

EDUCATION FOR CHURCHMANSHIP

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The protest often heard against "churchianity" would likely lose its relevance were more attention given to churchmanship and the making of churchmen. This element in the manifold objective of modern religious education is well conceived, but is thus far little more than a gesture. We need not only the objective of churchmanship in theory, but more definite planning and practical educational procedures for realizing it as an outcome. It is my purpose to present some of the essentials to that end.

Churchmanship a Religious Education Objective

Education for the religious life is threatened today with danger from a too-limited view of the outcome to be sought. One of the most significant goals of religious education — one most widely neglected — is skill and satisfaction in churchmanship on the part of church members. The fact that little attention is paid to making churchmen of church members is not a pattern to be followed but a weakness to be deplored and remedied. Too many church members are merely enrolled on the church records. That they shall come to desire and practice participation in the activities of worship, fellowship, service, and study within the church with skill is a 'must' for the church of the immediate future. Without this, church membership cannot take on its richest meaning nor yield full value to members.

The neglect of churchmanship will be evident to any observer who will notice in vast numbers of church members their indifference toward church activities; the crude and bungling way in which some members perform in these activities; and the refusal of some to participate at all. The yield of sat-

isfaction from the church to the average member is tragically slight, largely because the member himself has not gained faith in the church's possibilities for him nor acquired skill enough in its activities to realize those possibilities.

There is, therefore, no more urgent aim of the church school than that all members and prospective members of the church be led to develop from the minimum status of enrollees to the high level of skilled and satisfied churchmen. This requires stimulation, guidance, teaching. But through such effort the church may be confident of making a vital and fruitful membership which will command respect and confidence and expectation of good from the church of the future.

The Problem of Growth In Churchmanship

How shall we state the problem of growth in churchmanship? What is the difficulty which prevents members from advancing from the minimum status of mere enrollees to the maximum of skilled and satisfied churchmen? The answer is three-fold. Some members never were planted in that kind of educational soil in which churchmanship might have germinated; others have become stunted after a period of slight growth; and still others have become twisted and warped into very grotesque shapes through misdirection.

As to the first-mentioned of the three aspects of this difficulty I call attention to the influence of the historical Sunday school. With no desire to discredit the Sunday school for the great good it has done in the past, it has unwittingly lodged in untold numbers of its members the impression that to be a good Sunday school "scholar" is of major importance; but to be a churchman is of

minor importance. It has not been soil for the germination of churchmanship in children to any considerable degree. While the church in recent times has gained from it most of its enrollees, nevertheless the Protestant Sunday school itself, generally speaking, has not taught churchmanship. Its concern has rather been that of having its pupils gain a memory possession and traditional understanding of the canonical scriptures, assuming that all else necessary — whatever that may be — would follow therefrom as a matter of course. It has turned out that, for many branches of the church of the western world within the last two centuries, the very soil in which the religious life of children got its start was so ill-conditioned as to give churchmanship very little chance. Almost any Protestant Sunday school taken at random — other than those of Lutheran and Anglican faiths — would likely discover upon close examination of itself that it is allowing its pupils to grow up with the idea that the church is something quite outside and essentially separate from Sunday school, and that churchmanship is quite foreign to the Sunday school's purpose and practice. Here, then, is one place to look for the difficulty in the way of growth in churchmanship — the difficulty of ill-conditioned germination soil.

Stunted churchmanship, the second aspect of the difficulty, requires its own answer. Churchmanship, in many cases, is hindered by conditions that stop growth some time after it has been under way. Any condition reducing the frequency of a member's participation in church activities is likely to hinder growth. Such conditions are too greatly varied for all to be mentioned here. Some of them are least suspected and very likely to be overlooked by any given church. To mention one such condition, it has been found by test that, with very few exceptions and other things being equal, the farther a city

church member lives from his church building the lower his rank in quality of churchmanship. It follows from this that such a simple thing as changing his residence to a place a few blocks farther from his church building is like to hinder a church member's churchmanship growth. And whatever a church may think or feel or say or do about such a case, it is bound to recognize in it an increase of difficulty in maintaining normal growth. This is true also for the many other hindering, stunting conditions that each church is obliged to be informed upon and to do something about.

