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Benjamin S. Winchester

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Correlation of the Week-Day Curriculum and the Sunday Church-School Curriculum

BENJAMIN S. WINCHESTER*

If one were disposed to be cynical he might detect in the wording of the topic a certain anxiety on the part of those who are responsible for the Sunday-school, lest this new agency, the week-day school, may usurp the functions and prerogatives of the more venerable Sunday-school. As though the Sunday-school were to say, "We are the time-honored educational institution of the church; we have developed all the curriculum it has, we have added from time to time hand-work, club work, expressional activities of every kind, activities which require the extension of our program out into the week: who are you now to assume to set up a week-day school and to propose a 'week-day curriculum?' We are bound to assert and defend our rights, as the parent institution." Such feeling is akin to that of some parents who are proud of their children but dread to see them set up housekeeping for themselves. Is it not a sign that they are getting beyond parental control?

And yet it is in no such captious spirit that we would approach this problem. We have here to consider the very serious question of economy of effort for all concerned. We are all engaged in the same general task, but it would be the height of folly if all were to do precisely the same things. Clearly, there is a call for some division of labor, some understanding as to just what each agency is to contribute to the educational process, for we are engaged not only upon the same task, but we deal very largely with the same persons and handle much of the same material and use many identical methods. How are we to correlate and who is to do the correlating?

A good many suggestions have been made as to how correlation may be brought about. Some have assumed that the main task in both Sunday and week-day schools is the imparting of information, as for example, knowledge of the Bible. Let the week-day schools concern themselves in a general way with memorizing the "gems" of biblical story, poetry or parable, with mastering the "main facts" of biblical history, with drill upon the more mechanical tasks of learning the names of the books of the Bible and how to find chapter and verse; and let the Sunday-school dwell rather upon the interpretation of the Bible passages, the inculcation of doctrine, the emphasis upon those aspects of the church's teaching which are more distinctively denominational, not to say sectarian, in character. This point of view is perhaps more often met with in communities where the week-day-schools are of the coöperative or community type.

Again, there are those who are convinced that, even for the imparting of information, expression as well as impression is necessary. Hence, hand-work, picture-pasting and coloring, map-drawing, the making of diagrams and models, note-book work, essay work, etc., and even dramatization, pageantry and the like. All this takes time, too much time to allow of being done on Sunday. Let this be done in the week-day school and correlated with the work of the Sunday-school, so far as subject-matter is concerned.

A third suggestion is made by those who feel that education, even religious education, involves more than knowledge of the Bible, more than

*Associate Editor, The Congregational Publishing Society, Boston.

the imparting of any knowledge alone. It involves, even in its intellectual aspects, a knowledge of church history and of the missionary enterprises in which the church is engaged. It involves also the development of the missionary motive, the motive to service in personal and social ways, it involves the element of feeling and the expression of feeling in acts of worship. The statement is sometimes made that our religious education must include both instruction and training, instruction in the Bible, in history and in doctrine, and training in attitude and habits. It is sometimes proposed that the doctrinal and worship aspects be undertaken by the Sunday-school, the remainder of the teaching task to be accomplished through the week-day school.

This very variety of suggestion seems to indicate that we have not yet arrived at an agreement or common understanding as to just what we mean by correlation, and as to just what is involved in any effective correlation. If one were to hazard a definition, shall we say that by correlation we mean the harmonious working together of all parts of the educational process so that it shall accomplish a certain definite result in the pupil. It is the unity in the experience of the person to be educated that constitutes at once the necessity and the basis for correlation. An illustration will perhaps make this clear. A certain high school teacher of domestic science was once asked: How do you proceed to teach bread-making? Do you go into such matters as the chemical changes involved, the physical changes brought about by the action of the carbonic acid gas, the biological and physiological activities of the yeast plant? The answer was immediate and to the point: Oh, no, I correlate with the teachers of physics, chemistry and biology. That is to say, in order to teach the practical art of bread-making, these three or four teachers of different subjects *synchronized* their teaching in such a manner as to furnish the respective knowledges required in bread-making at the time when they were needed in order to make the process most intelligible and thus lead the pupil to its mastery.

