

vision of how he may, as a social worker, or a student volunteer, or a preacher of the gospel, or a Christian citizen, enter as a character into the epic, the final books of which can never be written till the kingdom of God shall come.

THE PROBLEMS OF BOYHOOD

A COURSE OF ETHICS FOR BOYS IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

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Study IX. Speech: Slang and Profanity

Our home training, our education, our character are constantly being reflected by our speech. Men's judgment of us is more likely to be based upon how we speak and what we say than upon anything else. Men's judgment of each other in this respect may sometimes be wrong, but it is generally correct. A man's speech usually betrays his inner life. What he thinks determines what he is, and what he thinks determines what he says. "Out of the abundance of the heart," said Jesus, "the mouth speaketh." Think of the people you know best and see if this is not so in their cases.

The characteristics of speech include not only the words used, but the tone of the voice and the inflection given to the spoken words. These are first acquired by imitation and early become fixed habits. Members of the same family often show marked similarities in tone and manner of speech. Certain differences of pronunciation of the vowels mark the person born in New England, in the South, and in other parts of the

country, so that one may tell pretty accurately from another's speech in what region he has lived. Certain words and phrases mark certain localities. The New Englander "guesses," the Southerner "reckons." Give some other illustrations.

What is the value of an agreeable voice? Think of the teachers you have had, the preachers and other public speakers you have listened to. Has the quality of their voices had anything to do with their effect upon you? You must have known some boy who was a bully among his fellows. Did his voice and manner of speech give any clue to his character? Apply the same test to any brutal or vulgar person whom you have seen.

What are the qualities of voice and manner of speech that seem to you most attractive and effective in others? Are not these worth your striving hard to secure? If you have already fallen into other habits it is not an easy task. How will you go about it?

However desirable a pleasing voice

and manner of speech may be, these are of far less importance than the words spoken. If one has thoughts worth expressing they are most effective when expressed in clear, direct speech. A vocabulary large enough to express careful distinctions in thought is necessary and should be used with discrimination. Discuss the training in English which you have received in school, with especial reference to the value of composition and extemporaneous speaking. One ought constantly to be enlarging the stock of words which he can use. One of the axioms which we laid down when we were studying habit will help us greatly. Use the word you wish to add to your vocabulary at the earliest opportunity and find several occasions to use it. It will then become a permanent acquisition.

The habit of using slang is very common. Where does slang originate? Does it serve any useful purpose? Would a newspaper account of a baseball game be as interesting and effective if written without slang? It might be a valuable exercise to translate such a "story" into the sort of English that your teacher in the high school would approve. Some slang expressions may seem to be more expressive and picturesque in a particular case than any other words. The chief objection to slang is that it is usually made to serve too wide a use and to take the place of more carefully selected words. At the present time such inane expressions as "I should worry" and "I should say" are heard on every hand and indicate either that the speaker has no thoughts to express or has fallen into a most unfortunate habit of concealing such thoughts as he has.

Whatever defense may be offered for the use of slang there is absolutely no excuse for profanity. Among the Ten Commandments we find "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain." Was profanity wrong before the Ten Commandments were written? Would it be wrong now if the commandment had never been written? The real essence of profanity is irreverence. Why is irreverence sinful? Read the teaching of Jesus on this in Matt. 5:33-37. What did he mean when he said, "But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil"?

Swearing is a habit easily acquired and not easily broken. The habitual swearer does not think of the meaning of his words, but uses them to give emphasis to his speech. In this respect swearing is like slang, showing lack of discrimination in the use of language. Is swearing less wicked because used without thought of the real meaning of the words? Boys are not likely to swear in the presence of their mothers or others for whom they have respect. What does this show?

What kind of people are most addicted to profanity? In what places are you most likely to hear it? Why is profanity so frequent in connection with athletics? There is probably more swearing in football than in connection with any other game. Why? Football coaches often swear at a player who makes a misplay, and "cursing up" a team between the halves is a frequent practice and is supposed to put "pep" into a team. Many schools would not tolerate such a thing, and a coach would

send from the field a player who was profane. Would such a team be less likely to win? Would you rather play on such a team?

