FAITH AMONG ADOLESCENTS

Joining, Drifting, Searching, Owning

By JOHN S. NELSON

Do ADOLESCENTS BELIEVE IN GOD? If by 'God' is meant a transcendent person or power present and active in their lives, then the vast majority of adolescents do believe in God. In ranking twenty values, adolescents usually put God high on the list, among the top five.[1]

Do adolescents pray? If by 'prayer' is meant some kind of response to such a transcendent person or power, then the vast majority of adolescents do pray. Surprisingly, the number of adolescents who confess that they pray has sometimes been clocked higher than the number of those who affirm that they believe in God.

Do adolescents worship? If by 'worship' is meant assisting on a regular basis at a church-sponsored liturgy, then the vast majority of adolescents do not worship. Again in ranking twenty values, adolescents tend to put church low on the list, among the bottom five.

What accounts for these differences among adolescents with regard to believing, praying and worshipping? How are they to be evaluated? We can get some light from two sources which meet in the one word 'psychosocial': the inner psychological development of adolescents and the wider sociological world which impacts upon them. Both these sources point us toward an underlying tension between the self and the other. The tension takes at least three different forms, often in a sequence of relative dominance during adolescence (about ages 12 to 21). They provide the three-point framework for this chapter.

- Being uniquely oneself and/or belonging to a tradition: *joining and drifting in early adolescence* (*ages 12 to 15*).
- Exploring what is true for oneself and/or accepting as true what is received from someone else: *drifting and searching in middle adolescence* (*ages 15 to 18*).
- Possessing one's own meaning-system and/or being confused about purpose and occupation in one's life: *searching and owning in young adulthood* (*ages 18 to 21*).[2]

This article will attempt to explain and reflect upon each of these tasks or tensions. Please note that they are expressed as 'and/or'. For those who think disjunctively, the reality is 'either/or'. For those who think conjunctively, it is 'both/and'. Conjunctive thinking would probably be more accurate, but most adolescents and young adults tend to think disjunctively.

Faith as autonomous: being responsible to one's own self

The strangest things can happen in the world of the early adolescent (ages 12 to 15). On the one hand, for example, belonging or affiliation may reach its peak of ascendancy. There often is a fierce loyalty to the faith of one's family, of one's people, of one's church. This allegiance may extend to one's friends, to one's team, to one's club.

On the other hand, autonomy makes a strong move into the psychosocial life of the early adolescent. This period of life has been called 'a second individuation', when 'the terrible twos' re-emerge as 'the terrible twelves', when the young person wriggles to slough off such influences as parents and pastors, teachers and coaches, community and society.

Consider, for example, the ongoing debate over the best age for receiving the sacrament of confirmation. Let us leave aside the theological arguments about its relationship to baptism and eucharist, its implications for a more mature faith, its commitment to a wider mission within the world. From a psychosocial point of view, early adolescence seems to be for confirmation the best of times and the worst of times. It is the best of times because it is an age for joining, for belonging, for pledging one's allegiance in word and action, with gesture and symbol. It is a time of transition from childhood into adolescence for which we would have to invent a new rite of passage if we did not have confirmation. How, then, can we say of early adolescence that it is the worst of times for confirmation? Statistics weigh heavily upon us. We design confirmation programmes so that the sacrament signifies and makes real the young persons' entrance into fuller life in the faith community. With many this happens. With many others, however, as far as communal worship is concerned, what is intended to be a sacrament of initiation proves instead to be a sacrament of termination. Aside from major feasts like Christmas and Easter, the Church sees its confirmands next when they come to set a date for their wedding. The increased desire for autonomy at this age may account at least in part for this phenomenon.

What is to be done, not only to weather with them the crisis of adolescent autonomy, but also to help them profit from it?

A starting point may be how as adults we image ourselves in the lives of the young people with whom we minister. Two complementary images may help, that of midwife and that of adoptive agent. As midwives in the lives of adolescents, we help bring to birth the judgements of their own minds and the values of their own hearts. Our task is to be there to coach them, to encourage them, but not to replace them in the process of gestation. This image of midwife needs a corrective: that of adoptive agent. There are 'children of mind and heart', that is, ideas and values, which have already been born into the human community. As ministers to young people, we introduce them to these children of mind and heart and we encourage young people to adopt them as their own.

