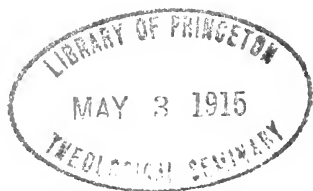


A BOY'S RELIGION

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES



BV 639 .B7 H9 1914  
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# A BOY'S RELIGION



BY ✓

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES

ONE OF THE BISHOPS OF THE  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN  
NEW YORK                      CINCINNATI

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EDWIN HOLT HUGHES



TO MY FRIEND IN YOUTH AND MANHOOD,  
THE REVEREND MILLARD PELL,

AN EXEMPLAR OF  
A BOY'S RELIGION,  
A MAN'S RELIGION,

A PASTOR'S RELIGIOUS INTEREST IN BOYS.



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## FOREWORD

THE simple chapters that compose this booklet were written originally for the *Classmate* on the invitation of the late and much lamented John T. McFarland. The Publishers and Book Editor have requested that the articles be placed in one volume. Although the author did not write them with the intent that they should form a small book, he yields cheerfully to the request.

The reader will please bear in mind that the writer has not sought to produce a scholarly and scientific treatise. That side of the general subject has stimulated much recent writing; and just now there is small need that additions be made either to its amount or to its excellence.

The only claim for this contribution is that it is human and practical—and that the method admits of a certain warmth and intimacy of discussion. The claim might likewise be made that the writer has walked all the paths that the booklet suggests—having been a Boy, a Man, a Parent, a Pastor, and a Teacher. He would not deny that the chapters have grown out of experience and that they contain not a little hidden autobiography. Nor would he deny that he has largely avoided the technical theological vocabulary. He entertains the profound conviction that the future theology will keep the essentials of the past theology, but that it will be cast less in the forms of the Roman Courtroom and more in the forms of the Home and Family.

The author's sufficient reward will be gained if any boys are led by this modest little book into loving and serving relations with Him

“Whose years, with changeless virtue  
crowned,  
Were all alike divine.”

EDWIN HOLT HUGHES.

EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE,  
San Francisco,  
July 27, 1914.





PART ONE  
THE BOY



## I. THE REAL BOY

THERE are two kinds of boys. One kind you meet on the streets and in the homes; the other kind you meet in the books or in the speeches of some kindly people. Of course the boys you meet on streets and in homes are not all alike; and those you meet in books and speeches are not all alike. But the real boy must be found in real life, if he is ever found at all. Little Lord Fauntleroy is fine, I guess; and we rather enjoy reading about him. Yet it would not be well for us to suppose that boys usually act and speak as does this beautiful little fellow in the novel.

On the other hand, it may be that the boy in the book is rougher than the boy on the road. Huckleberry Finn is as interesting in his way as Little Lord Fauntleroy is in

his. I think, however, that those of us who were boys once or who are boys now would say that the usual boy is unlike Fauntleroy and unlike Finn. He is not as fond of handling dead cats as "Huck" was, nor is he apt to call his mother "dearie" all the time, as Fauntleroy did. He is not an angel and he is not an imp.

So what a man says about a "Boy and His Religion" will all depend on where the man finds the boy. He may find the boy in his mind. Sometimes boys "make up" stories about men; and I suspect that sometimes men make up stories about boys. It may be that they want to believe that boys are so and so because they have made up a story about boys that they would like to prove true. When Charles Dickens was alive, he used to say that he knew men who did that. You will remember that one man in Dickens'

book said that Oliver Twist was "an article direct from the manufactory of the devil himself." That was a pretty mean thing to say about a boy. The man who said it did not study Oliver Twist first; he studied a doctrine about all boys first. Then he wanted to believe that Oliver Twist was one more proof that what he thought about boys was true. This was not fair to Oliver; nor was it fair to all the other boys.

Then again, an author or a speaker may think that he finds the boy almost in heaven. James Whitcomb Riley makes "The Hired Man" say,

"I believe all children's good  
Ef they're only understood."

There is a truth in this pretty and kindly couplet, but it needs to be handled "with care." This is especially so when boys become older and more responsible. Once I heard a man talk about boys as if they

were all saints. He claimed really that boys were bad only when older people made them bad. The boys who heard the man say all these nice things about them seemed pleased, but I really think that they knew better. If you could have gotten them to tell all they knew about themselves and all they knew about other boys, they would have said that the man who was talking meant well, only he did not know. If we think honestly about our past, we shall say that, while at the very earliest period the poet could make us say,

“And trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home,”

directly we began to carry about with us some other clouds that were not so glorious after all.

This means that the only way to know the truth about boys is to know boys. The man who studies

science is always telling us that you must not get your belief first and then try to find a lot of facts to prove that your belief is true, but that you must get your facts first and then get your belief out of your facts. This rule is as good for finding out about a boy's religion as it is for finding out about a boy's body. You can find out about a boy's religion only by going where the actual boy lives. I knew a boy once who would not play baseball. If I should know only that one boy, I should make a big mistake about boys.

So if I wanted to know about boys, I would not hear what the mother of Little Lord Fauntleroy thought, and then say, "That settles it"; nor would I want to know what the foster-mother of Huckleberry Finn thought, and then say, "That settles it." I would prefer to hear what fifteen or twenty fathers and

mothers thought, and even then I would want to know the boys myself and to be very sure that every one of them was just a plain, everyday, natural, and normal boy.

It is this sort of a boy that we are going to study in these chapters about "The Boy and His Religion." We shall find him in a good many places and we shall ask him to tell us about himself and how he feels and what he does about God.

## II. A BOY'S SEEKING

THE boy of whom I am now writing was a real boy in the sense that he existed, but an unreal boy so far as the way he acted was concerned. I hold this to be sure: that God wants us to be genuine. Whenever, therefore, we act a part in religion, we really cease to be religious at all. The point of this article, and of the one to follow it,



will be that, if we seek religion, that is, if we seek to be converted, or if we seek to do religious duties, that is, to live the Christian life, God wants us to be our real selves.

This boy did not do this. When he came to seek religion, he acted. So I fear that he did not find what he thought he was seeking. As I remember him, he was not a particularly bad boy. His first name was William, but we never called him that. I must admit that he did not have a very good chance at home. There were some reports in the town about his father that made me think that he was not as good a man as he should have been. I remember hearing that sometimes this father came home drunk, and I do know that he used bad language. The boy's father probably did not give the boy a fair chance to do the right thing.

I do not recall the boy's mother.

I guess that she was a good woman, but I think that if she had been a religious woman I would have remembered that fact. The boy's people were not rich. They lived in a small house. The boys did not go to school very long. When they were quite young they dropped out and went to work. This, I think, is another proof that this boy did not have a very good chance.

In one respect the boy did have a good chance. He went to Sunday school and church, and there he heard about good things. I do not know why he went. Perhaps it was because his parents wanted him to do so. It may be that he went because he wanted to be with "the other boys."

Now directly there came a revival meeting at the church. Every evening special services were held. Our Sunday school teachers wanted us all to attend. The preacher would

preach and tell us what God wanted us to do, then he would ask us to come forward and kneel at the altar and seek to have our sins forgiven. We were told that God would give us new hearts and that he would help us to do right.

One evening this boy's big brother went to the altar. This big brother had many bad habits. He was somewhat like his father. He would get drunk, tell foul stories, and use profane language. He surely did need to be converted. I suppose that when he went to the altar he was sincere and wanted to lead a better life; and I judge that when the little fellow saw his big brother go forward, it touched his heart and he went forward too. I was sitting just where I could see both. I was glad that they had gone to the altar, even though I had not gone myself.

Soon the older brother began to

groan and pray aloud. Doubtless he felt quite wicked. I think that he ought to have felt that way. He would roll his head from one side to the other, just as if he were suffering greatly. The small brother saw what the big brother was doing and he did the same. I can recall now that I did not like that in the least. I felt that the big brother ought to act in his natural way in getting religion, and that the little fellow ought to act in his natural way.

