

Concordia Theological Monthly



AUGUST ♦ 1954



RECEIVED JUL 27 1954

ARCHIVES

The Modern Parent and the Teaching Church

By ARTHUR C. REPP

“IT is a gloomy moment in history. Not for many years, not in fact in the lifetime of most men who are here, has there been so much grave and deep apprehension; never has the future seemed so incalculable as at this time. In France, the political cauldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty; Russia hangs, as usual, a cloud, dark and silent, upon the horizon of Europe; while all the energies, resources, and the influences of the British Empire are sorely tried and are yet to be tried more sorely. It is a solemn moment, and no man can feel indifference, which happily, no man pretends to feel in the issue of events. Of our own troubles, no man can see the end.” The foregoing quotation is from *Harper's Weekly*, October 10, 1867. I owe this quotation to Dr. T. V. Smith of Syracuse University. We see from it that the prophets of doom have been with us for a long time. They have been correct a sufficient number of times to give encouragement to their disciples of gloom who hope that they might graduate to become prophets of doom. Every age wants prior claim to a piece of real estate on the brink of collapse.

Practically every age agrees that the home is in some way responsible for the state of civilization. It is also a popular pastime in our generation to tie the home to the whipping post. The educator, the preacher, the police, the social worker, the politician, the spinster, the bachelor, and, were we to look long enough, we might be able to add even the congressional committees investigating un-American activities. Each and every one of these has in turn rained his lashes of righteous anger on the home. This general criticism of the home is more than an escape for those who should

share whatever blame there is. It is, in fact, an unconscious recognition that the home holds a strategic position and is responsible in a measure for any condition in which the State, the Church, and the community find themselves. It is equally true that like Mark Twain's weather, everyone talks about the home's importance, but little is actually done about it.

As a matter of fact, the home has often failed, the Christian home as well as the non-Christian home and, if the study of mankind means anything at all, we can be sure that the home will continue to fail in the future. Having failed, it is by no means a failure. The modern parent is of such great importance in everything the Church and the community hope to accomplish that no one can simply write the home off.

We are to talk about the modern parent and the teaching Church. What is the modern parent like, the parent who is said to be responsible for our present chaotic condition? What are his responsibilities? Just what are his tasks? his resources? his problems? What part should the Church play in its relationship with the parent? What part is it playing? Has the Church been a helper or a usurper? If a helper, to what extent has it been a real asset and to what extent has it been merely "mother's-little-helper"? If a usurper, has it done a good job as teacher or has it helped to undermine where it should undergird? There are no definitive answers to these questions. The answers will differ under individual circumstances but the questions need to be heard, and they must be answered in given cases by both the parent and the Church.

We are going to simplify our problem by limiting ourselves to the Christian parent of today. The Christian parent and the pagan parent are so different in nature and resources that it would only confuse the issue and keep the discussion too much in the area of theory were we to attempt to treat both under the present heading. Perhaps we ought to admit that we are further limiting our problem by keeping before us only those homes in which both parents are under the same religious conviction. Where the home is Christian but represents two variant groups, where only one parent is Christian or where only one parent is at home, the full team is not there to work together. This brings a discordant note or some other

variant into our problem and adds to our difficulties. But even in such cases where the home is not one in its Christian point of view much of what will be said is relatively true even though in a somewhat different frame.

Let no one say that we are limiting the problem to such an extent that it is no longer a problem. The problem disappears only for the ideal parent and the ideal parent exists only in the teachings of the Scriptures. Even where two fine Christians marry, we have no assurance that theirs will be a good Christian home, for that which makes a person a good Christian does not necessarily make him a good parent. As there is no perfect man and no perfect woman so there can be no perfect parent. The ideal home will never be realized in this world nor in the world to come, where all ties of human parenthood will be dissolved and only the Church, the family of God, survives.

