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On: 04 February 2015, At: 04:26

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

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Published online: 09 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: L. Earl Jackson (1918) THE CHURCH PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 13:2, 132-135, DOI: [10.1080/0034408180130209](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408180130209)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408180130209>

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THE CHURCH PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION

L. EARL JACKSON *

The tremendous gap between the achievements of the average home and its possibilities in the realm of personal development is a distinct challenge to all who seek the ethical improvement of the race. The time is ripe for larger recognition of the meaning of the family as an agency for the development of character, and for propaganda that will assist parents in their educational task.

A pioneer work in this field has been done by mothers' clubs, parents' classes in child study, and parent-teachers' associations in the public schools. The work in these fields has been of real value, but we are convinced that the best and most natural agents of this propaganda are the institutions of religion, chief of which is the Christian church.

We therefore propose as the nucleus for this work in the local church, the formation of an organization known as The Church Parent-Teachers' Association. Its object would include: More intimate relations between the church and the home, assisting parents in the moral and religious training of their children, co-operation of parents and teachers in the work of the church school, and the establishment of the child-centric motive in the program of the church.

The place of the association in the church organization should be one on a level of equal standing with the church school, the young people's organization, the women's union and the brotherhood. Although it is under the supervision of the church Board of Education, it will be almost wholly self-governing. It is not an appendage to the church school, though its organization would be somewhat similar to the latter, nor is it an extension of the Home Department and the Cradle Roll. It will both supplement, co-operate with, and form a part of, every department of the school, but its distinctive features are numerous and important enough to require recognition as one of the major organizations of the church. It will of course be represented on the church Board of Education and confer with the latter from time to time about improvements in other departments of the school.

The Association will also relate itself to other community organizations doing, in whole or in part, an educational work, such as public schools, recreation commission, child-welfare agencies, health

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department, libraries, social hygiene society, associated charities, National Institute of Child Life, Religious Education Association, and many others.

The organization of the Parent-Teachers' Association need not be complex. The president or director and the other usual officers may be either appointed by the Church Board of Education or elected by the Association. In case of election, the Board of Education might well constitute the nominating committee. An Executive Council consisting of the officers and the chairman of committees, the latter appointed by the president, would be responsible for the general conduct of the work. In this Association perhaps more than in any other church organization, the work succeeds or fails with the choice of a leader. The list of qualifications should include "Willingness to study the subject thoroughly, ability to teach as contrasted with mere talking, sympathy with parenthood, and a passion for the religious personal values in life." (Cope.) While "physiological parenthood is less important than spiritual parenthood," it is usually essential that the leader be a mother, who has profited by experience, who has not lived a protected life, and who is thought by *others* to have been really successful in the training of children. Of course, no one who "knows all about the subject" is prepared to lead such an organization.

The work of the Association may be divided into the following committees: Publicity, membership, curriculum and program, social, visitation, extension, secret service, literature, and parents' problems. The functions of some or all of these committees could be assumed by the executive council according to the size of the organization and the abilities of the members. The names of the committees are largely self-explanatory. The membership committee, however, aims chiefly to get new members into the Association, from both within and outside the church, while the extension committee is expected to keep in touch with the other community educational agencies mentioned above, and to plan for the improvement of family life and child training in needy sections where recruits for a church organization cannot readily be secured.

The activities and methods of work of such an Association have already been suggested in part. The general meetings could be held monthly, except during the summer months. In addition to the business session, some leading topic of general interest to parents of children of all ages should be taken up by the director, with the presentation of assigned papers by other members of the Association and a discussion following. The tendency to a rambling

discussion must be curbed in this kind of organization especially. Occasionally lecturers on special topics may be obtained. Among the topics that might be discussed are these: Vocational Guidance, Vocational vs. Classical Education, The Child's Companions, The Educational Values of Play, Family Life as a School of Morals and Religion, Freedom and Authority in Discipline, Sex Education, What Makes Good Breeding, Training for Citizenship, Higher Education, The Educational Values of the Arts, and The Church's Contribution to Family Life.

A more intensive work can be done through the establishment of parent's classes in child-study and training, religion in the family, and allied subjects. Few courses can cover the general field adequately in less than twenty-five or thirty lessons. The classes should meet once or twice a week, using some standard introductory textbook like Dr. Cope's "Religious Education in the Family" or Dr. Forbush's "Child-Study and Child-Training." Week-night classes would afford more time and give larger prestige, but classes in the church-school session on Sunday may attract larger numbers. If good teachers are not plentiful, several classes could combine for a period of six months. One of the most important phases of the whole work, viz., the preparation of all young people for family life and parenthood, could probably be undertaken only by presenting such a course in the Sunday classes of the church school. We suggest that this course occupy a regular place in the graded curriculum of the school at age twenty-one, and be regarded as prerequisite to graduation into the adult or post-graduate department. Dr. Cope gives very adequate suggestions for the class work.

After completion of the first introductory course, specialized work in the various departments should be undertaken. The members of the Association would naturally fall into groups according to the ages of their children, and would conduct classes and conferences dealing with the problems of their particular children. These sections of the Parent-Teachers' Association would correspond to the divisions of the church school, and it would be in such sectional conferences that the work of the school and its expressional activities could best be presented to the parents of the children, and various plans of co-operation between the home and school effected. In addition to the sections of the Association corresponding to the various departments of the school from the cradle roll to the intermediate or senior department inclusive, and in addition to the Sunday classes for prospective home-makers, the Association should provide special help for individual prospective parents, including medical advice, provision of literature, etc.

For the benefit of those who find it impossible to attend the conferences and classes conducted by the Association, reading courses should be offered, with proper recognition of the work. The library committee will also keep in touch with the latest literature, and be prepared to recommend the best books and pamphlets, present book reviews, references to pamphlets and magazine articles, both to individuals and in the monthly meetings of the Association. The library should of course contain the writings of Hodges, Kirkpatrick, McKeever, Cope, Forbush, Coe, Griggs, Miss Slattery, and Miss Moxcey.

The well-known "father-and-son" and "mother-and-daughter" banquets also come within the province of the Association, and in addition to their own possibilities, offer an excellent recruiting ground for the Association. Other meetings may be provided if occasion demands. The extension work in needy districts and the experimental work outlined by Dr. Forbush may require case-work and rehabilitation conferences similar to those of the Associated Charities. The preparation of future leaders will also be kept in mind.

FELLOWSHIP IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The New York Diocesan Board of Religious Education of the Protestant Episcopal Church again offers a fellowship of five hundred dollars, for the year 1918-19, available for study in the field of Religious Education in some department of Columbia University.

This fellowship is open to men and women, who are members of the Episcopal Church and registered in some parish of the Diocese of New York, and who shall have received the bachelor's degree from a college or university of recognized standing, or who shall be considered by the University Committee on Admissions to have had the equivalent of a college education, and who at the time of making the application shall be not more than thirty years of age.

Three points will be considered in awarding the fellowship: (1) The scholastic standing of the applicant; (2) All-round development of character, interest in religious education or allied subjects as shown by the elective courses pursued and the practical work undertaken by the applicant; (3) The ability to represent the church, particularly in the field of religious education, and the promise of successful leadership in this field of work.