I cannot now remember whether both the brothers claimed to be converted. I do know that the little brother did not turn out very well. A few years ago I visited the town where he had lived as a boy. The older brother was dead. He had killed himself long since by drinking rum. The younger brother, they told me, was living in an adjoining town. He was not a good man, and

it looked as if he would not live much longer himself.

When I heard all this I could not help wondering how the younger brother would have turned out if he had sought Christ in his own boyish way. Boys are great imitators, they tell us. But I am certain that they should be very careful indeed never to imitate in religion in such a way as to act an untruth.

It is my conviction that God comes to all who seek him in spirit and in truth. I fear that he will find it difficult to come to those who do not seek him in that way. The moral is that the boy should seek Christ in a boy's way.

### III. A BOY'S WORKING

OUR last chapter told of a boy who tried to be converted as if he were a man. Whenever a boy tries to do that, I fear that he does

not get converted at all. Now we shall tell of a boy who tried to do Christian work as if he were a man. And when a boy tries to do that, I fear that he really does not do any work at all. He goes through a man's motions, but he does not do even a boy's work.

This boy, I judge, was ten or eleven years of age. He would arise in the meetings and tell how much he wanted to do. He would say that his heart was heavy for some of the people of the town. He seemed to feel that God had made him responsible for the conversion of the older people in that place. He was just like a little old man who had been made a dwarf by carrying loads that were too heavy for him. His talk was old; his manner was old; his spirit was old. He did not seem like a boy at all. Somehow I felt then that he was not doing what God wanted him

to do; for I am sure that God does not want a boy to be a man, and to carry a man's burdens too soon.

I heard many years afterward that this boy's big desire to do God's work in making the people of that town better did not continue after the boy became a man. Somehow I was not surprised. One other boy in that church is now a successful missionary in a foreign country. Another is one of the well-known preachers in this land. Several others are faithful members and workers in that same church. All these were living as natural boys, while this little fellow was trying to act like a man. The other boys did not like him very well; and I know that some of the older people must have felt that the boy was not quite himself. Certainly God would ask nothing more than that a boy should be a boy at his best and that he should do only such

work as would naturally belong to a boy.

Do you remember that story in the Bible about David's trying to fight in the armor of Saul? David was still young; Saul was older and bigger. David had sense enough to see that the only way for him to fight was with the weapons that he himself could use. In the war time a man's heavy gun would quickly tire a boy to death

And have you ever read in a book of history about those little people who, fully seven hundred years ago, thought that they ought to be soldiers and ought to help take the places where Jesus lived and died away from the enemies of Jesus? Suppose you find the right book and read a little bit about "The Children's Crusade." It is really the story of some boys, and of some girls, too, who tried to do what only men could do. Nearly all



of them died on the plains—of hunger and heat—and their small bones marked all the ways of travel. It was all a very sad story, and I believe that a sad story is always written whenever children try to do the work of men.

In America we are now trying to stop what we call "child labor." For a long time little children have been hired to do what only full-grown men and women should do. Nearly two million boys and girls have been working in mills and factories when they should have been going to school or playing in the fields. There are now many thousands of good people who say that all this must be stopped because they know that it is wrong to make little people do the work of older people.

You will notice how natural are the children in the Bible. Read about the boy that picked up arrows

one day for Jonathan and so helped to save the life of David; or read about the little girl that told Naaman how he could be cured of his sickness; or find the story of the way Samuel lived and worked in the temple, helping the old priest, and wearing proudly the coat that his mother brought him once each year; or read again about the little boy that aided Jesus to perform the miracle of the loaves and fishes; or read the tale of Saint Paul's nephew, who saved his uncle's life by using his wit as a young fellow well could. You will search the Bible all through without finding where any boy was told to do a man's religious work. God wants boys to be boys. He did not ask Moses or Paul or any of the other heroes of the Scriptures to do men's work until they were men. Even Jesus did not preach until he was thirty years of age. He was simply a boy in Nazareth,

doing the will of his parents, and, so, the will of God.

#### IV. A BOY'S EXPERIENCE

IN order to make more real what has been said in the three previous letters, I am asking a boy to tell us what he himself did and how he felt. This boy, let me confess, is now a man, and he is much interested in religious things. From what I know of him I can say that he was quite a normal boy, even as he is now a normal man. I told him that he must speak frankly; and this is just about what he said:

“My father and mother were very religious people. They took me to church regularly. They made me attend Sunday school. Sometimes they took me to prayer meeting. They had family prayers once each day. They were Puritans in their thought of life. They lived simply,

and they had nothing to do with any form of 'worldly amusements,' as they always called them. Yet they were not morose, and our home life was full of cheer and occasionally of fun. My father was a hearty laughier, while my mother had a quick sense of humor.

"All my earliest impressions of the Christian life were good. I said my prayers always before going to bed at night. Sometimes, when I forgot to do this, I would be a little troubled in my conscience, and I would get out of bed and kneel to pray, even when the night was cold. I recall when I first found out that there were some people in our neighborhood who did not confess Christ and did not go to church or have anything to do with its life and work. I felt sorry for these people, and I could not understand why they should be so foolish. I felt especially sorry about one man

who seemed so pleasant and, in general, so good and kindly, that he quite puzzled me. I used to pray that he might become a Christian. So far as I knew, he never became one. That puzzled me too.

“But, although I felt this way about the Christian life, I somehow got the idea that I was not myself a Christian. As I review it all now, this was because I heard the preachers say so much about the new birth. I was not aware that I had been born again. In the section where I lived men and women were often converted after much loud praying, and then sometimes they shouted joyfully. I wanted to be converted like that. So while I was still young I went to the altar and tried hard to be converted in a special way. I did everything that I thought a boy could do, but I felt no such experience as I heard the older people describe. After long

seeking I became discouraged and ceased going to the altar. But I did join the church. I think that helped me very much. It kept me from doing many things that I fear I would have done otherwise. I have always been glad that I had this restraint upon me; and because of my own experience I rejoice when I see young boys joining the church. Several years later I was converted, though not without having gone off 'into the world' a little distance ere I came back again. This second time I went to the altar again. But I sought simply to get my will into right relations to God and his purposes. I did not gain any great and sweeping emotions.

"In the earlier years I did not do any Christian work, as such. I did try sometimes to keep other boys from doing certain evil things; and in one or two revival meetings I sought to get some young people

to come to Christ. Yet I did not know just how to do any real work, and I always had a fear that I would seem 'pert' if I tried to talk of their religious duty to people who were older than myself. After my will was surrendered I did some personal work, particularly while I was in college. I think that through my four years' course of study I lived a clean life and stood for the Master amid not a few temptations. But my fervor of work came as a growth, and almost, as the scriptural phrase is, without observation. Now for a good many years I have been considered a fairly active Christian."

When I questioned him a little further, as our train was speeding over a Western desert, this man said to me: "Well, I am glad that I managed to keep real in my attitude toward religious matters. I was religious as a boy and I think that I kept true to myself as I was

then. Now I am a man, and my own boys are growing up around me. Above all else, I want them to be Christian men. I do not want them to take big religious work too soon. Somehow I feel that their main duty now is just to be clean in their lives; to keep close to the church; to do the small service that appeals to them naturally; and to go on in quite a normal way until they are able to make it their primary business to work for Christ."

Directly he added, with a touch of sadness in his voice: "One of my boys seems to be getting careless about religious matters, and I am afraid that family prayers and church services bore him a little bit. Sometimes I find myself wishing that he would get into a good revival meeting and get a new start. I want all my children to belong to Christ fully."



## V. A BOY'S CARELESSNESS

THE friend with whom I had the talk on the train has two sons. One of them is still interested in religious things. It is not necessary to urge him to go to the services of the church. He frequently attends prayer meeting. He sometimes speaks in the young people's meeting, though this seems just now to make him quite nervous. He plays tennis, and he is a real boy, yet he seems never to have departed from sympathy with the Christian life. I judge that his temptation to do so will come within the next two years. So I have written out a letter which I expect to send him. Leaving out the strictly personal items, it is about like this:

MY DEAR E—: I had a conversation on the train with your father the other day. I was pleased to have him confirm what I had thought for myself—that

you kept up your interest in the church, and that you were still perfectly frank in saying that you were trying to lead the Christian life.

