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## WHY CHILDREN CHEAT AND STEAL REVEALED BY PROMINENT JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

### In Public Schools Every Pagan God In History May Be Subject Of The Day's Lesson, But Not God Of The Bible—Comparatively Few Youngsters Attend Sunday-School.

(By Nancy Hanks)

After sitting through a session of the Juvenile Court, which is held every Friday in the Court House, Towson, one wonders why so many youngsters leave "the straight and narrow path."

A revealing light is cast upon the cause of the shady morals in life, now being dragged out into view as never before.

In school, it seems, every pagan god in history may be the subject of the day's lesson, but not the God of the Bible. A knowledge of Greek and Roman gods is often one of the requirements in causes necessary for graduation. Geography is taught along with the history of pagan faiths but the God with whose handiwork geography is concerned, the God of Christianity, is left out of the curriculum.

The child must learn about Him and about religion as best he can. The comparatively few children who go to Sunday-school, as shsown in statistics compiled, average twelve hours a year in religious training—some of course, receive additional training in the way they should go at their mothers' knees, but a vast number receive it not at all.

It seems the business of the public school is not to teach the child the plain and simple morals of every-day living, to teach him that it is as sinful to cheat a storekeeper or a railroad company as a friend; as sinful to steal from the rich as from the poor. The result is seen in the archives which we would the sooner forget, in the unparalleled growth of crime of every sort.

It is a pretty stirring indictment of our public-school system which William G. Shepherd, journalist and author, presents. He tells us that the facts prove that there is no place in America to which a parent can send his children—and keep them within the limits of democracy where they will receive instruction in religion and morals. Religion and morals, somehow, have dropped out along the road in our educational progress. Tests show, we are told, that more than one-half of our American school children will, under temptation, have an unethical outlook on life. They show more than this, that under temptation more than half of them will cheat and lie and steal. One of them, known as the "True-False" test, has been applied to thousands of children in the United States. After each statement given to a child to test its moral viewpoint are printed the words "True False," and the child is asked to underline the word which he believes describes the statement. Here is the view-point presented by some children:

"It is not wrong to steal from one who has secured his wealth dishonestly."

"It is more honorable to have charge of an office than to work at a trade."

"Stupidity is more sinful than deceit."

"Unnecessarily failing to meet an appointment on time is not immoral and unchristian."

"It is true that our duty is greater to secure justice for the people of our own race and religion than for others."

"Cheating a railroad is not so much a sin as cheating a person."

"It is not the pupils duty to call attention to the fact that a teacher has given him too high marks."

"It is true that if a storekeeper gives you too much money it is all right to keep it, because he would probably do the same if you paid him too much."

Thousands of American children, we are told, assented to these statements when they had an equal opportunity to dissent from them by merely making a mark with a lead-pencil. "Nothing they had received in school or at home in the way of religious instruction caused them to mark their paper otherwise. Their answers "afforded proof that under American life, 'way down deep into its very childhood, there is unmorality in thought and downright approval of dishonesty." Another test—the Purchasing Test—tried children with the temptation to be dishonest. A shopkeeper—taken into the confidence of the examiners—gave the child purchasers a dime too much in making change. The test was to see how many children—and which ones—would bring back the dime to the teacher. The result was that "sixty-four per cent. of the children did not return the dime, either to the teacher or to the store.

"The scientist who made this test insist that their selection of children was made so carefully that they feel safe in assuming that sixty-four per cent. of all America's children would have done as these children did.

"In still another test the children were taken into cafeterias where they could select their own food, and where they were expected to make a report of how much food they had bought. Not half of them reported honestly.

"The tests were ingeniously disguised. In one city a test was given in a restaurant where the children thought they were giving a banquet for the restaurant keeper who, some weeks before, had made a gift to their school organization. Every child brought a certain amount of money to pay for his share of the banquet. At the conclusion of the banqueet it was announced, privately, to each child, that the cost was less than had been expected. The children were supposed to return the excess to their school organization. This test involved not only the honesty, but gratitude to the restaurant-keeper and loyalty to the school organization. Only a small percentage of the children returned the money.

Here is a test made to see how children would cheat in examinations, a test so severe that it would strain the moral fiber of even senior college students:

"The children are given double sheets of paper, the under sheet being secretly coated with wax that shows any change or correction. A set of question and answers is written on the blackboard and a map hung over the answers. The teacher in this test leaves the room while the children are writing down their answers to the questions. After a certain length of time the map, apparently by accident, falls from the blackboard and discloses the list of answers. The children, with no teacher in the room, have the opportunity to correct any errors they have made in their answers; they are given plenty of time to yield to this temptation. In some of these tests 100 per cent. of the children yielded."

Tests to determine whether they would overpraise themselves or allow themselves unearned credit were given to childrn. These tests were character-sifters, scientifically designed. Scores were given in every test, and strength of character and the ability to resist temptation were expressed in terms of percentages, as engineers express the strength of steel. The highest score, we are told, was 82.3 per cent.

