

FROM WOLVES TO LAMBS

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Education and Grace



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This work is based on a little, but important, book written by Saint Manuel González, who was bishop of Málaga and Palencia from 1931-1935 (*Grace in Education, or, the Art of Educating with Grace*¹). I have dared to “borrow” his main ideas.²

To whom is this book dedicated? To all educators (priests, parents, teachers, catechists, and anyone who guides someone else), but also to self-educators (those who have received an earlier education, but who are convinced of the need to and the advantages of not only of allowing themselves to be educated, but also of educating themselves).

What does it mean to educate? As one can derive from the etymology, it means “to draw out” and “to guide.” It consists of

¹ Manuel González, *La gracia en la educación o Arte de educar con gracia*, Ed. “El granito de Arena,” Palencia 1956, 377 pages. I follow the general features of this book’s central ideas.

² The great “theses” of this work are from the saint. For this reason, the quoted texts that are cited without any reference are textual citations from the great educator.

“*drawing out* the energies that are dormant, amorphous, unexplored, or twisted in the child, who, like the immanent being that he is, has within himself the beginning and end of his action, and to *guide* those energies to the state of perfection.” “If education is to really warrant and do justice to that name, it is the mysterious and slow action of the hands that, like a fairy, from a clay doll can bring out a man, from a candidate for the devil bring out an angel, from a bad son of a sinful place can bring forth a good son of God.”

To educate, as King Alphonsus X said, is “to work so that a son reaches the perfection of manhood.”

The educator’s work is “greater than that of the most genius sculptor. The sculptor *makes a figure* from a rock or a piece of wood that doesn’t move itself by itself; on the other hand, from a being who moves where he wishes, the educator doesn’t *make* but rather *draws out* a being that, when he wishes it, moves himself to where he ought.”

“For a labor that is so deep, so transforming, and that must come up against many obstacles, an instrument is needed: an instrument that is long-running, steadfast, effective, and flexible; an instrument which, since it must work upon a subject gifted with freedom, and a freedom inclined more to evil than to good, brings with itself, in addition to all those other qualities, that of being pleasurable, of making itself desired and even loved. . . . What is this instrument? Here is my thesis: that all of those helps *with grace*, on its two-fold plane, both natural and supernatural, work; with-

out grace, no. Behold the great instrument for the integral education of man: *grace*.”

1.

Grace

What is grace? In this work, grace is to be understood in two senses: nature and supernatural. When both are united in one person, that person becomes a perfect educator. There have been great saints who have revealed the marvel of these two phenomena, the natural and the divine. It suffices to think of Saint Francis of Assisi, Don Bosco, and Saint Teresa of Jesus (Mother Anne of Saint Bartholomew, Teresa's companion during journeys, would write of her: "She was no friend of sad people, nor was she a sad person herself. Nor did she want those who were in her company to be sad either. She would say: 'from sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us.'").

1) Natural grace

Natural grace is also called "the good angel," "liveliness," etc. Natural grace is the child of ingenuity and of goodness. Ingenuity is what we call "that certain spark," or "mental agility." It is the

art of “quickly taking charge of things.” There have been men and women of great talent but short of ingenuity; likewise, there have been men and women who lack great talent or a great memory, and yet are outstanding in their ideas. Goodness is that quality that spreads good everywhere, of doing good to others. Scripture mentions it: *And I was a witty child and had received a good soul* (W's 8:19 – Douay-Rheims). Speaking informally, we say: “What a good soul he is!” By goodness, we mean that habit which inclines a person to act in conformity with the norms of what is just, upright, and honest.

In an educator, goodness and ingenuity should go together. When they are separated, we have one of the worst deformations of character: ingenuity without goodness. “What an evil beast! From him come forth, like infectious bacteria, slander and jokes that hurt, the cartoons that mock, satire that raises blisters, the obscene joke or word with a double meaning, which gets laughs at the cost of scandal, picaresque murmuring, in short, something which makes some laugh at the cost of making others cry or by wounding them; it is because of this that it is not a breath of grace, but rather a bite or exasperation of ingenuity without goodness, either because ingenuity wasn't able to marry goodness, or, if they did marry, they got divorced at a bad time.” In education, this wreaks havoc: jokes sprouting from a poisoned ingenuity against the faith or against the Church and the pope made by a teacher (or a father or mother) have many times been the breach

through which many children and adolescents have lost their faith or their purity.

2) Supernatural grace: that is, divine grace

“I believe that, if to educate, as King Alphonsus X said, is ‘to work so that a son reaches the perfection of manhood,’ supernatural grace, aided by natural grace and by other means, carries out this office in a wonderful way and, if it can be said this way, doubly so: not only drawing out *complete and balanced men* from men who were full of defects . . . but also elevating them to the honor and exuberance of being *divinized men*. This is where supernatural grace can reach!”