Now all this makes me glad—for your sake, and for your parents' sake, and for Christ's sake. But I know, both from my own experience and from what I have seen of other boys, that a time of special temptation will soon come to you. So I am writing you to be faithful. I do not want you ever to look back on any period of your life with deep regret. Some men spend their later years in trying to fight against what they did in their earlier years. Because I know that this is wholly unnecessary, I take the liberty of writing you this letter.

Soon you will begin to feel independent. You will want to do some things that your parents do not approve; and you will want to do some other things in your own time and way. Directly you may begin to think that being a Christian means being restrained. You will see other boys doing things that you desire to do; and you will not like to have your Christian life get in the way of your pleasure

Besides this, you will begin to feel awk-

ward about the formal things of the Christian life. You will prefer just a little not to sit in the family pew with the rest of the family. It will not be easy for you to go to the Communion. You will be so self-conscious that you will try to avoid speaking or praying in the young people's meetings.

Now I warn you beforehand about these two things because, if you really understand them, and if you get the right attitude toward them, you will pass the period safely. About the first, the matter of doing some things that your parents disapprove, let me advise that you talk freely with your father and mother. They have lived longer than you have, and it is fair to suppose that they know what is best for you still. And, as for the second matter, do not pay too much attention to your own embarrassment. In due season you will conquer that, more or less. The one thing for you to do is to go straight ahead, counting yourself as belonging to Christ *and refusing to treat yourself otherwise*. Your father tells me that you have seemed religious all along, and that you have had no marked experience of conversion such as you hear some people tell

about. Do not let this disturb you. Simply be sure of your purpose to follow Christ now and to be true to him. He will care for all the rest, and you will find your own experience growing better and clearer as the years pass.

For, after all, what God wants is the will to serve him. Some of the most faithful Christians I have ever known cannot tell how or when they were converted. All their lives they have loved Christ, and they have had no break in their experience. In this respect they have been like Christ himself. If you will simply follow Christ earnestly, he will see that your experience is exactly what it ought to be.

But my special purpose in writing this letter to you is to warn you against what is sure to happen. You will feel restrained, and you will wonder whether you are really living your own life. Sometimes, it may even happen, you will wonder whether you are genuine and honest. I think that every young fellow meets this temptation. Some of the duties of the Christian life will become irksome to you. But you have discovered that you must go to school when you do not feel like going. Even as some day you will be thankful

that you were not allowed to drop out of school, so likewise some day you will thank God that your parents held you to the church and tried to keep you faithful to Christ. I will guarantee that you will feel just thus, if you will follow the advice of this letter.

Keep this letter, and in ten years write and tell me exactly how you feel about the Christian life. I am sure that I can prophesy what sort of a letter you will write. If you ever want any advice, talk with me, or, better yet, talk freely with your father. Meantime we will both commend you to the heavenly Father. God bless you!

Your Friend,

E. H. H.

## VI. A BOY'S CONSISTENCY

You will remember that my friend had another son about whom he was anxious. This son had become careless rather than coarsely wicked. When he came to the time of independence and his father felt that he ought not any longer to *make* the boy do certain things, this son

drifted out of real sympathy with the church and was not outright in expressing his purpose to follow Christ. I think that he is in a dangerous place. I could scarcely justify myself if I wrote earnestly to his brother and did not write to this son too. My letter to him, which I really expect to send, will be about like this:

MY DEAR H—: I have known you for a long time, and I am an old friend of your parents. Indeed, I was at the church on the day when your father and mother brought you to the altar for baptism. They promised then to do their best to bring you up in the church and for Christ. I know that they have tried hard to meet their promise. You are surely blessed in one thing: You cannot help believing that your parents are good and sincere people. Charles Wagner once wrote that it was a fearful disaster when a young man ceased to believe in God, and that the disaster was almost as great when he could no longer believe in his parents! I think that Wagner was right.

And now you will soon be a man, your "own man," you say sometimes. I fear that with nearly all boys there is a time when the sense of freedom goes faster than the sense of responsibility. That was the trouble with the prodigal son. Perhaps, without knowing it, you are meeting that very trouble yourself. It is a wonderful time in a boy's life. I always tremble a little when I see it coming. You will not be angry with me if I say that I have already done some trembling for you.

. This is not because I have felt that you were as yet coarsely unclean. I imagine that few boys go wrong in that way—at first. There is always a lowering of ideals and purposes before there is a lowering of conduct. Will you pardon me if I say that you have taken the first step? Already your will is much stronger for rebellion than it is for obedience. If you were as bent on doing right as you are bent on having your own way about a few small matters, you would be a very strong young man. Several times lately you have not been at church. I was not at your home when the question came up, but I think that I can tell you what you said: "I don't feel like going to-day." I know, also, how

your father and mother felt as they went off to the service without you.

Of course, you will say that going to church does not mean everything; and you may even insist that it is better not to go than to go unwillingly. But my point is that we all need all possible help if we are going to do right. If we attend a service of worship and will ourselves into a right mood about it, there is nothing that more stimulates our desire to be right and to do right. In fact, I do not think that there is any other institution on earth whose one aim is to get men to be right and to do right in all respects. There are other institutions that are engaged in trying to make men right in one respect or in several respects. The church, however, tries to keep men in the purpose to do right in all things. We all need something that will deal with us not as fractions, but as whole numbers.

So my fear is that your staying away from that service means more than just that one thing. It is simply a step in the wrong direction. It may be followed by many such steps until at length you have gone far from that faith of your childhood which meant so much to you.



Now, my boy, do not fail to keep close to good things. You will need them all. Temptations, of which you little know as yet, will soon attack you. Perhaps you have yielded to some things ere this about which you would not like your father and mother to know. This is only the more certain evidence that you are moving in the wrong direction. I want you to turn "right about face."

Do you want my advice? I will give it anyhow. Talk frankly with your parents. Heed some public invitation and indicate that you are determined to do right and to follow Christ. One fine thing about a public confession is that it puts us where we must do right or else go back on ourselves. But, above all else, pray more and more earnestly, and ask God to fix your purpose beyond recall. Frankly, all this is just about what I did when I was almost exactly your age. I was really converted then, and I became again as a little child. I had no big emotions, but God did fix my purpose to do his will. That, I think, is always the essence of conversion.

If you will do all this, you will be in danger no longer. Perhaps your first im-

pulse when you read this letter will be to tell me to look out for my own affairs. Your later mind will be different. Ten years hence you will be glad that I wrote you thus. Do not destroy this letter. Read it over occasionally. God bless you!

Your Friend,

E. H. H.

**PART TWO**  
**THE PARENT**



## VII. EVANGELISTIC PARENTS

IF this subject shall seem peculiar to anyone, the very fact that it seems peculiar may reveal a great weakness in the evangelistic work of the day. Evidently "evangelistic parents" would be those who sought by all wise and earnest ways to keep or win their children for Christ. Yet doubtless our temptation is to lay undue stress upon the mere "ways." The School of Hearts must precede the School of Methods. The evangelistic heart will not only find ways of working; it will often succeed in spite of its ways. The spirit of evangelism will triumph either through its fashions or over its fashions.

Consequently, we shall try to exclude from this article all discussion of ways and means, save as these are deep and inner. The point is

that what parents get for their children is likely to depend on what parents most want for their children. It is not only true that we do not gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles; it is likewise true that we do not gather grapes from grapevines or figs from fig trees unless our spirit sends us to the vines and trees. What we ask is what we get. What we seek is what we find. The door at which we knock is the door that opens to us.

So the first question to which the parent must make an honest answer is this: What do I most desire for my children? And this answer is not to be secured from an abstract query made to one's own heart. Abstractly, there is but one possible answer for any parent who has in any degree the Christian sense of values. There are probably few fathers and mothers connected with any of our churches who would

not say theoretically that their first and greatest desire is that their children might be followers of the Lord. In fact, often we find parents who are not themselves professing Christians, but who still show no little anxiety over their children's spiritual welfare and no little pride in their children's consistency of Christian life.

