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CHAPTER IV

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

George G. Konrad

I. THE TEACHING PARENT AND THE CHURCH

All Christian teaching functions must be viewed from the perspective of the local church—what it is and what it does. Parents, as Christian teachers of their children, or as teachers of Christianity within the home, also derive this responsibility not first of all from the fact that they are parents, but from their identity with the Body of Christ. “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you . . .” is the point of departure for a discussion of parents as teachers.

Among the varied functions of the church is its responsibility for teaching or Christian nurture. Both by its nature and by its purpose the church must assume a teaching function. The biological analogy of membership in the Body of Christ through the “new birth” is carried out in the Scriptures in terms of “bodily growth.” Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 4:15, 16, “. . . but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” Without growth there can be no development of life within the church, and without nurture, there can be no growth. As Graves has stated, “A church does not *have* an educational program, it *is* an educational program. The very nature of the church constrains it to be an educational organism.”¹ The same message is implied by the title of a book by James

DeForest Murch, *Teach or Perish*.² On this basis, then parents have a teaching responsibility to their children. Because they are members of the Body of Christ, they participate in the teaching function of the church.

The church not only provides parents with the fact of a teaching responsibility, it also determines the teaching objective and the content of teaching. By and large parents participate in the concern to help their children become responsible members in the community and the church. We want our children to study effectively in school, we want them to obey the laws of the country, we want them to respect their elders, and so on. While all these are legitimate, when we speak to parents as teachers within the Christian context, we go beyond this to the teaching objective of the church. This too can be spelled out in various forms by identifying the numerous Christian virtues as teaching goals in the home. However, more general categories used in the Scriptures refer to the edification of the church (I Cor. 14:12), building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12), building up the body in love (Eph. 4:16), or the most encompassing one, of attaining the "measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Christlikeness is the overriding objective of Christian nurture in the church. Insofar as parents derive the objective for their teaching function from their identification with the Body of Christ, their objective in teaching their children is also determined by the teaching goal of the church. All the goals of the teaching parent must be made subservient to the goal of helping their children become more like Christ. This statement naturally has to be modified by the question of the faith-status of the child, which is too large a topic for discussion here.

One other factor concerning the parents and the teaching church has to do with the church as the true context of Christian education. Frequently we are in danger, both as parents and teachers in the church's educational program, of subscribing to a transmissive model of education which gives primary attention to the transmission of content (e.g. Bible knowledge), while largely ignoring the context of learning, which in the case of Christian education

is the church. Again using the analogy of the body, Paul makes it clear that the relationship to Christ *and* the provision supplied by "every joint" (Eph. 4:16) causes the growth of the body. Robert L. Browning says: "The most powerful education is informal appropriation of values, attitudes and understandings of what a Christian is and does, which comes through participation in the Christian Community."³ The responsibilities of the teaching parent, as members of the Body of Christ from which they derive their teaching function, must also be viewed from this perspective. They participate in the life of the church and are in truth the church in the home and as such can provide the true context for teaching in the home. This has to do more with self-identity and self-awareness than with a variation in content. In our teaching relationships to our children it is not enough to see ourselves in the role of parents; we must also at the deepest level of our self-definition, see ourselves in the role of members of the Body of Christ.

II. TEACHING PARENTS IN THE BIBLE AND HISTORY

Universal education as prescribed and provided in modern Western society, for while generally taken for granted, is of relatively recent origin. Throughout history formal education has been the prerogative of the elite and the rich while the masses were limited to informal learning in the context of the home and/or vocational pursuits. Industrialized society has demanded educational specialization which was not available or as necessary in the agrarian past. Increasingly educational functions have been assumed by the public schools on the secular level. Churches in turn, wanting to emulate the educational trends of society in general, have sought to initiate similar models in the church. In some sense, at least, the discussion of the role of parents as teachers is an anachronism belonging to the forgotten past. How often parents of today experience the fact that their children in public school have outdistanced them in knowledge and understanding. And in addition, increasingly the church of the past decades has preempted the

role of Christian education of children, so that parents are quickly given the impression that their responsibility is limited to and met by assuring the faithful participation of their children in the educational functions of the church. Lawrence Richards has said:

We say that parents are responsible for the Christian church programs to minister to them and thus promote the idea that parents can turn their children over to the church and the church will do the job of nurturing for them.⁴

Historically in the more primitive societies there was little or no provision for various agencies or institutions to assume educational responsibility for children. Education was informal. It occurred in the daily interactions of life as parents together with children and other members of the extended family and the community pursued their vocational responsibilities.