So, in the working out of the problems of religious education, the first requisite is a common understanding and acceptance of a definite aim, then such an administration of all the agencies and methods as will supply, on the part of each one, that essential element which each is best qualified to give. A common aim and a unified administration—these are the two indispensable factors.

We are very far today from agreeing upon a common aim. It is not necessary here to enter into the discussion as to what that aim should be, for this, at least so far as week-day schools are concerned, forms the theme for discussion at another session. Suffice it to say, that it is the exception rather than the rule even to state this aim in terms of definite results to be accomplished in the pupil. Still less common is it to evaluate lesson material, worship, expressional activities and methods of administration with reference to such an aim. Even in the statements of aim provided in connection with graded lessons it is customary to indicate what the *teacher* is to do, rather than what the pupil is to do as a result of the teaching. For example, "The purpose of this lesson is to *show* . . ." something or other, but why the teacher is to show this is less clearly pointed out.

Consider for a moment what happens in an ordinary session of the Sunday-school: A few minutes are commonly spent in what is assumed to be a period of worship. If the person who conducts the worship were

to be challenged to state just what the worship is to accomplish, he might find it difficult to answer. One is tempted here to refer to practices which, though all too common, contribute little if anything to any definite educational accomplishment. Still more difficult would it be for the leader of the worship to state precisely how the act of worship is related to the rest of the teaching program of the Sunday session. In many instances it bears no relation whatever. Again, there may be a brief period devoted to some form of missionary enterprise, or to some form of social service. But these, in turn, are often, perhaps generally, unrelated to the "lesson." Then follows, perhaps, a series of announcements, or a secretary's report, and at last the statement, "We will now go to the lesson." Thus, in the course of forty-five minutes or an hour, the pupil is rapidly hurried through a series of disconnected and unrelated performances. It would seem that the first step to take in the process of correlation should be the bringing together into a harmonious unity of these separate, unrelated teaching acts.

But right here we run against a difficulty. The control of the worship element in the program may be in the hands of the superintendent. The missionary program is perhaps provided by some missionary board which is burdened with the responsibility of securing financial support for the missionary enterprise and sends out broadcast a series of missionary "exercises" supposed to be instrumental in arousing interest in missions and securing contributions—a program too often prepared in utter ignorance of the rest of the program of the school. The secretary reads a perfunctory, statistical report in a perfunctory manner. The "lesson" is provided by a publishing house, which has to consider the situation in the denomination at large and therefore cannot concern itself with the concrete problems of James and Helen in the local church. In other words, we have, right in the Sunday-school session itself, an over-crowded program, made up of unrelated parts, emanating from different sources and assuming different aims for the teaching process. Is it any wonder that the impression often made upon the mind of a pupil is a confused one and that experienced educators make the assertion that "the chief things the pupils appear to be learning are bad habits"—of unpunctuality, irregularity, inattention and indolence?

One may go farther within the church, apart still altogether from the question of the curriculum of the week-day school, and ask as to correlation between the Sunday-school lesson, for example, and the Boy-Scout program. "A scout is courteous," we say. It might be supposed that the Sunday-school would "impress" the idea or hold up the ideal of courtesy, and that the Scout group would be given opportunity that same week to make practical discrimination between acts of courtesy and discourteous behavior. But no; the Sunday-school lesson was made, let us say, in Boston or in Philadelphia; the Scout program was made in New York. The people who made these programs may have had the same general aim in mind—"to save the boy"—but they did not have before them as they planned their programs the mind of the *same* boy, nor did they have in mind each other's programs for saving the boy. The result is, two separate stabs at the boy in the dark, one by a program which emphasizes knowledge and information and leaves almost out of account the recognition of the boy's immediate problems; the other program laying stress upon activity and expression and initiative, but leaving the formulation of ideals, the picturing of idealized experience, the systematic building up of sanctions, largely to incidental reference. It is not intended here to misrepresent or disparage

either of these agencies, but simply to show that each really needs the other and that the two programs require correlation. And the same might be said of the Girl-Scout program, the program of the Camp Fire Girls, the Christian-Endeavor or Epworth-League or Baptist-Union program. These programs and the Sunday-school program all need to be correlated with each other, but as yet there is almost no real correlation whatever.