Can we reconcile these two images of midwife and adoptive agent which seem to conflict with each other? Is it contradictory for us adults to say to today's adolescents: 'We want *you freely to choose* what *we judge* is best for you'? But isn't that what being a parent or a teacher or a youth minister is all about?

Second, there are some general affirmations which we can make about prayer and worship among adolescents. With regard to prayer, as adoptive agents we can introduce them to different ways in which people have prayed and do pray. For example:

- learning Eastern modes of turning aside from being busy, of replacing sound with silence, of being alone with oneself and with God;
- practising Western modes of combining prayer with movement, such as hiking or jogging or cycling;
- imagining oneself in scenes from the life of Jesus as told in the gospels;
- keeping a diary or journal of what is going on within oneself, with friends and family, with God;
- sampling prayer traditions that have come to be named after spiritual leaders who developed them and taught them to others: Benedict of Nursia (prayer and work), Hildegarde of Bingen (visions shared in writings), Francis of Assisi (songs of creation), Ignatius of Loyola (contemplation in action), Thérèse of Lisieux (the little way), Dorothy Day (Christ's presence in the poor).

This presentation of prayer styles to adolescents may be more effective if it is: invitational (more a gift than a burden); hands-on (actually done rather than just talked about); modelled (practised by adults and peers who pray); patient (for when prayer becomes dark, dry, desolate); varied (even the most popular of songs and TV shows have their run and lose their appeal after a while).

Third, with regard to corporate worship, may we appeal to the image of midwife, that is, as a faith community we help young people give birth to their own worship of God. This is the most challenging of tasks, because, at least in comparison with private prayer, the liturgy seems to allow for a minimum of freedom, of adaptation, of inculturation into the life of adolescents. Yet before we surrender to the adolescent complaint that liturgy is boring, the following items may suggest possibilities that echo the positive experiences of others. They are practical suggestions gleaned from worshipping with adolescents in parishes, in schools and in houses of prayer. They are open to debate in the light of contrary experiences and points of view.

- Invite young people to take part in the planning, celebration and evaluation of liturgical experiences in parish, school and houses of prayer, so that they may share in the ownership of these experiences.
- At the same time foster the links of each liturgy with the wider faith community, both as it is at present and where it has come from in its history. This can be done not only through ongoing catechesis on the topic, but also by respect for the structure of the liturgy, for its cycles of readings and for the appropriateness of its music and movement.
- Take care that worship be a blend of awe and ease. Liturgy is a time for reverence and relaxation, when God is 'closer than my inmost, higher than my topmost' (Augustine of Hippo).
- Be attentive to the symbols and imagery involved, that they be 'warm' more than 'cold'. For example, God as close and loving tends to be 'warm', God as distant and judging tends to be 'cold'.
- Build into worship the sharing of stories, both personal and communal. For example, faith-witness talks by middle adolescents at liturgies for early adolescents have proven effective.
- Structure worship so as to be open to experiencing the more common grace experiences, to recalling or to reliving them. Common grace experiences for adolescents seem to be especially in the pinnacles of fullness and success and in the nadirs of emptiness and failure.
- Allow spaces for quiet reflecting and for slow maturing. In the long run, the manner is ordinary. For example, the tendency to induce emotional peaks at retreat liturgies needs to be balanced not only by preparation beforehand and follow-up afterward, but also by valleys of calm on the retreat itself.

- Attend to the liturgy of the Word. Here there is more room for innovation, adaptation and application. On the other hand, be careful not to be exclusively verbal. Build in appropriate music and movement.
- Meet the objection that worship in settings more conducive to adolescent participation (schools and houses of prayer) occasions negative judgements on parish worship. Through reflection and discussion we should be able to perceive the values of each and to arrive at realistic expectations.
- Strive to improve parish worship for adolescents by the quality of reading, of preaching, of singing, of inviting to prayer, and by active involvement of the young people themselves.
- Respect also and encourage prayer forms other than the eucharist: personal and private, liturgical and communal, popular and devotional.