Grace is a divine being that makes us children of God and heirs of His glory.

“It is extremely disheartening to know and to see that the vast majority of Christians do not know the meaning of the word grace, which is a word that, beyond doubt, after the name of Jesus, is the word richest in meaning in the Christian vocabulary!” How much more serious is the ignorance of grace that we find in many educators. . . .

Grace is a *being*, a thing that is, that exists, a reality that is invisible in itself and visible in its effects; it is like an electric current that passes through a wire, or like the heat that penetrates a body and softens it, or turns it red-hot. No one sees the current; no one sees the heat, yet everyone can feel and know their effects. Grace

is not a material being, although it makes use of the material and what is physical as a vehicle, an instrument, and an occasion, like the sensible and material forms of the sacraments, or the external and material words of vocal prayers, the reading of good books, the hearing of the Word of God and of good advice, and the practice of the virtues and of good deeds.

However, it is a *divine* being. That is, it is something elevates a human making them divine. This is something that we simply can't value as we should. Let's give an example: "A flower is beautiful, and a soul in the state of grace is beautiful; both beauties are from God, since He produces them. However, the beauty of the flower is not the same as God's beauty. The flower's beauty is *virtually* in God because God's power [*virtus*, in Latin] produces it; the beauty of the soul in grace is the *very same* beauty of God; it is *formally* in Him, and equal in form. They are only distinguished by the intensity. The soul in grace has this or that degree of God's beauty, and God is beautiful without degree, since He is infinitely beautiful." We learned the effects of divine grace in the *Catechism*: it makes us children of God and heirs to His glory; that is, it has two main effects: filial adoption and eternal beatitude.

Now then, divine grace not only divinizes man but also *makes him perfect as man*. This is a metaphysical principle: the more that an effect participates in its cause, the more perfect it is. As man participates more and more in God, his first cause, he becomes more and more perfect. A man in the state of grace is like God in his knowing, loving, and living; he has more of God. He

participates in the divine way of knowing, loving, and in the divine power, more than an angel without grace; a man full of grace is a man full of God, of perfection. He is a perfect man, a balanced man! A man is said to be “balanced” when he is excellent in his class, or when he is complete, exact, and perfect: perfect and balanced in his soul and in the faculties of his soul, and likewise in his body and in his senses and the movements of his body, and this because of the overflowing of the soul’s grace.

What are the causes of grace? The efficient cause of grace, the author of grace, is only God: only He can give a participation in His nature to a creature. The exemplar cause, meaning, the Model to whom those who receive grace should resemble, is the Son of God by nature, God made man, Jesus Christ. The meritorious cause of grace, the motive or price that moves God to give such a rich treasure to sinful men, is the Passion and Death of His Son, a death on behalf of sinful men. The final cause is, first and foremost, the supreme glorification of God by means of the multiplication of His children, who know and love Him; secondly, it is the supreme perfection and happiness that men and women enjoy by means of justification in this life and the beatific vision in eternal life.

2.

The need for grace in order to heal nature

1) The starting point of education: the sinful inheritance

“The starting of all rational, human, and truly educating pedagogy must be the knowledge of the state in which man has been left because of the sad inheritance from his first parents: sin.

The transmission of that inheritance of sin, which is a mystery of faith, is also the key to the secret of unfathomable mysteries and the saving solution of the most unsolvable problems of education, justification, and even the divinization of man.

Original sin means that every person is born *in deterius commutatus*, spoiled or deteriorated in both soul and body, as the Church teaches. People aren't born essentially corrupted, as the Protestants maintain, in such a way that sin, according to their

fatalistic doctrine, is unpardonable and ineradicable; however, neither are men and women born good and upright, and then corrupted by society, as the rationalist school of Rousseau maintains.”

“Perhaps some superb teacher or psychiatrist will laugh at me if, as I speak about education, I use that archaic and harsh-sounding word: sin! But, what are we to do?! Whether or not these people want to talk about sin, in the truly Christian understanding of it . . . [sin] is the great stumbling block, the great dissolvent, the most infectious bacteria for the educator and the one being educated.

Yes, sin, be it original or personal, at the very least takes away from the breath, lights, influence, attraction, gentleness, devotion, or kindness that the *educator* should have with the ones they are educating, and, if it happens repeatedly, it turns into a vice or into disbelief; in addition to taking away what was mentioned, it exchanges it to become uneducating and even destructive because of the bad examples and bad teachings given. In the *one being educated*, sin in itself prevents all good education; it hardens and even petrifies the ground of souls in which the good educational seeds must be planted. In this way, those seeds can’t take root, or they dry up, and are choked with the bad weeds and thorns of vices.”