For the basis of correlation, as Prof. Betts has well said, is to be found in the child himself instead of in the material. If the aim of education may be said to be the commitment of the pupil to a purpose, and that the same purpose which exists in the mind of the teacher, and to which the teacher stands committed, then correlation is the process of bringing together the minds of several individuals, all of whom are in some way participating in the teaching process at a given period of time, so that their combined influence shall work harmoniously and cumulatively toward the clarifying, the motivating, the inspiring of the pupil to follow out this purpose of his own free will and on his own initiative.

We begin to see, I think, some of the elements in this problem of correlation. It involves the formulation of teaching aims, the coöperation of program-making agencies, the synchronizing of effort on the part of those who are concerned in some part of the teaching process, the centralizing of administrative and supervisory activity under a single head within the local church.

It is also possible to understand not only why the problem is so complex, but why it is so difficult practically to secure correlation. Our present situation in the churches was not created to order by following out carefully drawn plans and specifications drawn by an expert engineer. It is the product of a long development which, however, has been especially rapid during the last century in the attempt to meet the needs and conditions in a new country in a new way. Like every such human product, the system, as it grows up, gathers to itself elements and traditions both good and bad. When a need is keenly felt, then we find a group of people setting themselves to meet that need. It is an emergency that is faced. And as soon as some success is achieved, others adopt similar methods, a demand is created for the necessary materials and for administrative direction, an organization is formed and "quantity-production" starts. This goes on until another need is felt, another great emergency arises, another experiment is started, another organization is formed, and more quantity-production is provided for. Such, in brief, is the history which lies back of the modern Sunday-school, the young people's society, the missionary education movement, the Scout movement, and so on. None of these was started with the idea of incarnating the whole teaching process. But each, as it has developed, has added to itself new areas and widened the scope of its original activity. The Sunday-school reaches out to touch all ages. It extends into the home, to enlist there the infants as prospective pupils and to give suggestion and guidance to mothers in the pre-school years of an infant's life, and to bring encouragement, counsel and comfort to the infirm and the aged. It extends out into the week, through its affiliated clubs and classes. The young people's societies reach backward, to enlist prospective members, and forward, to retain the support of members who have grown beyond the years for which this form of organization was originally planned. The Scouts have the same problem of recruiting and retirement to face. In other

words, each of these agencies which began as a "movement" became at length an institution, with more or less rigid standardization and a rather definite program. Meanwhile, the local church, in which all these branches of the institution exist, and for whose youth these movements began to be, has lost the power of direction and co-ordination, this having been transferred to some centralized administrative agency, located at a distance and operating over the whole national area. The result is that administrative officers, each intent upon promoting and expanding his own program, become pre-occupied with their own tasks, tend to regard them from the point of view of the administrative office rather than from the point of view of the individual pupil, whose varied situations it is not possible to visualize, and become jealous of interference and suggestion looking toward the modification of programs to insure better correlation.

These are some of the reasons why there is so little correlation at present within the Sunday-school program itself, and between the Sunday-school and allied agencies within the church. These programs are supplied to the churches by nearly a score of denominational and inter-denominational and undenominational agencies, each one claiming, rightly, to be the creation of the church and therefore claiming, with far less right, to urge upon the church its own program. But the programs are prepared independently and without much correlation between agencies. They come to the local church uncorrelated, and the local church is all but powerless to correlate them. It is this fact, perhaps more than anything else, which has brought about the inefficiency of the church's teaching which is everywhere more or less apparent and generally deplored. And now comes along another movement, calling itself the week-day school. Its very existence and its air of self-conscious importance and aloofness seem to imply criticism of existing agencies. Indeed, it is stated in so many words that the reason for its existence is to be found in the failure of the Sunday-school. It assumes to be actuated by higher motives, to aspire to higher educational standards, to be bent upon more tangible results. Moreover, it shows signs of developing into an institution, and if it does we may well ask, What is to become of the Sunday-school? For with all its boasted superiority, it is an observable fact that this new movement makes use of much the same lesson material, many of the same methods and, not infrequently, the same educational plant, as the Sunday-school. What is to be done about it all? For the injection of a new organization, with a new program, into an already over-organized field with programs as yet uncorrelated, seems likely only to add to the confusion.