Faith as searching: God as present on the way

Achieving autonomy is a lifelong process, but there is evidence that it is particularly critical during early adolescence. For many, but not all, it levels off by about age fifteen with some kind of truce that parents, pastors, teachers and others in authority can live with. What comes next?

One suggestion is that during middle adolescence (ages 15 to 18) there rises to ascendancy faith as *searching*. The *process* is one of supplementing or even replacing earlier role models so as to make room for new significant persons with whom to identify. The *arena* is the expanding web of relationships through which the adolescents can come in contact with new ways of thinking, of valuing and of behaving. The *focal point* for faith in God as present in their lives is their own personal experience. It may help to try and clarify this process of identification, this arena of relationships, and this focal point of experience.

The process: identification, internalization, integration. Two of the main approaches to adolescent development, the social-learning and the psychodynamic theories, agree on the importance of imitation and identification. The social-learning school pays more attention to external measurable behaviour, while the psychodynamic theory delves into internal drives which come to be known through psychological analysis. The explanation which follows draws mainly upon psychodynamic categories.

The search begins with identification. The young person comes in contact with someone attractive to him or her. This other person becomes significant through what he or she believes, values, lives by. The young person imitates what he or she observes, tries on for size what the other person wears, grows into what this model embodies.

Identification may be more subconscious than conscious, yet it is not beyond freedom. It resembles the introjection and incorporation of very early childhood, except that the infant is not yet aware of the distinction between the self and its primary caretakers. The adolescent is aware of this distinction and is more selective of what he or she imitates.

The second step is internalization. What begins as the superficial imitation of someone else takes root within the adolescent. It becomes part of his or her self-definition. Adolescents will cluster together according to what they have been internalizing: for example, those who are bookish, those involved in sports or athletics, those who experiment with abusive substances, those who party a good deal, those who dress in a certain style or have their hair cut in a certain fashion, those in street gangs, etc.

Internalization has its freedom as well. There may be cases where it seems no more free than breathing the air of one's neighbourhood, yet even in the most predetermined of situations we find individuals who insist upon thinking for themselves, who accept values only of their choice, who give their own direction to their choice. Freedom may be nebulous, but it is real and efficacious in the human person.

Finally comes integration. A person does not come into adolescence psychically undeveloped. Beliefs, values, behavioural patterns are already there. During adolescence itself differing beliefs are competing for a voice, sometimes deferentially like cabinet members at a presidential conference, sometimes noisily like brokers on the floor of a stock exchange, sometimes indirectly like e-mail correspondents sharing advice about boyfriends and girlfriends, teachers and courses, films and music.

There are levels of depth with regard to integration. They form patterns. With regard to more transient values and their expression, such as preference in music, style of dress, idioms of expression, peers weigh in as most influential. With regard to values that are seen as more lasting, such as concern for people in need, belief that life is meaningful, loyalty to family and to friends, peer influence becomes stronger during adolescence than in childhood, but not to the extent that it eclipses the influence of parents and family, church and community.

The arena: an expanding web of relationships. As will be outlined in the section on faith as owning, in young adulthood will emerge the ascendancy of ideological and occupational/professional identities (how one makes sense of reality and what role one plans to play in adulthood). Some researchers have been so impressed by the findings of these identity dimensions among young adults that they have tried the same empirical instruments to measure middle adolescents on the same topics. The results have not been so satisfying. The high-school adolescents studied were not nearly so interested in ideology and occupation as were the college-age young adults. What instead has come to occupy centre stage for middle adolescents? More urgent for them are human relationships: positive experiences of friendship, of acceptance, of love; negative experiences of antipathy, of rejection, of enmity. Even such momentous decisions as choice of college or occupation are tinted by such considerations as 'Where are my friends going to college?' or 'What kind of job will my friends be doing?'

The sequence of resolving psychosocial tasks follows a curious rhythm. The positive resolution of one phase of development often is a stumbling block in the next crisis. Thus the early adolescent hopefully will make the passage from the dominating heteronomy of childhood to the relative autonomy of adolescence. This newly won independence, however, may prove to be an obstacle to a more mature interdependence.