When we speak of the modern parent, we are very likely to give the impression that there exists a person who is a typical modern parent. But just as the average man and the average woman do not exist, so there is no real, typical parent. He is merely the artificial composite of all we have observed. This fact, that there is no typical parent, is part of our problem because each member inherits his family and his relatives and creates a new combination called the home. Thus, every new family is a product of the past modified by the conditions of life in which it finds itself, and as it is modified, it modifies some family of the future. The only typical family that really exists is your typical family and it is typical only of you. The typical family of the suburb differs from the typical family of the city, and both in turn differ from the small town family and the rural family. It makes a world of difference, too, whether the family is B. TV. or A. TV. Small wonder then that any assembly-line material produced for the Christian home never fits. In 50 per cent of the cases it is too optimistic and in another 50 per cent of the cases it is too pessimistic. It fits as well as the suit that is cut on the basis of the average height, weight, and shoulders of the mythical American man.

And yet we must talk about the modern Christian parent and must try to find out what he is like. While every description is

only relatively true and fits both everyone and no one, it does provide a basis from which we can proceed.

Let us try to come to an agreement on at least six points. I am sure we can think of more, but these should suffice.

The modern parent loves his children. This is not a peculiarly Christian trait, nor is it a profound observation. But we need to remind ourselves of this truth when we see the critics in their sackcloth and ashes and listen to their dirges. Perhaps the modern parent has loved not always wisely and much too well. Frequently he is determined that his boy is going to get all the breaks that he never had or that the girl will have all the clothes and privileges which mother longed for. From this desire it is only a step before the parents have surrendered their position of authority and have abdicated to the whims of the child. Sometimes the love of the parents takes the opposite direction. This is true when parents love in a sort of busy but bored and tired way, the father always at the shop or at the church (preacher, beware!) and the mother at her committees and her part-time job. Whichever direction the parent's concern takes, behind it we must recognize that the modern parent loves his children.

The modern parent is, furthermore, concerned with the Christian life of his children. He wants his child to be a Christian, even a good Christian if the effort required is not too great. Granted that most parents are not sufficiently concerned about this question, it must nevertheless be conceded that they have a concern even if it manifests itself in an awkward, fitful way. As a matter of fact, the parent's concern about his children is usually more than he has about himself, for he hopes that his children might be what he himself ought to be and so he displays that papa-knows-what's-good-for-you feeling, which irritates so many children. They soon see how their parents fail in their own advice. But it still remains true that the modern parent is concerned with the Christian life of his children. Let us not forget to grant him this interest.

The modern parent wants his child to have the best possible education that he can afford. The junior lad or lass must have at least the same, if not a better, education than his elders enjoyed. Parents are often to be pitied in their wild dreams as they try to force their children to live up to their own frustrated ambitions.

Parents have a great faith in modern education, and modern education has much to live up to even to approach their simple faith.

But the modern parent is also a very insecure person. Life has become so complicated since he was a boy that he finds no simple solution for his future nor for his present. The breath-taking changes which have brought him laborsaving devices and the comforts of modern living usually include an alarm clock set for age 65 or 70 to awaken him from his pleasant dreams. But his dreams are not all pleasant because some of the machines that serve him are beginning to enslave him and threaten eventually to destroy his present way of life. He transmits these fears for the future to his family and unless God becomes a living reality they may all slip off to a silent worship before a shrine of unrighteous mammon.

These traits of the modern parent have produced in him a gnawing feeling of guilt about his shortcomings. He loves his children; he wants to bring them up as Christians; he wants them to be a success and be secure; but everywhere he is reminded of his own failures. It has been dinned in his ears that he has been delinquent; that he is contributing to the breakdown of the community. Every issue of the paper gives evidence that the modern parent is doing a bad job. He takes a look at himself and he sees evidence that adds to his feeling of guilt. If he has been conscientious and strict, he becomes aware that his children fear him but do not love him. He wonders just how much love and discipline must go together to get the proper respect, love, and confidence. If he has been indulgent, he sees ample evidence of the untamed animal spirit in his home. He may appear to be the very essence of self-confidence and have the air of a model parent, but he has to admit to himself and his God that the feeling of his guilt is there.

But most modern parents are not satisfied merely to have a guilty feeling. They want to be better parents. The easiest way to get a listening audience today is to talk about parenthood and childhood. The writers of "how to do it" books have long ago invaded the field of parent education. The number of books, articles, and essays on the subject is enormous. Every newspaper has several columns for eager parents to read. The convention of cooks who have worked out recipes for parents have prescribed so many

ingredients that anxious parents are more confused after the treatment than they were before. And yet the modern parent wants to know how to become a better parent. He continues to listen and to apply while his children become tasters of many spoiled broths.

