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THE WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE FAMILY

RABBI EMANUEL STERNHEIM*

One of the first tasks in the department of the family should be that of enlisting the sympathy of every clergyman of every denomination in every community from one end of the land to the other, in the effort to emphasize before their congregations and with everyone with whom they come into contact the fundamental importance of the place of the home in the building up of civilization.

If it were possible to unite all for one generation in an earnest effort to make the very best possible of every girl and boy born in our land, how grand would be the result and how lasting. There would be a new race, loving God, therefore healthy and law-abiding, in body and mind, and in the love of God—brave to face alike the world of today and the future, and wise to order all things for the good and the gain of man.

A fundamental unanimity might be one of the aims of the department of The Family. I know that this is a bold postulation and no more likely to be realized on this occasion than on the very many others in which it has been postulated. But my immediate plea is for a simpler unanimity than the unanimity which wipes out all the differences between sects and creeds. It is at least the unanimity which shall enable us to forget our differences in the remembrance of the common hope and aspiration, in the common task and the common goal.

If the Department of The Family did nothing more than enter a mighty protest against the rigidity of professional religious expression and the overwhelming part that is being played in its institutional life by the amateur and the dilettante, it will do more than it can possibly achieve by any setting up of formal machinery. While I have no delusions as to the place of the dreamer in the body politic, I am not ashamed to stand on record in protest against the modern cult of efficiency which may be of value in the department store, but which is stultifying our schools, colleges and churches.

A preacher with the mind of the department store manager can introduce little religion into his church and less into the family. I am perfectly well aware that the governing boards of churches have a soft place for the departmental-minded preacher, but that fact does not detract from the correctness of the indictment. The moral

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would be that in the general process of the refining influence of the cultural home life based on "*Wissenschaft*" and crowned by religion, such governing bodies would tend to disappear, and with them the man in the pulpit who is content to be judged by the efficiency test; and with the passing there would come the renaissance of real soul life, which would mean that the machine for introducing religion into the family would need to be very simple.

The general board of Religious Education of a certain denomination has issued a little pamphlet on "Religion and the Home," in which they place second in a list of plans that are suggested "The pulpit stimulating family religion." Respectfully, I differ from this placement though I agree with the importance of the suggestion as such. They place first the suggestion "Parents Awakened to the need of Religious Nurture"; but parents will not be awakened to the need of religious nurture until the pulpit awakens them; and we are persistently raising a generation of young people, potential parents, who have no such conception of their duties towards religion. Feeling as strongly as I do that it is not machinery that we need, so much as "spirit" going out in the broadest possible fashion, I am reluctant to continue with any suggestion on machinery, but I am not unmindful of the fact that some of the ideals which I have myself endeavored to present to you may be put into motion through some form of effective organization.

This department must be a vital one, all of its members contributing to the work and it should carry on a persistent propaganda, not for machinery, but for the higher ideals which I have endeavored to outline. We should leave the machinery to the sectarian bodies who are endeavoring to do the work as effectively as they know how and to the Sunday-school committees and the like local organizations better equipped for the doing of it, but we should provide the stimulus from our central organization and to the component parts of our whole religious organization nationally conceived, endeavoring to stimulate all the sects and all the component parts of our organic religious life with need of the stimulation of the parent to the vital need of the place of religion in the home and *that only* after, through press, school and pulpit, a higher ideal of home is postulated for our children especially. For that reason I would suggest that there is an analogy between this subject and the treatment of sex-hygiene. A common objection to the treatment of sex-hygiene in schools is that it is usually said that this is the parents' task. I have no quarrel with the statement; it is the parents' task. But the fact is that we have so trained previous generations that the parents are unable to do it. So soon as we have done our work in the light of what I

believe to be a newer vision the next generation of parents will be able to take it out of the hands of the educators to some extent.

The particular thing which we are endeavoring to legislate for is in the same condition. I am not very hopeful of any propaganda having a very profound effect upon the mothers and fathers of today. I am not only hopeful, but in the highest degree optimistic, as to the result of education if we can commence rightly in training a generation of parents, who shall have an ideal concept of home, and a correct knowledge of the place of religion in it—that it is the crown and apex of all home life.

Our highest duty lies with the child of today, that the parent of tomorrow may have a wide conception of what home means and of what religion in the home means. Unless we perform that duty, we are failing in our major task. For this, the Department of The Family needs no elaborate machinery. It needs to make use of the inspiration of its membership for the dissemination of these ideals, amongst the members of the association in the first instance, and amongst the preachers and teachers of every sect and of every creed from one end of this broad land to the other.

