original Sin

It is impossible for a Catholic to discuss this important subject without at least a reference to original sin. One of the consequences of original sin is the thing called concupiscence. That is a word frequently heard; its meaning is not too difficult.

Man's nature and woman's nature were meant to be in nice balance. Their senses were under the control of their wills; they always willed the things they knew to be right and just.

By original sin that balance was destroyed. The senses rebelled against the will, as we have often and sometimes disastrously experienced. We have a strong inclination to do the very things that our conscience tells us we must not do. We choose the things that are bad for us and do the things that we know will harm us and others.

Often the conduct of young people is one of the strong proofs of the yielding to this concupiscence. They give their senses full play against the decisions of their will. They know what is good for themselves and for others and what makes for the happiness of a full life; they do just the opposite.

Such conduct is simply disastrous to mankind, throwing an age, a whole race out of proper balance and line.

Motives

Why be pure?

In my whole discussion here, since I did not wish it to be too long, I have almost omitted the matter of motives.

But we can resume them briefly here.

God gave us the wonderful creative power of sex, the power to call into the world His sons and daughters. The exercise of this power in parenthood is an action so splendid that Christ gave it the consecration of a great sacrament. St. Paul could find no finer comparison for the love of Christ for His Church than the consecrated love of husband and wife.

God rewards the correct exercise of this creative faculty—blessed through the sacrament of matrimony—with the joys of married life, the pleasures of sex.

On the other hand nothing else brings the world more misery and pain, more sickness of body and peril to the future, more sadness of women and brutality among men, more tears and disease for little children than does the misuse of this great creative power. Its very greatness makes the abuses of it terri-

fying things, almost sacrileges. Its importance to the human race makes any betrayal of it a betrayal of humanity itself.

Because it is so important, God honors and loves fine fathers and devoted mothers. He asks priests and brothers and nuns to give up the exercise of this power so that they can prove to the world the possibility of purity and so that with no other love than the love of Himself and of souls they can serve His children.

The Church honors virgins, the pure in body and in soul, by elevating them to the altar as saints. The Church is proud of Catholic parents. The Church is happy in its unmarried, virginal priests, in its men and women religious.

All this I have dealt with at length elsewhere. All this I recall to your minds now. We ask you to be pure, not because we want to take anything away from you. We ask it so that God will bless your married life with real happiness and great achievement. We ask you to be pure now so that you may be strong hereafter. We ask you to be good in your youth so that you may be noble and fine and generous and brave in your adult years.

Love purity.

Purity is the great virtue on which depends the future of the race. A virtuous nation is a strong nation; a vicious, lustful nation is already doomed.

And a nation is no stronger than the young men and women who are to be the future fathers and mothers of that nation.

Don't Bottle Up

Many a young man and a young woman suffer unnecessarily because they bottle up deep inside themselves their problems and temptations, sometimes even their lapses and their sins. Don't give yourself this unnecessary suffering. Such bottling up generates, creates a sort of autointoxication, a self-poisoning. The smart young person has a regular confessor, someone to whom he or she goes for advice and direction. The mere telling of your problems is a relief. The reassurance that you receive is a source of new courage. Often things that looked desperate turn out to be unimportant . . . and obstacles melt in the mere telling of them.

Always there is mature and reasoned counsel. Always there are the simple remedies that make the difference between steady feet and stumbling feet, between security and hesitation, between a clear vision of right and a clouded, troubled mind.

By Way of Conclusion

This then is the story, and these are the simple facts.

God needs fine men and women who will unite in blessed, wholesome love and give Him strong, pure children.

The world needs men and women who are fully grown-up, who are in control of their passions, who are obeyed by their emotions.

You can make of yourselves sound adults worthy to work with God in the creation of the human race.

You can be for your future partner in marriage a strong character; you can bring him fresh, unspoiled love and sexual powers that are ready to express deep love and create fine, healthy life.

Or . . .

What need is there for an "or"?

God's ways are happy ways. The rules of nature are the rules of wholesome and successful living.

God blesses with rich endowment of character pure young men and women.

If they marry, God looks upon their marriage with approval and the certainty that here are His worthy partners.

From among His pure men and women He selects His future priests and His consecrated men and women religious.

With these pure men and women He makes the world a happier place. And through those of His sons and daughters who marry He fills heaven with the fruits of their love, the stalwart men and virtuous women who are trained by well-controlled, trustworthy fathers and mothers.



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