

## THE LAYMAN AND HIS HOME.

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Education has come to be a supreme concern of the human race. It is on account of the responsiveness of the human being to the educational process that one generation can pass its experience on to the next, and thus the volume of human knowledge is steadily growing from century to century. But just in proportion as the race advances in wisdom the children of successive generations are born more ignorant for the simple reason that there is more to be ignorant of. That is, as the environment becomes more complex, the problem of adjusting the individual life to it becomes more important and requires a longer time. Thus as civilization advances, the need for education instead of diminishing, is steadily increasing.

The savage in the jungles of Africa needs for his simple life far less training than the civilized man. The same thing is true, though in less degree, of the ditcher as compared with the doctor. The higher a man's calling, the more he needs training. If our supreme task is in the realm of Christian service, surely more attention should be given to the training of the layman. Why should we degrade our high calling by putting it on the plane of "unskilled labor" for which no special training is needed?

Interest in the matter of training is increasing also because of our growing appreciation of the social significance of our modern life. We have come a long way through the centuries from savagery to civilization; and it has been through constant struggle that this civilization has been achieved and human life has been institutionalized and socialized. Nor are these changes alone in the outer aspects of life. Equally great changes have been wrought in the inner man. We are infinitely remov-

ed from the savage. Man has reared a splendid civilization, and at the same time this civilization is rearing a very different man. With a growing appreciation of the great social forces which are thus guiding and shaping human progress, there is emerging a consciousness of social responsibility, and a recognition of the fact that these forces which so powerfully affect the life of the individual may be brought under social control.

The church, therefore, is directly interested in our social institutions. This means far more than merely looking on, and deploring their deficiencies. We have a direct responsibility for aggressively seeking to spiritualize these forces and to make them minister specifically to the higher life of man.

Of the institutions which we have built up during the past there is none so important as the Home. At the same time it is the one to which we seem to be giving least consideration. It seems strange that in this day when we think so much of efficient schools and churches we should be giving almost no attention to the organization of the important institution. It is true that we spend large sums of money in erecting commodious and modern residences and in equipping them with the latest conveniences; but while these are important as furnishing a suitable place for a home they do not make one, for the simple reason that a home is not a place but an institution.

Moreover we live in a day when the home is undergoing changes which are radical and far reaching,—changes which so far as we can see, are lowering rather than raising its efficiency. We may consider for a moment one of these changes, not only because it is in itself so significant, but because it is so intimately related to other changes we view with increasing uneasiness. In the days of our grandfathers the typical home was a very busy place. It provided many of the things which the family needed, thus affording employment of various sorts for

the several members of the family. Thus the home had a multitude of economic activities. These have been transferred almost bodily, to the factories of various sorts. The loss of these economic activities gives the home more time for discharging its higher duties, and therefore might be turned into an advantage. But unfortunately, many a home has lost the lower, and seems to be unaware of its higher mission, and thus finds itself without an adequate task. An institution, as well as a physical organ, atrophies when it ceases to function,—if it remains long out of a job it goes out of business. Thus some of our homes are going out of business,—and into the divorce courts.

Marriage entails responsibilities and demands individual sacrifices. Of course in every true marriage the rewards immeasurably outweigh all sacrifice that it calls for. Those who are unwilling to assume its obligations are unworthy to enter into this holy estate. One of these obligations is to have a home—to provide a suitable place in which the family life can develop according to a well ordered plan. For this it is necessary not only to have a home but to control it, allowing no one the freedom of the home who would attempt to hinder us in carrying out the plan, no matter how rich or near of kin he may be. We would not allow one to slip into the nursery at midnight and poison the children; nor should we allow one to come into the family circle and express views of life which are hostile to all the ideals which we are trying to build up in the minds and hearts of those whose nurture God has entrusted to our care.

