

POST SCRIPTUM

We shall complete our work by a short explanation of the conditions that M. de La Salle requires for correction to be of benefit to the one who inflicts it, and to the one who receives it. We could have discussed this question in the treatise on the Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher, the two topics being closely connected, but we preferred to deal with this matter here, and in fact such is the order observed by our venerable Founder.

It is true that the *Conduct* discusses the conditions which correction should have in order to be of benefit; but one finds there prolix passages, generalizations, inversions, omissions, lack of clarity in the divisions and the sub-divisions. Such are the drawbacks which we have thought it wise to remedy in this Postscript, until a new edition of the *Conduct*, that excellent work, is published.

The conditions that correction should have are ten in number: the first seven are those which correction should have in order to prove useful to the one who inflicts it; the last three, the conditions it should have to be helpful to the one receiving it.

The seven conditions that Correction must have if it is to be of benefit to the one inflicting it, are:

1) It should be pure. No doubt we should have in view, when correcting, as in all our actions in general, the glory of God and the fulfillment of His holy will. But, in addition, we should intend the amendment of the student we are correcting, so that there may not be any intermingling of ill-humor, aversion, antipathy, caprice, revenge, or resentment in what we do.

2) It should be charitable. The child should be corrected because we love him. A teacher is like a doctor, not an enemy. "*It would seem,*" says St. Augustine, "*that the doctor persecutes his patient; but in reality he is persecuting his malady only. He treats the illness because he loves the sick man; and he makes the later, whom he loves, suffer, only to deliver him from the malady that makes him suffer.*" Thus does a teacher act with regard to the child whom he corrects; his apparent severity is a grace, and the pains he causes are remedies.

3) It must be just. All punishment necessarily presupposes a fault; we should, then, correct only for a fault which is certain; similarly, a severe punishment must not be used save to sanction a fault which is serious either in its quality or in the consequences which it may entail. Punishment may sometimes err on the side of leniency. But it must never be more severe, otherwise we would violate not only justice, but even reason; it would mean being guided by prejudice, and even might make it appear that we punish for the pleasure of punishing, or from some other evil motive.

4) It must be proper. We need to pay attention to the age, the character, the temperament, and the dispositions of the student we are about to correct, and even to those of his parents, so that the punishment may be exactly proportioned to the fault, the circumstances, and the end we have in view.

5) It should be moderate, neither too harsh nor too precipitate. If it is too

severe it might embitter, might incite rebellion, might give rise to hatred, or might discourage the child. If it is too precipitate, it may well be neither just nor proper.

6) It should be peaceable, i.e., performed without trouble, impatience, excitement or bluster, and even, as a rule, in silence; unless we speak in a low tone, and only if this is absolutely necessary.

7) Finally, it should be prudent. This is one of the conditions to which special attention must be paid. Prudence demands that before punishing we should ascertain the dispositions of the culprit, and those in which we ourselves are. We would punish in vain a student whose feelings are lacerated, who is in revolt, full of bitterness and anger; he should be prepared to receive the punishment, if he is capable of reason; and the teacher must himself be prepared to inflict it after calm reflection.

Prudence requires that we judge both the fault and the punishment which should be imposed. As there is a difference between faults committed through malice or stubbornness, and those due to inattention, weakness, etc. there should also be a difference between the chastisements inflicted on those who commit them.

Prudence requires that the students should not become too used to punishment; they might become unaffected by it, and the sanctions would be fruitless.

Prudence also demands that we examine the manner of punishing; the time, the circumstances, the occasion - in a word what is apt to make the correction more useful. It demands that we consider the character, the age, the temperament of the student and whatever else pertains to him, so that we can determine the best manner of imposing the correction. For punishment should be inflicted with such perfect consideration of all the angles, that far from having any ill effects, it may on the contrary procure only advantageous consequences for the culprits.

This is why we should not punish children who are timid and usually docile, who admit their faults, in the same way as we punish those who are unruly, hard-headed, stubborn, who deny their faults, who fight back, etc. It is also for this reason that we should, as far as possible, spare the older pupils especially the shame of being chastised;

1) their faults are not known to the others;

2) so too we should keep secret the punishments given to faults against purity when these are not known, or known only to a few; this to preserve the good name of the culprits.

II. The three conditions that correction should have to be of use to him who receives it.

1). It must be voluntary. This means that it should be received without any resistance, and accepted willingly. The motives we should use to bring the one we are punishing to consent to it are: to show him how serious his fault was, and the need for him to make up for it both for his own personal good and for the good example he should give to his companions.

2) It should be respectful. The student being punished should recognize that

the teacher is obliged to punish him for his faults, and as a consequence, that he himself should submit to the punishment when he is guilty.

3. It should be silent. The culprit must receive it without speaking, without crying out, without complaining or murmuring, otherwise he would show that he is receiving it neither voluntarily nor with respect.

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Brother Agathon.