You may know of some strong and able man who uses profanity. Is this characteristic of such men? Does it add to their strength or is it a hindrance to them?

Study X. Clean Thinking and Speaking

We have said in an earlier study that the mind is like the sensitive plate of the photographer. If you will consider, you will see that this plate is much more sensitive to some impressions than to others. It probably took a good many exposures to fix permanently in your mind the multiplication tables or the inflection of a Latin verb. Other impressions you will find there, still vivid, from a single exposure. I recall vividly the words of a "smutty" song which I heard when a boy which I have never repeated in speech, but which I can never forget. Many things which I once learned laboriously and which I would gladly remember, I cannot recall. We cannot always avoid hearing improper speech, nor keep from having improper thoughts. We can avoid seeking and dwelling upon them. Examine your own mind and see whether you enjoy thinking of these things.

A self-controlled man has control of his thoughts as well as of his words and other outward acts. Two helps may be suggested. First, avoid whatever suggests impure thoughts. What are some of these? Second, keep your mind busy with wholesome things. Athletic games are of great value because they give boys so much to think and talk about. What else do you think of that serves the same purpose? Perhaps you have discovered that it is more difficult to control your thoughts at certain times or in certain places. The condition of

your body has much to do with this. If you take plenty of exercise, do not overeat, sleep with your window open, get up when you first wake and take a bath, a cold one preferably, you will find it easy to keep your body strong and your mind clean. You will find these matters fully and helpfully treated in *From Youth to Manhood*, by Dr. Winfield S. Hall, published by the Y.M.C.A. Press, New York.

As we have seen, clean speech follows clean thought. While it may be that a person of unclean thought may not always give expression to these thoughts, a person whose inner life is clean will not use unclean speech. "Smutty" storytelling and other forms of vulgar speech are very common among boys, and it is easy to fall into the habit without realizing how demoralizing are its effects. The gymnasium locker-rooms, school corridors, fraternity houses, poolrooms, and other places where boys gather by themselves offer frequent opportunity for such talk. In what places and under what circumstances have you heard or used such language? Boys sometimes think it is a sign of smartness or manliness to use vulgar language. This is more likely to be the case if the captain of the team or some other prominent boy has this habit. Discuss the responsibility which this places upon the captain.

If you have made up your mind that unclean speech is wrong, what can and

ought you to do about it? You can and must keep your own speech clean. The habit of clean speech once formed is a safeguard against much that is degrading. But is this enough? What should you do when others use "smutty" language? A group of boys in school drew up and signed an agreement that they would not use vulgar language and would not allow another to use it in their presence without protest. The result was an immediate lessening of the amount of "smut" in that school. Would such decision and action in your "bunch" make you unpopular? If so, would it not be better for you to get out of the "bunch"? A certain boy to whom another had made an improper proposal told him never to repeat it, and when he did so, promptly knocked him down. A well-known college ath-

lete at the close of his last football season was given a dinner by his friends. In the course of the dinner one of the men told a vile story, and the guest of honor without a word walked out of the room. These boys valued their own self-respect more highly than any temporary consideration of popularity. No one with the manly courage required to administer such a rebuke as this need fear being called a "goody-goody" or a prig. There are persons to whom an acquaintance would never think of telling a vulgar story. This is the highest possible tribute to a man's character. Do your friends tell vulgar stories to you?

The devout psalmist offered this prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

Study XI. The Problem of Sex

The period of adolescence is marked by the development of the organs of sex. At this period the boy grows rapidly, his voice becomes deeper, his beard begins to grow. He is thus taking on the physical characteristics of a man. These physical changes are accompanied by corresponding changes in his inner life. His mind dwells strangely upon thoughts of the opposite sex. He begins to chafe at the restraints placed upon him at home or in school. He is shaken by forces the source and nature of which he does not understand. It is not necessary nor desirable that a boy should think much upon those changes taking place in him. It is not desirable that he should worry about them at all. They are simply Nature's

way of turning a boy into a man. It is, however, important that he should early know the truth about certain things concerning which he is naturally inquisitive and about which he is almost certain otherwise to receive false or misleading information. Ignorance here, as perhaps nowhere else, breeds disaster.