A. Jewish Education.

Every child was a delight in the Jewish home. There were no unwanted children. This attitude is aptly expressed by the Psalmist: "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; . . ." (Ps. 127:3-5a). Barclay says, "The Jew was sure that of all people the child was dearest to God."⁵

Early Jewish history prior to the time of Ezra has no record of schools for children. Although some educational efforts were introduced with the rise of the synagogue, general education was not introduced until well into the first century A. D. Even when schools were beginning to exert some significant influence in the life of the Jewish people, the focus of religious and vocational training remained on the home. "However high the Jewish ideal of the school, the fact remains that to the Jew the real center of education is the home."⁶

The Deuteronomic law gives some explicit instructions concerning the responsibility of parents for the nurture of

children. There is something awesome about the fact that at the time of the establishment of a new nation which would face overwhelming odds both religiously and militarily, the writer of Deuteronomy points to the home as the foundation for the future welfare of the people of God. "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on him? . . . Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons" (Deut. 4:7, 9). Moses becomes more specific in a later chapter. After he has once again presented the demands and the challenge of the decalogue as the basis for God's covenant with his people, he provides the directive whereby success and blessing may rest upon the nation. "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:5-7).

Many different teaching aids were provided for the people of Israel such as the sacrifices, the feasts and the festivals. All these helped them to focus on their relationships to Jehovah and their responsibilities to Him. However, even here parental education of children remained crucial. So much so that the educational function of the parents became obligatory and part of the ritual, specifically in the case of the Feast of Passover. So Moses says concerning the ritual of the Passover, "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt'" (Ex. 13:8). The practice of having the son ask questions concerning the meaning of the Passover with the father providing the answers has been maintained in the Jewish religious life to the present.

The words of Solomon provide a suitable summary of Jewish attitudes toward the importance of the parents' role in the nurture of children: "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

With the resurgence of interest in the teaching responsibilities of parents, the danger exists that an attempt be made to establish a one-to-one correlation with biblical practice and current need. The fact is that in the social and cultural conditions which prevailed in the past, there were virtually no possibilities of providing education for children except in the home. There was essentially no program of general education to which the child from the average home had access. Additionally, there were no church agencies or organizations which had as their objective the instruction of children. Furthermore, the ancient family cannot be equated with the modern nuclear family insofar as it consisted of a larger group of other family members such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, often referred to as the extended family. Therefore, in reviewing some practices of the Old and New Testaments, it must be done with some caution. We want to abstract some general principles and emphases without seeking to establish a normative practice that can or should be implemented today in its totality.

While taking into account the cultural realities of ancient Israel, we nevertheless note the important place of the child in Jewish thinking and the onus of responsibility for religious nurture resting with the parents. Various community structures, including the extended family, supported the parents in this task without diminishing their primary duties toward their children.

B. The Early Church

Even a cursory reading of the Gospels quickly establishes the fact that children held a position of prominence in the life and teaching of Jesus. All of us recall the compelling Sunday school pictures where children were gathered around the loving Jesus. Despite increasing pressures and demands placed on Jesus and despite the efforts of his disciples to protect him from the intrusions of mothers and their children, He made a special point of acknowledging them. Perhaps his highest commendation of the child was when he used one as the example of the citizen of the Kingdom (Matt. 18:2-4). Although these passages are frequently used as an apologetic for the evangelism of children,

the case can rather be made that Jesus emphasized the true worth of the child in its natural (innocent) state.

Jesus seems to assume that parental responsibility for their children comes to them naturally or instinctively. Even wicked persons "know how to give good gifts to (their) children, . . ." (Matt. 7:11). The absolute responsibility toward children is asserted by Jesus in his warning about causing "these little ones who believe in Me to stumble" (cf. Matt. 18:6-14), as well as in his lesson on humility where receiving a child is equated with receiving Christ himself (Mk. 8:36, 37).

With Jesus' stress placed on the importance of the child, one might expect that the remainder of the New Testament would have developed a fullblown theology and practice of child-rearing. Not so. Acts has virtually nothing to say about the child. There are some brief references indicating that somehow the faith of parents will directly impact their children (cf. Acts 2:39; Acts 16:31).

