

WITH OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Home Fundamental

By Rev. W. J. Knox, M.A.

(The first of an important series of articles on the home.)

There is no other institution which means so much to mankind as the home. Since man came into being he has been a member of a family. The family ties may have been loose or strong. The household may have been simple or complex. The dwelling place may have been a cave, a tent or a substantial building. The family group may have had a fixed abode or it may have been migratory. Although the features may vary, the home has persisted through the centuries as the most powerful influence moulding human character.

What the children in the home become, depends very largely upon the parents. The physical nature of the child is determined by the principle of heredity. Whether the child will be tall or short, dark or fair, with intellectual capacity or without, depends almost entirely upon physical heredity. What the child will be in his higher mental and spiritual nature will depend just as largely upon post-natal influences or what is called racial inheritance. A child taken from a vile environment when quite young, and placed in a good home, will, in ninety-five cases out of a hundred, grow up into a man or woman of good character. The lower elements are determined by physical heredity, but fortunately the right kind of home and social influence will develop a worthy character in a child taken from degrading surroundings.

This indicates the great significance of childhood as the time when life's quality is determined. The one feature of the human species which distinguishes it from all lower species is the lengthened period of infancy. This is God's way of directing attention to this period as the one during which the young life receives its main direction. Then, more than at any other time, are the main outlines of character determined.

It is during this deeply significant period that the child is under the influence of the home more than at any other time and this home influence is much more deep and lasting than any other influence to which the child is subjected.

When we examine the home as an agency for character development, we are not surprised at the profound influence it wields.

It fulfils in a most perfect manner the several conditions necessary to a complete life.

In the first place the home influence begins to mould the character of the child from the very hour of his birth. Through the early months and years, before he consciously directs his own life, his conduct is being directed by those about him in the home and this directed conduct is continuously reacting upon his inner life and shaping his mental and spiritual nature. The very atmosphere of the home, apart from any specific control consciously exercised by the parents, silently determines the form which his character will assume.

In the second place, the personality of the parents is ever making its appeal to the developing personality of the child. All true education, as distinct from the conveying of information which process we call instruction, is effected by the appeal of one personality to another. In no place, so effectively as in the intimate relations of the home, does the quiet, continuous, potent appeal of personality effect such permanent results.

This appeal of personality provokes an effective response because of the openness of the child's life to this influence of the parents. Nowhere is there such faith, such love, and such confidence as may be seen in the child heart towards his parents. This spirit of trustful affection puts the child into such an attitude as will yield his plastic self to the moulding influence of his parents' personality.

We note, also, that in the home a fourth essential condition is fulfilled. There can be no true education without ample opportunity for the most complete expression of those qualities which make for noble living. In the home there is the most perfect sphere for such expression. From hour to hour there is continuous opportunity for the child to give expression in word or deed to the spirit of love and service, and every other worthy quality, and by this expression make permanent all noble tendencies in the life.

The great life decisions are made in the teen age. Whether a man is to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, or whether he is to pursue a criminal career, will be decided in this critical period. Whether he is to enter upon a calling with a selfish ambition or with a passion to serve his fellows, will be largely determined before he enters his