“If education isn’t to be limited to some hypocritical forms of civility, if its purpose is to make a twisted subject into an upright person, or to make from one inclined to evil, one who is fickle or

anxious, a character who is upright and of immovable tenacity, if education has the hope of exchanging all of the subject's imperfections with perfection, to bring the subject to the fullest development of all their faculties and wellsprings that are in seminal form, either because they lie dormant or have been damaged in the one being educated, if education honestly wants to attempt all of this . . . and yet attempts to leave aside the influence of original and personal sin in the ones being educated, then education is already condemned to the greatest possible failures and to a most embarrassing sterility."

When educators set aside this reality of sin, "they [only] pretend to educate," and are poor blind people who lead other blind people. "I would even say that the dogma of original sin and of its inheritance by men and women is the fundamental dogma of all healthy and rational pedagogy. If this dogma isn't kept in mind, then the child, who is a cross between an angel and a wild beast, is a being that is unable to be educated, a monster."

What sin takes away:

1st Sanctifying grace, which makes the just soul live the divine life and become an adopted son or daughter of God; it also takes away many actual graces that help the soul and dispose it to perform good works and acts of virtue.

2nd The integrity that accompanied grace in Adam: that is, the submission of concupiscence to reason; when the soul was deprived of that integrity, it was left enslaved to concupiscence.

3rd The physical and moral strengths that grace confers in order to work so as to obtain eternal life.

4th Supernatural help to keep the natural law.

5th The privilege that God gives of avoiding venial sin and the great blessing of final perseverance.

6th The attenuation or weakening of free will, as the Council of Trent states.

When faced with all of this, it is clear that pedagogy cannot close its eyes. The process of education must begin by recalling with what problems the child is born because of sin and the evil inclinations that follow, and to fight against both of them.

2) First trace of sin in children and youth: consistency of mud

The mud from which we had been formed has left two traces in us: fragility and porosity. Although here I am considering principally children, adolescents, and youth, this also applies to all adult men and women as well.

a) ***Fragility for what is good.*** Both the child as well as the loftiest man have the fragility of mud in the faculties of their souls. That fragility has names like inconstancy, boredom, disillusion, disappointment, and disenchantment. “What is there that is more fragile in the moral and intellectual order than the innocence and candor of souls, the firmness of the ideas that they acquire, the attention that they pay to what they hear, see, and learn, the

illusion and enthusiasm they have for games and toys, persistence in one same task and, in a word, all the different manifestations of the child's soul? All of that which, even in the man who is formed and upright is subject to incredible frailty, has the consistency of soap bubbles in children.”

b) *Porosity for what is evil.* The porosity of mud, or the permeability of mud, appears as impressionability, susceptibility, moral contagion, and the influence of the environment. “Teachers and educators will never spend enough time on that mysterious permeability and obsessive curiosity of children’s souls, a permeability to absorb the juices of all the evil and dangerous things that surround them.” Likewise, mention must be made of the ability to assimilate any evil thing that they perceive while, at the same time, they are impenetrable to most good words, good examples, and good works that they receive throughout the years.

The most overwhelming proof of this reality is the extraordinary number of children and youth who graduate from Catholic (or more or less Catholic) schools . . . and the meager number of good Catholics who really live a Christian life! What happened? Didn’t they assimilate anything that was taught to them during those years?

“The secret of those unpleasant surprises is not always in the ineptitude of parents and teachers, and never in the inefficacy of Christian education, but rather that in each of those Christian and Christianizing schools and families, which are truly paradise on earth, the appearance of the serpents of temptation cannot always

be prevented. These serpents arise in the form of evil and hypocritical teachers and friends, unfaithful servants, imprudent guests, dangerous books, and obscene things to be seen. The **porosity** of the child's soul is more quickly soaked with the drops and splashes of evil juices than by the rains and torrents of healthy waters. How many times has a gesture, a word, a smile, a pout, a reluctance, or a wink from one single person been the beginning of the perversion of a child?"

A good proof of this permeability is the influence that the environment of the street and public life exerts on the souls of children and adolescents. It is "decisive, fulminating, and overwhelming!"

Something very special is needed to strengthen that fragility and to waterproof that ability to receive what is evil. That something is God's grace. This is the first task of grace in the soul, after purging away original sin: to counteract, neutralize, and overcome the characteristic action of mud, the fragility of glass, giving the soul the constancy of steel.

3) Second trace of sin: animality

"If man is a rational animal, then children, despite the niceness that those little disguised angels should be shown, show themselves to be more animal than rational in their early years, and it is only by means of the influence of a successful education that the rational element comes to have control over the animal in later years. I say that the child is more animal because of the imperfect

and almost primitive development of reason and conscience, the lack of social habits and caution, and the excess of ingenuity, all of which put the child at a disadvantage with respect to the adult, who is able to hide or dissimulate the features of that little animal, which we, whether big or small, carry inside of us, showing only the face.”

