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may 10, 31, m, th, tu

**THE CHILD and  
THE CHURCH!**Third Lecture of a Series on this  
Subject Delivered Tuesday, May  
11th, in Gower St. Church.

By REV. D. B. HEMMEON, B. A.

(Concluded.)

There are certain essential truths in the Bible History, in the Prophecies, and in the New Testament. These should be incorporated into a regular course, differing in text, subject matter, and method of presentation for each separate grade. Such standard courses have already been adopted in many schools and can be obtained quite easily.

I think a decided loss of effectiveness in the Sunday School has been the result of a too close intimacy in Sunday School work, by means of Conventions, with those whose whole theory of the relation of the child to the church differs from ours. The effect of such contact has, without a doubt, weakened the hold of the church on the child.

Another matter that calls for notice is the abuse of Decision Day. The Primary Department of a Sunday School should never be subject to the ceremonies of Decision Day. The reason for this have already appeared in our study of the child. Many schools are at present confining the observance of the day to the higher grades where, rightly observed, as the result of careful thought and plans, it has proved a most helpful adjunct to Sunday School work.

I would like to speak briefly in this connection of the whole matter of vow and pledge-taking as now observed in our Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies. The question we must ask is, what is the effect upon the character of the young person of taking a vow, to abstain from or perform an act that is not of universal, essential and unalterable authority? When one lays upon himself such a vow from one's own convictions, the vow is unnecessary so long as the convictions remain. When the convictions change, the result is a conscience that obeys a rule rather than a principle—the opinion of men rather than eternal righteousness. I venture the assertion that many teachers, preachers and parents have extracted vows from young children to keep a rule that was only the opinion of themselves and some others who agreed with them, which in later life those children have seen was not in essential harmony with universal righteousness. One person's conscience must never be imposed permanently on another. When the matter is found to be disputable, the

child will turn on you and ask you why you extracted the vow. He will then possibly assert his freedom by violating the pledge. And an unenforced rule drags the church into disrespect. The aim should be, not so much to get young persons to promise to do certain things and refrain from others, but to train the power of self-control for essential goodness.

We come now to a consideration of Young People's Societies.

For lack of a better place to put it—as it really stands in a class by itself—I will include the Catechumen Class with such societies. It is doubtful if the church possesses a piece of excellent machinery more neglected than the Catechumen Class. It is an ancient institution, and was only discarded as a result of that neglect of the child mentioned above. When the child ceased to be considered a member of the church the Catechumen Class died. But it is being restored again. Personally, I have found it workable and efficient. And nothing can supplant it as a culture-ground for those that are planted in the House of the Lord, that shall flourish in the courts of our God.

The Societies among the young people that have sprung up in the recent past aim at turning the activities of the whole life of the youth churchward. Perhaps it is too early to judge accurately of their permanent efficiency and value. In so far as they are an adaptation of the church to the peculiarities of modern civilization, their value is only temporary. In so far as they supply a permanent necessity, they will continue.

If they could control culture, labor and athletics, fusing all together in the warmth of a broad and permanent religious faith, their work would be incalculable. These societies are an attempt to supply the demand of social impulse among the young, and as such should receive their fair share of attention from the church. Such societies should be under the control of the church and the minister, since they are likely otherwise to become the playground of immature leaders, or the scene of petty jealousies, envies and struggles for leadership among those who are still in process of being educated.

In some of our larger centres, there have recently grown up within the church young men's and young wo-

men's unions. These are comprised mostly of those young people who are flocking to the cities for a living, or for a training. This is an excellent opportunity for the church to open her doors to the young and invite them to make use of her classrooms, shelter and atmosphere in which to study and engage in a free interchange of thought upon those most fascinating and momentous questions now engaging, and destined to continue to engage, the best thought of the most earnest minds. Sociological problems, Strikes, Labor and Capital, The Relation of the Church to Politics and Moral Reform, the Problems of Responsible Government, the Abuses of Democracy, and kindred questions. These are going to be the things the church must touch and solve. It is, therefore, highly advisable that she should provide the means and create the atmosphere for a free discussion of such questions in the new, growing and complex conditions of to-day. Let her turn no earnest life from her doors. May her motto always in the future, as in the past, be "All are welcome."

In this connection let me quote the language of the report of the Sociological Committee to the last General Conference. "We think it advisable that such clubs be conducted that those may feel at home in them who do not agree with many things the church believes, but whose hearts are burdened with the problems of economic injustice."

