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THE RIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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do you desire to accomplish in this class this year? Is this course the best in all the world for accomplishing this specific result? Why so? How, as a matter of fact, does it work? Do you really know what reactions the pupils make to it? Do you know why they make just these reactions? To what extent are these reactions due to the lesson material, to what extent to the textbook's treatment of it, and to what extent to your own methods? Similarly, every process, by whomsoever performed, from pastor to janitor; every piece of material, whether in class teaching or in worship; every sort of result upon each sort of pupil—all this is to be observed, and known, and judged.

Not to stop with guesses as to the facts; not to acquiesce in anything because it's what we've always done; not to condemn without a fair hearing of evidence; not to discard anything without definite knowledge of something better to take its place; but to insist upon making ourselves efficient in getting results ascertained to be there, never covering up our faults, and never evading difficulties but always facing them—this is at once the scientific point of view and the religious point of view in religious education.

THE RIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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I shall endeavor to treat, first: of the rights of the school in the life of the church and also of the rights of the child in the administration of the school.

1. *The Bible school has a right to an adequate place in the life and work of the church.*

By an adequate place I mean, first, one that gives to the school a measure of recognition in keeping with its vital importance in the church's life; and, second,—and this is even more important—an opportunity to do its best work for the church and for the Kingdom of God.

Any commercial enterprise conducting its business affairs with reference only to immediately apparent demands, and with little or no consideration for future needs, would be considered faulty in the extreme, and its inevitable failure would occasion neither surprise nor sympathy. I am reminded of the remark of a business man—made some years ago, I am glad

to add — to the effect that the church must certainly have the direct aid of Divine Providence to be able to live and flourish with so little of foresight as it often shows.

It is quite unnecessary to argue in this presence the vital importance of adequate training of the child to the future welfare or even the future existence of the church. Statistics show that 75 to 80 per cent of the additions to church membership come directly from the Sunday school, and the indirect results of its influence are impossible to tabulate. The future of the church depends upon the constant accession of young people to its membership. Such accessions are voluntary and depend upon the formation of ideals and the development of character in accordance with the aims and purposes of the church. How are such ideals to be acquired and such character developed if not through the right kind of religious training, a training which is not being given in adequate measure through the church service itself, for the simple reason that the children do not attend these services in very large numbers. It must be done through the Sunday school and the home, if at all.

It seems reasonable to accept without further discussion the fact that the Bible school is of vital importance to the future of the church. We fear that it is equally certain that the school has not yet been accorded the recognition and the place in the plans and expenditures of the church which its importance demands. In spite of the urgency with which this point has been pressed, and the undoubtedly increasing tendency toward better things, freely and gratefully recognized, it is still true in great measure that the church has not yet come to intelligent appreciation, much less full recognition, of its educational responsibility. I do wish, however, to emphasize the hopeful aspect implied in the foregoing statement. There is a growing tendency in the right direction evidenced by the increasing demand for trained leaders, directors of religious education, leaders in boys' work and the like, a demand which has made itself felt in theological seminaries and schools for teacher-training, colleges and universities.

The place of the educational ministry and the certainty of its future development may be considered as assured, alongside of the regular pastorate, with equally high standards and requirements and with equal recognition and authority in its special field of work.

We do not believe it to be a too optimistic statement that, before many years have elapsed, the church that is not making

provision for this part of its work, adequate to its needs and ability, will feel itself hopelessly outclassed and out of the running.

With such a prospect in view we wish to suggest some items in an adequate program.

1st. The school has a right to a place entitling it to the name of Church school. That is, it will be regarded as an integral part of the church organization, not a separate institution. Its claims for financial support will be among the first to be considered, not the last, as is now too often the case. Note the statement, upon one screen of this year's exhibit: 90½ per cent of the church funds spent on its adult work, 9½ per cent on the school.

The problems of the school administration, the correlation of its work with other departments of church activity, its standards of efficiency, the selection and training of teachers; these and similar questions will receive the careful consideration of a committee on religious education, appointed by the church and ranking in importance and influence with any other board or committee of its creation. The details of such an organization have already been thoroughly outlined in the report of the Commission on Correlation of the Educational Activities of a Local Church, presented at the Cleveland Convention of this association, and still further elaborated by the chairman of that commission, Professor Athearn, in his invaluable book, "The Church School."