Still it is evident that the evil powers that try to seize our children are not to be defeated by any good theory that we may hold, nor yet by any spasms of effort to win our beloved for the good. An evangelistic mood is not quite an evangelistic heart. An evangelistic effort is not an evangelistic habit. We must not only want our children to be Christians, but we must want that most, and we must want it all the time.

Surely it needs no argument to show that the best and most natural

evangelist is the Christian parent. Isaac gets the cue of the monotheistic life from Abraham. Lydia's children come to baptism and faith through Lydia. Other evangelists come seldom and stay briefly. Even the Sunday school teacher is a sort of weekly visitor. The most faithful pastor is not equal to the task of furnishing the religious atmosphere for the children of all his homes. The professional evangelist does not continue long in one stay. The parent is the most constant earthly presence for the child. The old Eastern proverb says: "God could not be everywhere, and so he made mothers." The proverb is neither accurate nor impartial, but it does state the important truth that parenthood has the best chance for constant evangelism.

Perhaps this brief chapter could do nothing better than to insist upon an answer to this piercing question



addressed to all parents who read these words: What do you really most desire for your children? What reply do you win for this question, not from your occasional wishes, but from your total and constant bearing toward your children? Have you really an evangelistic heart, or is your wish for each child primarily social, or primarily commercial, or primarily intellectual? Where do you put the emphasis in your own life as it relates itself to your children? Are you God's chief evangelist in your own home?

It is not meant, of course, that the minor interests are not to have their part. But do you keep them minor, or do they become major? If your children judge by the spirit of your life what you most desire for them, what judgment will they be compelled to reach? Those who most eagerly desire the coming of the Lord's kingdom and who see its

deepest and most far-reaching lines of influence will not halt at saying that there is small hope for the salvation of the world unless we shall raise up a host of evangelistic parents. The Jewish church began in the tent-home of Abraham. He who runs may read.

### VIII. EVANGELISTIC ATMOSPHERE

IN the last chapter we used the phrase "evangelistic atmosphere." The words guide us in a good direction, and we shall follow them a little further.

There is surely a difference between an evangelistic effort and an evangelistic atmosphere. The two are not contradictory, and they may act and react upon each other. An evangelistic effort may create an evangelistic atmosphere; and an evangelistic atmosphere is sure to issue into evangelistic efforts. Still

we have all known homes which yielded occasionally to an evangelistic mood and engaged in an evangelistic effort and which, for all that, did not maintain an evangelistic atmosphere.

For there is such a thing as a religious climate. There are arctic regions in the spiritual realm, regions so frigid that only the hardiest plants have any chance whatsoever. And there are tropic regions in the spiritual realms, regions so soft and soothing in their influence that they grow naught but flabby woods and dainty flowers. This figure of speech will help us to classify certain homes. Some homes would destroy any but the most vigorous spiritual life; other homes would become mere spiritual hot-houses and would nourish such delicate spiritual life as would wither at once even upon transfer to a temperate zone, religiously speaking. All this is a matter of climate.

The figure of speech is a scriptural one. The psalmist says of one that feared the Lord, "Thy children shall be like olive plants round about thy table." He again expresses the hope that "our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth." Our ritual says in one place that only those that are "planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." But can plants grow in any atmosphere? What happens to rose bushes and dahlias when they are set out in the Nevada deserts? What becomes even of sturdy oaks transplanted to arid regions where they reach down their eager roots all in vain for the waters of life? The efforts of cellar plants that grow weakly toward the light and air of the one small window often suggest pathos. We see them sometimes, lying wan and bleached in the semi-darkness, and yet growing toward the light! If only they

had the right atmosphere, with sun and dew and rain, they would be green and fruitful boughs!

Now all this does not overstate what may happen in very many homes. The character of parents must furnish an evangelistic atmosphere. This climate cannot be secured artificially. It may even be brought to its best more or less unconsciously, so far as the parents are concerned. Moses is not apt to be aware of the shining of his own face when he deals with the children of Israel. And when the children of Israel move toward their spiritual best, they are not so apt to be aware of it either. They simply feel at home with its radiance. Yet the face and character of Moses will help to make the spiritual atmosphere in which they dwell. There are fathers and mothers who are so unaffectedly religious, so beautifully and almost unconsciously devoted to

Christ, that they create a winning religious atmosphere.

This makes it less needful that they should engage in any direct evangelism for their children. Those olive plants are in the right soil, and the sunlight and dew of heaven get a fair chance at them. The parents do not need to use their own clumsy fingers to open petals and to shape sepals. God makes them the agents of his own climate. Long before the child can analyze a situation he can feel the gentle pressure of that atmosphere, and he can yield to its call for life and growth. The gardeners of the Lord's nursery will still have to stir the soil, and lay the rows, and prevent undue shade and excessive heat. But the climate is doing gracious work all the time.

It is evident that such a home as this cannot be secured by any direct effort. It can come only as

the kingdom of God always comes, without haste and without observation. It comes only from the living of the life of Christ. This is the type of home described by Robert Burns in his "Cotter's Saturday Night." Such a home represents that house of the Lord and that court of God wherein sons and daughters shall be as plants growing into grace, blooming into beauty, and fruiting into service for the Lord of the Garden.

## IX. EVANGELISTIC UNITY

IN the modern athletic period a phrase has passed from the field of games out into all the realms of working. That phrase is "team work." It signifies unity of effort in order to secure victory. It likewise signifies a willingness to put aside personal display for the sake of the team, as when one makes what is

called a "sacrifice hit." We shall give the phrase as holy a meaning as we can well assign it if we say that in the home there should be team work and that the father and mother should keep an evangelistic unity.

The Scriptures assert the need of this, and the command is, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." The Roman Catholic Church sees the point and insists that, even though a member of that church shall marry a Protestant, the children shall be brought up under a unity of training. Broad as John Wesley was, he put some things into the Discipline that stressed the necessity of wife and husband working together in the religious life.

It is wise that the unity shall find an outward expression. Less and less, as the years advance, do we find husband and wife belonging to different churches. The feeling is



that the children ought not to be confused in their religious ideas. If on Sunday the father goes in one direction to church while the mother goes in another direction, the little people can scarcely fail to be mixed. The usual explanations will not suffice. Only conscience should divide a home in this way; and the child will naturally feel that, if his parents are separated on a matter of religious conscience, that matter must be very large and real. To take sides against either parent is not easy. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that usually the home must be united religiously ere there can be an evangelistic unity brought to bear upon the lives of the children.

But, important as this matter is, it is not the deepest thing in the problem. Without doubt parents may remain separated in formal church membership, while still being thoroughly united in their desire

that their children shall belong to the Lord. God has ordained that both halves of parenthood shall be joined in order that there may be a social unit. Where either parent fails of the evangelistic spirit, one half of the power is lost. It is even worse than this: the one half of the power that seeks to work works under obstruction. Thus it comes to pass that a home that is divided religiously is worse than divided; it is cleaved and split into more than two parts. The jangle is there, even though it be not noted by parents and children.

Now every pastor knows the meaning of this description. He has seen instances where the hand of a foolish father or the hand of an equally foolish mother kept a child away from a profession of Christ and from membership in his church. It is thus to him a day of gladness when he sees a home brought into religious

unity. He knows then that he has not simply added one more recruit to the army of the Lord; he knows that he has established one more training place for the King's soldiers. He has unified the most important forces that make for the religious life of the children. The so-called solitaire that has two religious settings in the family is not a solitaire at all. The doubtful gems quarrel with each other.

Let it be said that too often it is the father who fails to give himself to the making of religious and evangelistic unity in the home. The mother of Zebedee's children still comes to the Lord with her children while Zebedee himself is absent, being interested in other affairs. In some measure this is due to causes too large to be discussed now. But it must be due in some measure to the fact that we do not often enough remind the father of his evangelistic

duty. The cradle of every new-born child is a call to each parent to put life on a holy basis. It is a great thing when an immortal soul is sent into our keeping. If we can put deserved emphasis upon that wonderful fact, every cradle will become an altar at which two parents shall join themselves in a holy unity of purpose and work to the end that in God's season all the children shall be led into the Father's house.