Within middle adolescence itself there is the same curious rhythm. The narcissism that is so common, and often necessary, for an adolescent struggling with a poor self-image becomes outgrown, and room is made for the other. The other, however, may at first belong exclusively to the range of family, of friends, of group. This limited area has been called *domus* (home) or the microsector of human relationships. There are, however, widening circles expanding outward to *polis* (city), to the mesosectors and macrosectors of interhuman relationships. The safety and warmth of *domus* may make the passage to the rough world of *polis* difficult indeed.

What do these psychological and sociological terms have to do with the prayer and worship of middle adolescents? A great deal. They describe the arena in which the struggle for faith and its expression take place. Without them faith risks becoming personal in the sense of private rather than interpersonal and social. Especially in the last one hundred years men and women have come to see the finality of religion as concerned, not only for the *domus*, but also for the *polis* in all its dimensions.

The focal point for faith in God: personal experience. In the twentieth century, religious education has gone through several paradigmatic shifts. For Roman Catholics these have been rapid changes in focal points. A key question for religious educators has been: where and how is God present and active in the lives of whose with whom we minister?

In the early part of this century the answer, at least implicitly, was 'in and through the Church'. For Catholics the instruments for the transmission of faith were explicitly the creed (a summary of what Catholics believe), the commandments (how Catholics live moral lives), the sacraments (how Catholics gain light and strength to stay and grow in God's grace), and the Lord's Prayer (how Catholics pray). Since all these areas had been worked out in the course of history, the preferred method of transmission was to memorize answers exactly so as to ensure accuracy.

A major paradigmatic shift occurred in mid-century. The spotlight turned from the visible Church to the person of Jesus. Religious educators went back beyond the creed to the biblical story of salvation summarized in the creed. Sacraments and liturgy moved into second place because praise and thanksgiving as a community were judged to be the proper initial response to the good news of the Scriptures. Then came the commandments, with emphasis more on the two great commandments of love as expressed by Jesus than on the ten commandments as relayed by Moses on coming down from Mount Sinai. All along the way would be lessons on prayer. Part of this paradigmatic shift was a change in methodology. Replacing memory was proclamation; catechesis followed the example set in the revised eucharistic liturgy, especially in the liturgy of the word.

A more dramatic paradigmatic shift took place in the late 1960s and is still a major cause of controversy today. Its most common name has been 'experiential', though it has been called 'anthropocentric' and 'existential' as well. It has taken several forms in the last thirty years, especially in the direction of groups, of processes, of systems, of cultures and of new forms of communication. What has held them all together is the way in which the focal point shifted from the Church and from Jesus to an emphasis on the human person.

During these past thirty years of catechetical controversy, the magisterial pendulum has been swinging back from a personalist focus to its earlier Jesus-centred and Church-centred approaches. From *The general catechetical directory*, through *Catechesi tradendae*, to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the emphasis has returned from what is globally human through what is ecumenically Christian to what is confessionally Catholic. It has even been voiced by some that experiential catechesis has been a twenty-five-year mistake.

Why review here all this history? Because, in my judgement, at least for middle adolescents, experiential catechesis has been a right road to follow to help them search for their faith, to name it and to own it. Again in my judgement, as far as the faith of adolescents is concerned, experiential catechesis has been a rich vein of ore to be mined. It would be a great loss to young people now to neglect or abandon it.

Such sweeping generalizations obviously call for some explanation. One way to proceed is to distinguish among historical, existential and correspondent categories. Historical categories refer to such faith events as Yahweh's revelation to Israel, the incarnation of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth and the continued presence through the Spirit of the risen Jesus in the Church. Existential categories refer to such faith experiences as the beauty of nature, the mystery of evil, the longing for meaning, the desire for excellence and the support of friendships. Correspondent categories refer to such faith metaphors as God as parent, Jesus as friend, the Spirit as advocate, the Church as community and the sacraments as healing, sustaining, life-giving.