2nd. As indicated in the report and book just mentioned, the Church school will have, wherever possible, the leadership of a trained expert who, whether professionally called such or not, shall be director of the religious educational activities of the church, and whose authority and leadership in these special activities shall rank with that of the pastor in other lines of the church work. This man shall be above all an administrator, and skilled in the leadership and training of teachers and other workers.

3rd. When once the church is embarked upon such a plan of action it will recognize the importance of providing, not only sufficient time, but the most favorable time possible, for the sessions of the school. In the large majority of our churches the session of the school is held at the time which, from the standpoint of efficiency and good educational work, is probably the worst time that could possibly be selected out of the twenty-four. The noon hour for Sunday school means, first of all,

that in the average church the school can have no known time for beginning, but is at the mercy of the pastor or the church choir when either of them chances to lack terminal facilities. I know such schools which advertise their session as at twelve o'clock but who count it a rare privilege if they can begin by ten minutes past that hour. Of what earthly use is it even to speak of the habit of punctuality on the part of pupils under such conditions. I have heard pupils in such schools compare the schedule of their day school work with that of the Sunday school, and not to the credit of the latter.

Again, this noon hour makes it almost certain that the time allowed for the school session will be pitifully and ridiculously inadequate. A very large proportion of the membership in every school have a Sunday dinner to think of and many of them know that the responsibility for providing that dinner is theirs. It is only natural then that they will insist upon a prompt closing of the school session. If by chance one o'clock comes before the closing signal is given, they obviate the necessity of giving it by making for the door. I know of schools where anything like an orderly dismissal, to say nothing of a reverential closing service, is made practically impossible by the procession of mothers or older sisters hurrying for the door that they may get home in time. I have sometimes wondered, and I confess often with a desire to see it tried, just what effect it would have upon an unduly prolonged morning church service, if all the officers and teachers and pupils of the Sunday school were to arise and hasten out, in order to be in their appointed places in the school on time.

Again, this hour for the school session takes the child at the time of day when fatigue is at its maximum and the power of sustained attention at the minimum, and the possibility of good teaching or study consequently reduced to the minimum. In our own school we have just recently changed the hour for the session of the kindergarten department, from noon to half-past ten, holding the session at the same time as the regular church service. The immediate relief and delight of the teachers, both on account of having time enough to do their work without hurrying, and because of the greater responsiveness of the children, is a marked testimony to the value of this point.

4th. In such a school, the place of the teacher will be more honorable and the demands made upon the teacher will be increased. The church that takes its educational work seriously will not be content to turn over the religious training of its

future members to illy prepared or incompetent leaders. It will both demand and make possible a training that shall fit these teachers for their work. This it will do in various ways: by maintaining a normal training class as a part of its own graded course of study, by co-operating in the maintenance of interdenominational training schools in the community, and by making it possible for picked young people to share in the privileges of the many excellent summer schools and Chautauqua courses. Again, it is only needful to refer to another report of a Religious Education Association Commission, that upon Teacher Training, which has been issued in the form of a reprint from RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

5th. It is but the complement of the last point to say that a church working upon such a program will make it possible for a good teacher to do good work by providing adequate equipment and physical conditions. We are glad to note that not many really modern church edifices are erected without more conscious thought for the provision of suitable quarters for the children and youth. We have some way to go yet, however, before we strike quite the right balance between these facilities and the provision made for the adults. I do not wish to minimize the importance of the church service or the value of an auditorium suited to the purposes of worship. But I do feel, and state with conviction, that when choice has to be made between some of the extra æsthetic values and luxuries in the church service and suitable accommodations for the religious educational work, that choice might more often swing to the latter side with great advantage to future generations and to the Kingdom of God on earth.

This is probably sufficient to indicate the lines along which a church that wishes to have a real school will map out its program. Let us now turn to the other phase of the topic and consider the rights of the child in such a school.

At the very outset, let us disabuse our minds of any idea that we are to demand for the child consideration that the church should not be glad to give if it only appreciates the situation. For the only rights worth conserving are those that will make the child of greatest service to the church and to the Kingdom. Just as, in general education, we are demanding from the school the kind of training that shall enable the child to meet the practical requirements of life, so, in religious education, we ask that the child be trained to become an efficient worker in the church and one able to realize the highest religious ideals in his private and social relations.