The Epistles also are devoid of any systematic treatment of parental concerns. However, a number of significant statements are made, all of them indicating that the nurture of children is the responsibility of parents. Children are to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). The significance of this injunction is emphasized by the outlined qualification of church leaders. Successful parenting is essential for elders and deacons to assume leadership roles (I Tim. 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6). Fathers are to nurture their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, but not provoke them to wrath (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Parents also have primary responsibility to provide for the physical welfare of their children (II Cor. 12:14).

The New Testament gives no hint of institutional provision for the instruction of children, ". . . for the New Testament is certain that the only training which really matters is given within the home, and that there are no teachers so effective for good or evil as parents are." There were no schools or teachers for the education of children in the early church. The church was poor and could not have financed the erection of buildings or the hiring of teaching staff. Additionally, there was the expectation of the imminent return of Christ, so that any general education may have been con-

sidered irrelevant in the first and second century. Besides, Christians were a hunted, illegal group, and any institutional provisions were highly impractical and even impossible.

From the Scriptures, then, we must draw the conclusion that the primary responsibility for the nurture of children rests with the parents. Not even the church can usurp this role with impunity. From this brief summary we are compelled to reassess current practices in our churches with regard to the Christian nurture of children.

C. Martin Luther and Menno Simons

The period between the early church and the Reformation presented only sporadic and limited attempts to introduce education for the general public. Most of these were limited by political history or geography. The Reformation under the leadership of Martin Luther signaled a renewed attempt to introduce educational provisions for children of the common people. Luther spoke harshly against the expenditure of funds for various public and military improvements and the parallel lack of funds for the education of children.

Luther also pointed out the responsibility of parents for the education of their children. He encouraged parents to send their children to school and more than that, prepared the shorter catechisms to be used by parents in the home with their children. However, he was generally disillusioned with the ability and interest of parents in assuming this task.

The reasons he gives for the ineffectiveness of parents in the nurture of children have become arguments that have been used by Christian educators and churches down through the ages. He points out that parents do not have the desire to educate their children. Furthermore, they lack adequate piety and are generally unqualified. And within the demands of daily vocational responsibilities, parents simply do not have the time to do an effective job. Therefore, the public school must provide for the educational needs of the child.⁸

Menno Simons did not have the luxury of political support and thus was unable to deal with the question of public

education. However, in his article on "The Nurture of Children," he too highlights the responsible role of parents when he points out that "... this is the chief and principal care of the saints, that their children may fear God, do right and be saved."⁹

Menno emphasized the need for parents to break, suppress or destroy the sinful nature of children. Although he warned against excessive physical punishment, he advocated the use of the rod to help children know the righteous judgment and terrible wrath of God. His concern was that parents set a good example, pray for their children and display a spiritual love which would instruct children in the way of the Lord and avoid spoiling them with a natural or permissive love.¹⁰

Both Luther and Menno Simons identified the significant role of parents in child training although Luther initiated specific steps for some of this responsibility to be assumed by public, albeit Christian, institutions.

III. TEACHING PARENTS AND MODELING

A study of the biblical literature makes it apparent that the major role in the Christian education of children belongs to the parents. However, the Bible provides only few specifics. Another question which needs to be raised is how children learn as members of a closed sociological unit, the family. Although a family is not a totally closed unit, especially as the child grows older and is exposed to the church, to peers, to school, etc., within the parameters of the nuclear family it is narrowly circumscribed.

We are abundantly aware that children learn within the family and that somehow parents exert significant influence on them. In the early years of the life of a child we are frequently amazed at the imitative behavior of children; how in their speech and behavior patterns they uncannily resemble their parents. One can say as a generalization that this learning process is inevitable and there is nothing parents can do to prevent their children from learning in the home setting. Larry Losconcy has pointed out that:

We can no more avoid teaching our children religion

than we can avoid teaching them how to talk or eat or walk. By the time our children are five years their consciences are basically formed. By the time they go to kindergarten their basic attitude towards God and other people is set. In the grade school years they learn doctrine in school and then come home to see what is really right and good and worthwhile.¹¹

The nature of learning within the family can be compared to learning as it is posited for the life of the church. Faith, in the Scriptures, is not only an adherence to certain doctrinal statements of belief; it is a living relationship with a person, Jesus Christ. Within the context of relationships in the church, growth takes place. Change and development occur as the members of the body relate to one another in truth and love, confrontation and support. From this perspective it becomes easier to understand the nature of growth within the family context.