These are some of the more important characteristics of the modern Christian parent. Because the modern parent has certain ideals and good intentions, it should not be assumed that it is up to him whether he pursues them or not. The Christian parent certainly knows that God has not given him a choice because this is one reason why he has such a guilty feeling. He knows, too, in varying degrees, what is implied in his divinely-given responsibilities. He has certainly heard the Holy Scriptures on this point, especially in the clear set of directions outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy, where the Lord God in the sixth chapter first reaffirms his authority and the Christian's obligation. There he has read:

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Then follows the specific injunction:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

This command continues for sixteen more verses.

The parent knows, too, that this is not a duty that is obsolete because it is recorded in the Old Testament. He has read or at least has heard his obligation to nurture the child in the Lord repeated in the New Testament together with the added reminder that God holds the Christian father directly responsible. He knows that the Lord wants to use the Christian parent to accomplish his purposes in the world.

What specifically is the task of the parent? The answer to that question may take on many forms and lead us far away from our chief interest as pastors. It might be pointed out that the parent's

first concern is to feed and shelter the life which he has brought into this world. While this is true to a certain extent, it still does not get at the most fundamental need of the child, the need that must be filled if his living is to become a life; if we are to recognize his purpose and destiny as something beyond that of an animal. The answer we want for our question, What is the task of the parent? is the answer in terms of what God wants to do in and through him.

Parents become parents through a biological process. The life that we see, feel, and hear at birth is only a part of God's plan. The child though breathing, squirming, and sucking is still dead. It may grow up and continue to give every evidence of physical life and still be dead in its most important phase of existence, that is, in the life with God. The miracle of the physical birth must be supplemented by the even greater miracle of the spiritual birth, the birth that takes place through the blessed sacrament of Baptism. Through the miracle of the incorruptible seed of the Word the life, which the human seed could not give, is awakened through the power of the Spirit. When Christian parents bring their children to holy Baptism, they are using the means which brings this life to the yet unborn. Thus, through the simple act of the sacrament, God's purpose in Christ's redemption is fulfilled. The barrier of sin is broken down and Christ enters the heart of a new believer. The God of love "who is never satisfied to be good in Himself, but wants the good for others" has used the parent to establish His love in the life of another human being.

But the life begun by Baptism must be nurtured. Physical birth is followed by the parental care which strengthens and guards the growth, health, and vigor of the child. Likewise the spiritual birth must be succeeded by the nurture which edifies. As the mother presses her breast against the sucking mouth of the child and nourishes him, so the Christian parent must press the Word against the life of the little one to feed him with God's own milk. Even before ideas can be conveyed by words, the parent makes the child conscious of the fact that there is some unseen Presence to whom one talks in a special way and who is given a special kind of reverence. With the unfolding understanding the child becomes more vividly conscious of the presence and reality of God as he

hears of His love and care through the simplest Bible stories. It is this loving care which strengthens the life and love of God in a child and makes the parent worthy of the title, Christian father or Christian mother.

But the life begun and nurtured in a child is not a life unto itself. We say that the life of a Christian is a life in Christ. This is true of the youngest Christian, too. We must never forget that there is only one date line for this life, and that is the date when we have become a child of God. In the case of the baptized infant it is such a life from that moment on, not at some future date, not later when he goes to school or is confirmed or becomes officially an adult or becomes married and begins his own home. His is the life in Christ, and it soon learns to reach out to others. The love of the Christian parent which he sees in action reaching out to him and to others is the same kind of love that is nourished in him.

The family, and this includes every member of it, is the training school where the love of Christ grows and develops. It has the potentiality to develop in its members, as Dr. Caemmerer has so well stated, "those qualities which are essential for all living with people — love, forbearance, congeniality, interest in others, responsibility for people, readiness to sacrifice. Family life provides the opportunity for the most essential type of love: self-sacrificing labor without hope of return, the pouring out without stint or hindrance of energy and responsibility. Parents sacrifice for their children with little hope of return. Children practice Christian love to parents, not in the fields of spectacular service, but in the simple self-evident chores, daily duty and tasks of thoughtfulness."¹ With something like this in mind, the ancient church father Chrysostom told the Christians in his congregation: "Let your home be a sort of arena, a place of exercise for virtue, that having trained yourself well there, you may with entire skill encounter all abroad."