The organs of sex are provided for the purpose of reproduction. In the study of botany or zoölogy you may have become familiar with this wonderful process, by which from the union of male and female cells plants and animals reproduce their kind. This is, perhaps, the most wonderful of all the processes of nature. It is, however, a subject about which boys hear little except in the form of vulgar jest. Do fathers

generally talk frankly with their sons about this? Where did you get your knowledge of the subject? Do you know words which are not vulgar in which you can talk of the organs of sex and the facts of reproduction? Do you think that sex hygiene should be taught in the schools? If not, why, and where should it be taught?

The desire for reproduction is one of the strongest forces in our lives. Man alone of all the animals has polluted this natural instinct. This is due in some degree to the delay which our social customs have placed in the way of marriage. The power and desire of reproduction come long before the boy has completed his education and is ready to assume the responsibilities of married life. There are other reasons which cause late marriages or even prevent marriage at all. Discuss some of these. Anything which discourages marriage at a reasonable age or lessens the sense of responsibility which marriage involves tends toward moral deterioration. Discuss the effect of divorce.

From the earliest times of which we know there has been prostitution. Of late there has been much discussion of the social evil, and investigations have been made as to its causes and effects. It is well known that there are thousands of women, mainly young girls, who live in prostitution. These girls are mostly recruited from the ignorant classes and are seldom led into a life of shame by their own deliberate choice, but often by deceit and not infrequently by actual force. Once started upon this life they seldom emerge, but continue to pander to the evil passions of men, cast out by their own sex and despised by the

men whose lust they satisfy, until within a few years, usually not more than five or six, they die miserably as a result of the diseases almost certain to be contracted in this sort of life. And their places must be filled by others, and so the ceaseless sacrifice goes on.

A boy of clean mind and manly spirit who knows the truth will not cause a girl to fall nor share in her degradation once she has fallen. To do so is essentially unfair and unsportsmanlike. Seldom does a girl fall who has not yielded to the stronger force or deception of man. What would you do to the boy who had wronged your sister? The double standard of morality required of men and women is also unsportsmanlike. A girl who has fallen becomes an outcast. A man who contributes to her shame is socially acceptable. You would not marry such a girl. Is it fair for a man to demand that his wife be purer than he is?

All boys should expect to become husbands and fathers. Association with loose women is almost certain to bring diseases of the most loathsome sort, sometimes incurable. These may be communicated to one's wife and children. In this way much suffering is caused to those who are innocent of fault. From the manly feeling of chivalry toward women as well as from consideration of fairness toward the pure girl whom he will some day ask to marry him, and the children whom they will rear, a boy should keep himself from sexual contamination.

Many boys who are not tempted to sexual immorality of this sort are yet in danger of yielding through ignorance or the suggestion of vicious companions

to the habit of self-abuse. This, if persisted in, will lead to harmful results. It is an unnatural practice in which no boy of clean mind and self-control will persist. If continued, the practice tends to weaken a boy's will and leads to his moral and physical degeneracy. A good antidote for this is to keep the mind free from evil by filling it with something else of engrossing interest. Avoid any place, picture, or whatever else gives evil suggestion. Above all, have nothing

to do with anyone who suggests sexual excess of any sort. I know a boy who promptly knocked down another who made such a suggestion to him.

Because the impulses and desires of our sexual natures are so strong, constant watchfulness and restraint are necessary. The fight for clean living is a hard one, calling for the best there is in any boy. The penalty for defeat is heavy, but the reward of victory is sure and enduring.

Study XII. Alcoholic Liquors and Tobacco

The census reports for 1910 show that \$1,800,000 is annually spent for liquor in the United States. This is the same amount that is spent for food and clothing. If you can find the figures, compare this sum with the cost of education, the value of the property of our colleges and universities, the value of church property, or make any other comparison that occurs to you. The average consumption of liquor for every person in the United States is about twenty-three gallons per year.

We should naturally assume that in a country whose people are intelligent, any article of food or drink, consumed in such quantities and at such cost, must be beneficial. What is the fact regarding liquor? Can you think of any beneficial results from its use? How do you account for its extensive use?