There now remains one other agency in the church for the training of the young, and I have purposely left it till the last because, without doubt, it is the most important. I speak of the Home.

As it is the oldest institution, it will live the longest. It has witnessed the growth and decay of many make-shifts and substitutes for itself. But it has never yet, nor will it ever, witness a real substitute.

There is no doubt that the home is not occupying the place it should in the religious life of so-called Christian civilization, and the reason for this are apparent. The father's occupation keeps him from home almost all the child's waking hours, thus preventing sympathy and good fellowship. The demands upon the mother's time, owing to those increasing calls from society, the desire for fine clothes, fine houses, display and publicity—a frivolity that has communicated itself to all classes in society—all these have separated the parent from the child.

Men are thinking only of increasing their wealth, for they know that to-day, more than ever the world judges a man not by his methods of getting so much as by the amount he gets, so that the craze to get rich keeps men away from their homes and children. And the price all this demands is the awful one of the character of the child. The modern child has no home.

For, let it be understood once for all, that if the things for which the family was designed are not accomplished by the family, they will never be accomplished by another means. God's work admits of no such proxy.

It is easy to mention the Sunday School. The Sunday School has its place. It is a Sunday School. It teaches the child one hour out of the one hundred and sixty eight. What about the other one hundred and sixty seven? Its greatest weakness lies in this attempt to do a work that, in the eternal nature of things, it cannot do. The efforts that the Sunday School has made to do the work of the home only escape being ludicrous by the paths of their undeniable and stark futility.

You will hear it spoken of at Conventions by imported so-called "experts"—men and women who, out of a superficial smartness and the ingenuity of restless "hustle," describe it as a heaven-sent panacea—a providential cure-all for the selfish negligence and worldly apathy of the home.

In so far as the Sunday School has tried to do what the home should do, I have no hesitation in characterizing it as a colossal and dismal failure. Nothing can take the place of the home. Therefore let nothing try to take its place lest both be ruined. Rob the church of the home and its training, and you send her childless into the wilderness of a barren future. For these reasons, then, I have these suggestions to offer in conclusion.

A new interest must be awakened in the children within the family circle. In endeavoring to do this the church will meet two kinds of opposition. First that of apathy, and second that of ignorance.

To meet the first difficulty the church must arouse the parent to a sense of responsibility for his children's eternal welfare. He must be shown that unless he does his share, the church, as a church, can never do it for him. He cannot throw his own responsibility upon the minister, the Sunday School, the Epworth League, or any Society. He must bear it himself. It may make him poorer, it may keep him from the

club, it may limit his notoriety in business or political circles, it may limit the mother's in society. But it must be done.

To meet the second difficulty the church must teach the parent. It must show him the way of approach to this tender thing, the heart and life of his child. How to train him, what play, what food, what companions, what environment.

And to this end the church must organize a mission to her homes and families, such a mission to be led by earnest, devoted, and trained men and women who shall arouse and teach the mothers and fathers of the church.

I am convinced that the outlay for such a work would amply repay her. I believe large numbers of parents are capable of being aroused and that large numbers are already anxious about these things.

Before long the results of such a work would appear in a quiet growth of the days that will shortly dawn on this last great nation, of which you and I are citizens.

Brethren, notwithstanding all drawbacks, we live in a day of glorious promise. The hearts of the parents are turning to their children.

Even after deducting the necessary amount from the assertions of the political visionary and the patriotic dreamer, what remains of practical probability must inspire all earnest men with a sense of deep responsibility for their share in the grandeur of the days that will shortly dawn on this last great nation, of which you and I are citizens.

The largest and most influential protestant church in Canada is the Methodist Church. The largest share therefore, in assimilating the multitudes of aliens that are flocking to our shores and in teaching them to train the children belongs to us. Can we do the work? If so, how?

Once we regenerated England. Now this new-work awaits us. It needs not another Wesley, if you and I are true to our calling.

The work there was regenerative. The work here must be a combination of all that was permanent remaining from those methods combined with the best educational methods of today. Let us hold what we have in our homes, and let us go forth with the evangel of God to possess the remainder.

But to this end we must meet the incoming tide of immigration with no artificial interpretations of duty. Our requirements must be as generous enough to admit all faithful souls who seek the light, yet deeply grounded on principles of eternal truth and righteousness.

So shall the church of the future—let us say the Methodist Church of the future—charging upon her eschewon where has been seen these many years the figure of a kneeling penitent, that other figure—sometimes forgotten—of a little child, expand her sheltering walls and open her shining gates to offer sanctuary to the families of the world.

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