Twisting, disproportionate development, and other malformations constitute a third aspect of the difficulty of unsatisfactory growth in churchmanship. Again we may properly ask almost any Protestant church to observe how many of its members are skilled in one or two types of church activity, but utterly lacking in the others. These are "lopsided" or disproportionate churchmen. Among them one finds not a few religious cranks. The zeal with which most of these cranks operate presents the danger of the whole local church body being swung in incidental directions. Many of these zealous cranks become so absorbed in the techniques of performance of their chosen type of church activity that they lose sight of the essential purpose of the activity and engage in the most fantastic activities in the name of worship, fellowship, or service. In our time there are "bingo" and bridge parties as "benefits" and tithing as the one and only acceptable method of giving; there is the cluttering up of worship with the manipulation of an outlandish number of objects and the assuming of a still more outlandish variety of postures in the name of symbolism. Such malformations of churchmanship are taking place daily before our eyes.

I have thus sketched the growth problem in its three-fold nature. With

this growth difficulty every local church's educational program should deal educationally. Some elements of a well-conceived program to that end will now be considered.

Insuring Growth in Churchmanship

It may justly be expected of the religious education program that it take responsibility for stimulating and maintaining growth in churchmanship. Accordingly, the same main factors and conditions upon which education depends for results in other lines of learning must be invoked for education in the experience and arts of churchmanship. Chief of these factors and conditions are (1) the **desire** and **purpose** of church members to grow in churchmanship; (2) opportunity for them to **observe the advancement** being made by other churchmen; (3) **participation** in those church activities that are to be learned; and (4) **recognition** or **celebration** of growth as it takes place. The educational bearing of these points calls for some elaboration.

(1) **Desire and Purpose.**—The desire for experience and the purpose to attain it are primary conditions of learning whatever be the objective. It is, therefore, too much to expect church members of whatever age to strive for and achieve a high level of churchmanship unless some way be found to arouse in them the **desire** to be good churchmen and purposely to **undertake** to be that kind. How to arouse that desire and to get that purpose adopted by church members is suggested by the same fundamental laws of human nature according to which persons come to like anything and set out to get it. One of these laws is that of imitation. We tend to like whatever is liked by the people we happen to like. By this token church members will tend to desire to be good churchmen if the people with whom they associate and whom they admire put churchmanship well up in their list of preferences and practice.

We also tend to like what brings us satisfaction or what is of genuine worth. By this token the desire and purpose to be churchmen can be created by making church members acquainted with the greater worth and satisfaction awaiting them in churchmanship as compared with being mere enrollees. By these or other means the arousal of desire and the adoption of purpose to be skilled churchmen is the first step toward insuring churchmanship growth.

(2) **Opportunity to Observe Good Churchmen.**—A second condition of growth is opportunity for church members to see good examples of churchmanship demonstrated by good churchmen at work in church activities. This condition also follows the law of imitation. That is to say, persons tend to do as is done by those whom they see at work, especially by those whom they most admire and believe in. By this token any plan for education in churchmanship should, if possible, make opportunity for learners of churchmanship to observe the church activity of faithful and skilled churchmen. If such churchmanship demonstrations are not available in the learners' own local churches, effort should be made to relate the learners to other churches where such demonstrations may be observed.

(3) **Participation in Church Activities.**—Another condition of effective learning is that the learner practice the behavior that is expected to become a characteristic of his living. Applied to the aim of churchmanship, we would teach it partly by providing situations in which church members are guided in performing or engaging in the activities of church life. Desire and purpose and example must be followed by doing for oneself those works of churchmanship in which one hopes to attain excellence. No greater mistake can be made than to defer actual participation in essential church activities by children and youth under the false theory

that "they do not understand what they are doing." This mistake is often inadvertently made by church administrators in allowing certain willing, self-assertive, and ambitious members to capture all the church tasks and leave nothing to be done by others who need the aid to growth found in actually doing what is to be learned.

(4) **Recognition or Celebration of Growth.**—A fourth condition of learning is awareness by the learner that he is making some progress. The old proverb that "nothing succeeds like success" is borne out by this law of learning. Accordingly, the educational guidance toward excellence of churchmanship should include occasions and procedures for some evaluation to be put upon their activities in church life both by the learners and fellow churchmen. Progress in churchmanship should be identified and recognized in fitting celebrations from time to time that hold up that progress before learners and fellow churchmen for their appreciation and approval—even for praise.

Under the conviction that recognition of growth when it takes place is one of the most neglected conditions of growth in churchmanship, it is my purpose to close this article with a proposed liturgical service in which fitting recognition may be given those who have made progress, and through which encouragement may be given them to continue their endeavor for growth.

A SERVICE OF RECOGNITION OF GROWTH IN CHURCHMANSHIP

NOTE—This service is provided for any church desiring to make suitable recognition of members who, from time to time, may have given evidence of worthy achievement either in the sphere of their own Christian growth or in that of service to other persons or causes through any of the activities of church life.

