

Religion in America

Religious Training for Child Big Responsibility for Parents



By LOUIS CASSELS
UPI Correspondent

If there is one responsibility which terrifies the average parent more than any other, it is the religious nurture of children. Most parents today are aware that religious training must begin at home. But they aren't sure how to go about it and are afraid they'll bungle the job. Judging from their anxious inquiries to pastors, many have the notion that they may blight a child's life forever by using the wrong words in speaking about God, or by failing to give just the right answer to a question about death.

Such parents may find a measure of comfort, and a great deal of helpful advice, in a new book entitled, "Your Child's Religion, A Practical Guide For Parents," by the Rev. Dr. Randolph C.rup Miller (Doubleday, \$2.95).

Dr. Miller is professor of Christian education at Yale Divinity school. He has six children of his own.

Found Through Love

He points out that "God is not an idea to be talked about so much as a personal reality to be experienced." He "comes to persons through other persons." He is present wherever there is a loving relationship between human beings.

A child first encounters God in his daily life "through the love shown to him by his parents." Thus parents become "mediators of God to their children" simply by loving them, "long before any words are possible."

As he grows older, a child can learn to identify the spirit of love with God. Parents can point out that no one has seen God at any time but anyone can "discern Him at work underneath the surface of events." They can also help the child to discover God at work in the natural order of the universe, of which he becomes aware quite early in life.

Glib Answers Unneeded

Parents need not have a ready stock of glib answers when a curious child begins to

ask further questions about God. They should make clear that people hold different conceptions of God, and that no one knows all the answers because the reality of God is too great to be put into words or reduced to simple explanations.

"Let us be sure that the concepts we share with our children are such that as they grow older they will never need to unlearn them," says Dr. Miller. "They are going to have many mistaken notions that need to be corrected, but there is no reason why parents should contribute to these misconceptions by watered-down views of God or erroneous ideas that sound cute because they are for children. We must never make them feel that answers about God are easy to come by."

A child won't find this approach evasive or confusing if his parents are themselves convinced of the reality of God, and if they make clear by their actions that they trust God and attach great importance to doing His will.

How Child Learns

"Most of our fundamental religious teaching," says Dr. Miller, "is not our conscious effort to tell the child anything, but is the unconscious and undesigned activities of the parents whose principles propagate themselves even without their desire."

Teaching a child to "say his prayers" at an early age

Preference Given To Transfer Students Of Junior Rank

Ann Arbor, Mich. — The Literature, Science and Arts college of the University of Michigan has decided to give preference in accepting transfer students to those of junior rank.

The college, which studied the transfer situation for two years, determined that students who have completed two years of college provide broader evidence of sustained competence, can make the transition into their major field, would be unlikely to be making just another stop en route to another college unit. Also, enrollment pressures are less severe at the junior-senior level than in freshman-sophomore classes, the college said.

is not, in Dr. Miller's opinion, quite as essential as some anxious parents believe. It cannot be demonstrated that the early use of prayer by the child makes any difference in his later development," he says. "It is much more important for him to see his parents pray, and to become aware of their relationship to God, than it is to say a few words in the form of prayer in order to satisfy his parents."

That brings up the question of family prayers. Dr. Miller thinks they are desirable whenever they are "perfectly normal and natural," and he points out that any family can share the act of prayer involved in grace before meals. But he adds:

"I think we need to be perfectly honest here and say that in many families any kind of group family worship in the home is almost a complete impossibility except on special festivals. And I am not sure that this is something to be regretted. There have been many times when a father's compulsive desire to lead his children in prayer has led to extremely negative results."

Sunday School Important

Although he is fully aware of the limitations of the average Sunday School, Dr. Miller thinks it is very important that a child be introduced early into the "believing community" of a church congregation.

"Start attending Sunday school with your child as soon as possible," he says. "Make this family attendance a weekly affair, including both parents. Maintain this regularity through the years, so that even if a teen-ager rebels, he will have had the experience of the organic unity of a Christian family in the church."

Dr. Miller discusses the "teen-age rebellion" problem at length and suggests various ways of coping with it. His first-hand experience as a father is reflected in the observation that there is no sure-fire formula for dealing with teen-agers — "We have to play it by ear."

"We also have to remember," he says, that "no one can compel another to have faith in the God of Jesus Christ — not even God Himself. Faith comes by grace, and God gives us the freedom to resist His love. We must give our children the same kind of freedom, in the hope that they will respond in faith to God's grace."

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Hog Farmers Seeking To Avoid Over-Production

Washington — The Agriculture department says hog farmers appear to be using caution this year in an attempt to avoid over-production and consequent lower prices such as occurred in 1955 and 1959.

In a review of the livestock and meat situation, the department predicted the 1962 fall pig crop will total about 43 million head. This would be about 1 per cent above 1961 and the largest fall crop since 1943. But this expanded fall crop, added to the smaller than-expected spring crop of 49.6 million head, would produce a total for the year of 92.6 million head. Such a crop would be a little below last year and the smallest since 1959.

More Red Meat

The department said domestic red meat production during January-June was greater than during the comparable period last year. The rise was due to increased beef and pork production. Veal, lamb, and mutton were down compared with the first half of 1961.

Imports of red meats during the first half increased sufficiently to provide one pound more meat per person for the year as a whole than in 1961. This meat was imported because of demand and favorable prices to the exporters.

More Beef, Veal

The department said meat production during the last half of 1962 also likely will exceed the July-December output of 1961. The increase will be due to greater production of beef and veal. Pork, lamb, and mutton production will be below the last half of 1961.

The outlook at the beginning of 1962 was for an increase in the total meat supply about equal to the population increase. Per capita consumption was expected to be slightly below the 161.1 pounds used last year. But with the increase in imports the first half of the year, per capita consumption of meat for the year as a whole probably will be slightly above that of last year.

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