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WHY NOT TRY IT.



The Child and the Church.

Second Lecture of a Series on This Subject Delivered Last Night at Gower Street Church.

REV. DOUGLAS HEMMEON, B.A.

A revival of earnest desire to ascertain the real nature of childhood and the true relation of the child to religion, began in the middle of the last century, and was inaugurated by Horace Bushnell. The church is gradually awakening to a sense of what she owes to this student of child nature, and no account of the past attitude of the church to the child can ignore the work he did. In his book, "Christian Nurture," he placed before the church of his day the essential requirements of the child, contending earnestly for a recognition of the limitations of childhood and a consequent adaptability of religion to his fundamental nature. He took up the saving idea of development. He avoided the intellectualism of Scholasticism and the Reformers by pointing out how Christian life and Christian character can come to the child; in fact, that their normal access to the child is rather by way of unconscious assimilation and self-expression rightly guided than by way of deliberate volition.

Bushnell was scarcely heeded in his own day, but has since been recognized as the restorer to the child of his religious heritage.

A brief examination of the relation of the public school to the religious nature of the child is necessary, because the opinion is still held by many that the public school should teach religion.

With the rise of Democracy and Protestantism there began a movement, the inevitable result of which will be that the church will lose her last vestige of direct control over the state and public instruction.

Now, it should be admitted as fundamental that the public schools must recognize the national religious faith—the religious genius of the race. The public school system of this country is theistic. It is not godless. More, it is Christian. It will, therefore, appear that there should be a certain body of

religious doctrine held in common by all creeds, and this much might well be taught in the public schools. The limit of such teaching would be the limit of the harmony in doctrine.

But if this be true theoretically, there is another equally fundamental fact, and that is that it never has been, is not at present, and will probably not soon become a practicable proposition.

We must, therefore, accept the inevitable and fall back finally upon the church and the home for the training of the religious nature of the child. This brings us to a brief historical survey of the Sunday School. In so far as the Sunday School represents an attempt to place the education of the child in the hands of the church it is as old as religion. As we have already seen, the Jewish church took complete control of the education of the child, passing it on to the Christian church, which in turn carried it through the middle ages and only discarded it with the rise of democracy and the separation of church and state.

"Young children and scholars are the seed of the church," said the Rabbi. Paul claimed that aptness in teaching was a prerequisite for the work of the ministry. Luther said that no one should be chosen as a minister who was not before this a school master, and prepared two catechisms himself for the instruction of children.

Many of the church's foremost men have devoted themselves to the personal instruction of the young. St. Charles of Borromeo instituted a school of Christian teaching in Milan. Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, held a catechumen class in the church of St. Paul at lions. Abbe Fenelon, Bossuet and other illustrious names stand in the succession of those who in all ages have recognized the importance of the church school.

As a modern and socialized form of this institution the Sunday School proper, as is well known to this assembly, dates only from the year 1780, when Robert Raikes began his work, and has gone on increasing in power and influence, until it has spread over part of Germany and France, and all of England, Scotland and America.

There remains one other organization for the religious training of the young. I refer to the Christian Endeavor Societies, Young People's Guilds, Unions and Epworth Leagues that have sprung up within the memory of those present. This movement is supposed to take up the active side of the child's nature and give it a field for movement and direction in development. It will be taken up for closer study as we proceed.

We have now briefly and roughly given an outline of the child's position in the church down to the present day. We have found that the theoretical estimate of the child has varied from time to time, under pressure of different forces. We have seen how, owing to these varying estimates of the child, efforts have been made from time to time to make the child fit reactionary theologues rather than to adapt theology to the child.

But we must not forget that, through it all, the child has remained the same—a child of God, born, as Paul says, agios—"holy." And that word does not refer to civil status, as some say, but to religious condition. Shined within the sacred precincts of that relation to God, he has always responded to the proper agencies and often resisted the improper, with that supreme inertia of divine unconsciousness by which God often protects "them that are His."

We come now to a study of the nature of the child. The talmud fancifully defines the child as "one who cannot ride on his father's shoulder and go up from Jerusalem to the Mount of the House," or "one who cannot grasp his father's hand and go up from Jerusalem to the Mount of the House." But these definitions are made to fit the law that exempted children from attendance on the temple worship. Rightly defined, the child is the immature human being. By common consent, childhood is divided into successive periods as follows: Infancy, from the beginning of life till six; young childhood, from six till eleven or thirteen; Adolescence, from thirteen till maturity.

These periods are sub-divided for more technical purposes than ours, but such division is not necessary here. My aim will be to show the differences between the child and the adult, and will begin, naturally, with his physical structure, because all the faculties and capacities of the child depend, as we will see, in a great degree, upon physical structure.