The items that have already been specified as factors in the creation of a real Church school: trained and intelligent leadership, adequate accommodations and equipment, favorable opportunity for the best work, and the evident respect and consideration of church officers and elders generally for the school and its work;—all these are factors in the problem of giving to the child the kind of training he should have. But there are two other points which I should like to make under this heading, which seem to me vitally important. The child has a right to expect from the school instruction that shall be sufficiently authoritative to produce definite and deep-seated convictions, and a training that shall be sufficiently practical to issue in character.

II. *The Child has a right to authoritative instruction and practical training.*

Ist. Authoritative Instruction. Just in proportion to the importance of any study do we demand trustworthy information. In religion above all things we crave an authority upon which we can rely. Because of this craving we have, in lieu of something better, often given our allegiance to an authority which has been arbitrary, and which too often at critical points in life, has proven unsatisfactory.

The kind of instruction that is to meet the needs of our children and youth today and produce in them that inner conviction which is itself the highest authority, will reach its end, not through disregarding or over-riding the individuality of the pupil, but by respecting and using it. It has often been said that the pulpit of modern days has lost its note of authority through the influence of modern criticism undermining the confidence of men in the written word. This may be true but, if so, the fault is not that of modern criticism but rather the failure properly to apply the methods of criticism and to discover the fundamental truths of Scripture which are in themselves authoritative.

I can make my point clear in no better way than by referring to the example of the Great Teacher. It is recorded that men were "astonished at his teaching, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." What was the secret of this impression? Was it not that Jesus confined himself mainly to those eternal and ethical principles that are elemental and that carry their own appeal to the conscience and judgment of all mankind? I can find very little in the teaching of Jesus that savors of dogma or theologizing, or that deals with forms or ceremonies, except as he emphasizes their comparative worthlessness. He simply set clearly before men the issues of right

and wrong, expressing himself in terms that were common to their experience, so that they must surely understand just what he meant. Then — and this is the other part of his secret of power — He left them to pass their own moral judgments, knowing well that any moral judgment, to be of value, must be individual. When they came to Him with questions which the Pharisee would have answered with endless casuistry, He made them answer their own queries. "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" asks the lawyer. "What is written in the law? How readest *thou*?" is the response. And when the lawyer's reply shows that his judgment is correct, then comes the simple appeal to the will: "This do, and thou shalt live." Then, when the lawyer, not content with so simple a solution, attempts to lead the discussion into the more familiar fields of casuistry, Jesus lays the whole matter before him in a word picture so complete and masterly that it has become a classic for all time, and again puts the matter of judgment up to the questioner: "Which of these three, thinkest *thou*, proved neighbor to him that fell among the robbers?" Again the lawyer's reply proved that he saw the point, and again was the issue left with him: "Go, and do thou likewise."

I can think of no better treatment of the whole subject of authoritative religious instruction than is contained in this simple and familiar incident, supported by many others that every student of the life of Jesus will recall. He persistently refused to set himself up as ruler or judge. "I judge not," said He; "the word that I spake, the same shall judge in the last day."

The application of this principle to the matter of religious instruction of our children and youth means this: that we should confine ourselves to those fundamental religious and ethical facts and principles which are concrete and meaningful to them, at the particular stage of experience in which they happen to be, and not overload our teaching with theological glosses or matters which can have meaning only for those of adult experience. The child wants light upon questions that are real problems to him, then and there. He wants help in living today and tomorrow and if he gets the right kind of help for this, never fear but that it will serve him in the hereafter.

And then, having made sure that the truth we present has meaning for the pupil, let us respect him sufficiently, give him credit for enough of conscience and brains to see that meaning for himself. Let us at least give him a chance to do it for himself before doing it for him.

It was a most significant statement, made, I believe, by Superintendent Davis of Grand Rapids, at the meeting of the Council of Religious Education a few years ago, that it was the aim in his schools to cultivate in the pupils the habit of moral thoughtfulness, by bringing them face to face with the moral issues involved in their studies in history, biography, literature and the like, and getting them to pass judgment upon these ethical questions. This is what we need to do in our treatment of scriptural history and biography and in the other studies of the Church school.