There are many aspects of the family life which are important from the church's point of view, and it is not easy to decide which to select for discussion in one brief paper. Even if we confine the attention to religious education, we must include far more than is commonly thought of as comprehended in that term. It is the nurture and development of the whole being with reference

to spiritual ends; it is fitting one for complete living in the Kingdom of God here on earth. Even the physical life plays an important part in this, for it is the basis of all that higher life which we value so much, and powerfully influences both its development and its expression. We realize, at least in a measure, that ill health in a growing child may lead to a weak constitution and impaired usefulness later on. But many persons seem not to appreciate the fact that unfavorable physical conditions in the child have a profound influence on the development of the life itself. It is not merely a danger that the personality will be imprisoned in a feeble body, but the danger is that the personality itself will not develop.

The development of every life is a real unfolding. The child is born absolutely ignorant, but begins at once to acquire knowledge of the outer world through the physical senses, and to feed upon the environment which exerts a powerful shaping influence on its life. For the growth of knowledge there is needed good health and normal physical senses, so that there may be keen perception and ever widening experience. Any deficiency here will permanently contract the nature and rob life of much of its significance, because we are constantly interpreting the new in terms of the old. As we look at the outer world in the light of the knowledge within which past experience has provided, this outer world grows richer in meaning as the soul within grows larger. That is, education not only puts a larger man in the world, but it creates for the man an ever expanding world. But it must be remembered that this whole process is very dependent on clear vision, acute hearing, and trained sense of touch. This fact that the very growth of the soul has an important physical basis ought to set the whole question of physical well-being on a higher plane. We are just beginning in our public schools to provide a competent medical staff to give every child a thorough physical examination, to make sure that he has normal sight

and hearing and is free from disease, and even to provide instruction for parents in the proper care of the health of the child so that he may profit by the splendid system of education which is provided at public expense. Ought not the church to be at least as much interested as the state in the growth of the human soul?

With the rapid development of our system of education, particularly of our public schools, there is far less teaching done in the home. Governesses and tutors who used to be quite common are now almost unknown. At the same time religious teaching and especially the use of the Bible has almost entirely disappeared from the home. No doubt secular education has greatly profited by this change; but religious education has fallen by the wayside. In most of our public schools the Bible is specifically excluded from the curriculum. It is true that in some places the Sunday-school has been greatly improved. But what can you do with a growing boy if you get a chance at him only one hour in a whole week?

The Bible ought to be a larger factor in our homes. I am not sure about the wisdom of teaching it too much like a text-book and assigning tasks to be done, except in the important matter of co-operating with the Sunday-school in the systematic work which it assigns; but I am very sure the Bible ought to be used far more in the home for devotional reading, and especially as a guide to the daily life. We are too much given to reverencing the Bible with no particular concern about comprehending it and living it out in our lives. We should be greatly disturbed if our children were ignorant of the divine origin of the Bible or had any doubt about its inspiration, but we regard it a light matter that they should be entirely ignorant of what God inspired the writers of the Bible to say.

Much of the Bible is not only charming to children, but nourishes the social and intellectual and spiritual life. Parents should select such portions and make them vital to the child, and habitually interpret them in terms of

the child's daily experiences. The Bible is designed to be a guide to the life; and it is most potent in giving direction to the life of a growing youth if it is presented in such way as to get into the center of one's interests and activities. The trouble with many a person is that he fences off a little sphere of life which he calls religious and which he allows to become perfectly stagnant,—and he confines his Bible to this sphere. So it does not get a chance to guide the part of the life that is moving

We need not only to restore family worship, but we should make it an exercise which will really minister to the child's need; and this will mean of course an exercise in which the child can have an active part. The Sunday-school has discovered the important truth that a program which makes the children mere spectators is an empty performance. Is it not the duty of the church to force this upon the attention of the family also? Family worship might become much less formal and still be full of reverence. It ought to be made real and vital to all the family. But in order that it shall render this larger service the father must, as Mr. Cope says, "cease to be the high priest for the family and become a worshipper along with them."

But for all these things, you will say, many earnest fathers and mothers have little competence, and without aid from some source would blunder seriously. Why then does the church remain indifferent to so serious and pressing a need? It is a case which calls for leadership of the highest kind.