Catechesis has been taking place in terms of all three of these sets of categories. There is no need to eliminate any one of them. Yet there is a place for prioritizing their sequence. In the light of a large body of experience and research with regard to the faith of adolescents, it seems to make good sense that existential categories be the starting point, not as a pre-catechesis, but as a catechesis in itself. Historical categories should follow upon the existential, with attention to the times and places and circumstances in which they became expressions of belief. Finally, the two sets come together in correspondent categories to give us some insight into their mutual correlation and their appropriateness for contemporary Christian belief, worship, discipleship and prayer.

The faith-metaphors of correspondent categories are appealing and worth pursuing, yet they call for caution. A critical example is the invitation to adolescents to believe in Jesus as friend. Some questions which arise are: What does 'friend' mean for an adolescent? What is the scriptural evidence for Jesus as 'friend'? How valid and useful is this faith-metaphor of 'friendship' with Jesus?

What do adolescents mean by 'friend'? For an adolescent girl, for example, the list of meanings may include:

- close or best friends: they are few in number, equal in status, and open about sharing personal confidences;
- good friends: they are persons who can be relied upon; they may include parents or teachers or counsellors or coaches who encourage and support her;

- boyfriend: this is someone of the other gender with whom there is a romantic or sexual attraction;
- guyfriend: this is someone of the other gender where there is little or no romantic or sexual attraction;
- just friends: this is usually a former boyfriend or potential boyfriend with whom the romantic or sexual dimension has been muted or eliminated;
- acquaintance friends: these include just about all schoolmates, neighbours, parishioners, fellow workers on a first-name basis.

What kind of friend is Jesus for an adolescent? Certainly not boyfriend, guyfriend, or just friend. More than acquaintance friend. Perhaps a blend of close friend and good friend. Yet different from all of the above. The image is a faith-metaphor; the relationship is a faith-friendship; the bases for its truth are the faith-events of the incarnation and resurrection.

What help do we get from the New Testament with regard to friendship with Jesus? In favour of this faith-metaphor, we have in the Fourth Gospel these farewell words of Jesus to his disciples: 'I call you friends, since I have made known to you all that I heard from my Father' (Jn 15:15). On the other hand, we have a large number of other titles for Jesus put on the lips of his disciples. If we limit outselves to this same Fourth Gospel, we read:

- John the Baptizer: 'Look! There is the Lamb of God!' (1:36).
- Andrew: 'We have found the Messiah!' (1:41).
- Nathaniel: 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel!' (1:49).
- Nicodemus: 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God' (3:2).
- Martha: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of God, he who is to come into the world' (11:27).
- Thomas: 'My Lord and my God!' (20:28).

The faith-metaphor of Jesus as friend meets the criteria often used to test faith-affirmations. First, it has meaning, that is, it is internally coherent with other faith-affirmations about Jesus. Second, it is meaningful, that is, it makes a difference in the lives of those who make this profession; the lives of Christians are different because of it. Third, it is true: it corresponds to what for twenty centuries Christians in faith have been saying about Jesus of Nazareth.

This essay will now journey on to the final phase of adolescence, young adulthood. First, however, we should note a critical alternative route. An appreciable number of adolescents (estimated from below 20 to above 40 per cent) undergo a perceptible graced experience around the ages of 16 to 18. It can be dramatically acute; it can be low-key but recurrent. It can be a conversion away from a life-style which is no longer acceptable; it can be a reaching toward a new way of thinking and living. It is wise for the youth ministers of this age group to keep two things in mind. First, these may be bona fide religious experiences and are to be welcomed as such. Second, since a large number of adolescents seem not to have this experience, any programme needs to have a prudent respect for the uniqueness of each individual.

Faith as owning: affirming an ideology as truly one's own

Let us grow a bit older along with adolescents, moving from the middle teens (ages 15 to 18) to those who can technically be called late adolescents (ages 18 to 21), but who more popularly are known as 'young adults'. What happens here?

From a psychosocial point of view, there then takes place the critical episode of a larger drama. The larger drama has been called the person's search for identity. It has several scenes, which go by such names as individuation or autonomy, sexual and relational identities, occupational/professional and ideological identities. What seems to move to centre stage in early adulthood are occupational/professional identity, that is, how a person will make his or her contribution in the world of adult responsibility, and ideological identity, that is, how a person will find meaning in his or her human existence.