## X. EVANGELISTIC GOOD NEWS

DOES this title seem strange to any one? If so, let us explain that the meaning relates to the manner of telling the gospel rather than to the story of the gospel. The gospel without doubt is a good announcement, a happy message, a real evangel. We would suppose that its telling would quickly fit itself to the nature of the truth, and that evan-

gelist everywhere would be found aglow with a large and serious joy. The man who brings good news should bear a face and wear a manner that comports with his message. The glad gospel should have a glad teller.

Let no one suppose now that we are going to omit the cross. The gospel has its serious side. But Jesus, who died on the cross, had much to say about joy. Even when he was within a few hours of Calvary he spoke of the joy that he would give as a legacy to his followers. That joy, he said, was to be "full." In agreement with this word, our religion has been a glad religion. Some say that it is really the only singing religion. Its genuine followers in all the centuries have been people who knew praises and hallelujahs.

Inasmuch as parents are divinely appointed evangelists, they must be

careful not to lose the sense that the gospel is good news. Children are just at the age when they are seeking for happiness. Life to them is very good and very rosy. More than this, they feel that they are entitled to happiness. Their elders feel the same way about the little people. A gloomy child is not of God's appointing. Whenever we see one such we feel that there has somewhere been mismanagement, or maladjustment. Even when the Bible speaks of little children in heaven, it describes them as playing in the streets thereof. "Playing," mind you! In the better country the nature of youth is taken into account. God provides play in the New Jerusalem.

Nor is it trifling with sacredness to say that parents must show the glad side of the gospel if it is to appeal to the eager and bounding heart of youth. This side cannot be put to the front by artifice. No

father or mother can say, "I will now be glad in order that I may show my children how good our religion is!" The gladness must be inward, working into outward expression. Parents must really "*enjoy* religion."

Sometimes it almost seems as if they had it, but did not really enjoy it. It is a restraint, a guide, and even a comfort, but it is not a joy. The father speaks of it without a smile. The mother nearly always weeps when she tries to give testimony—and her tears do not seem to be the tears of gladness. Doubtless the expression is not a true indication of the inner feeling, but the expression ought to be just that. We have no right so to set forth our good as to allow it to "be evil spoken of." A glad religion ought to make a glad countenance.

Our children must have the gospel of the shining face. None other

will appeal to them and claim them. Later the emphasis will move toward the serious side, and some time it will take on the solemnity of eternity itself. But in the earlier years the call that persuades childhood is the call of the Christ who promises joy. If that old tradition which told that Christ was never known to smile were true, our gospel would be put at a disadvantage in its approach to young life. A smileless Christ would not be the ideal for youth, nor would a smileless messenger be the most persuasive representative of our Lord.]

That all this has its relation to parental evangelism cannot be doubted. The constant impression of the gospel comes to the child from the parents. In some ways they are the child's gospel, or at any rate the Bible in which he reads his gospel. A father or mother with a jaundiced or mournful re-



ligion is not God's best teller of his best news.

The psalmist saw this clearly. In a passage of much insight he offers the prayer, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," and soon he adds, "*Then* shall I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

We may be well assured that if this be true of all tellers of the gospel, it is especially true of those parents whose joyful behavior as being themselves children of the heavenly Father becomes a real evangelism to the children of their own homes.

## XI. EVANGELISTIC WARNINGS

It may be that some one, reading the last chapter, said, at the close: "It is true that there is an evangelism of good news; but there is also an evangelism of bad news.

Or, if it is not accurate to state it in that way, there is, at any rate, a very stern side to evangelism, and this side should not be neglected." The suggestion is just, and we now proceed to urge that in any consistent and biblical evangelism warnings must have their due stress.

Jesus did not hesitate to lift up the final warning in the vision of hell. Without any question whatsoever, the Bible is not scant in its teaching of retribution. Perhaps we have used too exclusively the figure of speech based on "fire," because that figure is so vivid. The New Testament uses "darkness," and "filth," and "worms," and "banishment," and "prison," and various other emblems. Reduced to their very lowest terms, these figures of speech must have some supremely serious meanings. While the Scripture gives us no right to be dogmatic about the details of future punishment, it does

compel us to present the assurance that this life bears on the next life in a real and vital way.

Perhaps in dealing with the young we are instinctively drawn to use this teaching carefully. Our Saviour's actual dealing with any little child would not give us warrant for making this appeal primary. Still, we should not permit the child to entertain any foolish delusions. He ought to be impressed by the sure fact that the consequences of sin are lasting, as well as with the other fact, that all our knowledge of this present life would lead us to believe that in the long run condition will answer to character. One cannot, philosophically or scripturally or experimentally, avoid the conclusion that there must at the last be a huge difference between the dwelling of the bad and the dwelling of the good. That main point may be urged even on childhood. Notwithstanding the cry

raised by some persons in our own day about the stern teaching of generations gone, most thoughtful and just adults will testify that a doctrine of punishment for sin held them away from many wrongs and was an effective factor in their moral education.

But there are some concrete meanings of this subject for the present life. In recent years we have been using some of them in scientific instruction. It may not be a pleasant thing to show the child pictures of the human stomach and bowels burned and blistered by the effect of alcohol; but our laws in most of the States and in all the Territories compel just that sort of teaching. At the present time many good people are in doubt as to the proper limits of so-called sex education; but there is all but unanimous agreement on one point, namely, that the new generation

must somehow be taught that dreadful penalties follow after impurity.

The truth is that in all departments of our teaching the warning element has a large part. The teacher tells of a day of judgment, not only represented by the arrival of examinations, but represented as well, and more deeply, by the arrival of life's severer tests. All worthy instructors repeat at times the substance of our Lord's parable about the wise and foolish virgins—about the danger of being caught unprepared for the emergency, and about the necessity of having the reserves ready to bring out to meet the crisis. The point is that intellectual penalties are visited on intellectual sins.

Now, that element of warning must be kept in our evangelism. We must tell the youth not only that there are large gains to be sought, but likewise that there are terrible losses to be shunned. Per-

sonally, I do not think that it is wise to give our sons and daughters the idea that forgiveness carries with it the remission of penalty. That threadbare story about the nails that were driven into the post to represent the boy's misdoings, and that were pulled out to represent each conquest over the particular sin, is true to life. The scars remain in the post even after the nails have been pulled. The popular song has the truth of it,

The bird with a broken pinion  
Never soars so high again.

The gospel saves men from dangers that are the most real. Our children should be earnestly taught that the final goal of sin is ruin. The soft prophet is not the genuine evangelist. Our doctrine of God reveals One who will not trifle with sin.

XII. EVANGELISTIC INTER-  
CESSION

THE need of intercessory prayer in connection with revivals has often been urged. Pentecost was simply the beginning of the great awakenings that have been preceded by earnest and long-continued praying. Formal logic, as well as religious logic, would indicate that if prayer were necessary in order to bring a revival in a community, prayer would likewise be necessary in order to bring a revival into an individual heart. Hence there is such a thing as evangelistic intercession.

It is probably just as well for us to confess both to ourselves and sometimes to the subjects of our prayers the mystery involved in praying for others. We believe in the freedom of the will; and we believe, also, in the power of intercessory prayer. But just the rela-

tion that our prayer may take to the free will of another person it is difficult to say. We could scarcely claim that our praying may put compulsion upon him and do away with his free choice of salvation. Indeed, if we felt that we could turn a man into a machine by our prayers, it is doubtful whether we would be willing to take that fearful responsibility. If God will not force a man to himself, we may be sure that he will not assign to prayer a power which he himself declines to use. Prayer is given us to be used within the realm of God's will, and God's will is not that any man should be compelled into his kingdom. Whatever else intercessory prayer may accomplish, there still remains one personal center, one last citadel which it cannot capture from an unwilling soul

Still, there is left to intercessory prayer a wide field. The prophet



said to the children of Israel, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." When the Israelites knew that the form of the old friend and leader was often bowed in prayer for them, it would be easier for them to do the will of God, harder for them to fly in the face of God's servant and of God himself. Who can doubt that a mighty wave of intercessory prayer would aid in making the atmosphere in which men would more readily yield to the Lord? Who, indeed, has not felt something of this sort when hundreds of heads were bent in silent prayer? It is much as if we passed into the climate of God. Our prayer is doubtless a part of the pressure that the Spirit puts upon human hearts. There may be a sense in which our prayer is borne by the ministering Spirit of God to the very person for whom it is offered.

