

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Disintegration of American Home-Life

There has been a break-down in the homes of America. Our homes have become dressing rooms, filling stations, and beer parlors. Moral corruption has flooded the land.

Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency is one of our major problems. The FBI reported recently a steady increase in crime, year by year, with teen-agers responsible for a very substantial portion of it. In 1945, for example, there was an increase of 12.4% in crime over 1944; the upsurge in crime this year being the biggest since 1930.

A survey of 543,892 arrest records showed that 17 year-olds lead all others in the number of arrests, with 18 year-olds following a close second. Arrests of girls under 21 more than doubled in 1945 over 1941. A rape, felonious assault, or killing occurred in our country every 6.4 seconds. Youths under 21 years of age accounted for 51% of all automobile thefts, 42% of all burglaries, and 28% of all robberies.

Parental Delinquency

What is the cause of all these increases? There has been a catastrophic break-down in the homes of our country. For the most part, delinquent parents can be said to be the cause of delinquent children. Juvenile delinquency is only the symptom of a disease which is eating away the very foundations of our country, and is threatening to destroy the church of the Lord. That disease is a lack, a dearth of truly Christian homes.

Roger Babson says any hunt for a solution to the problem of juvenile delinquency must start with the reconstructing of parenthood and its un-transferable duties. A wayward youngster and an erring parent are usually but the opposite sides of the same bad coin. Child hoodlumism will end only when legal and financial responsibility is acknowledged not only in the realm of feeding, housing, and clothing, but in the much more important realm of training and teaching.

Judge Sam Davis Tatum, judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court of Davidson County, Tennessee, reported recently that of the 9,500 boys under 17 who had come into the courts of Davidson County, there was not one whose parents went to Bible classes and church services regularly. He further stated that there were only 44 boys out of the 9,500 who, themselves, went to Sunday school and church services regularly.

Where Our Money Goes

It is clear that we have over-emphasized material things to the neglect of spiritual things. The United States of America in 1942 spent in all religious enterprises the sum of \$721,000,000; this was less than 1% of our national income. In that same year the American people spent \$5,200,000,000 for alcoholic drinks and an additional \$2,400,000,000 for tobacco. Thus, for whiskey and tobacco the American people spent in that year more than ten times the sum spent on all religious endeavors of every description. And the awful contrast continues to grow even more shameful and disgraceful in the years following the war. In 1946 approximately \$10,800,000,000 was spent by Americans for whiskey and tobacco; while only about \$4,000,000,000 was spent in all our educational institutions, from kindergartens through universities.

There are over 437,000 saloons in America—one for every 300 people. To each five church buildings in the nation, there are seven saloons. There are 27,000,000 young people in America who are receiving no religious instruction of any kind whatsoever. And of this number approximately 16,000,000 have never been inside any kind of church building — even one time! There are 60,000,000 Americans who profess no religion of any kind.

Declining Morals

Anyone curious about the evident decline in national morals, including all the problems of delinquency both juvenile and adult need look no further. The figures denoting comparative interests and evaluations tell the story; they speak for themselves. When whiskey and tobacco are more important to a nation than all her churches and schools, the fall of that nation surely cannot be long postponed.

There has been an alarming decline in the moral character of the womanhood of our nation. We are witnessing the disgusting sight of cigarette smoking, paint-smearing, cocktail drinking women, reeling drunkenly in the streets of our cities and towns. In 1920 one woman was arrested for drunkenness to every five men arrested for that cause. In 1946 the ratio had risen to one woman for each two men. In 1949 the proportion is approximately even.

Women have left the homes, where God ordained they should be, and have gone out into the world to compete with men in the store the factory and the office. They have left their children in the hands of maids and "baby-sitters" instead of caring for them themselves. Divorce and immorality on an unprecedented scale have come in the wake of such behavior.

The Home and the Church

It is inevitable that these conditions in the home life should reflect themselves in the church. The church in many places has been filled up with worldly-minded people, irreverent, and flippant in their attitudes. The word of God has been disregarded and lightly set aside.

The home is the training center for the church. It is nearly impossible for one reared in a home filled with irreverence and disregard for God's law to grow up to become the kind of Christian and the kind of citizen he ought to be. We must build homes in which piety, reverence for God and spiritual things are stressed and impressed. Then we'll have better communities in which to live, and better churches with which to sound out the gospel of Jesus Christ into all the earth.