“What is certain, and everyday experience confirms it for us, is that in spite of the rational soul that we are all born with, the first thing that announces its existence is not rationality, but rather animality, and while rationality needs months and years of patient waiting and adequate education in order to give signs of its action by means of smiles, words, studies, prayer, the practice of the virtues, and conscious acts of life in communion with others, animality, on the other hand, erupts fulminantly in the newborn, with all the rebellions and insolences of the irascible appetite and with shows of the blind and vehement pleasures of the concupiscible appetite.”

“I will never forget the humor and pain,” wrote Saint Manuel González, “that came when I heard the words of a beautiful three-year-old angel who was infuriated with his baby-sitter. Tired of trying to remove some chocolate stains from the child, she threatened him with [a reference to] King Herod, to which threat the child replied with this fiery reproach: *Herod to me? I am Herod, I am, and I'll behead you and all the baby-sitters of the world.*” The saint concludes: “The little beast! The little infant beast! Who will control it? We have called in grace.”

3.

A Realistic Education

1) A successful education program from a 9-year-old

Given the preponderant influence that the animal aspect exercises on the soul, the character, and the inclinations of children and adolescents, “the need is felt for a successful education to set each element in its plane, and to establish order and subordination, that is, so that the rational element is what commands and is obeyed, and the animal elements faithfully obey the soul.” In short, spirituality must prevail.

How?

We found an extraordinary answer and a very complete method from the mouth of a nine-year-old. Or, better said: in the memories of one of the great Christian educators—I am referring to Saint John Bosco—who has left us the memory of a dream he had when he was nine, and still lived at the very poor house of the

Becchi's, working as a shepherd. In this dream, we find the complete program for his work of education.

I transcribe the text in its entirety, as it is found in his *Biographical Memoirs*.

“When I was about nine years old I had a dream that left a profound impression on me for the rest of my life. I dreamed that I was near my home, in a very large playing field where a crowd of children were having fun. Some were laughing, others were playing and not a few were cursing. I was so shocked at their language that I jumped into their midst, swinging wildly and shouting at them to stop. At that moment a Man appeared, nobly attired, with a manly and imposing bearing. He was clad with a white flowing mantle and his face radiated such light that I could not look directly at him. He called me by name and told me to place myself as leader over those boys, adding the words, ‘You will have to win these friends of your not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness. So, begin right now to show them that sin is ugly and virtue beautiful.’

Confused and afraid, I replied that I was only a boy and unable to talk to these youngsters about religion. At that moment the fighting, shouting and cursing stopped and the crowd of boys gathered about the Man who was now talking. Almost unconsciously I asked, ‘But how can you order me to do something that looks so impossible?’

‘What seems to impossible you must achieve by being obedient and by acquiring knowledge.’

‘But where? How?’

‘I will give you a Teacher under whose guidance you will learn and without whose help all knowledge becomes foolishness.’

‘But who are you?’

‘I am the Son of Her whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day.’

‘My mother told me not to talk to people I don’t know, unless she gives me permission. So, please tell me your name.’

‘Ask your mother.’

At that moment I saw beside him a Lady of majestic appearance, wearing a beautiful mantle glowing as if bedecked with stars. She saw my confusion mount; so, she beckoned me to her. Taking my hand with great kindness she said,

‘Look!’

I did so. All the children had vanished. In their place I saw many animals: goats, dogs, cats, bears, and a variety of others.

‘This is your field, this is where you must work,’ the Lady told me.

‘Make yourself humble, steadfast and strong. And what you will see happen to these animals you will have to do for my children.’

I looked again; the wild animals had turned into as many lambs, gentle, gamboling lambs, bleating a welcome for that Man and Lady.

At this point of my dream I started to cry and begged the Lady to explain what it had meant because I was so utterly confused. She then placed her hand on my head and said, ‘In due time everything will be clear to you.’

After she had spoken these words, some noise awoke me; everything had vanished. I was completely bewildered. Somehow my hands still seemed to ache and my cheeks still stung because of all the fighting. Moreover, my conversation with that Man and Lady so disturbed my mind that I was unable to sleep any longer that night.”³

For our purposes, it is interesting to note the different ways in which the children appear in the same dream

– first, Bosco sees them in a very large playing field, some laughing, and playing, and other blaspheming;

– later, that multitude appears as changed into “goats, dogs, cats, bears, and a variety of others”;

– lastly, those ferocious animals are changed into meek lambs and, jumping up and down, play around Jesus and Mary.

In these three appearances of children-children, children-wild animals, and children-lambs, the whole field of education is contained.