For the Scripture seems to indicate that prayer is one form of service which we can use for each other. It may fail because it is so often used alone instead of with its companion forms of service. The farmer would scarcely expect much from his acres if he planted and did not till or reap, or if he put his furrows in the sunshine and then declined to provide irrigation. Each thing is necessary, but each thing will not do the work alone. It must be even so with prayer.

God has certainly decreed that there should be a close relation between prayer and work. Some one long ago said that "prayer was the work of the soul, and that work was the prayer of the hands." Unquestionably sincere prayer drives to work for the object prayed for. Evangelistic intercession in the closet, if it be genuine, will lead to evangelistic effort in the open.

Thus there are really two forms of evangelism, prayer and work. It is no hazard to say that God can give small heed to a prayer when the one who offers it is too much afraid of man to do the other human part of evangelism. The path of true prayer will lead in due season to the very face of the man whom we would lead to Christ.

Now while all this is general, it still has its special application to parents. It may be that our very nearness to the children and our privilege of association with them will lead us to neglect prayer in their behalf. Many parents would confess that their most earnest prayers for the children began after the children went away from the home. This must mean that up to that time we had allowed our direct contact with them to do away with prayer for them. While it is easy to offer

some justification for this course, and even to plead its naturalness, it may yet reveal a danger. We should pray for our children while they are still with us. We shall be stronger and more persuasive in dealing with them, if our sincerity be strengthened by frequent appeals to God in their behalf. At the family altar they should be straightly brought before the throne of grace. There are those who say that the weak point in modern evangelism has been its lack of vigorous and constant intercessory prayer; and it may be that this is the weakness of family evangelism. If God can do so in righteousness, he will not deny the cry or annul the effort of those fathers and mothers who intercede and work for the salvation of their children.

**PART THREE**  
**THE PASTOR**



### XIII. PASTORAL FORESIGHT

IN the previous treatment of the boy and his religion we have dealt somewhat with general principles, somewhat with the boy himself, and somewhat with his parents. But there is another party to the duty of evangelism as related to the boy. That party is the pastor.

The first equipment of the pastor for this particular work is the ability to see the long issue and to work for it. For several years the boy may be a burden rather than a carrier of burdens. He cannot be a heavy contributor to the finances of the church; nor has he had sufficient experience to count much as an adviser. A pastor can bring many children to Christ without bringing many dollars into the church treasury or many statesmen into his own official board. Some of the lower

motives are wholly lacking in work for children. The conversion of one rich adult may mean more for immediate finances than the conversion of scores of children may mean. If a pastor should be a "hireling," to use Jesus's dreadful and piercing word, the call of the children is not very persuasive.

But if a pastor be thinking of Christ's cause, as that cause will be in his town ten or fifteen years hence, the call of the children becomes imperative. Those rollicking boys will be men then, fathers of families themselves. They will be holding their places as merchants, judges, bankers, doctors, plumbers, builders. The middle-aged pastor, when he returns to his old charge after many years, gets this lesson very impressively. He sees in the church sense the meaning of that word out of the Bible, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children." Those laugh-



ing girls of the old days are matrons now, leading their own children into the services of the church. It is so easy to see all this when it comes as a tribute to achievement rather than as an incentive to toil.

Now unless a man be a seer so that he can get that vision clearly, he is not likely to be an earnest evangelist for children. Immediate interests will engross him. Quicker harvests will entice him. The Scripture speaks of one who "is blind and cannot see afar off." The words might well be used of one who neglects to win children for Christ. The short-sighted pastor who does not eagerly gather the lambs into the fold has the most evil form of near-sightedness. It is pointed out occasionally that the accounts of revivals reveal this lack of foresight. The papers say "sixty conversions, mostly adults." In reality this statement is doubtless meant often to in-

dicating that the meetings were powerful enough to reach and convert the older people. If the phrase should be taken to mean that the conversion of adults was more important than the conversion of children, we would quarrel with its meaning.

For God has given us too many examples to leave us in any doubt as to the effectiveness of his work among the children. Preachers are fond of telling that David Livingstone was the only person converted in a special meeting, and that the elders deemed the revival a failure! If only they had been blessed with foresight! They would have seen that in claiming that small boy for Christ their pastor was getting ready to answer the outstretched hands of all Ethiopia. Without doubt it was the biggest day's work that pastor ever did for his Lord.

We are aware that all this represents a truism. But we are aware,

also, that truisms *are* truisms simply because they are so very important in their meanings. That talk about the "future generation" is really very great talk. Sometimes we must all regard it as the greatest talk. The children are our bonds toward the coming time. They are the only agents through whom we can send our life on into the earthly life. They are the only hopes we may have for all the faith we hold most dear, for all the causes that appeal to the eternal best in our own hearts.

God saved the future to himself by means of the Child of Bethlehem and Nazareth. It is no wonder that his own Son calls us so insistently and tenderly to the care of the children. Jesus needs to-day, and always, far-sighted pastors who will claim the future men and women by claiming the present boys and girls. Samuel soon becomes a prophet. John soon becomes the

forerunner of Christ. Timotheus soon stands by the side of Paul in the plan for the conquest of the world. Beloved pastors, those children *are* your earthly futures!

#### XIV. PASTORAL INTEREST

It is not often that our relations with people begin upon a distinctly religious basis. We may begin our acquaintance in an inquiry room or at an altar. Usually, however, our early approaches to a life are social. We are "introduced." Or we make our own way forward without any formalities. Before Jesus talked to Zacchæus of the deeper things of the Kingdom he dined with him, this being merely the prelude to that appeal which was to win the publican to the right life. Indeed, it is scarcely natural that two people, unknown to each other hitherto, should begin their relations by dis-

cussing the deepest things. When a man's first word to us relates to our duty to God we often feel that there is something forced in the situation. More than that, we may even feel that the man is putting God at a disadvantage. If all this seems to protect religious speech unduly, it has at any rate one virtue: it makes all the other lines of life mere preliminaries. They are the approaches. Religion is the goal, the very temple of life. We may well be glad that it has so many vestibules.

However important this social approach may be in dealing with adults, it becomes especially important in dealing with boys. Their social nature is strong. They are susceptible to attention. We can often detect them "hanging around," waiting to be recognized. Their slightly older playmates will sometimes accuse them of "tagging on," that is, of

trying to get into company where they are not wanted. This is itself merely an evidence of that social instinct that craves satisfaction. Occasionally the outreach of that social instinct is so eager as to be pathetic.

That eager outreach of the boy's social life is the preacher's best chance for evangelism. It is more than a chance: it is an invitation, extended both by the boy himself and by the God who made the boy. It is almost as if the boy said: "Here I am waiting to be captured. I am just bound to be related to folks. That is the reason why the poolroom draws. It is this mood that gives the saloon its opportunity. Cannot the preacher see that I am waiting for him to get ahead of the bad things?"

Therefore, the first great pastoral need in dealing with the boys is a warm human interest. This interest cannot be assumed. The average

boy is an unconscious detective. Whether he can quite define the situation or not, he will know the difference between the man who seeks him for his own sake and for Christ's sake, and the man who regards him as a candidate for church membership and so as a trophy of his ministerial cunning.

So the interest in the boy must be real and deep. It must be forceful enough to lead the preacher to write him a letter when it is known that the boy has done well in school or has graduated with credit from the grades. It must follow the boy knowingly through the varied stages of his advancement, whether in scholarship or athletics or in any other natural interest of youth. One such preacher I knew years ago. Long after he had left the pastorate in a certain town I would keep finding full-grown men who would tell of the way in which his interest

followed them. The boys never forgot him. When they reached the seriousness of middle age, the very mention of this preacher's name would at once make them kindle with loving remembrance. And many of them were in the Kingdom and were vitally connected with the church of Christ because this pastor's human interest would not suffer them to escape.