I am not insensible of the difficulties, but I make the suggestion that probably as valuable a contribution as could be made by our department would be the establishment of a traveling secretaryship, the incumbent of which should be a man deeply imbued with the catholic spirit of religion, who would carry these ideals of fundamental basis, into widely scattered communities and do something to create real amity out of the chaos of diversity. I am well aware of the fact that this is being done by individuals here and there with rare fidelity and courage, but it is being done at tremendous personal sacrifice and even at that, ineffectually. Only upon this broad rock-bottom foundation of the fundamentals of religion, common and basic, to all the creeds, can we secure real progress.

Let us take for instance a specimen denominational program that I have before me as I write this address. "Parents Awakened to Need of Religious Nurture." "Parents Stimulating Family Religion." "Parish Appointing Leader to Work for Home." "Parents Gathering for Conferences and Classes." "Parish Library on Home Nurture in Religion." "Public Library Lists Distributed." "Participation in Home Movement of Church." Probably an excellent propaganda for a denomination, which might be well copied by all denominations, but which cannot be of the slightest use unless stimulated from without by inter-denominational agencies dealing with fundamentals such as ours is.

I am ready to admit that the value of the Religious Education

Association to me is its inter-denominational character. I am frankly tired of the insistence upon isms with which we seem to be more and more obsessed. It is the crowning tragedy of tragedies that before the cataclysm such as we are witnessing we nevertheless go on serenely in our petty circles busying ourselves with our puny details without the faintest conception that religion is inevitably doomed unless it can place itself upon a higher plane. I am not subscribing to the doctrine of the man in the street that the war is a direct indictment of Christianity; it is an indictment of Christian and Jew—not of Christianity nor of Judaism, but an equal indictment lies in the sloth with which we are facing the world problem. Religion in the coming world order must be the resultant of religious education that shall realize as well as recognize unity amidst the diversity, or we can only hope for the very speedy writing of a similar program before a new world order which shall mark the passing of our own.

I say this in order to introduce another suggestion for fruitful activity; the co-operation of effort and the co-operation with institutions. We are rapidly institutionalizing our inter-denominationalism as well as our denominationalism. In the realm of philosophy we have done exactly that thing. The American sociologist is confronted with a bewildering *embarras de richesse* in the field of national agencies for betterment. The peace-loving man of today in America is confronted with the spectacle of a large number of peace organizations fighting each other in anything but a peaceful fashion for precedence in the creation of a peace order which they do not seem to have been successful in attaining.

This might be mere satire, were I not so fearful of a similar resultant in an attempt to create agency after agency in order to create a unanimity which is as far off as ever. It is the old story of over-valuation of machinery. It is not machinery of which we have woeful lack. It is spirit.

The Department of The Family therefore would in my opinion be performing a tremendously valuable act if it could secure the closest co-operation with the Congress of Mothers, with the Child Welfare Association, with the Women's Clubs, with all the various agencies having to deal with womanhood.

Moreover, there ought to be an intimate and close association with the agencies that are striving for moral education. I can conceive nothing more futile than constant reiteration on the part of some religionists that there can be no morality without religion. They seem to forget that the obverse is also true, and that there can be no religion without morality. I can see no scintilla of justifi-

cation for the friction that exists between co-ordinating agencies which have an essential part to play in the upbuilding of the ideal of the family.

And so, if I may be permitted to summarize the service that the Department of the Home can render it is in the creation of a new *modus operandi* for the introduction of formal religious training in homes upon a huge international and national basis. If we are fighting in the doing of it we would merely be perpetuating an old evil. Our contribution must be the stimulation of intelligent agencies to efficiently accentuate the ideals underlying the work, to establishing a right foundation for the work of the denominational agencies. Furthermore we must act as a stimulus to the educator, as such, that he pay regard to the training of the young rather than attempt to reach the present generation of parents, to the stimulation of the deeper and nobler things underlying religious idealism at its best, to an active effort to bring home the importance of these wider ideals to every existing agent. Then, and then only may we properly give attention to the presentation year by year of effective programs dealing with the various aspects of the department's work.

CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

BRINGING THE CHILD INTO RELATION WITH THE CHURCH

MARY LAWRENCE*

Under ideal conditions the matter of bringing the child into relation with the church should present no problem whatever. Born in a religious and moral family, bound to the church through baptism, membership in the cradle roll, the church school, the church service, social functions and philanthropic organizations, any youth may be expected to regard his relations to his church as natural as his relations to his home. Under ideal conditions the church takes its place along with the other institutions, and young people contribute to it and receive blessings from it as naturally as they contribute to and receive from their homes, schools and playgrounds. When the perspective is lost and the church loses its touch on life, conditions are no longer ideal, and the relation of the young people to the church becomes a problem.

*Miss Mary Lawrence, A.B., a trained director of religious education, states that she draws most of the methods in this paper from her experience in the First Congregational (Unitarian) Church of Providence, R. I. Delivered at the meeting of the Association of Church Directors of Religious Education, Boston, March 2, 1917.