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THE HOME AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO THE CHURCH

Eugene C. Foster ^a

^a Boys' Work Secretary , The Y. M. C. A. , Detroit, Mich.

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the ruins of fallen kingdoms, of decadent peoples, and of illfated republics there can be read the warning implied in the Fifth Commandment. Dishonor thy Father and thy Mother and thy days shall be short in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. In America we shall see within a generation, indeed, we have begun to see already, the struggle for survival between races whose fate will depend upon the capacity and cultivation of reverence. We are their sponsors who inherit from long generations the traditions of reverence in the home and Church. How do we fulfil our sponsorship? Foreigners who are coming to our shores have been quick to discern, and too ready to acquire the attitude of careless familiarity and even of open hostility in the presence of things once sacred in their sight. It is interesting and significant to observe that the races in our land which most faithfully preserve their habits of worship, undecorated, undefiled, are those among whom healthy and devoted family life prevails.

THE HOME AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS TO THE CHURCH.

EUGENE C. FOSTER,

Boys' Work Secretary, The Y. M. C. A., Detroit, Mich.

First, the attitude of the home toward the church is often either indifferent or critical, rather than frankly loyal. Indifference is born of thoughtlessness; for no thoughtful parent can long be indifferent to an institution which has brought to his home and children so much that is good and safeguarding and uplifting. Criticism is born of forgetfulness; for the parent who remembers that the church is made up of individuals of which he is (or may be) one, will feel that whatever fault the church possesses is traceable to himself as well as to others.

But, at the same time, the attitude of the church toward the home is often faulty. Theoretically, when a member of a family becomes an attendant at a church, the church relates itself to the entire life of that family. In practice, while the busy minister sees the vantage ground he has gained when a child from an unchurched family enters the Bible school, and intends to follow up that gain, a thousand cares crowd in upon him, and the family is forgotten or neglected. The failure of the church at this point is almost universally traced to a fundamental mistake—the lack of lay workers to relieve the overburdened minister of many of his duties.

But the church is even more seriously at fault in failing to make the home a partner in the religious training of the children. When a thoughtful English preacher declares that the loss which the home has sustained in giving over the religious training of its children to the Bible school makes him regret that the Bible school was ever established, we are a bit startled.

The Bible school in its teaching function is in some measure the bridge between home and church for growing children at least, whatever other function it may have for adults. As such it has a relationship to home as well as to church. But how seldom it projects itself into the home.

We have a right to assume at the outset that the home is interested in the religious education of its children. Our present assumption is the opposite of this; and the home is living up to our estimate. Hence I plead as a first step that we expect that the home will assume its rightful share of this work if given a fair chance. What are essential elements in the working out of such a scheme?

Certainly, teachers who are favorably known in the home. I asked a large number of boys, one by one, the name and address of their Bible school teachers. A remarkably large percentage were not sure either of the name or the address of their teachers. In such cases parents cannot realize anything in common between the teachers of their boys and themselves. There can be little or no mutual effort on the boy's behalf; and a vital point of contact between home and church has been lost.

Again, our teaching has not included home co-operation in its plan. But a better era is dawning, and present lesson schemes involve a call upon the home for help on this department. We are in danger of getting discouraged, for the response will not be immediate. The parents of our present generation of children were largely raised upon the "no-home-co-operation" plan. They will not quickly change to a better way; and they themselves are frequently so ignorant of the real Bible that they can give their children little help.

I have so far placed the responsibility for better relationships largely upon the Bible school, rather than upon the home or the church. This department of the church is the agent of the whole institution because it is primarily dealing with the child, and because the child is the unit in religious education. The main responsibility is on the school rather than on the home because the school is organized, and the home is not. Through organized educational methods we can reach the school, and through the school reach the home. The school must make the advance.

Has the home, then, no initial responsibility? Yes, a great one. How shall it be shown that responsibility? Indifference and ignorant criticism largely will be displaced as the teachers convince the parents of their unselfish interest in the children of the home. The barriers to a better understanding will be rapidly broken down when leaders of religious education do their single part without waiting for a better attitude on the part of the home.

But the home owes more than an attitude of interest and lessened criticism to the Bible school. It owes that degree of co-operation which will send its children to the school regularly and on time, as a matter of course; it owes that co-operation which will refuse to allow social engagements on Sunday or "week-ends" which interfere with the regular religious education of its children. The home owes the school a degree of responsiveness to all reasonable school or class plans which is frequently lacking. It is tremendously discouraging to teacher and officer to realize that well-laid plans may be defeated by lack of co-operation on the part of the parents.

Can these things be expected of the non-religious home? To some extent, yes; probably to a larger extent than we now imagine. We shall certainly get no more helpful co-operation than we look for; our fault as Bible school leaders has been that we have not looked far enough. A factor not to be reckoned lightly is the love of parents for their children and an intensity of interest in their welfare that is tremendous. Thoughtful parents who make no religious profession recognize the safeguards of religion for their children, and welcome the religious influence in those children's lives. To such the teacher may come with any reasonable request and it will frequently be granted.

The home of ignorance or of vice presents another problem. Here we must frequently cease to count the home as an ally, and assume it to be an enemy. But even as an enemy it may more profitably be won to friendship than stung to more bitter enmity. So that here again the responsibility for the attitude rests most largely upon the organized force—the church, through its arm the Bible school.

I close with a plea that the church shall enter the life of its children at more than one point. Primarily the church's duty is the religious education of its childhood. But it may rightly welcome any agency which will enable it to give its children that religious training in an acceptable way and through a longer series of years. Childhood, especially in adolescence, has interests more varied than religious training, invaluable as that is. The church's attitude has been: "We

give this growing boy religious training, even though he may not want it. The things he really wants he must get elsewhere." Should not the attitude rather be: "We will give the growing boy many of the things he really wants, supplementing the home in its effort to provide social and recreational life for him, but we will see to it that a fine religious training permeates it all; and he will learn that true religion is a part of play and of business and of life itself." Such an attitude on the part of the church promises great things in the way of home and church co-operation. It will be a new interpretation of the church's attitude toward life. It will prove that the church interprets religion in terms of everyday life, not alone of the adult but of the growing boy and girl; and rationally religious childhood promises a service-loving church in the next generation.

METHODS AND MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR RELIGIOUS TRAINING IN THE HOME.

MRS. B. S. WINCHESTER,
Concord, Mass.

There is no doubt but that we are now on the right track. We have tried shutting up our criminals and our delinquents. We have experimented with the reformatory under various disguises and under none at all. We have been forced back by gradual stages until we discovered to our surprise and chagrin that base, degenerate and criminal men and women were once children who had possibilities of good, which were frustrated by ignorance, idleness, and lack of training. While we were trying to make over or even merely take care of a lot of useless and dangerous grown people, a vast multitude of children were starting off on the sure road to danger. And so at last we have very sensibly concluded that we would do better to go back to the beginnings of things and start the children right, and trust to the other matters working themselves out in time.

This has also been our experience in the matter of religious training. After discovering that we are living in a generation of people lacking in religious strength we have seen it to be due to lack of training in childhood. And the result of this discovery is a wave of earnestness that has swept across the country and revived in the hearts of parents a desire to train their children right.