It all comes back, of course, to the one thing that Saint Paul glorifies in his great psalm. All else fails but love. The mere word "love" will not conquer the boy. In fact, it is likely that its use may make him self-conscious. But the fact of love for him will do wonders with him. What scholarship will not do, and what even sacrificial toil will not do, and what martyrdom will not accomplish, that love will do with that socially eager youth. There is a marginal reading somewhere in the Old Testament that says, "Thou



hast loved me out of the pit." The reference is to the way in which the love of God lifts men out of their moral dangers. The servant of God can in his sphere love men out of the pit. His love is a lifter. The pit waits for the feet of the boy. Sometimes the pit seems to conquer. But God and the man of God can conquer the pit. The boy can be lifted from its darkness and filth by that loving human interest which is the preacher's surest way to the heart of youth.

## XV. PASTORAL SACRIFICE

VERY often we make the mistake of assuming that work with children is easy. Some of our figures of speech encourage this mistake. Children are "plastic"; older people are "hardened." The figures of speech have their meaning, but we should be careful not to make them into

errors rather than into truths. Or we may virtually imply that, inasmuch as the bending of the twig makes the inclining of the tree, after once you have given the twig the right direction, the whole problem of the tree is solved. Of course this is far from correct. Any orchardist will teach us more wisely than that.

Nor should we suppose that delight and ease are the same thing. We sing the hymn,

“Delightful work, young souls to win !”

and we may readily pass to the conclusion that the work is delightful because it is easy. We might as well say that, because Stradivarius enjoyed making violins, his work was not difficult! Instead, we find that he often poured the glad sacrifice of months into the making of a single instrument. The work was delightful, not because it

was easy, but because the workman loved the result. That result was the "joy that was set before him."

There is a general consideration against the assumption that work with children is easy, namely, that no great work is ever a smooth and jaunty task. The gourd that grows over night will wither over day. The ease of its development is the measure of its ease of decay. The big things, whether they be Magna Charta, Reformation, Revolution, or an oak tree, are not hurriedly grown. And a human life is the largest thing provided for in the creation of God. It would be strange if its best and finest development were a product easy to gain.

Sometimes, also, we have this impression of easy spiritual results with children because some one else does the difficult work and we take the result as a mere matter of course. We are surely prone to do this

with the intellectual education of our children. We turn the little people over to the public schools, and we do not always appreciate the fact that they are educated only because teachers feel the tug and strain many hours of thousands of days. But the sacrifice is there whether we recognize it or not. Is the intellectual education of our children easier than their spiritual education?

Nor is it any overstatement when we say that to win and hold the boy requires peculiar sacrifice. The boy must meet a large range of coarser temptation from which the girl is freed. She seldom hears profanity; she knows little of the lure of cigarettes; the saloon is not for her; she does not carry a latch-key with a view to late hours! But all these and other forms of allurements coax the boy. It may not be hard to get him to start in the Christian life, if indeed he has left his first love;

yet to keep him in the way of Christ *is the work of years*. It cannot be done by any easy wave of the hand. It is not accomplished in any one brief service. The work that truly evangelizes the boy *is a service many years in length*. Any other thought is superficial and dangerous. It is simply a big blunder to think that because boys are easily reached, they are easily kept. The true evangelism of youth is the most difficult thing because it is the most important thing.

The rules of the church plainly reveal where the difficulty will come. It is the long continuance of the work that costs the price. One meeting may win the boy to an allegiance. It will require many meetings to train and confirm him in the way of the Lord. It is just this fact that leads so often to an answer which, as every conscientious pastor feels, is a poor compromise

of himself. How seldom have we been able to answer fully and unequivocally the question, "Have the rules respecting the instruction of children been observed?" The full answer to that question is the measure of full pastoral duty. That answer can be won only out of sacrifice.

The lesson would not be complete without saying that sacrifice in the Christian sense does not necessarily mean strain and pain and sorrow. It may rather mean joy and gladness. Jesus saw joy beyond the cross. If Simon the Cyrenian saw what life really was, he felt joy beneath the cross. The load of life must be pulled anyhow. The yoke of Christ can be cushioned by a love of the task and, more still, by the love of Him who calls us to the task. When a burden is actually his burden, he himself waits to furnish the spirit that makes the easy yoke and the light load.

PART FOUR  
THE TEACHER





## XVI. THE TEACHER'S CHARACTER

THERE is a suggestive verse in one of the Gospels which declares that great crowds came to Bethany "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also whom he had raised from the dead." But they were thus brought into contact with the Saviour. Doubtless, if we could discover the personal histories of that olden time, we would find out that many of those who came to see Lazarus saw some one far greater, and even that they experienced that spiritual resurrection which is the achievement of the Christian faith.

It needs only a quick review of our early experience to convince us how true this illustration is. We had an interest in some person, and

this interest was directly transferred to Christ. It led us to some part of Bethany, and Jesus was there. Very often this human mediator was a Sunday school teacher. We found ere long that this teacher had been raised from the death of trespasses and sins. We believed in him. His character appealed to us as being high. He rang true. He had the first essential of a religious teacher in that he was himself religious. What he taught was not contradicted by what he did. His word and his deed did not quarrel with each other. We knew that he was really good.

Now character has an industry that is all its own. It is pervasive also. Like the shadow of the tree, it often goes where the man cannot go. It works even when its owner is absent. It can be summoned to the witness stand in the twinkling of an eye. It is influential in all realms, but it is particularly in-

fluent in that realm where the first object is to produce character. Like produces like, we say. How can darkness make light? Or how can the unclean fountain send forth clean waters? Somehow we keep the conviction that a man's work in the spiritual region cannot possibly be any better than the man. He talks when he is silent. He works when he is idle. He appears when he is absent. When he and his word clash and fight, he is likely to be victor as against his word. If he be a good man, he himself is salt; he himself is light; he himself is truth; he himself is life. God still follows his own highest example and uses an incarnation in order to make Himself known. Often a Sunday school teacher is that incarnation.

Now boys have keen eyes and quick intuitions. They may be easily deceived at first, but in due season

they will know the teacher for what he is. In this respect they all have the advantages or disadvantages of the group spirit. What one does not find out another will discover. Nor are they good keepers of secrets. The seal of silence is not yet fastened tightly on their lips. The teacher's inconsistent act, seen by one, will soon be known by all; and after that the teacher must get new and strong credentials ere he will be trusted again

All this is good for the teacher himself. We have all known men and women who were saved by the necessity of their own influence. While they were trying to bring the boys to Christ, the boys brought them to the same Master. The teacher-evangelist evangelized himself. He found that action and reaction were equal and in opposite directions—in Sunday school work as well as in physics. The prayer of his life

became a prayer for utter consistency. He longed to be a good man because he knew that character was the most efficient evangelist. Boys are not only very curious, they have likewise a large human interest. They can be brought where Jesus is if they feel that they can there see a Lazarus whom Jesus has raised from the dead.

Does not Jesus himself give us this lesson in its fullness? He is not merely the gospel of God; he is the evangelist of that gospel. It was necessary that he should tell us that God was holy; but it was just as necessary that he should show us the divine holiness in his own life. If the world should lose faith in the character of Jesus, it would quickly lose faith in the gospel of Jesus. A sinful Messiah could not be a complete Saviour. Jesus teaches the way, the truth, and the life, because he *is* the way, the truth,

and the life. He is his own religion. There is a certain sense in which every teacher must be the same.

There is, moreover, a deep human conviction on this point. People are insistent that the teachers of youth shall not be corrupt. They demand this of public school teachers. It is a well-known fact that an evil reputation makes a disqualification for secular teaching. How much more shall we make this high demand for spiritual teaching?

It is said that a famous infidel once visited the home of a saint. He left sooner than he had intended and gave as his reason that, if he stayed in the home another week, he would become a Christian in spite of himself! The saint's character was doing evangelistic work. Shall not a good teacher's character invite a class of impressionable boys into fellowship with Christ and into his blessed service?