To allow the young person opportunity to work out his or her personal identity, especially its ideological and occupational/professional dimensions, nature and society have opened a window called 'psychosocial moratorium'. It allows the young adult to hang loose, to try out alternatives, to suspend long-term commitments until the time is riper for them.

Much has been researched and written about psychosocial moratorium among young adults; to pursue it in depth is beyond the scope of this article. Important to us is its impact upon faith as commitment and upon prayer and worship as faith's expression.

To some extent faith is like an ideology. It is a way of construing reality. It is a mindset, a mentality, a world-view. It has a philosophical component, that is, it is a kind of knowledge that gives meaning to life. Faith also differs from ideology, at least in some emphases. It is knowledge which includes the imperative of conviction. It is relationship which calls to commitment. It is response to a personal God, which includes inner love and outward action.

Because of these differences, it would not be wise to counsel young adults to suspend the faith of their childhood until they are mature enough to accept and affirm an adult faith of their own. The truth lies somewhere between suspension of faith, or at least of involvement in a faith-community, and foreclosure of personal decision, that is, allowing someone else to decide our faith for us, or at least its liturgical expression. Faith, in order to be faith, should be free, should be personal, should be owned.

It has long been observed that for many young adults affiliation to a faith-community follows a cycle. During middle adolescence attendance at worship tends to decline. This decline becomes precipitous in young adulthood. But then comes marriage, which provides for many newly-weds the incentive to include once again worship as a regular part of their lives. With the birth and rearing of children the rate of return to the religion of their childhood accelerates. Many want to pass on to their children what they had received from their own parents.

Yet some differences have been noted in the last few decades. The decline seems to have steepened. Despite scattered signs of reawakenings, compared with a generation ago church attendance is down, especially in the age-bracket 15 to 29. A combination of factors seems to contribute to this phenomenon. Some are:

- The secularization of society. People find their questions answered and their interests satisfied in terms of this world, with its thought-patterns and its agencies.
- The heterogeneity of culture. There have been times and places where culture is more homogeneous, that is, where families and neighbours share common sets of beliefs, of customs, of moral codes, of religious practices. This homogeneity has been changing to heterogeneity, particularly in western societies.
- Changes in family structure. One of the results of heterogeneity is 'mixed' marriages: religiously, culturally, ethnically. This mixing has its value for many individuals, but it has a negative effect on many churches. Religions tend to rely upon continuity of beliefs and practices from generation to generation.
- The primacy of the individual over community. Studies on such western cultures as in the United States have found that there are two dominant mindsets at work. The first and more dominant is individualism: being number one in achievement and reward is the cultural priority. The second and more subordinate is service to the community: making some return to the common good is an important dimension of being a citizen.

- The imaging of God. There is a further point of correlation that is more subtle than those just mentioned. It concerns how a person images God. Those whose imaging of God has been warm and close will more likely return to worship within the church of their childhood. Those whose imaging of God has been cold and distant are more likely to leave and stay away.

Conclusion

This chapter has been using the psychosocial tasks of early, middle and late adolescence as a framework on which to hang a variety of academic reflections and pastoral suggestions. The same framework may help us respond to this question: How may a youth minister present to adolescents the person of Jesus Christ?

As indicated above on the topic 'Jesus as friend', the Christian Scriptures provide us with many and varied faith-understandings of Jesus. One way to assemble them is:

- Jesus as way of life;
- Jesus as term of personal bonding;
- Jesus as goal and meaning in life.

'Jesus as way of life' is particularly appropriate for early adolescents, with their concern for allegiance within a group. We find it not only in one of the earliest names for Christian community, 'the Way', in the Acts of the Apostles, but also and especially in the public ministry of Jesus as told in the Synoptic Gospels. Some passages stand out, such as the collection of community admonitions in Matthew 18, the parables of mercy in Luke 15 and 16, and the kind of Messiah Jesus is in Mark's Gospel.