The child has a right to more of concrete, ethical instruction that shall appeal to his own conscience and enable him to formulate his own rules of conduct and life, and in so doing he should not be confused by a multitude of considerations which have no meaning for him as yet and which are not essential to his real religious experience.

So much for instruction and impression; the other phase of the topic has to do with expression.

2nd. Practical Training. With the best of ethical instruction, the most discriminating moral judgments and the truest of moral impulses, there will be a fatal lack, if these are not led to function in some kind of expressive activity, for it is thus that character is formed. To quote the words of Dr. Harts-horne at last year's convention: "From the point of view of the educator, religious education consists in providing a series of controlled situations, real and imaginary, which will tend to call forth from the child the type of response in action and attitude that we desire to have become habitual." This statement includes both the kind of instruction we have just been discussing and the kind of training we are now to consider. Jesus presented to the lawyer an imaginary situation calculated to call forth from him the desired reaction in the creation of a proper emotional and intellectual attitude. The subject matter of the school curriculum should be so selected and presented as to do the same thing.

But we must also help to crystallize these mental attitudes into habit by providing real situations, and aiding the child, by example and encouragement, to act properly therein. The child has the right to expect this at our hands. Here is undoubtedly one of the chief problems confronting the Bible school of today. We have made considerable progress in the matter of selecting material for instruction and seeing that it is more closely adapted to the needs of the pupil. But we are still open to the criticism

of trying too exclusively to teach so practical an art as Christian living out of books. With a few honorable exceptions we have done little or nothing in the way of providing graded training in service and in the actual solving of concrete problems.

Noteworthy contributions to the literature of this subject have been made by Professor Athearn in his "Church School," and by Rev. W. N. Hutchins in his "Graded Social Service for the Sunday School." For fuller details these works will be found helpful. Let me attempt to illustrate the main point.

The Church school has to too large an extent confined itself to the discussion of the imaginary situations growing out of the Biblical lessons and left the actual working out of concrete problems to chance or to the miscellaneous efforts of parents or other interested parties. It is time that the school came into closer relations with the pupils' home, school, recreational and vocational activities, in the course of which the real situations are created, and the real character of the pupil is formed as he meets them. It is here that the opportunity for practical training arises, and it will be both informal and formal.

The informal part of such training will come as the teacher, club leader, or parent working in conscious harmony with the school aids the child to relate the instruction of the school to the problems of his own life. To illustrate: Two boys in a certain school had had a serious difference of opinion. Ill feeling was created and finally one of the boys, taking the other at an unfair advantage, punished him rather severely. The teacher of the class, not finding anything that had recently been before them in the course of study that seemed to apply, consulted with the superintendent. The following Sunday, in the devotional service the story of David and Saul was told at that point where David refused to take advantage of his opportunity to kill Saul while asleep. A casual discussion of the story followed in that particular class, with the question put up to the boys as to why David did not avenge himself when he had the chance. The decision on this point was left to the boys and nothing pointed was said by the teacher. The expression on the face of one boy convinced him however that the discussion was striking home, and this conviction was deepened by the fact that, at the close of the session, this boy turned to his adversary with extended hand, and said: "I'm sorry I didn't fight fair. I'll apologize now or you can fight me again if you want to."

If the church maintains for its boys a game room or gymnasium, or provides such facilities at the Y. M. C. A. or out-of-doors,

under sympathetic and wise leadership, the opportunities for just such victories over self will be multiplied, and the further opportunity of consciously relating them to the religious instruction of the school will be of highest value. Space forbids further illustration of the same principle in the home and in the choice of vocations and the like. The essential factor is the bringing to bear upon these informal relations of life the conscious influence and direction of the school.

Again, there is the formal side of such practical training. An increasing number of schools, under the direction of committees of religious instruction or directors of religious education, are planning the definite activities of their children and young people so as to eliminate duplication, adapt the kinds of service undertaken to the capabilities of the worker, and above all bringing it all into such direct relation to the work of the school as to make it clear that such service is a religious act, the expression of what they have been learning in the class. Mr. Hutchins has outlined just such types of work in his book, above referred to, and in a very practical and helpful manner. The essential feature is that each pupil in every grade shall feel that these practical acts of helpfulness are as much a part of their Sunday school work as the study of the lesson.