Thus the Christian life grows in the matrix of the family under the direct care of the Christian parent. The obstacles and resistance of the flesh, the influence of the world and the assault of the devil are not minimized, nor can they be kept out. Under the protection

¹ "The Christian Family — a Living Force in the Modern World," *The Christian Family in the Modern World* (5th yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association), p. 58.

of the parent and the power of the Spirit the safeguards are set up. In all cases of spiritual sickness parents apply the medicine of the Word and show the same patience and forgiveness for spiritual mistakes as they do for the physical and vocational ineptitudes so common in the home.

But no family can live for itself. It does not insulate its love and service from the community. Love "will out" to share itself with others. So the give and take, the spirit of love and service of the family, reach out into the community, to the neighbor at work or at play, to the teacher, the shopkeeper, the policeman, the adult across the street and even to the stranger in the next city. The family is a world in miniature; and the virtues which are fostered there are used in the world at large.

How does all this happen? How can the parents do this? The answers to these questions have already been implied as we described the task of the parent. It really revolves about the power of the Word and the life in Christ which results from it. The task of the parent is not accomplished by human devices but only through divine means. The simple use of the Word makes the Christian life what it is.

The rule of Christ's love which has been established in parents prompts them to use the blessed sacrament to create the miracle of the second birth and lo! a new life in Christ is begun. This same Word now becomes the center of the formal teaching of the parent to the child. In this process of teaching and using the means of grace both the parent and the children are edified. The family devotions, the private meditations are part of the corporate and personal intake of God's power unto salvation.

But the Christian parent does not stop there. He teaches through his own example. Herein the home manifests its greatest advantage over against any other teaching agency. The home is the only natural school. All others are artificial. As parents tackle their daily problems and find their solution in God's Word, they are by their example not only giving directions but also establishing habits, values, attitudes which become part of the very life and atmosphere of the home. Whether the problem be spiritual, vocational, domestic, economic or moral, the same basic directions are found in God. His abiding presence is treated as a reality in

sickness, in lonesomeness, in moments of fear and uncertainty. His divine promises are held fast by the clutching hand of faith. Children and parents together learn to rely upon them in all the vicissitudes of life. These truths which may have been taught before in some contrived situation at school are now experienced in the school of reality. Thus God's power is not something simply talked about. It becomes very real. And when sin rears its ugly head, it is met head-on with firmness and love, not simply with the law, with threats, with punishments, but with the ever present assurance of divine forgiveness for the penitent one.

Whether we as pastors or teachers like to believe it or not, the home is still the best teacher for good or for ill and it cannot be written off. We know that the personality of an individual is formed by the interaction between him and his environment, and it is here where the home and especially the parent have the greatest potentiality for good. That is why all authorities believe that the most important years for learning in life are the first six years. Many would say the first three. During this period of time we learn our basic attitudes, our values, our habits, our civilizing refinements or lack of them, and when these are governed and directed in a Christian environment, we have the most important potentialities for good. It is this daily living and breathing under the divine influence that God has in mind when He told the parents of old that they should talk of His Word when they sit down and when they walk about, when they lie down and when they get up in the morning and to hold a way before their mind, their hands, and their eyes the love and divine authority of the Lord their God.

The modern parent vaguely realizes the truth of what has been said, and he recognizes the importance and scope of his task. But he is burdened with certain serious disadvantages that make it difficult for him to get very far along in his task.

Perhaps one of the basic handicaps under which the Christian parent operates is his limited understanding of the meaning of teaching. Together with many other teachers he places undue emphasis on the importance of telling and preachments. He soon learns that his efforts to tell and to preach do not bring the promised success and he blames this lack of success on his own

limitations or on his children. He becomes doubly conscious of his ineptitude when he hears some educator speak of the necessary skills that the teacher should have, forgetting that all this applies chiefly to those who are conducting the formal schools rather than the natural school of the home. The result is that he is soon subdued and discouraged.