- Rufus R. Clifford, Sr. (1912-1997), in The Gospel Guardian, June 2, 1949

Rearing Godly Children in Difficult Times

It is not uncommon today to hear older Christians who have already reared their children comment somberly in the presence of young prospective parents, "I certainly wouldn't want to be bringing up children in times like these." It may be innocently done, but it is not helpful. These already anxious young people do not have a choice of times in which to rear children. For them, it is now or never.

Candidly, from the short term perspective, these are certainly not the best of times for the family. Much has happened in this century that serves to tear at the fabric of domestic life. We have become a city rather than a rural people, living in the anonymity of teeming urban anthills where no one knows or cares who his neighbors are. Our increasing mobility had made us a "nation of strangers" and the once supportive influence of an extended family of grandparents, uncles and aunts, has been lost. Even the homemaker mother has been gradually disappearing before the increasing power of industrialization. Today, for the first time, most American women of childbearing years are working outside the home.

Along with these important social and economic changes, there has been a significant philosophical shift. Our society has been increasingly secularized. Biblical values that

once had at least some influence on our institutions have been largely set aside. From a world in which certain values were cherished, even though often violated, we have moved to one which denies that absolute values exist. Out of the passionate individualism, which arose during the Vietnam War era, has come a hedonistic pursuit of personal fulfillment which is heedless of the consequences to others. Marriage and family commitments are seen as less important than the "finding of oneself." Drug abuse and mindless sensuality abound.

And to this already frightening equation must be added the insidious factor of television, which has the ability to instantly, universally and powerfully infiltrate this moral and spiritual corruption into every American mind.

But if this analysis of our times is accurate in the short term, it certainly does not obtain for the long one. From a wider perspective, current circumstances do not present nearly the challenge to rearing children that past ages have. A few examples will suffice to make the point.

How would you have liked to rear children in the days of Noah, when the whole world was convulsed by violence and every human heart, save two, was wholly set on evil? In spite of the loneliness of their task (you think you're in the minority!) and the ridicule, which it must have brought, Noah and his wife reared three sons not only to trust the true God in the midst of a moral cesspool, but to influence three young women into the same commitment.

What chances of nurturing children in righteousness would you have given Jewish parents during Israel's abject bond servitude in Egypt when even your infant children's lives were under threat from an all-powerful state? Amram and Jochebed reared two sons and a daughter in these very circumstances. In order to save the life of Moses, they were compelled to sacrifice the joys of seeing their youngest child grow daily into manhood and were not even allowed to openly claim him as their own. But the little time they were granted with that son was so well used that he never forgot who he was and, at last, chose affliction with God's people over the pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:24-25).

The New Testament world was no great advance over that of the Old Testament. Fully half the people of the first century Roman Empire were slaves. Human life was cheap and murder was frequent. Divorce was easy and generally accepted. Unwanted infants were simply exposed to die and the females were frequently saved by the enterprising and reared as prostitutes. Every variety of corrupt pagan religion and superstition flourished and was woven into the work-a-day world of all the people. Devotion to some god or goddess was linked to every job and every social occasion. And yet in a world like that, in the midst of an intensely pagan city, a young Jewish girl, married to an unbelieving Greek, reared her son to be one of the great gospel preachers of the early church. With

no synagogue in Lystra and only her mother to help with Timothy's spiritual training, Eunice not only succeeded in rearing a godly son, she succeeded magnificently!

And so, when anxious young people approach me with concern and ask if I think it is possible to build solid marriages and rear godly children in these "difficult times," I simply take them by the hand, look them in the eye, and tell them, "Absolutely!" All that is required is that they be willing to pay the price of a surpassing love for God and a deep love for one another which guided the parenting of those successful fathers and mothers who have gone before us.

- Paul Earnhart

- * "When we hand folks over to God's mercy, don't let it be because we show none ourselves!"
 - * "When we work, we work; when we pray, God works!"
 - * "Even the feeblest knock is heard on heaven's door!"
 - * "God help the sheep when the wolf is judge!" [Danish proverb]
 - * "Character is what a man is when he is not visible to others!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)