The asterisk () indicates portions that may be omitted.*

*THE MUSICAL PRELUDE (The people seated)

THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE by the Leader (The people seated)

Beloved fellows in the Christian life, let us be mindful of the holy purpose which brings us together. It is unworthy of those whom God has endowed with the powers of growth and advancement to lapse into indifference, or to be fearful of failure, or to boast of full stature of Christian maturity. In order that we shall the more surely rise above all such unworthiness, and continue to be free from the same, we now join our prayers and aspirations for the strengthening of our faith in Christian growth.

Some of our fellows have made progress in church life, both in the enrichment and maturing of their own experience and in service to others, to the glory of God. We come now to acknowledge their achievement, and to make fitting expression of its meaning. Let us rejoice heartily with them, and thereby seek to increase their joy.

It behooves us also to make more sure of our own growth by a reconsecration to this holy calling here and now. Let us, therefore, give ourselves sincerely to the opportunities and responsibilities of this occasion, trusting God to grant us His gracious guidance and blessing.

THE UNISON PRAYER for Wisdom and Appreciation (The people kneeling or bowed.)

O God, from whom cometh light in darkness and promptings to goodness, we know that without divine guidance we may fall into error. We earnestly desire that whatsoever is lovely and of good report shall have right of way among us. To this end we look to thee for wisdom to choose the good and shun the evil. Open our eyes to those graces that bloom in the lives of our fellows from time to time under thy loving care and nurture. May all the unlovely and sinful ways to which we are prone be increasingly hateful to us, until we shall be wholly pure in mind and heart. May these acts of recognition which we come to perform increase in us the desire for more abundant life, as becometh the sons of God. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. AMEN

(Here the Lord's Prayer may either be chanted or said in unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our

trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. AMEN.

THE HYMN of Christian Fellowship (The people standing)

THE PRESENTATION of Persons Who are to Receive Recognition (The people seated)

(If so desired, the candidates may be presented in classes according to the particular type of achievement for which each is to be recognized. They may then be seated forward until after the address, if one is to be given)

*THE ADDRESS (The people seated)

(The address should be in reference to some aspects of churchmanship and growth in Christian life and service).

THE BESTOWAL of Insignia of Advancement in Churchmanship (The people seated or standing, and the candidates assuming postures as prearranged. The insignia may be a rose or other flower; a simple type of chevron; or any other mark of recognition desired and adopted by the particular church concerned)

*THE TESTIMONY of Persons Receiving Recognition (The people seated)

(Those receiving recognition may relate their experiences in connection with their churchmanship endeavors)

THE HYMN of Aspiration (The people standing)

THE UNISON PRAYER of Gratitude, Confession and Aspiration (The people kneeling or bowed)

O God, who knowest our hearts and minds better than we know ourselves, we bow in humble gratitude to acknowledge the providence under which we live from day to day. Especially do we give thanks for the many promptings that call us out of childish thought and habit, and stir us to press on and up to maturity. Thou hast, times without number, saved us from indifference, discouragement and fear. We have been inspired by thy messengers to grow and to enrich our living. We have been moved to explore for truth, to attune our senses to beauty, and to cultivate the ways of goodness. Thanks be to thee who hast not left us

to ourselves, but hast ministered so constantly, even when we knew it not.

(Here may be sung a choral Amen or other response)

We do acknowledge our shortcomings and confess our sins. We have not been fully awake to our privileges and responsibilities in the church. Our church life has too often suffered neglect. We have expected more from the church than we have cared to give it. We are heartily sorry and do earnestly repent of these our weaknesses and misdoings. They are grievous unto us and fill our hearts with shame.

(Here may be sung a fitting choral response)

O God, who hast endowed us with power to grow, cultivate in us a new desire and purpose to be more worthy churchmen from this time forth. May the true meaning of our fellowship dawn more clearly upon our vision from day to day. We would walk more faithfully in the light of truth. We would show forth among us more of the love which was in Christ Jesus. We would leave behind our childish thoughts and feelings and desires, and reach upward toward the full stature of maturity. Let thy grace be upon those who lead, that all may be inspired and guided by their example. And make us all quick and diligent to follow and to work together for the making of thy kingdom of love and righteousness among men. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

(Here there may be sung a fitting choral response)

THE PARTING PLEDGE of Mutual Affection and Aid (The people standing)

The leader: Brothers and sisters, let us make our vows of mutual affection and aid

All: Rejoicing in the rich blessings of fellowship in times past, we do now solemnly renew our pledge of devotion to each other and to the cause that unites us. We resolve henceforth to trust each other, to forbear each other's weakness and errors, and to help each other in times of need. As we part in body, may the love of God dwell richly among us, binding us together in sympathy and loving memory.

*THE MUSICAL POSTLUDE