But there is more needed than direct teaching. In fact it is quite possible that the indirect teaching in an ideal home is more important and more potent in shaping character than the direct. Truth becomes significant to us only when it is related to life, and its value is directly proportional to the extent to which it fits itself into human life and ministers to human need. The parent therefore must do more than impart knowledge,—

he must be an interpreter of life. Especially must he interpret the daily experiences of the child, the ordinary occurrences of life, in order to bring out their deeper significance and link them up with those things that make life worth while.

There are certain great ideals that must be dominant in every life that is to count for much in this world. And with rare exceptions these find lodgement in the mind and heart in the period of adolescence,—the plastic period when the spirit is so open to all the finer influences, the time when the whole nature is in upheaval, allowing everything that comes into it to be interwoven into the very fiber of one's being. You can easily get an idea into a man's head after he is forty years old, but you cannot get it down into his lower nervous system where it will determine his habitual attitudes and guide his habitual conduct. Only those ideals that have been breathed in from the very atmosphere of the home have much chance of becoming a dynamic in the life. The creative influences in almost every life come from the home. The forming of character is a slow process, but it is continuous and progressive and the foundations for it are laid in the early years.

At the close of a district association in Virginia a man invited me home with him, and he told me on the way that he had a seventeen year old son whom he wanted to send to college. He wanted me to get the boy interested in this plan. I had not been in the home long, however, before I realized that the father expected me in one short evening to convert the boy to a whole program of life to which a college education is merely incidental, when for seventeen long years the whole current of the family life had been toward the exaltation of money with no reference to inner values or to the sacredness and worth of personality. "Table talk in the home is more potent than teacher talk in the school or preacher talk in the church."

But if the home, in its organization, in its activities, and in its atmosphere is thus to minister to the child's

needs and fit him for the fullest, richest life, we need an intelligent understanding of the nature of the child, for nurture must be made to fit the nature. Many parents have blundered sadly, not because they did not love their children, but because they did not understand them. The finer the nature the more need of such knowledge. A man who knows little about horses may break a plug that is incapable of much training, but he would ruin a thoroughbred. Just so it often happens that the children of the very finest possibilities are the very ones who are most completely ruined through our ignorant blundering.

The study of child nature has thrown a flood of light on the Sunday-school teacher's problems, and more and more the church is insisting on her teachers getting this preparation. But parents need it far more than Sunday-school teachers. In fact the home is the only place where we can carry out at all fully the methods which a study of child nature suggests. Many persons seem to take it for granted that the nurture of very small children is a comparatively simple matter and may be entrusted to the most incompetent members of society. They are as a rule easy to control and are not capable of receiving much formal instruction. But controlling a child and guiding its life aright are two very different things. Moreover while there is little formal teaching there is large moulding done. From birth up to nine or ten years of age, the child passes through a period of rapid growth and great plasticity. With impressible activity he is running into all sorts of new experiences that will affect the whole subsequent life. He is drinking in and absorbing a complex environment, is powerfully influenced by example, and is unconsciously imitating what goes on around him. The whole environment is making a deep impression on his sensitive nature and is in large measure shaping his life. When we remember that parental care if properly directed has the power to modify and shape all this nurture, and thus shape the na-



ture, it is almost unbelievable that one would undertake the delicate task of rearing and training a child with no knowledge of child nature and with no effort to acquire such knowledge. And how can the church ignore so solemn and so obvious an obligation as that of preparing men and women through systematic training for the high and holy function of parenthood?