Formal teaching takes very much time. But it is relatively easy when the child is small and there is only one. Mother readily takes over the burden of telling the stories, of teaching prayers, of giving the daily direction and answering the many questions of the inquiring mind. However, when the second, the third, and the fourth come, each requiring attention in his own way and for his own needs, the parent again feels his inadequacy, which together with the limitations of time discourages him.

Because parents are so keenly aware of their handicaps in the formal teaching process, they do not fully realize that their everyday life and conduct is actually the most powerful method of teaching. Actually how much of the human personality is affected by the formal lesson? To what extent do we change attitudes, habits, interests, and values by merely talking? Is not much more accomplished by the daily experiences and environment of the Christian home? Parents must learn that they can teach, in fact, do teach whether they are aware of it or not. What they should be concerned about is what they are teaching, not whether they are teaching.

Another difficulty equally real and exacting is the normal problem of every adult in understanding a different generation. The best we can do is to try to envision how it was when we were of that age and in similar circumstances. But there is the rub. Life is never the same. Any occasion that we can recall is never a duplicate. It is only deceptively similar and when we apply the stereotype answers of the past to the present problems with assurance and finality, we are certain to fail. How difficult it is to understand the thought life of children and the world in which they live! How hard for us to understand just what words mean when they are spoken across the span of a generation! What values do our words have for them? What causal relations do they see in our arguments? How difficult it is for them to generalize!

Because children are at times so insensitive to words we fail to realize how sensitive they can be to the impressions which are non-verbal, particularly those which communicate our inconsistencies.

One handicap that is particularly great in our present age are the many distractions that press themselves into our modern living. The harried and hurried tense way of our machine age seems to absorb the interest and energies of the average adult so that surrounded by time-saving devices he still does not have time for those closest to him. The forty-hour week of the father has not allowed him time for the quiet hours of relaxation but has catapulted him into a busyness over many little things: the family car which takes him away from the home, the radio which encroaches on the quietness of the family discussion and now TV, the most exciting tyrant of all, shackling both eyes and ears, threatens to make us strangers by the very power that draws us together geographically.

These and other handicaps make the modern parent agreeable to any invitation to take over some of his duties. One of the more eager ones to assume the parents' duties is the State. It is ever anxious to give ethical training to its citizens. In its attempt to reach the total man the State, knowingly or unknowingly, begins to take over his total life. But it has competitors. The social workers with their teen-towns and youth centers, the camps with their appeal to crafts and camping, the neighborhood clubs, the Church, all stand in line ready to take over any part of the task which the home is willing to surrender.

Yet the modern parent is in need of help without surrender, and he needs it from the one agency that can give this to him, the Christian Church. Therefore God instituted the Church that it might become a teaching agency to fortify the home for its task. The organized church, like the home, is equipped with the same means of grace which parents use but for which they need directions so that they can meet their responsibilities. Such directions the congregation should stand ready to offer through any teaching agency which it is able to establish.

While the congregation is the one agency that is able really to help the Christian home, it has very often become a means to weaken it. Through the local church's many organizations, espe-

cially in the cities, it has become a competitor for the home's attentions and energies. The home's strength lies in the fact that it is a unit. When the congregation demands the time and the talents of some single member of the family almost every night of the week, it is not only adding to the distractions of parents, it is shattering the home by a competing complexity of outside interests.

The local church has at times become a distraction by appearing to become a substitute for Christ Himself. It does this when it demands the exacting attention and service for the "good of the church"; when it makes inroads on the home's time and feeds itself on the strength and energies of individuals, easily forgetting in its zeal that it is only a means, not an end. The Church as an institution is to lead men closer to God rather than to itself. The home does not exist to serve the Church, nor does the Church exist for the home. Both exist side by side to serve the same Lord and Savior.