The organized class is an efficient unit through which much of this practical training may be carried on, but these classes should all come under such supervision as shall insure the most effective types of work for each, and so divide the work among them all as to raise to the maximum the total effectiveness of the school.

A sample of the activities of one such class may serve to illustrate this point. They had been studying the teaching of the prophets with regard to social righteousness and human fellowship. As a means of carrying into effect the principles thus suggested, committees were appointed to investigate certain matters in the life of the city. One committee was to report upon the influence of child labor in a particular concern, upon the morals of certain specified children affected thereby. On the basis of their report action was taken leading to the correction of the abuse. Another committee was appointed to visit a Neighborhood Girls' Home, another to look up an institution for neglected children, and still another to correspond with the officers of a mission school in the South and find out what the class might do for them. On the basis of these reports, the class decided upon the division of its funds and work for Christmas benevolences.

In another school the main feature of the Christmas celebration is the bringing of gifts for the needy. This is prepared for by suggestion both in the class work and in the devotional services of the preceding weeks, and each department is asked to have a share in the total contribution, adapted to its own interests and abilities, the kindergarten department bringing things for little children, etc.

These are merely snapshot illustrations. For details as to a well outlined curriculum of service I refer you to Mr. Hutchins' or Prof. Athearn's books.

As a part of this practical training, the child has a right to a larger share in the administration of the school. This share should increase in proportion to the growing capacities of the child, and he should feel that, just in proportion as he advances in intelligence and self-control, to that extent will he be recognized and given a voice in the direction of affairs which vitally concern him. In no other way can we so efficiently train children and youth to take their place as active members in the church, and so certainly insure their taking this place.

This training is at present given mostly through the activities of the organized class with its officers and a certain measure of control over its own affairs. More can be done through the organization of departments in the school and giving to each an appropriate measure of control over their own affairs. Every child, to the limit of possibility, should be given a voice in the disposition of the gifts which he brings, and will thereby be trained to a more intelligent appreciation of the missionary and benevolent activities of the church.

In some churches we note the formation of Boys' and Girls' Councils — representative bodies, composed of delegates from the organized classes, and with a considerable degree of initiative in the general affairs of the school. This is exactly the same principle which has been so successfully applied in schools, and which has been productive of good results.

Mr. Alexander, in an address on Boys' Work, some years ago, said that we had passed through two stages in that work. The first was Work for Boys, in which the adult devised and carried out plans supposed to interest the boy. The next was Work with Boys, in which the boy was invited to share in the execution of the adult-made plans. We have now reached the stage of Boys' Work in which the initiative and interest of the boy is recognized, and the leader simply aids and guides him in the best possible execution of the boy's own ideas.

It is time the church came to take more of this attitude in the religious educational work and social activities of its children and youth, and thus recognize more fully the rights of the child.

AN ADEQUATE PROGRAM FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHILD

FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CHILD'S RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN
THE CHURCH

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It is very hard for most of us to be interested in "adequate programs" unless we see some possibility of their being carried out. This thought suggests two questions:

Is the church interested in an adequate program for the life of the child?

Or going further back in thought —

Is the church interested in the child?

With great regret it must be admitted that in some parishes a thousand diseased children in China can more easily win the sympathy and support of the American church than a thousand well children in the United States who are growing to an abnormal manhood because of distorted ideas of God and undeveloped sympathies for neighbor.

I know we have Lesson Systems, Cradle Rolls, Children's Days, and a frequent solemn proclamation that "the children are the future church," but do they reveal anything more than the attitude that the real interest in the child is founded upon the fact that some day he will grow up, and until then he must be kept in a department by himself, used in so far as his ability will admit in swelling the size of lists and increasing the amount of missionary offerings?

The idea that the child is the most necessary, the most delicate and sensitive part of the church, that he demands the most careful study by minds especially trained and by sympathies specially developed, is an idea foreign to many church leaders, and too filled with enormous and almost terrifying demands to be bravely faced by the majority of leaders who give the subject any thought.