The relation between, let us say, chastity and health, in the adolescent—who shall say how intimate it is? Malnutrition has been responsible many a time for that which was credited to original sin.

After a short description of his bodily characteristics we will proceed to discuss his senses, will, intellect and feeling. And I shall be satisfied if any word herein shall prompt anyone to a more exhaustive study of childhood, knowing that such study will begot interest in and love for the training of the young.

It will be seen, as we proceed, how necessary it is for any system of education in the school or home to be in harmony with the long process of development that intervenes between the child and the adult. It will further appear that this order of a child's training must not stand in any preconceived or logical sequence, much less in any haphazard way, but in the way prescribed by the child's own nature.

Finally, the bearing of such conclusions as are found valid, upon the spiritual training of the child, will be noticed.

We will proceed, then, to some of the conspicuous physical differences between the child and the adult.

It has seemed sometimes as though the child has been the last young animal to come into his rights. Calves, colts, pups and chickens have been the happy beneficiaries of untold thought and expenditure as to diet and environment, and their fragile and helpless condition has been amply recognized. Yet, strange as it may seem, the young of man have been looked upon as men in the small.

The practical judgments of society on the child, as seen in methods of education and social and domestic care, are founded on this false assumption.

But the infant and his parent are entirely dissimilar in everything but the most fundamental characteristics.

Conceive of an adult whose relative proportions had not altered since birth, and you have a monster whose immense head and dwarfed lower face, long body and short arms and legs, would almost frighten you. Think, then, at what unequal rates the various parts of the body must grow.

The child and the adult do not breathe alike. Their pulse-rates are not alike. The composition of their bodies is not alike. The foetus is ninety-seven per cent. water, the adult only fifty-seven per cent. The

proportion of muscle tissue is relatively much larger in the child, the proportion of tendon much smaller. Hence the suppleness of children.

The heart of an infant is relatively nearly twice as large as the heart of an adult, the newly born infant's heart being nearly one per cent. of its weight, while the grown person's heart is only half of one per cent. of his weight. In infancy the relation of the size of the heart to that of the great artery leading from it is as twenty-five to twenty, while in the adult it is as two hundred and ninety to sixty. Probably most persons have noticed the rapid and loud beating of the heart of a young child even when he is quiet.

The lungs of a child differ much from those of an adult. They do not reach their forward growth till after seven years, and differ not only in size but in form, structure, and physical and chemical importance.

The stomach is tubular in shape, and more vertically placed than in the adult, resulting in that readiness and ease in vomiting so noticeable in childhood.

The intestines grow very irregularly in childhood, and the different parts are constantly changing their relative sizes and positions.

The spinal column of a child is light and flexible, so that it may be pulled and twisted with ease. It is nearly straight, the strains of mature life having altered its shape, in the adult. It does not reach its complete development till after the eighteenth year.

These constitute the greatest physical differences between the child and man. The bearing of them upon the training of the child can readily be seen. The most the child should have to do is to grow, because his goal is far away, and he has only started, and must cover three-fourths of the distance in one-fourth of the time allowed him to reach it. The supply of material for growth and the expenditure of energy in this alone is very great.

When your little one is irritable in the evening, be patient, knowing that to the exhausting demand of exercise has been added this drain to the demand of growth, and remember that he has travelled that day a long distance in the journey toward man's estate, and is tired.

A great increase in physical growth occurs at the period of adolescence—that most critical stage in the life of a child. This rapid increase lasts from twelve to nineteen and reaches its height at about thirteen. More significant still is the fact that the rates of growth between the different parts of the body are not proportionate. Sometimes the muscles grow faster and the child is "loose-jointed." Sometimes the bones grow too fast and stretch the attached muscles and the child has "growing pains." This is known as the awkward age, but when we remember the reasons, how much more patient we should be with the awkwardness and its resulting shyness and unwillingness to perform public acts, or even acts in the family, partaking of a dramatic or public nature, such as singing, playing and reciting. At this age, judicial physical culture is of the utmost importance, especially that of the larger muscles. Those used in minute work are altering their size too rapidly to be taxed.

We come now to the consideration of differences between the child and the adult that partake of the nature of mind and relate to his ability to govern his actions.

The first in this field in the order of development show themselves in the automatic centres that control the heart and lungs and must only be mentioned thus in passing, since they are practically beyond control.

The next in order of time possesses more interest, and have to do with controlling the movements of the limbs.

For the purpose of this lecture it will be enough to say that all movements of the various parts of the body are controlled by nerve centres either in the spinal column or in the brain proper. Certain centres begin movement, certain others stop movement. Now, the centres that stop or control movement, called the inhibitory centres, develop much later in life than those that begin movement.

Here is the explanation of those spasmodic, uncontrolled movements, called nervous reflexes, seen in a young child. If a baby should wish

(Continued on 7th page.)

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