Perhaps the most serious charge that can be laid to the organized church is its readiness to accept full responsibility for teaching the child as it enrolls him in one or more of its agencies. "Parents have been allowed too easily to assume that sending a child to a church school is equivalent to providing him with religious education."² Since in most instances parents are ready to transfer this responsibility, both groups have undermined their own worth. Instead of helping the home recognize its unique position and power, the Church has frequently bypassed this important agency or has written the home off as a failure. While it may be admitted that the modern home is weak in its responsibilities and its effectiveness, it is still true that "in spite of the great changes which have occurred in family life . . . there is still no more far-reaching educational institution than the family."

Because the local church shares the delusion that the most important phase of teaching is telling, it has not properly appreciated the influence of a good Christian home. Knowing that the home has frequently failed in imparting knowledge, the Church like an impatient elder is too eager to take over a job which it cannot do

² Paul H. Veith, "Christian Nurture — Then and Now," *Religious Education*, xxxix (May—June, 1944), 133.

very well itself and certainly never as well as a parent. Instead of helping to strengthen the home it has become a competitor; instead of restoring the dignity of parents and helping them, it has been inclined to write them off.

Though the Church as an institution has set up many distractions for the home, has competed with the Lord for the home's services and has invited parents to surrender their responsibility so that it might do the teaching job, the Church has not hesitated to scold parents for the poor job they are doing. In sermons, in periodicals, in books, the shortcomings of the modern home, particularly the Christian parent, have been trumpeted. The few helps which the Church has offered have frequently been vague and unrealistic. When discouraged parents discover this fact, they are ready to surrender under the Church's blast even the last vestige of their teaching responsibility to anyone who offers to take over the job.

By divine command the Christian Church is to be a teaching Church. It has been commanded by God to teach people of all ages. But what have we done with this responsibility? The churches have committed the serious error of abrogating their mission as teachers of all people by concentrating their efforts on children. When we begin to enumerate the formal agencies which have been established in the modern Church: the parochial school, the Sunday school, confirmation classes, vacation Bible school, the Saturday school, and the released-time endeavor, and compare these with the efforts in teaching the young adult and the adult, we see that we have made the serious mistake of concentrating on the children of the Church and almost wholly overlooked those who should be prepared for the establishment of Christian homes. The churches have neglected the adult which they could teach and have concentrated on the child for which they are less capable. In this struggle between church and home, the churches must recognize their inadequacies, and the home must recognize its potentialities. "The crucial problem of religious education lies in educating the whole family, not merely the individual child."³ This work belongs to the congre-

³ Wesner Fallaw, *The Modern Parent and the Teaching Church* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 205.

gation, and in this area it has been an even greater failure than the modern home.

The strength of the Church's agencies for children lies not so much in what the Church does for these but in the co-operation it gets from the home. Because the local church, too, labors under the illusion that teaching is basically a telling process, it has been led to believe that it is doing a far better job than it actually is doing. This is particularly true of the Sunday school. The Sunday school's greatest value lies as a supplement to the home. Without the home it is practically useless. "The church is inadequate for its task unless parents reinforce its objectives — both in attitude and in practice."⁴ We may well suspect that congregations have been claiming credit for a much better job than they are actually doing with most of their agencies. They are prone to take the credit for the good results and lay most of the blame for their failure upon the home. The home, admittedly weak, is actually making the congregation's job look better than it really is. In short, the congregation does not have the right to take over the home's tasks except where the home has broken down completely and then only until the home has been rehabilitated. Where the local church is trying to do the job alone, it is working under a staggering handicap.

Some specific ways in which the local church can be more faithful in its task as teacher of all may be suggested. The first of these is concerned with the leaders themselves. Those who have been chosen by the congregation to feed the flock must themselves work hard at being Christian parents. It is noteworthy that the Apostle Paul sets this forth as one of the prerequisites for anyone who aspires to the office of the ministry, saying: "He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man doth not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's Church?" (R. S. V., 1 Tim. 3:4, 5.) It is easy for the pastor and the teachers to be so concerned with being teachers of the Church that they fail to see that they have an obligation to their own family as parents and that if they fail to work hard at it, they are setting up a double standard and are indirectly nullifying what they so earnestly are trying to teach.

⁴ Fallaw, p. 18.