How?

The children who laugh, play, and blaspheme represent what we could call the “exterior layer of that field, that is, what is seen

³ *Memorias Biográficas*, vol. 1, pp. 115-117.

in these children at first sight: little kids who are sometimes happy and gladden with their laughter, their jumping, and their angelic graces, and others that sadden and annoy with their naughtiness and deceptions, which children don't digest or process, but rather allow to infect them and then spread that evil."

The children-wild animals, and the children-lambs are the interior field: the terminus *a quo* and the terminus *ad quem*, the starting point and last station on the path of education.

We can even identify the animals seen by Don Bosco with the distinct characters of children, "goats, dogs, cats, and bears":

- the children-goats are "jumping": they jump around in their ideas, attention, emotions, likes, and movements;

- the children-dogs are loyal (at least to their owners), but, at the same time, street children, lovers of poking around and smelling moral garbage, of offending and defending themselves tooth and nail, even to the point of rabid bites, when they don't get away with what they want;

- the children-cats are the sullen ones, envious, ungrateful, and cruel;

- the children-bears are heavy-hitters in their tantrums and whims, as well as in their laziness.

What we have described here is the child and the adolescent in their wild state, just as they have been left in original sin and their own personal sins before being educated.

The children-lambs are those in whom grace has set their character in order, and in whom grace has given rise to the virtues that re-establish man in the state he was in paradise.

The secret of education, as we can read between the lines in Don Bosco's magnificent program, in harmonizing these two elements: grace and firmness [or strictness]. The combination of these elements can give two harmful mixes and one that is good. These combinations are: no firmness at all, everything with firmness, and firmness to preserve and repair. Let us see them separately.

2) The first harmful combination: anti-severity or anti-firmness

In this group we can set a large swath of educators, parents, teachers, and catechists who, for different reasons, reject all severity or firmness in education. Here we can set:

1st Good-natured educators: these are those who leave those they are educating in complete freedom, as if they were in the jungle. Consequently, those in their charge turn into "little tyrants," who are dominated by their whims and accustomed to doing their will in everything.

2nd Fearful educators: there are four major fears that frequently assail educators, parents of families, teachers, etc.:

– Fear of exemplarity: the fear of having to conform with the example of what they teach! "A wrathful teacher: what reasonable

interest could they have in teaching their students meekness and patience? A profligate father, a fun-loving mother who loves the world, what effort can they show their children in how to overcome inklings to vanity and worldly and promiscuous likes with dubious company? Let's agree in this: often they have misunderstandings about strictness, and they overdo it when it comes to the temper tantrums and whims of the little ones and the selfish impositions and tyrannical demands of the youth, and this because they lack the courage to lead by example."

– Fear of the burden of constantly looking out for their child or student: to enroll children in a school, or to give them a kiss when they come home from it, is something fast and easy; however, to educate is more than this. It requires a greater union, to be closer, to be more vigilant, and this sometimes gives rise to fear. However, to be a parent or to be an educator, it's not enough to give the children life and food; they must be given affection and care, and at every hour of every day. When doing this requires that a person give up other things (in particular, to give up time for one's self), it becomes difficult for many people.

– Fear of ridicule: Fear of being old-fashioned, of being behind the times because they can't make a compromise with sensuality, vanity, or a hundred other possible things. Fear of being criticized or made fun of. In the end, it is fear of losing "human respect."

– Fear of "losing clients." How many schools that could be good have become insipid out of fear of losing students! "If we

ask too much, then they'll leave. . . . We have to compromise so that more will come." "The end goal of the Christian teacher is not to see the school filled, but rather to see that those who are in it rise up, are educated, and each day become a little better, a little more Christian, a little more balanced."

3rd Perverted teachers. These are those who poison the souls of their children or their students with their erroneous ideas, the sort that corrupt the minds, the hearts, the purity, and the habits of those who are under their care. Are there many of these? Unfortunately, yes. We can divide them into three categories:

- Educators who have perverted hearts. This is the educator who is immoral in their deeds, but who thinks rightly (they have a good doctrinal formation); this is the one who corrupts those they are educating with their bad example of drunkenness, lust, the habit of blasphemy, and violence. How many encourage others to sin, not with their ideas, but by their examples!

- Educators who have perverted minds. This is more difficult to find, but there are cases: a man of bad ideas but naturally good acts; a man who acts better than he thinks. It seems absurd, but there are cases in which it is found. History bears witness to many parents, who, although they have corrupted minds (even Masons and communists), have made the effort to have their children formed in religious schools.