The arguments against the use of intoxicating liquors are manifold and convincing. Its effect upon health and length of life may be computed accurately. The statistics of English life insurance companies show that the average

death-rate per thousand among total abstainers is 9.14 per cent, among drinkers 26.82 per cent, almost three times as great. That the use of liquor reduces a man's efficiency is evidenced by the fact that the employers of men in industry and commerce discriminate against drinkers in favor of total abstainers. Discuss this with some railroad official, manufacturer, or other employer of labor.

You will frequently hear the claim made that the revenue obtained from licenses adds to the public funds and reduces taxation, or that the liquor business makes business good in other lines. What can be said against these claims? If you can get the statistics for any town which has voted out the saloon, compare the tax rate before and after; also compare the cost of maintaining the police force and jails. Make any other comparisons that seem to bear on the question.

At present there is a nation-wide, even a world-wide, movement against the liquor traffic. Many states and large portions of other states prohibit

the manufacture and sale of liquors. You will hear it said that "prohibition does not prohibit." What other laws do you think of that do not prohibit the crimes against which they aim? What makes it more difficult to prohibit liquor-selling than murder or theft? What do you think of the argument that preventing the sale of liquor is an infringement of a man's "personal liberty"? What limits may society place to the liberty of one of its members?

Topics for further discussion: The saloon and the home; its relation to crime and pauperism; its relation to politics and government.

We have discussed the subject in its general aspects, but like all other moral problems, its final application is a personal one. The drinking habit is easily acquired and, once acquired, is perhaps the most difficult one to break. No one expects to become a drunkard. Have you any reason to think that your will is stronger than that of others? In its beginning, drinking is almost always social. Our American custom of treating is an important factor. Contrast this with the "Dutch treat," and show how our custom leads to harmful results. A group of young men with no serious purpose set out to see the sights. Some one of them takes the lead and the party finds itself in a saloon; a few drinks follow, and on they go to some worse resort. Next morning some of the boys to whom this was the first experience of the sort are overwhelmed with regret. The important question then is, Are they strong enough not to repeat the experience? A boy shrinks from seeming to his companions to be a prig. Should one fear this when it is a

question of drinking? Among men there is no need of hesitation to decline a drink. Discuss Secretary of State Bryan's practice of serving no liquor at state dinners in his home. Does the fact that the foreign guests who sit at his table are accustomed to drink at dinner place any obligation upon him to serve wines?

In many cities there are large numbers of young men whose boarding-places or homes are unattractive, to whom the saloon affords an opportunity for brightness and social pleasure. What other places are there to which they might go and find a welcome? Cities are seeing the need of providing at public expense attractive places for healthful recreation for young people. Chicago's system of small recreation parks providing attractive places for reading, dancing, athletic games, swimming, and other forms of recreation is providing for an important need which is being felt and similarly provided for in other cities. What might be done to meet this need in our school buildings and churches?

Little need be said regarding the use of tobacco. The amount of money spent annually for tobacco, though less than that for liquor, is enormous. Look up the figures. That the use of tobacco is harmful in youth is a well-known fact; that it is also injurious to many mature men is also certain; probably it cannot be shown to benefit anyone who uses it. However, the habit is very common, even among very estimable men.

Smoking is an acquired habit against which the body usually rebels at first. How do you account for its prevalence among boys? When training for the

team or for the track boys know that their physical fitness will be greater without tobacco. Why do they not give it up completely?

The use of tobacco is a selfish habit. A man often smokes in the presence of those to whom it is objectionable. Discuss the rights of the motorman on the streetcar to pure air during his working day, or of the stenographer in the office of her employer. Give some other illustrations of the selfishness of the smoker.

It is also, like drinking, an expensive habit for which many men spend money which is needed for the comfort of those dependent upon them. Compute the cost for a period of years of the cigars

of a moderate smoker, reckoning interest at the current rate.

What other arguments can you make against the use of tobacco?

What good reason can you give to justify the use of tobacco for anyone? You doubtless know some men, whose opinions you respect, who use tobacco. Ask them to give you some good reason why they smoke. If they undertake this, see if their reasons are valid. A good rule for a boy in this matter is, wait until you are fully developed physically, say, twenty-one years, before using tobacco. Then do not take it up unless you can find some reason that will satisfy a self-respecting man, even though your father and minister may be addicted to the habit.