Each period in the development of the child presents its own special problems. One may be quite competent to manage little children and fail seriously with older boys and girls. The Sunday school teacher may remain in the primary department, but the father and mother must keep pace with the rapid development of their children and modify their program from year to year. The junior age, as it is called, which is such a live problem in the Sunday-school, is an equally pressing problem in the home. The typical boy of ten or twelve years of age is quite able to take care of himself, thus no longer needing the help and protection of adults, and he has not yet acquired the interests of adults and hence is more independent of them than either younger children or those of maturer years. He is absorbed in the physical world in action, the higher world which—so significant to grown people—makes little or no appeal to him. He sometimes behaves much like a little savage and seems to give color to that recapitulation theory by living the life of his remote ancestors who dwelt in caves and robbed the neighboring tribes. He is a misfit in modern society. He delights to be out in the open, and lives a wild free life of body building and habit forming and of adjusting himself to the physical world. If you would guide this growth you must go out in the open with him. This is the period in which the boy exhibits that striking and curious character which we call hero-worship, when he wants some big strong man “to be partners with him.” But the big strong man must get into the boy’s world, and so he must know that world. Nine times out

of ten the boy would choose his father above all other persons to be his hero; and not one father in ten has sense enough to see this. Many a home is throwing away a great opportunity here, and in almost every case it is for lack of knowledge.

There is all the more need for establishing this relation of comradeship with the boy in the junior age, because just ahead of him are the rapids, when he is to pass through the most critical period in the whole course of human life,—the period of early adolescence. When he enters this period his whole point of view will undergo a marked change. Up to this time he has cared little for what we call the higher world, but has been exploring the physical world and adjusting himself to it, living out in the open, building huts in the woods and being as near a savage as his mother will allow. In adolescence he is initiated into a new world, is putting aside his savagery and getting ready for modern civilization, “he is building a second story on his primal nature.” It is a period of the awakening of new powers, a period of great danger, but of limitless possibilities. It is a time when there come rushing into the mind new conceptions of God, of human society, of modern civilization, of human achievement, of heroism, of personal responsibility. These changes come sometimes with surprising swiftness, and the sense of independence which was so characteristic of the wild free life which he has been living suddenly gives way to a feeling of bewilderment and helplessness amidst the vastness and complexity of this higher world which opens out before his vision. He instinctively feels the need of a strong sympathetic hand to hold and steady him. He needs guidance as at no other time. It will be fortunate if he can turn to father and mother for this service. But this will be impossible unless they have all along been his friends and companions, and have that sympathetic understanding of a growing, expanding life which will enable them to get inside of his heart and look

out on the world through his eyes, and minister to the nature which God has given him rather than to such a nature as they imagine he ought to have had.

This is the period, if previous nurture has paved the way, which affords the largest opportunities for creating the ideals which are to be dominant in subsequent life,—which in fact are to determine the plane on which the whole life is to be projected. Just at this time when he is beginning to be keenly interested in the social, the business and the political world the ideals which prevail in the home will determine in large measure what is to be, throughout all subsequent life, his attitude toward social responsibility, business integrity, and worthy citizenship. He is becoming aware of the world's social distinctions, and is observing with keenest interest the rating which public opinion is assigning to men and families in the community. He may wonder why men are rated, not by any qualities which inhere in the men themselves, but by the mere accident of how much material wealth they possess, with no reference even as to how it was obtained. Our whole life is so overlaid with a crust of materialism, the tendency is so universal to exalt money and material success to the disparagement of character, that no young life is safe which is not fortified against all this by ideals which put personality far above property. In multitudes of Christian homes the conversation is almost incessantly exalting money. When the neighbors are under discussion it is perfectly obvious that this test is invariably applied and they are rated according to their bank accounts. If there is a new-comer in the community the first question that is asked,—the only question that counts for much— is "How much is he worth?" How can a Christian home ignore the truth that a man's worth depends not on what he has piled up around him, but upon what he has built up within him?

If we could realize the power of ideals in determining the whole direction of the life, and that practically all of

the ideals of the adult are those which were bequeathed to him by the home of his childhood, surely the church would give itself more earnestly to the problem of making more efficient Christian homes. We can guide a ship only when it is moving, and we determine the shape and size of a house when it is building. And the time to give both magnitude and direction, both dynamic and vision to a life is in its spring-time, in adolescence when the life can so easily swing this way or that, and before the nature has hardened into selfishness and littleness, and all the finer sensibilities have been benumbed by a social order whose whole atmosphere is heavy with ideals which are a direct and complete denial of the Christian program.