How then does growth take place within the family? And in what genuine sense are parents teachers in the home? There appears to be a high level of agreement among social scientists that we need to look for the origin of personality of the child in dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Something happens as persons within the family relate to each other which results in the formation of personality. Learning, Larry Richards states, takes place "in real situations where effect, interest, motive, perceptions and behavior is united."¹²

The process of molding the child into the "image of the parents" is referred to as socialization. "Socialization, broadly defined, is the process by which the infant learns the ways of a given social group and is molded into an effective participant."¹³ The social group in this case is the family. As the child lives within the context of the family he increasingly becomes aware of acceptable behavior norms of attitudes, and appropriate feelings. Over a period of time he increasingly adjusts himself to become an effective participant. Doubtlessly, this is over-simplified, however, it provides a paradigm which helps us to understand the teaching role of the parent. No aspect of the child's life is exempt from the influence of other members of this social group, the family.

And consequently every area of his development is impacted: motivations, personality traits, and even abilities. Norman Bull agrees with this assessment. He says: "The nature of the child's morality will depend upon those around him—upon, that is the identification he makes."¹⁴

Similar conclusions are being reached by sociologists on a much broader scale to include nations and continents. So that we understand the meaning of the concept, "national character." When we speak of the Americans, the Germans, or the Japanese we already have certain prejudiced views concerning basic personality traits. The underlying assumption is that in a given society the techniques employed by members of that society in the care and rearing of their children are culturally patterned and thus will tend to be similar for various families. Since the members of any given society will have many common elements of early childhood experience they will also have many common elements of personality. As a result we have the development of a national character, traced back to common practices in the raising of children.¹⁵

Socialization is the distinctive process of growth in the life of the child. Socialization includes compliance, imitation, identification and internalization. All of these include the process of modeling whereby a child seeks to construct his behavior and attitudes after the life patterns of significant persons in his experience. Compliance refers to behavior adjustments which arise when the person influencing the child has the necessary means of control. Imitation is simply copying the behavior of another individual. Facial expressions, vocabulary, attitudes, tone of voice, and a myriad of other characteristics may be imitated by the child without conscious thought or deliberate intent.

Identification moves a step farther than the former two. Behavior adjustment is done with some deliberation and is based on the need to maintain a satisfying relationship with another individual or group.

Identification is a process in which a person believes himself to be like another person in some respects, experiences the other's successes and defeats as his own and consciously or unconsciously models his behavior

after him . . . the fact that there is emotional involvement with the other person distinguishes identification from mere imitation.¹⁶

The degree of involvement, namely, total role modeling, and the strong emotional tie with the model are the crucial elements.

Internalization is the final stage in which the child now views the new behavior or attitude as intrinsically rewarding. He attaches value to the new life style in its own right. He has incorporated it into his own meaning and self-definition. Generally speaking, this is what we mean when we speak of internally-motivated behavior.

Socialization is most effective under certain specific conditions. Although a substantial number of variables have been investigated, only a few will be identified here. Four conditions identified by Edward Dager are as follows:

1. Interaction must occur between the infant and some adult or adults.
2. The adult(s) must be predisposed to satisfy the needs of the infant (nurturance).
3. A dependent relationship must develop between the infant and some adult or adults.
4. The adults must have control of the resources the infant needs or feels it needs (power to reward and punish).¹⁷

The relationship of dependency between infant and adult is normative. The adult in the life of the child, usually the parent, controls the resources both for the physical and emotional survival of the child. Predictability in meeting the needs of the infant results in the development of security and relatedness which in turn enhances identification. The control of resources needed by the child virtually give the power of life and death to the parent. When used for the benefit of the child with dependability, identification results.

Several other conditions of effective modeling are identified by Lawrence Richards:

There needs to be exposure to the inner states of the model(s).

The model(s) need to be observed in a variety of life settings and situations.

The model(s) need to exhibit consistency and clarity in behaviors, values, etc.

There needs to be a correspondence between the behavior of the model(s) and the beliefs (ideal standards) of the community.