- Educators who are perverted in both heart and mind. This sort of person is totally corrupted; they have reached the final

point of their corruption. Saint Augustine says: “Nemo incredulus, nisi impurus.” No one comes to unbelief except through immorality. The reverse holds true as well: immortality leads to unbelief. Immoral habits end up corrupting the head. “If you don’t live as you think, you will end up thinking as you live.” When this happens in a person who has the mission to educate, it can easily be imagined what follows.

3) The second harmful combination: exaggerated firmness or strictness

It is likely that today people don’t sin as much by this combination as the previous one; nonetheless, it exists. There are some rigid teachers. This society of “anti-pedagogical products” can also be divided into three classes:

1st The educator with a heart of ice; this is a Siberian sort of educator. To educate is not to instruct. To instruct, or to teach someone something, it is enough that the two intellects (the one that teaches and the one that is being taught) come to an agreement. However, to educate, something more is needed: in addition, the two hearts must agree, and, even more than agreement, in contact, in a mutual transfusion. In other words, the one who loves more is in a better position to educate, and the one who responds most to the educator’s care is the best student to be educated. The educator who fulfills their role just as a function, or as a job, or who teaches because they have no other

options, cannot educate. Those who are educated this way by their parents are children and adolescents raised in the snow.

2nd The educator with the iron fist. Such a one has taken to heart the saying that says “the letter enters by force.” In schools, this is already something of the past, at least in most corners of the globe (few teachers would risk the consequences that a brutal treatment of students could have); however, on the other hand, this “type” of educator isn’t uncommon among parents of families. This is the sort of parent who solves all rebellion, all smart replies, all bad behavior, with blows and violence. Saint Manuel González asks: “Is this very brief infant penal code just, educative, and pedagogical?” Before giving his answer—and to avoid misunderstandings—he recalls two things: first and foremost, *considering its purpose or principle*, it is licit, necessary, and useful for the individual and for society to punish, even physically, those who are delinquents; secondly, it is a *fact* that there are days and hours in which many external factors (fatigue, and even the weather and nerves!) aggravate souls, setting children and adolescents in a “difficult mood.” Bearing this in mind, it must be remembered, says the saint, that “the educator with an iron fist,” in general:

– is unjust; because he punishes mistakes that most of the time are committed unwillingly (Saint John Chrysostom used to tell the children he had in catechism: Be still, *if you can!*); because he does not adjust the punishment, applying the most severe punishment at the beginning; because he punishes those who annoy him, disturbing his calm or his ears, more than he punishes those

who failed by doing something they shouldn't have; because there is no right to give punishments that are so harsh to subjects that are so weak; because in the majority of cases the real mistake is in the educator's lack of expertise and not in the one being educated;

– it does not educate: because of the bad example the teacher gives with anger; because it intimidates, irritates, and exasperates the effects; because violence is like alcohol: in the moment, it stimulates the one who drinks, and over time it turns them into a brute; because violence closes the door and hardens the soul so that the seeds of good thoughts cannot enter or take root;

– it is not pedagogy: because these poor treatments and violence do not serve to guide but rather to *tame* wild beasts;

– it is inhumane: blows and violence are not the way in which a human being is formed.

3rd The educator with a sour face. These are the ones who think that authority, dignity, and official duties must be accompanied by a sour and caustic bearing.

If those to be educated must be educated “counting on them,” and not despite them, these things are worthless.

4) The balance: grace and firmness: the creation of lordship

Saint Manuel González sets the educational balance at “austerity” laced with grace. The word “austerity,” which I have changed for the word “firmness,” has lost the original meaning that it had

when the Andalusian saint used it. I think the best equivalents are *“lordship”* or *“firmness.”*⁴ In some of the definitions of the Real Academia Española, “lordship” means: “gravity and moderation in bearing or in actions,” and also the “control and freedom in acting, subjecting the passions to reason.”

What is lordship or firmness in education?

“Lordship is, for example, to have an abundance of power and authority, but, outside of very specific cases, to not order others to do what one could do for themselves; to prefer to beg someone to do something rather than order it by command, and, in this way, to avoid despotism or tyranny.

Lordship means to be rich, and to be able to use valuable fabrics for clothes, to have exquisite morsels and drinks for the table, and the whole range of amusements and shows, and yet to impose moderation on oneself in clothing, dining, and recreation in order not to fall into those prohibited realms of lust, gluttony, drunkenness, dissipation, idleness, laziness, and sensuality.

Lordship is the habit of freely contenting oneself with *what is least* to not fall into the vice of slavery to *what is greatest*.

It should be said that *duty* is the barricade that separates us from transgression, of disorder, of sin, and austerity [lordship] is the *counter-barricade* that roots us more firmly than just duty and sets us further away from evil. . . .

⁴ Fr. Fuentes uses the Spanish terms “señorío” and “firmeza.” The term is difficult to express in English. It implies self-control, but, beyond mere control, it implies a dignity and reserve that comes with the freedom from the vicissitudes of desires and whims. – Translator’s note.

