

But admit all this, admit what a mother is to her child, to her boy, I say to you, to-night, after twenty years of weighing that question, that the mother alone cannot bring her boy to a virility, a masculinity, a manhood of Christian life and thought unless she has on her side her husband. In spite of the influences of mother in early years I find with the boys of my city it is the father's politics they take; often it is the father's denomination that they believe in; I find it is the father's example on the tobacco question they take; I find that the father is an immense and a mighty factor, and so I strove with all my little strength to burn that one truth upon my congregation Sunday after Sunday.

One of the lacks of our home is command. Command and persuasion are two weapons that every father needs to exercise in his home, but instead of this we find too many fathers exercise an unwise parental indulgence. We need to consult children less and to command them more in their formative years. Childhood means dependence, it means ignorance, and therefore it is ruinous to lay on young shoulders the weight of too much liberty. As the green casing of a rosebud holds the tender rose and protects it till it is ready to burst into bloom and fragrance, so the father in the home should control the child life till it unfolds into youth, otherwise the bud may be prematurely blighted and blasted, as it is in so many cases. Unless the father exercises authority and companionship, and unless he acts in this with the mother, I have the very gravest fears about "Decision Day," as far as the boys—mark you—as far as the boys are concerned.

I am convinced, Mr. Chairman, that the boy question that causes the Church agony, the boy question that is causing us great worry in the city, the slipping of the boys through the hands of the teachers, through the schools, and which is puzzling the Christian church, lies largely at the door of this one-sided administration in the home, where mother alone is left to this greatest of all work in the development of the children—(applause)—and I was going to say it lies at the door of incompetent fatherhood: and oh, I tell you brethren, it is hard to get up and talk upon that line. But I tell you no line of thought will pay you in any Christian home better when you visit it than this line of thought, rolling the responsibility upon him whom God made the prophet of the family, and upon whom God has laid the responsibility of the conversion of his son, and of the conversion of his daughter. (Applause.)

Then some said to me, I wouldn't like to exercise authority the way my father exercised it, and then I had to show this, that a father may exercise authority without tyranny. We may exercise authority, and leave the boys absolutely free in their wills, when they come to the years when they ought to exercise their wills in hewing out their own destiny. We are after, not a subjugated childhood, but a childhood developed with that subtle power that a father's example and religion and prayers, and a father's tenderness alone can give to his son when he takes this first great step.