We have been thinking of the internal organization of the home with especial reference to the service which it ought to render to the children within the family circle. But no home can live to itself. And an institution of such potency as a Christian home cannot exemplify the spirit of Christ if it is unwilling to render unselfish service to the world and make itself an aggressive force for establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth.

The home has an important relation to the church—a relation which ought to be more fully recognized. It can do much to promote the plans of the church. Not only should it be the chief factor in bringing the child to Christ, but it should train him for church service, helping him to cultivate habits of attending the various meetings of the church and supporting its enterprises. It should foster in the mind of the child high ideals as to the mission of the church in the world and as to its claims upon our time and thought and love and loyalty. It should cultivate enthusiasm for the local church and for the denomination and foster the spirit of loyalty to its entire program. The internal organization of the home should facilitate the fullest co-operation with the church, the schedule of meals, the distribution of duties and plans for recreation all having reference to the program of the

church, so as to make it easy for every member of the family to be a member of the church "in good standing and full fellowship,"—giving to that familiar phrase the meaning which it ought to have. The father and mother should study their children to discover in them aptitudes for special kinds of service and encourage them to find their proper places in the various organizations of the church.

The home sustains a very vital relation also to the community, and is not only affected by the community life, but has a responsibility to share in and contribute to that life. Sometimes a whole neighborhood is demoralized by a single home with its social gambling and dissipation, its irreverence and lawlessness, its materialism and selfishness, its vulgar display and sensuality,—with an atmosphere which poisons every young life that enters it and pollutes the streams of the whole social structure. Then there is the pure, generous, wholesome type which is an uplifting social and spiritual force in the community. The great multitude of homes belong to neither of these classes. Why should Christian people complain of one type unless they are earnestly striving to make their homes conform to the other type?

Some good people persist in complaining of society as not only apart from the Christian life but hostile to it. We lengthen our faces and shake our heads and say of a neighbor's daughter "She's gone off into society." But whose fault is it that society is so far away? Who is responsible for the state of things which made it necessary for this precious girl to go off somewhere to gratify this social craving which God Himself put into her heart? Have we not the making of society? But we can never carry society our way so long as our policy is to ignore these natural and tremendously important social needs of people. The officers and church members who have never, either in their homes or in the larger family life of the church, made any provision whatever for the social

needs of people have no right to make objection when the young men and maidens avail themselves of such social activities as the community affords. Many people think that the present forms of social recreation are harmful in their tendencies. Then why do they force their children to a choice between death from poisoning and death from starvation? It is not merely a matter of gratifying a social craving but of nurturing a social nature, without which there is little hope that in adult life there will be large capacity for social ministry.

The Christian homes in almost any community could revolutionize the whole social program of the young people, and put a new joy into their young lives, if they went about it in earnest, and with real insight into the nature and needs of growing youth. Thus the social life would be made the ally instead of the enemy of spiritual growth. Young people have enormous surplus energy and large social instincts, and they usually have a good deal of leisure in which to expend this energy and gratify these instincts. In guiding these activities the home has an opportunity the significance and value of which we wholly underestimate. But we must interpret our task as one, not of repression, but of intelligent and sympathetic guidance.

But, you will say, one family can exert very slight influence on the recreational life of a whole community, and therefore it is practically helpless. Quite true. Then why should not Christian homes combine in establishing a suitable and adequate recreational program for the community just as through cooperative effort they establish an adequate educational program? We live in a world that has become preeminently cooperative and institutionalized, and unless we as Christians can somehow be freed from the slavery of our exaggerated individualism, we shall never be able to make Christianity a constructive force in the community.

In the heart of every normal young person there are two strong cravings; namely, the desire for achievement and for companionship,—for something to do, and for somebody to play with and to help him do. And too often both the home and the church are blind to both of these cravings.