Blessed and fruitful is that Christian lordship which never asks: ‘How close can I approach danger without falling into sin?’ but rather ‘Where will I be furthest from the danger of sin?’

It is this lordship that makes our sons and daughters into balanced men and women, into whole and happy characters both on earth and in heaven.”

The fruits of lordship are well-known and beautiful. Lordship creates habits:

- of industriousness, even though they might not need to live later from their work,

- of modesty in dress,

- of moderation in eating delicacies, even though they might have an abundance of these, and their desires for them might be great,

- of respectful affection, both with respect to superiors as well as to equals and subjects,

- of punctuality and diligence in doing each thing at the right time, even if there is time to spare,

- of prompt and complete forgiveness of grievances and resentments,

- of civilized habits, even when playing around,

- etc.

In short, lordship will form men and women *of character*.

To achieve this end, firmness in the work of education must be **anointed with God's grace**, that is, firmness must become supernatural because of grace.

If educating is not only to bring knowledge to the student, but rather to develop their dormant interior energies, the task of the Christian educator, rather than improvising ideas or coercive and corrective strengths, is to count on that divine seed of grace planted in the soul by baptism, and to develop it, teaching the one being educated—the sooner the better!—to pray, to perform virtuous deeds, and to live from the sacraments.

“If only parents, teachers, and catechists were to *seriously* dedicate themselves to teaching their children to pray, meaning, to talk with God our Father, Jesus our Brother, and Mary our Mother, to make, time and again, acts of humility, charity, patience, and the other virtues, to go to confession with sincerity and contrition, to receive Communion and to speak with Jesus who lives in the Tabernacle as the Blessed Sacrament, and to listen to Mass *paying attention to it and understanding it*”: this is the way that the educator must collaborate with the interior act of grace in the child and the adolescent.

“If to this interior, silent, and efficacious action of grace, properly speaking, that of exterior grace is added, that is, grace in the broad sense, the task of educating the student to overcome, straighten out, and uproot the disorders of the passions and selfishness, and to form good habits, that interior grace takes on marvelous expansion and intensity. What does this exterior grace

consist of? It is the influence produced in the soul by the examples and words of Jesus, Mary, the angels, and the saints, the Gospel first and foremost!, all explained, broken down, and made into milk for these littlest ones.”

The great secret of catechesis and Christian education is Jesus: “Jesus, who in the Gospel is the *Author* and *Sovereign Teacher* of catechism by word and deed, is, in the Eucharist, also the perfect *Model* and the *Strength* to fulfill it.

The educative mission of parents and Christian teachers can in fact be reduced to setting their children *so close to Jesus* that they learn all their catechism lessons *from Him*, in the Gospel and in the tabernacle, and learn not by memory, but rather by understanding, will, and imitation.”

“Educators . . . [you must] live in God’s grace, and try to make those whom you are educating live in it. Live in grace, and chastity will take on a sweet and attractive odor in your words and in your gaze to attract them, and patience, which never tires, will replace natural compassion that wears out so quickly, and charity, which is patient, kind, not jealous, not rude, which does not seek its own interests, will make what is difficult or impossible for natural sympathy and affection easy for you: *love always*, in spite of the ungratefulness, failures, gray days, and bad dispositions of our children, and the light from the tabernacle lamp over your heads, that shines on you each morning at the moment of your Communion and every afternoon in your visit, will reinforce your

minds with lights from God, lights that are incomparably more intense than those from books written by men. . . .

Strive so that your children and youth *live in God's grace*: only with grace and through grace will they live a true and complete life, the life of purity that makes children into angels and the elderly like children, the life of humility which is the most solid base for virtue and knowledge, the life of faith, hope, and charity, which refine, increase, and spiritualize what they touch and move, and which make each child into another Jesus.”

Piety

The greatest defense for grace is piety, which makes us constantly aware of God's Fatherly gaze, and moves us to raise our hearts promptly to Him.

How is piety instilled?

- first, by means of the example of the educators themselves,
- then by opportune advice, especially taken from the Sacred Scriptures;
- finally, by conscientious participation and contact with the Church's liturgy.

5) The great lesson: to learn from God's action

The educator must learn from God's creative and conserving [meaning, that He holds things in being] action in the universe.

God's action is: 1st gradual and irrevocable; 2nd efficacious in and of itself, but it permits and indeed demands our cooperation; 3rd vigilant and wide-ranging.

