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**A Proactive Approach to Raising Children That Places
The Roles of Mothers and Fathers in a Christian Framework**

PARENTAL INFLUENCES

The Importance of Authority in Child Development
by William Bacon

The subject of "Parental Influences" is one of great importance, and is judiciously and ably handled. Well considered, well worded, and eminently practical, it deserves, and I hope will receive, the careful attention of parents — Rev. Jonathan Brace

In **PARENTAL INFLUENCES** (Gavrinis Press), William Bacon attempts to cover a wide range of issues that parents must confront in helping their children become responsible Christians. **PARENTAL INFLUENCES** takes the controversial position that corporal punishment, although it should be avoided, needs to be used when children do not readily accept other forms of inducement to obey parental authority. Not everyone will agree with the premises of this work, but it does provide critical information on the justification for physical discipline.

William Bacon believed in the concept of a household "absolute government"; the child must understand that ultimate law and justice rest with the parents, and disobedience by children cannot be tolerated. Consequently, Bacon does not hesitate in condemning parents who are too lazy or too weak to adequately discipline their children. To him, discipline meant taking whatever means necessary to make children conform to their parents' requests. Although harsh treatment is regrettable, Bacon maintains that not only will this form of correction benefit society, but will also, according to his analysis of Biblical scripture, improve the state of the child's soul.

Another interesting aspect of **PARENTAL INFLUENCES** is Bacon's surprisingly modern belief in what we today would call behaviorism: the human child, like other creatures, can only attain a productive life through guidance that is clear, steadfast, and goal-orientated. The natural tendency in man is to disobey, and if his tendencies are not checked, he will fall into moral ruin. Thus, careful "conditioning" will help to produce a socially responsible and prosperous adult.

PARENTAL INFLUENCES was published originally by Miller, Orton & Mulligan in 1856 to a favorable reception. It received accolades such as: "judiciously and ably handled", "eminently practical", "full of sound and important ideas", "valuable and timely and plainspoken instruction". The book was endorsed by many eminent persons, including J. M. Stevenson, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, New Albany, Indiana; Rev. Dr. Wood, Professor in the Theological Seminary of New Albany; Rev. Drs. Condit, Hopkins, and Huntington, Professors in the Theological Seminary, Auburn.

There were many pastors who approved of Bacon's sincere intention to clear up the misconceptions that existed on the subject of parental authority. As one reviewer said: "Parents who desire to learn and practice the duties they owe to their children, and to avoid the errors so common in family government, will derive benefit from this work."

William Bacon strongly felt that his work was a sorely needed addition to the child-rearing literature,

and indeed, it was a more comprehensive treatment than had previously been given to the public. He also believed that those who had read books by other authorities might profit from the uncompromising nature and directness of his work. Even those well-versed in the theories of parental authority should take the time to read the book, because it would give them the encouragement necessary to consistently put into practice those concepts that they had already learned.

What are we to think about the author himself? Prejudices about the “Victorian era” might make it difficult for some to see the positive points in Bacon’s personality. However, one can read his objective and careful examination of parental authority and understand that he was anything but a “fire and brimstone” preacher. In fact, Bacon viewed his role as that of an enlightened educator. In his mind, the Christian family should not be living in its own world, but as a part of modern society. Both parents and children should be held in high regard by their neighbors, as people who are socially engaged, generous, respectful and considerate. Thus, he does not grant parents a “dictatorial” role, and urges that all parental actions be balanced, logical and unselfish. For Bacon, such forbearance in constructing a well-functioning household “government” would likely bring about the ultimate goal: the spiritual salvation of the child. Readers can judge on their own the merits or faults of Bacon’s arguments, as well as his personality, by examining his well-written and thoughtful book.

PARENTAL INFLUENCES is a valuable addition to the knowledge about the poorly covered area of pre-20th century child-raising beliefs and attitudes, giving us a pellucid view of the various dimensions of corporal punishment in the past, i.e., its popularity, justification, and limits. It also helps us to gain insight into the debate on the biblical role of parental household government.

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family; and Equal but Different*. He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*, by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace*, by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **PARENTAL INFLUENCES**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, please contact Cassandra Foxtan, inform_at_anzapublishing.com. The publisher’s website address is AnzaPublishing.com.

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