There needs to be explanation of life style of the model(s) conceptually, with instruction accompanying shared experiences.¹⁸

The last point refers to the function of formal (or informal) instruction or explanations given to the child. The perceptual framework providing the rationale for the behavior parents with children are modeling becomes an essential part of the socializing process. Frequently there are tendencies among Christian parents to satisfy themselves with a consistent life without and verbal elucidation of the reasons for the behavior. The rationale will provide the child with a coherent system which will help him understand his parents and his own behavior in terms of who he is becoming.

In this section we have pointed out the inevitability of the influence of parents on their children. This pertains in all situations because of the sociological nature of the family unit and is achieved through the process of socialization. Various conditions, when met by parents, will enhance the modeling process in the life of the child.

IV. THE CHURCH AND THE TEACHING PARENT

In an earlier section of this paper, the point was made that the teaching function of the Christian parents was derived from their identification with the church, the Body of Christ. At this time another factor needs to be identified, namely, the primacy of the spiritual family over the biological family. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the concerns directed toward the biological, nuclear family. This concern, on the one hand arises from our growing awareness of the deterioration of the family in

our society. On the other it stems from the recognition of the basic socializing impact of the nuclear family on the developing child.

The danger facing us is that we accede primacy to the nuclear family and forget that the church is not constituted of biological family units, but rather of believers, individuals who have committed themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. On several occasions in his ministry, Christ asserted that primary loyalty belonged to him, not to the biological family. Luke 14:26 reads, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." This statement should continue to serve as a corrective to the churches as they view their responsibility to the nuclear family, especially those families associated with the church by virtue of the fact that there are Christians in them.

The first responsibility of the church in relationship to the teaching parent is to recognize the legitimate role of the parent in the nurturing of children. The parent's responsibility seems clearly delineated in Scripture and is overwhelmingly supported by the findings of the social sciences. The church is not in a position to replace the parent as the teacher of the young. Due to the dependency relationship which exists between children and parents and by virtue of most of the conditions of successful socialization, the parents are uniquely qualified to fill that role. All Christian education functions of the church with children must, therefore, be viewed as supportive of the teaching function of the parents and not vice versa. Parents have primacy in providing the atmosphere of love, the models of right living and the context of discipline and freedom which the children need to internalize those values adhered to by their Christian parents.

All parents, whether Christians or not, will have the socializing impact on their children as outlined above. In this sense the teaching function of parents derives from their natural role as parents. Christian parents, however, have the added dimension that their responsibility as teachers of Christian values stems not from their role as natural parents but from their membership in the Body of

Christ. Both the function and objective of Christian teaching in the home is derived from the church.

Whereas the leaders of the church frequently lament the deterioration of the family we must also look to the church for at least some of the contributing factors. In many instances the church has effectively separated the family in all functions scheduled on Sunday morning as well as in the specialized activities during the week. Although the content of our lessons in our closely graded programs are laudable and doctrinally impeccable and although the atmosphere is often one of life and support, the message of our structures is that nurture towards spiritual growth takes place in isolation from other members of the family. We should not be too surprised that often the lessons of the structure override those of the Bible content so that there is only a very modest level of success in transferring the content to the daily relationships of the home.

The second responsibility follows logically, namely, to help parents be more effective in their parenting role. The absence of any systematic training in parenting in most of our churches is only too obvious. "Parents are blamed not trained," says Thomas Gordon of Parent Effectiveness fame, and this from outside the perspective of the church.¹⁹ Although we readily concede the significance of the parental role, our lack of training provisions for parents contains the strong message that they are in fact of secondary importance in the teaching of children. Research into the phenomenon of child abuse indicates that child abuse is passed on from one generation to another.²⁰ Deductively we can conclude that other parenting patterns are also adopted by children from their parents. The church has the responsibility to help parents break the cycle of negative parenting models.

A third responsibility has to do with the personal growth of parents. Jesus stated that the goal of teaching is for students to become like their teachers. "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). On several occasions Paul exhorts the believers to follow his example (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9). However, when all is said and

done, a parent can only model what he is. All instruction in the home will be ineffective where it is contradicted by an inconsistent life. Therefore, the greatest impact of the church in the nurture of children, will not be in the formal Christian education experiences, but in the contribution it makes to the spiritual growth of the parents.

A fourth responsibility of the church has to do with the general loss of the extended family structure. As indicated earlier, biblical references to the family indicated not only the nuclear family as we know it, but also the extended family or even the clan. There appears to be little hope that the extended family structures can be recaptured in a highly industrialized, mobile society. The church, however, is singularly well suited both by its nature and its functions, to provide that extended social structure to help shore up the fissures appearing in the conjugal family.