XVII. THE TEACHER'S  
KNOWLEDGE

WHAT should a teacher of boys know in order that he may lead boys into the religious life? Answers to this question will vary according to the viewpoints of those who make reply. Some will make the intellectual emphasis too exclusive and will urge a rule that would drive nine tenths of our Sunday school teachers from their work. Others will make the spiritual emphasis too exclusive and will urge a rule that would fill our schools with teachers that have zeal without knowledge. Still others would combine the two emphases and would urge a rule such as God has adopted in selecting the great leaders of his church. Paul and Calvin and Luther and Wesley were all providential men, and they were all both intellectual and spiritual. They knew

with their minds, and they felt with their hearts. Sunday school teachers in their minor realm may not be able to be great thinkers or great mystics, but they should strive to love God with all their minds and souls. This double preparation will make them more efficient as evangelists of boyhood.

They should know the Bible. The Scriptures reveal Jesus as the end of their revelation. He himself said that the Scriptures should be searched because they testified of him. He was speaking, of course, of the Old Testament. Still, the reason that he gave for searching the Old Scriptures applies far more to the New. The statement is often made that, while more Bibles are sold than ever before, fewer Bibles are read and studied. Probably there is no accurate way of finding out whether this is so. If it be so, then there is all the more reason



why the Sunday school teacher should join with the pastor and parent in the effort to fix the Bible in the mind and heart of youth. Deeper than this is the fact that the Bible seems to have a peculiar power of conviction. It is quick and powerful. It does pierce. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Bible is the greatest evangelist, and the teacher should know the Book so well as to give that evangelist a full chance to do its work.

Teachers should know the boy. We must all feel sometimes a sense of resentment when some academic psychologist looks learned and proceeds to instruct those who have been dealing in practical psychology for many years. There are now in existence statistical tables showing certain tendencies in the life of childhood. If we are ever tempted to feel that much of this work is

theoretical and mechanical, we may still get its main value. We must know the boy ere we can effectively teach the boy. It will not do to try to win him with figures of speech based on wee femininity. Miniature doll houses and small sewing kits belong to girls' classes. The teacher must know how to select the boy's Bible from the big Bible. There are portions of the Book that are peculiarly fitted to appeal to boy life. Those portions cannot be found and used unless the teacher knows the boy as well as the Book. At the close of an address to boys months ago, a little fellow said, as he plunged from the room, "Gee! that man knows all about us, doesn't he?" This meant that the speaker was a practical Christian psychologist. He had at least a part of the equipment for winning boys to Christ. He knew where boys lived, and he knew how

to speak to them in the terms of their own lives.

Teachers should know Christ. Strange as it may seem, it is possible for them to know the Bible with technical accuracy without knowing him. In his later years Phillips Brooks wrote to a friend a transcript of his own personal experience with the Master. He said that all of life's experiences more and more took their meaning from Christ. He added that this was no mere figure of speech. "He knows me, and I know him. It is the realest thing in the world. And one wonders what it will grow to as the years move on." The man who wrote those words knew Christ. He was thus invincibly sure of his gospel. The boy is a very real person. The more the teacher really knows Christ, the more will the boy feel the sense of reality in the teaching. This knowledge of

Christ comes only from life with him. Peter gave his confession at Cæsarea Philippi because he had been living with the Master. Others, seeing Jesus's tears, might say that he was Jeremias. Yet others, seeing his stern rebuke of sin, might say that he was Elias. Still others, hearing only his gospel of repentance, might say that he was John the Baptist. But Peter, having lived those months with the Lord, reached the fuller and truer creed and declared that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God." His knowledge of Christ came from his life with Christ. Only so can any teacher of youth come to an acquaintanceship with the Lord that will make him an efficient evangelist of boys.

Without doubt, also, we come to this knowledge of Christ for the inspiration that will send us to the proper study of the Bible and of

the boy. Only the love of Christ has enough constraint to keep one faithful for years to the holy and serious task of evangelizing youth. When once we really know him we shall not rush through a few minutes' study of the lesson and on to a hasty and superficial dealing with the boy. We shall, rather, teach as if the Great Teacher watched both our preparation and our approach to the soul of boyhood. Then we shall be more skillful in bringing many a little lad into the presence of Him who can multiply his powers and possessions so that later multitudes shall be fed by his truth.

### XVIII. THE TEACHER'S PURPOSE

SOMETIMES we must all think that the story of Philip and the eunuch, as we have it recorded in the Acts, is a kind of biblical description of

a real Sunday school. Philip seems to have been a good man. He was likewise a knowing man in the Scriptures. But his character and his knowledge were both turned to a very definite aim. Ere long his pupil was asking, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" The door of the church stood open on that desert way. The teacher had met his purpose and so had come to victory.

All the elements of a class are present in this account. We may allow that the teacher is unusually direct and purposeful, and that the pupil is unusually responsive. In a way we may say that both attitudes are well-nigh ideal. But the big point is that the teacher was after the main thing. The end of the Scriptures was Christ, and the goal of the teacher was Christ. The outer way was desert, but the spiritual way proved a garden path whereby grew the tree of life. The

chariot moved, but a soul moved even more significantly. Had Philip dallied with a literary question the opportunity had passed. Had he discussed the abstract nature of prophecy, the interview would have issued into abstraction. As it was, Philip reached Christ in his teaching, and the eunuch reached Christ in his faith. The lesson ended in the pledge of baptismal waters.

The eternal lesson for passing teachers is all here, even though the itinerant school was rather unconventional, and even though the pupil was full-grown. The aim of all Sunday school teaching is Christ. Until the teacher is dominated and possessed by that one purpose, he is not a genuine teacher. The idealist may find many weak points in Sunday school work. He would doubtless be compelled to admit that the very weakest point was the lack of a definite and con-

suming purpose on the part of many teachers.

That definiteness is the conquering mood elsewhere. The architect, the engineer, the banker, the politician, the carpenter, the plumber—all these know what they wish to do, and they go toward a clear goal. If they do not do so, their work is marred and they class themselves with the inefficient. The world's work is judged by the way in which it meets its purpose. The teacher's work must be estimated by the same rule. Now without doubt the teacher's main purpose is to keep or to bring the scholars within a vital and obedient relation to Jesus Christ. If a teacher does that, he succeeds. If a teacher does not do that, he fails. That purpose is his compass, and it alone can keep him from drifting. That purpose is his North Star, and it alone can keep him from wandering. That



purpose is his life, and it alone can prevent the death of the teacher as a teacher.

Therefore, before every class comes to its session, the teacher should ask himself, "Why am I to teach to-day?" After the class adjourns, the question should be, "Why did I teach to-day?" While the class is in session, the question should be, "Why do I teach now?" Nothing short of this sacred definiteness will suffice. Without it teaching becomes general, hazy, secular, entertaining, frivolous—anything save efficiently spiritual.

And this purpose will select its own material. Strange as it may seem, it may employ a chariot ride as a vehicle toward the Highest. It may sometimes choose desert rather than city for its field. The purpose elects ways and means, as well as the subject matter of teaching. It accommodates speech to

the pupil, working its way adroitly to the center of life. It goes not too rapidly lest it leave the pupil so far behind that he cannot hear the saving word. The purpose becomes a glowing passion. It gives knowledge heat as well as light. It gives character power as well as beauty. It is the teacher's Gethsemane and his transfiguration; his cross and his crown.

Nor is all this a bit of vain idealization. We have all known just such teachers—men and women touched into a divine success by the power and definiteness of their evangelistic purpose toward their scholars. Sometimes these teachers have been learned; sometimes they have been far from technical scholarship. But they have all been partakers of the one Spirit. Whether we find them on the lonely road that leads down to Gaza, or in the ecclesiastical palace on the city's

hill, they are the Spirit's partners in that blessed task of bringing young life into the company of the redeeming Lord. The prayer of each teacher should be, "God, make me such!" The prayer of each church should be, "God, give us such!"