1st Gradual and irrevocable education: God's action is gradual in each kingdom (mineral, plant, animal, etc.), and in each moment (He doesn't always give them heat, or chill, nor is it always day, or always night, etc.); it is irrevocable: step by step, it goes about changing the seed of wheat into an ear of wheat. Education should be the same: one step after another, one drop after another; it shouldn't be all play, nor all study. Not everything has to be happy face, nor everything sour face. Each thing has its moment and its time, according to what is needed. However, it must be irrevocable, meaning, that the step by which the student moved forward yesterday doesn't get taken back today; that the good word spoken yesterday doesn't come undone by today's bad example.

2nd Cooperated education. Although it is effective by itself, God's action demands our cooperation. Education should be the same way. A person cannot be educated without including and counting on that person. Hence, the first step is to win over the one to be educated, so that the students might love what it is we want to give them. Saint Jerome gave the following advice to Laeta, the daughter of Saint Paula, for a granddaughter: "Above all you must take care not to make her lessons distasteful to her." So, "in order to win the child or adolescent's cooperation, you must win their affection, and to win it you must first give

them affection, but in this way: half, or three-quarters, then totally, everything. They must be made to understand that they *have to earn that affection.*”

An interesting point that Saint Manuel González raises is that “conquering the affection is easy when the children maintain their purity. A smile, a pat, or a simple look of interest wins them over.” However, when impurity begins to work its way into the souls of children and youth, it becomes more and more difficult to win their hearts.

3rd Vigilant and wide-ranging. God’s action reaches to all the details of creation and, nonetheless, it is broad enough that it never violates the freedom of the creatures who possess such freedom. This is the way education should be: it must “unite vigilance, which cannot be lacking, with the wideness that is fitting so that it educates and doesn’t drown them.” It is necessary to be vigilant, and, indeed, educators must keep watch and “distrust” as one of their duties: “La Fontaine has said that distrust is the mother of security, and it presses on no one more than on parents and educators to keep this saying in mind. Educators, I’m telling you that you have a right and a duty to be distrustful.” “However, so that your distrust does not overwhelm, intimidate, or drown those whom you love, put all the resources of your ingenuity and your kindness in mistrusting with grace.”

6) Apparent failures

Despite all the efforts of parents and educators, many of those being educated do not take advantage of everything that is given to them; sometimes, over time, they become morally corrupt. Is it worth so much effort to sow without reaping any fruit? Without a doubt the answer is yes; for this reason, it's worthwhile to keep in mind some things that Saint Manuel González points out:

1st That the seedlings made with God's grace, sooner or later, "always" bear a harvest of virtues and, when the harvest isn't of virtues, it is at least of the pangs of conscience.

2nd Therefore, it follows that if those being educated won't allow you to sow virtues, at least sow the pangs of conscience.

3rd That no matter how depraved our child, who once was good, becomes, or no matter how hard we worked so that the child might be good, know that the child will always be less depraved than one who had neither faith nor a good upbringing.

4th That a mother's prayers and tears, and a father's prayers and ever-open arms, affect, even at a distance, a mystery of attraction that calls out to Augustines and prodigal children.

5th That God the Father doesn't pay our harvest for grain gathered, but rather for the hours of work and drops of sweat, tears, and blood that our good intentions have cost us.

6th That, through the mysteries of inheritance, freedom, physiological dispositions, environment, temperament, and God's in-

scrutable designs and the action of His grace, good children, and even saints, can arise from bad parents and evil teachers, and vice versa: despite having good parents and teachers, evil children can come forth:

– from the same parents, Adam and Eve, there came forth Abel the just and Cain the fratricide;

– from Isaac the patriarch, there came forth Jacob the faithful and Esau, the mortal enemy of his twin brother;

– from Jacob's twelve children, ten sold their good brother for some coins;

– from the greatest college that has existed and will ever exist on the earth, the Apostolic College, founded and directed by Jesus Himself, there came forth eleven disciples who were saints, and one who was a thief and a traitor.

5.

Conclusion

Everything that has been said can be summarized in the following conclusions:

1st Being equal in knowledge, the one who has more grace instructs and educates better.

2nd Those who are “without grace” will never pass beyond being mediocre teachers, and will never become educators.

3rd Only the person who can truly be called a *balanced person* can be held as well and completely educated.

4th A person will be more balanced in the measure that he or she comes to resemble Our Lord Jesus Christ, the prototype of every man and woman. If a Christian educator doesn't have this clear, they cannot be an educator, and, moreover, a Christian.

5th Only supernatural grace can give that resemblance to those who receive it and freely cooperate with it.

6th Therefore, those who are better men or women, or who are more balanced, have more grace from God.

7th Natural grace is a most fitting instrument for supernatural grace.

8th Being equal in supernatural grace, the one who has more natural grace will educate better and will obtain more fruit.

9th Consequently, the best educator will be the one who is most filled with grace from above and from below, that is, the one who is holiest and endowed with the most natural gifts.

10th The best student will be the one who benefits the most from both graces.