The family is a common analogy used in the Scriptures to describe the quality of relationships that exist in the church. We are "members one of another." We are "brothers" and "sisters" in the Lord. We have "fathers" who nurture us in the faith and we in turn have "sons" in the Lord. One of the greatest potentials for providing relief to the embattled nuclear family resides in the church. As we establish loving, caring and admonishing relationships within the context of the church, we will be able to provide specific support in questions relating to marital health and successful parenting. The contradictory reality is that we appear least inclined to share our failures with our spiritual family in the areas of marital and family needs. However, the possibility is there and the church has the responsibility, if it is truly concerned with the welfare of the current family, to explore all avenues to provide supportive and corrective relationships and thus recapture some of the benefits at one time available through the extended family.

V. TEACHING FOR GROWTH

The teaching impact of the parent on the child will be largely at the informal, non-structured level. The child learns by watching, listening, touching, hearing and doing. Our society has placed additional demands on parents. The

father is largely absent from informal interaction with the child because of the demands of his vocational pursuits. This means that he will need to make a special effort to compensate for his frequent absence by seeking out opportunities to be with his child. No formal devotional time with the family, although important, can replace the influence the parent has on the child at the informal level. Increasingly mothers also absent themselves from the home in order to supplement the family income or to pursue a career. While there is probably nothing inherently wrong with such employment, the greatest opportunity for teaching might be bypassed, especially during the early years of the child's life.

The modeling of parents becomes the process whereby children learn. The most basic concern for parents then is that they be consistent models of that which they want to teach. Obviously no person can adequately live in full Christian maturity. At that point parents must acknowledge their sinfulness—share their inner states of repentance and hope with their children, and together recognize that there is a perfect model, namely Jesus Christ. Where a contradiction exists between the modeling behavior of parents and their verbal instruction, children will invariably accept the former as the more significant message and identify with that. So it happens that children are learning things we did not intend to teach. Things like "tell the truth except when it hurts." When daddy was pulled over by the policeman he said he was only doing thirty when everyone in the family knew he was doing fifty.²¹

Formal instruction in the home, those times when we schedule Bible reading, prayer, and other religious activities will only be effective when the message is in essential harmony with the behavior of parents. Such instruction becomes the rationale, the explanation for the behavior children have already observed.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated the role of the parent as teacher. The teaching function of the Christian parent in

relationship to his children is derived from his participation in the body of Christ. Both the teaching content and goal of the church guide the teaching activity of the parent.

A cursory look at the Scriptures evidences that the primary responsibility for the Christian nurture of children resides with the parents, not with the church as institution or other formal agencies. Although the cultural realities of the time precluded the use of public agencies and even church agencies, it is noteworthy that the early church made no attempts to formalize any programs of Christian education for children.

The transmission of values, attitudes and behaviors from parents to children occurs in the process of socialization. This process depends for its effectiveness on a quality of relationships between parents and children. Modeling can become more effective as these conditions are met.

In conclusion, the church's primary responsibility toward parents as teachers is to provide them both with the recognition of their teaching role and the necessary support and training to become effective in this responsibility. The church, in a very practical sense, has the potential to become the new extended family.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Allen W. Graves, "Administration of the Religious Education Program," in Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 107.
- 2 James DeForest Murch, *Teach or Perish* (Eerdmans, 1961).
- 3 Robert L. Browning, "The Structure and Quality of Church Education in the Future" in Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 141.
- 4 Lawrence O. Richards, *A New Face for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 17.
- 5 William Barclay, *Train up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 11.
- 6 William Barclay, *Train up a Child*, p. 14.
- 7 William Barclay, *Train up a Child*, p. 236.
- 8 J. Donald Butler, *Religious Education: The Foundation and Practice of Nurture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 31-40.
- 9 John C. Wenger, ed., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, Translated from the Dutch by Leonard Verduin (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1956), p. 950.
- 10 Wenger, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, pp. 947-952.
- 11 Larry Losconcy, "Actions Speak Louder," in Marie McIntyre, ed., *Parents: Educators at Home* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1969), p. 11.
- 12 Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 82.
- 13 Edward Z. Dager, *Socialization: Process, Product, and Change* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1971), p. IX, X.

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