"It was made by a group of Boy Scouts which had been organized two years. These high-idealed little fellows came within 17.7 per cent. of being 100 per cent. trustworthy and honest. Some new fellows came into the troop during the later months that the tests were under way. Of made by a group of boys in a highly knew the purpose of the various experiments; often, of course, they were not aware that they were being tested. The old-timers in the troop ranked up 100 per cent.! One young fellow said, 'I don't know what these examinations are, but they must be trying to test our nerve.' He scored 100.

'The second highest score was 80.4 per cent. It was made by a group of Boy Scouts which had been organized six months.

"The third highest score was 78.2, made by a group of boys in a highly efficient private school, who came from high-class homes.

"Far down in the list, number nine, came the group that interests you and me—that interests every father and mother in this land—a group of boys in a typical American public school. Most of us have our children in the public schools. We can not all have our sons in the Boy Scouts, or in private schools. These privileges are luxuries to some of us. The score of this public-school group was only 56.8.

"Are our public schools in America being so conducted that honeesty and the development of character in our children are luxuries outside of the range of public schools? Is a belief in God, such as the Boy Scouts have, and the Girl Scouts, and such as is taught in most private schools in America, too rare a privilege for American public-school children?

However, a joint meeting of Catholics, Protestants and Jews in New York—the first of its kind, according to the press—held that religious instruction should be outside the school, and that each child should be instructed in the faith of its parents. The conference, attended by 3,000 teachers drawn together by a common peril, was addressed by Archbishop Hayes, representing the Catholics; the Rev. Dr. Walter M. Howlett, in charge of the Daily Vacation Bible School Association, representing the Protestants, and by the Rev. Dr. D. de Sola Pool, rabbi of the Spanish and Portugese Synagogue, representing the Jews. One sentiment animated the gathering—the need of spiritual training for the child. All children, without question of creed, comments the New York Times, must be brought within the range of ethical and moral teaching in the school, but for that instruction which lies in the realm of spiritual experience and denominational faith the child should have freedom for a weekday religious instruction that will avail of the best. But "apart from program and credits, it is encouraging to behold the major divisions of the chruches uniting in an effort not only to give all the children entrance into their spiritual heritage, but also to develop in them the virtues which are at the basis of all sound citizenship-


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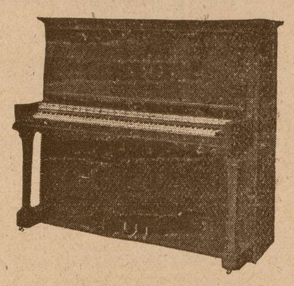
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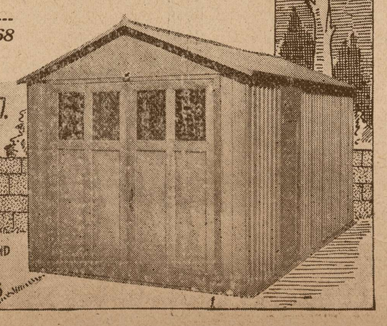
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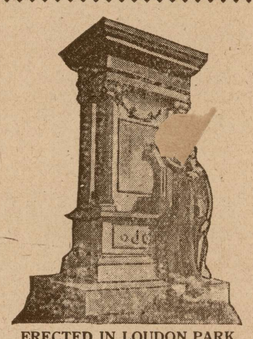
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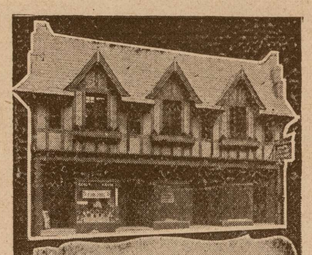
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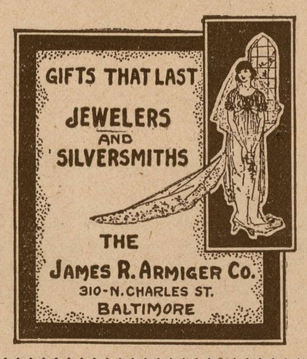
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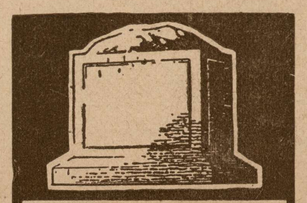
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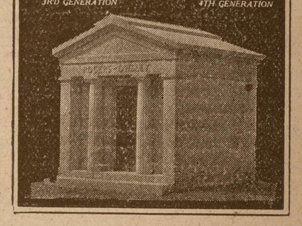

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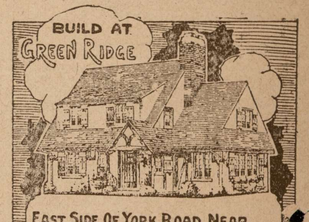
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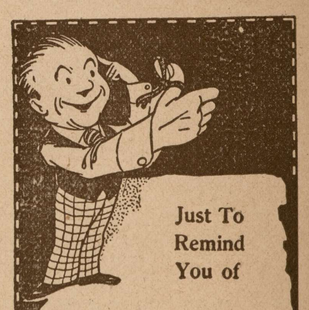
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