The situation is difficult, but not hopeless. Indeed, the very rise of this movement for week-day schools is a challenge to the church to re-examine its teaching aims and methods and re-assert its right of direction of all its agencies. What we need to work toward is the ideal of the church school. There are indications that some would seek to reach this ideal by a short cut, by the simple expedient of re-naming the Sunday-school. But this will not solve the problem. The church school, properly speaking, is the whole church in its teaching activity. Its sessions are held on Sunday and on week-day, according to convenience, during the daytime or in the evening, as the case may be. But all this teaching activity constitutes one system, built around the lives and designed to solve the problems of the boys and girls, youth and adults, who form the constituency of that particular church. And it is all under one unified control. The present hour calls loudly to the

local church to pull itself together, unify its teaching processes and co-ordinate its teaching agencies. And the week-day school stands over against these other agencies with its challenging attitude, as much as to say, If you don't get together and do this job, we will!

We are hampered today, not only by the fact that a large number of agencies are offering their independently prepared programs to the church for the instruction of its youth. We have no materials, lesson materials, programs of activity, anywhere which have been prepared with the totality of the teaching process in mind. Our efforts at correlation must, of necessity, be make-shift methods for the present. We must expect enterprising churches, or groups of churches, or favorably situated communities, to go ahead and make individual experiments. These experiments seem to lie for the present largely within the field of the week-day school. So far as the week-day school is successful, the success may reflect back disparagingly upon the Sunday school. But this should only stimulate the Sunday school to re-evaluate its aim, its teaching material and its teaching methods. Our present Sunday-school lesson material, program and methods of teaching are not necessarily final. The very experimental character of the week-day school is itself a hopeful aspect of the situation. Let us hope that it does not too soon crystallize into an institution, too soon become standardized with rigid standards, too soon become nationally administered.

The initiative in seeking better correlation must lie, let it be repeated, largely with the local church and the local community. We may not expect very much in the way of leadership from national officials in the field of the Sunday-school or other agencies. They are all too busy supplying materials and suggestion for the routine program now in wide use, that is, too much pre-occupied with the task of quantity production and distribution, to be able to give prolonged study and attention to the problems we have been discussing, which are problems of the local church and the individual pupil. Pressure may be brought to bear upon these program-making officials, however, to get together and correlate their own programs, and the local churches may, and should, bring this pressure to bear. But what we need today more than anything else is local experimentation, the actual working out in concrete detail of correlated programs which work locally and the actual reorganization of our local teaching forces so that they do, in fact, work together intelligently, as one team, for the accomplishment of definite aims in the lives of individual pupils and in the life of the community as a whole.

This is a slow process, and one with which we may all feel a certain impatience. The administrator in particular is likely to feel restive under the situation. It is irritating to feel that the work one is responsible for is under criticism and is being set down as inadequate and ineffective. The answer comes back, Well, show us how to do it better! But no one is ready, no one can be ready off-hand to meet this retort. When we face a problem which has never been solved, a problem of which we have only just now become conscious, we may agree that the problem is acute, and that it is important to find an early solution, but we are in no position to dogmatize as to what that solution shall be. We must together attack the problem, sympathetically, coöperatively, patiently, and work upon it until, at length, the solution begins to appear. And this, I take it, is the method by which correlation will ultimately be effected between the curriculum of the week-day school and that of the Sunday school and its allied agencies.