'Jesus as term of personal bonding' is a giant step forward. In faith we affirm Jesus not only as model to imitate, but also as friend who becomes part of our own self-definition. This faith-experience of Jesus becomes more appropriate for middle adolescents, when interpersonal relationships come into their ascendancy. For our understanding of this dimension of Christian belief we have especially the Pauline and Johannine literature. Faith-metaphors abound: reconciliation, new creation, body of Christ, shepherding, vine and branches, the closest of friendships.

'Jesus as goal and meaning in life.' Again, we are invited to take a giant step forward. In addition to being model and friend, Jesus gives meaning to our often meaningless reality. This dimension of faith correlates with one of the primary tasks of young adulthood, that of resolving ideological identity. Our sources in the Christian Scriptures are, in addition to Pauline and Johannine metaphors, the poetic hymns such as we find in Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians. Much of Christian thought of the past half century can help us here, such as political and liberation theologies, creation and feminist theologies. They challenge our thinking but they are to some extent within the grasp of young adults.

The tension remains between the self and the other, between the individual and the community, between affirming one's own faith and accepting the faith received from someone else. The resolution is not an analysis of an either/or disjunction, but a synthesis of a both/and complementarity. We conclude this article with two citations, each of which support one side of the tension, but not to the elimination of the other.

On the value and influence of the faith-community:

> Religious socialization is a process consisting of life-long formal and informal mechanisms, through which persons sustain and transmit their faith (world view, value system) and life style. This is accomplished through participation in the life of a tradition-bearing community with its rites, rituals, myths, symbols, expressions of belief, attitudes and values, organizational patterns, and activities.[3]

On the importance and integrity of the individual:

> We are grateful to you, Father, because you do not ask us to be Gandhi, our great leader. You do not ask us to be Nehru, our first Prime Minister. You do not ask us to be like our teachers or like our fathers and mothers. We are grateful because you ask Sheela to be Sheela, Anand to be Anand, Saroj to be Saroj, John to be John. Yes, Father. you ask all of us to be ourselves, to be true to ourselves. Amen.[4]

NOTES

[1] The generalizations found in this chapter derive from empirical studies and personal experience with adolescents from the mid-twentieth century up until the present. The data describe more directly English-speaking adolescents of North America. Some of the studies have been more psychological in character: they tend to describe what adolescents have in common throughout a society, indeed throughout the world. Others are more sociological: they tend to describe how adolescents from various groups or cultures differ from one another. The reader is invited to be critical of these generalizations.

[2] The sections of this chapter dealing with the psychosocial tasks of adolescents are in debt to the insights of E. Erikson on adolescent identity, of J. Marcia on psychosocial moratorium and of J. Fowler on faith development. The sequential linking of autonomy to early adolescence,

relational identity to middle adolescence, and ideological and occupational identity to young adulthood is more the author's own. The implications for and applications to the faith-life of adolescents owe much to the author's students in Fordham University's Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education in New York City.

[3] J. Westerhoff III, *Generation to generation: conversations on religious education and culture* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1974), p 41.

[4] D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Eucharistic liturgy for young people in India* (Bangalore: National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre).

Lately, the relationship is changing . . .

I DON'T KNOW WHO AND WHERE GOD IS – but I care. I feel a pressure to find out, to know. I guess my general idea of God is largely influenced by childhood views. I think of this guy up in heaven (pearly gates, streets of gold) who's looking down, watching me because he cares. He has plans and reasons for everything – he's in control but wants what's best for me.

I never really thought seriously about who God is until recently; I just took it for granted. Lately things don't fit. I don't think God is so human but I don't think he's a feeling or possibility. I think God is what we need him to be. He introduces himself as something we can deal with. I don't think he's limited to our religious views or categories. He doesn't have to be the same thing for everyone. He might not be a he or she. Personally I don't believe he's a he, but I don't know what he/it is.

I think God came down to earth (is it even 'down to'?) in the form of Jesus. He, Jesus, died on the cross for me. I think God is in heaven but also in us, or at least his influence is. I think God reveals himself to people individually as a relationship grows between them. Lately, for me, the relationship is changing; so, perhaps my idea of who he is and where he is continues to change, but I don't think I'll ever know who he is.

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