A second suggestion pertains to the sermon, which is still the one channel which reaches the majority of the adults as well as the children. In referring to the sermon we are not implying that it should take on a new message, but we do wish to emphasize that the sermon must be relevant to the life of the hearers. Very often our preaching is too generalized, dwelling on abstract situations or is concerned with knocking down strawmen. Sermons of this type are of little value to the average man and woman in the pew. One thing that preaching and teaching never dare be is to be out of this world. Nor is it sufficient merely to remind parents, what they already know, that theirs is a great responsibility and that they have failed in it. True, parents must be impressed with their family's importance, but they should be shown especially how they can meet their obligations. For example, it may be necessary to spell out in detail, in concrete terms, what the implications of the great doctrines of the revealed Word are. Fathers and mothers must be shown how the inconsistencies between life and professed faith nullify what both home and Church are trying to do for their children. They must be reminded that the values which they profess become real only when they are values which are lived. The implications of mutual understanding, of sympathy, of working together, sharing together, and sacrificing for one another as part of the family teaching situation must be emphasized.

A third suggestion is the establishment of a good pastoral or counseling program. The open door of the pastor's study is an important invitation to the adult to come with his domestic and parental problems. We probably would be shocked to know how many people in our congregations actually bypass the pastor and go to their physician, to a professional counselor, or write in to the newspaper columnist for advice. More stress must be placed upon a good marriage-counseling program in the parish, not from the scientific angle, but with a sound theological approach. Above all, the pastor must have a sympathetic understanding for his young people and be ready to give them assistance rather than be known as an impatient, petulant scold.

And then there is the educational program of the congregation, which should be tied more closely to the work of the parent. May we repeat: Never should the congregation give the impression

that the teaching task is chiefly its job. It must help the parent to recognize that teaching is basically the home's responsibility. Therefore the Church must begin to attack its teaching program with the family as a unit as much as possible rather than regard the members as a group of individuals. Before the Church assumes the task to teach a child in Sunday school, parochial school, confirmation or in any of its agencies, it should consult with the home, explain its objectives, its requirements of the child, and indicate specific ways in which the home and the Church can co-operate in doing a common task. It must be with the attitude of "we are trying to help you parents" do your task. Pastors and teachers must never allow the home to assume that it has gotten rid of its responsibilities and that the Church is really responsible for the outcome. The effort of Synod's Board for Parish Education to give parents specific directions through the *Parents' Guide* is commendable. The guide explains what the Sunday school is trying to do from Sunday to Sunday and shows in detail how the home can apply and make the lesson functional through its day-by-day contacts with the child. It seems incredible, yet only a small portion of our Sunday schools are effectively using the *Parents' Guide*.

If the family is taught to go to church and to school together as a unit, the adult Bible class may become one of the important means of helping the adult relate Christian doctrine to Christian living. It is here that the relevancy of the life in Christ can be presented in detail to meet the needs of the group "that they might have life." The senior and junior Bible classes also have an important opportunity to meet in this area. The senior class which attracts the future parents can prepare for the home that will be and the junior class which draws the high school youth can help establish a correct attitude toward the sacredness of marriage and the home. Thus Bible classes at all levels can help present and future parents in doing the task which the Church cannot do itself.

The alert congregation need not establish new organizations to strengthen the home. Instead it may be more effective to direct the existing organizations in such a way that the home realizes its great function. Whether it be with the young married couples' club or with the cradle-roll department, every organization should be concerned with assisting the parent in his task.

Some leaders have placed great stress on the importance of a formal parent-teacher organization. Perhaps there is a place for it if it is not merely an additional organization which attempts to make for just another night away from home or if it is not merely to serve the school or the Church instead of the home. If such an organization can bring the whole family into the congregation and so help tie the group into a unit, it may have great value. When during the evening the Church's teachers and the parents want to sit down to discuss how they can help one another, the children may be separated from the adults for their own program. One can well imagine that such an organization can be used to discuss teaching situations, objectives of curriculum, helps that are available, mutual problems, etc. If parent-teacher groups do this instead of simply raising money or using their efforts to help the Church as an institution, they can effectively realize a legitimate purpose.

One thing is certain, the modern Church must help the parent, and this it does when it is truly a teaching Church to every age level.

St. Louis, Mo.