

PARENT • CHILD
AND • CHURCH

CHARLES • CLARK • SMITH

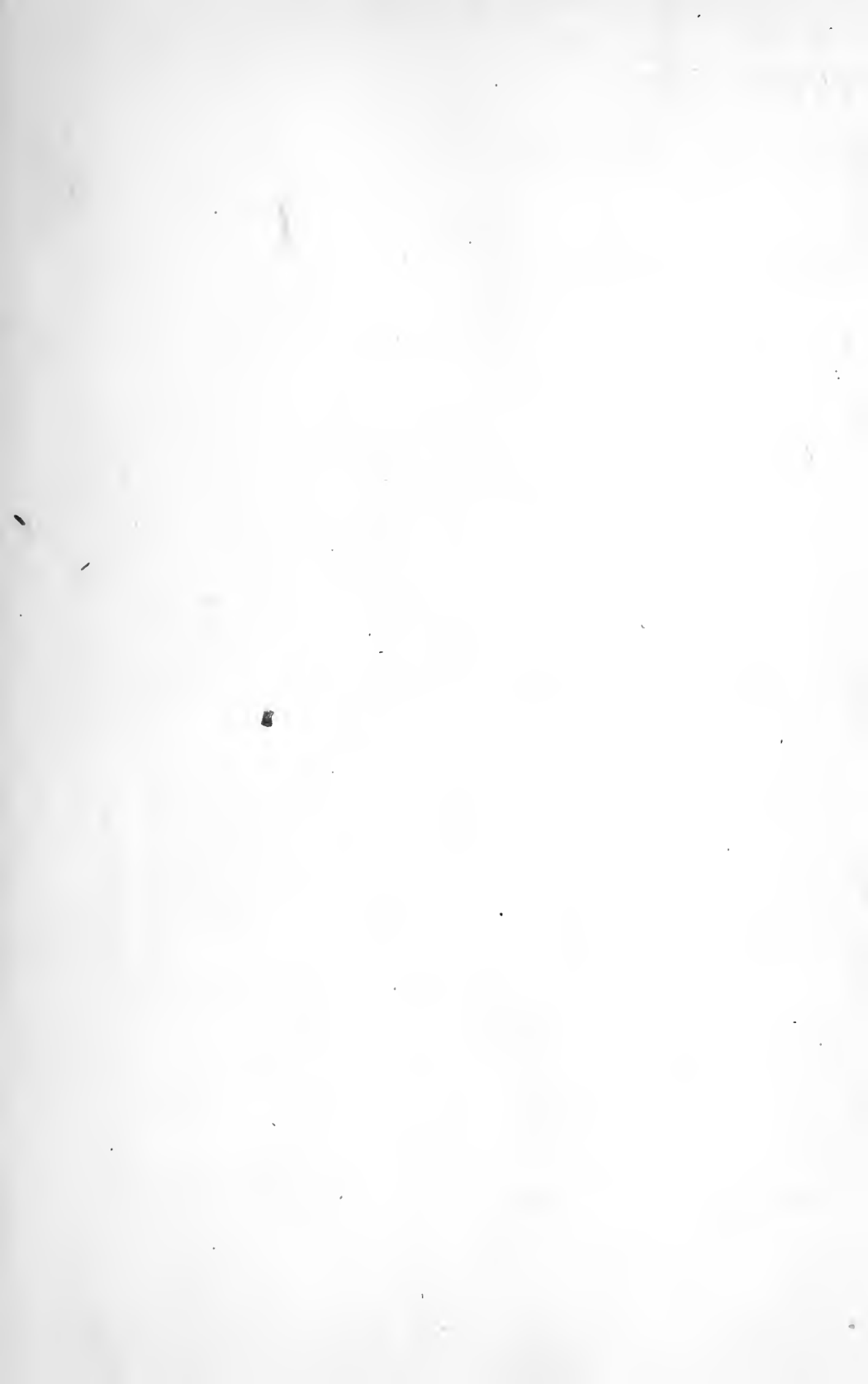


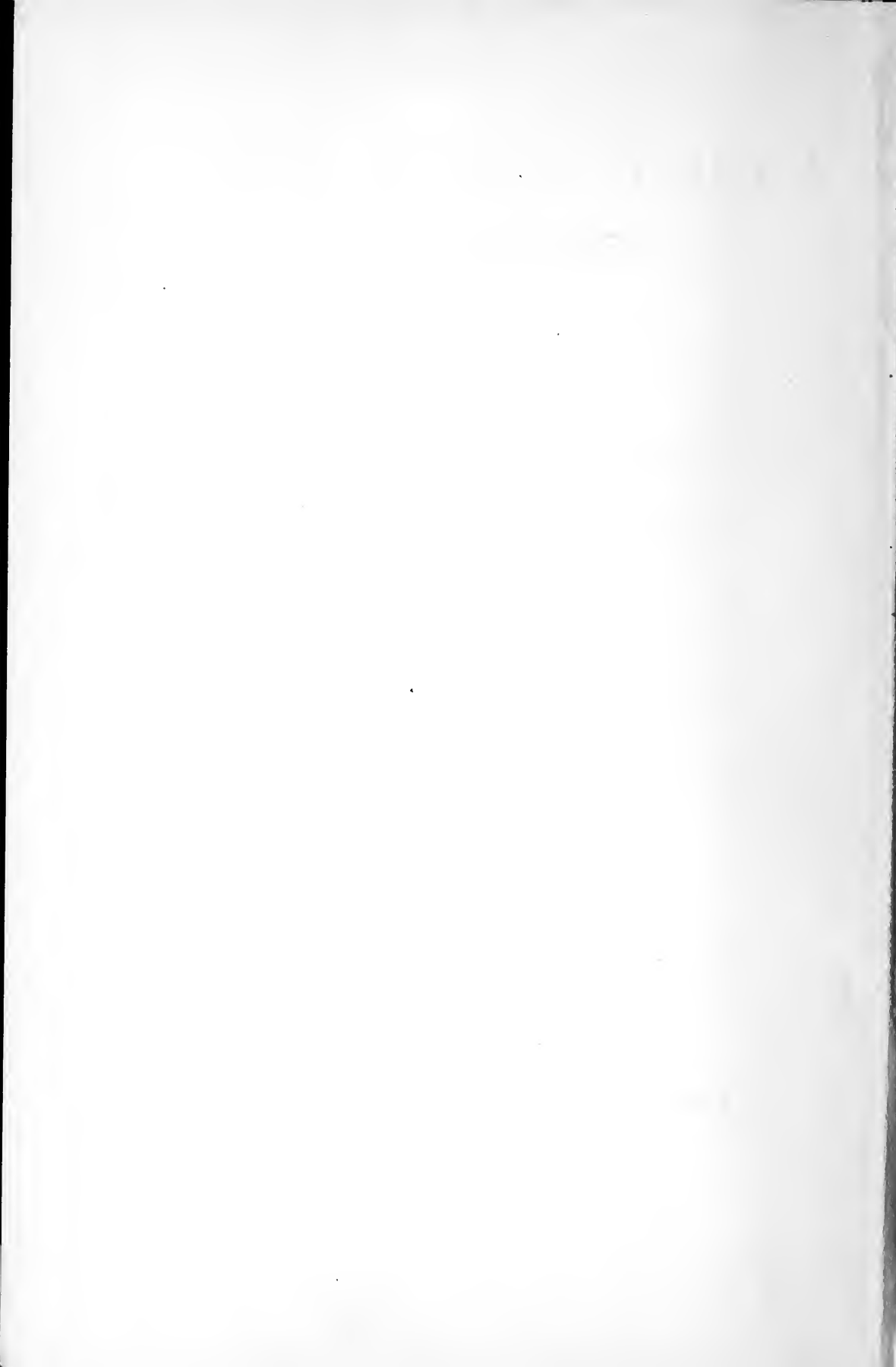
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PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

BY
CHARLES CLARK SMITH



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TO MY MOTHER
WHO, POSSESSED OF A DEEPLY RELIGIOUS
NATURE, REARED A LARGE FAMILY WHO
HONOR HER MEMORY, LOVE HER CHURCH,
AND WORSHIP HER GOD

TO MY WIFE
WHOSE CHRISTIAN TEACHING HAS IM-
PRESSED ITSELF UPON OUR FAMILY

TO THESE TWO MOTHERS
TO WHOM I OWE SO MUCH
I DEDICATE
THIS LITTLE VOLUME



CONTENTS

CHAPTERS	PAGE
PREFACE	7
I. THE CHILD AND CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS	9
II. THE MISSION OF THE LITTLE CHILD	33
III. HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT	67
IV. INSTINCTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AND ADOLESCENT PERIODS	107
V. THE THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD RELIGION	141

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PREFACE

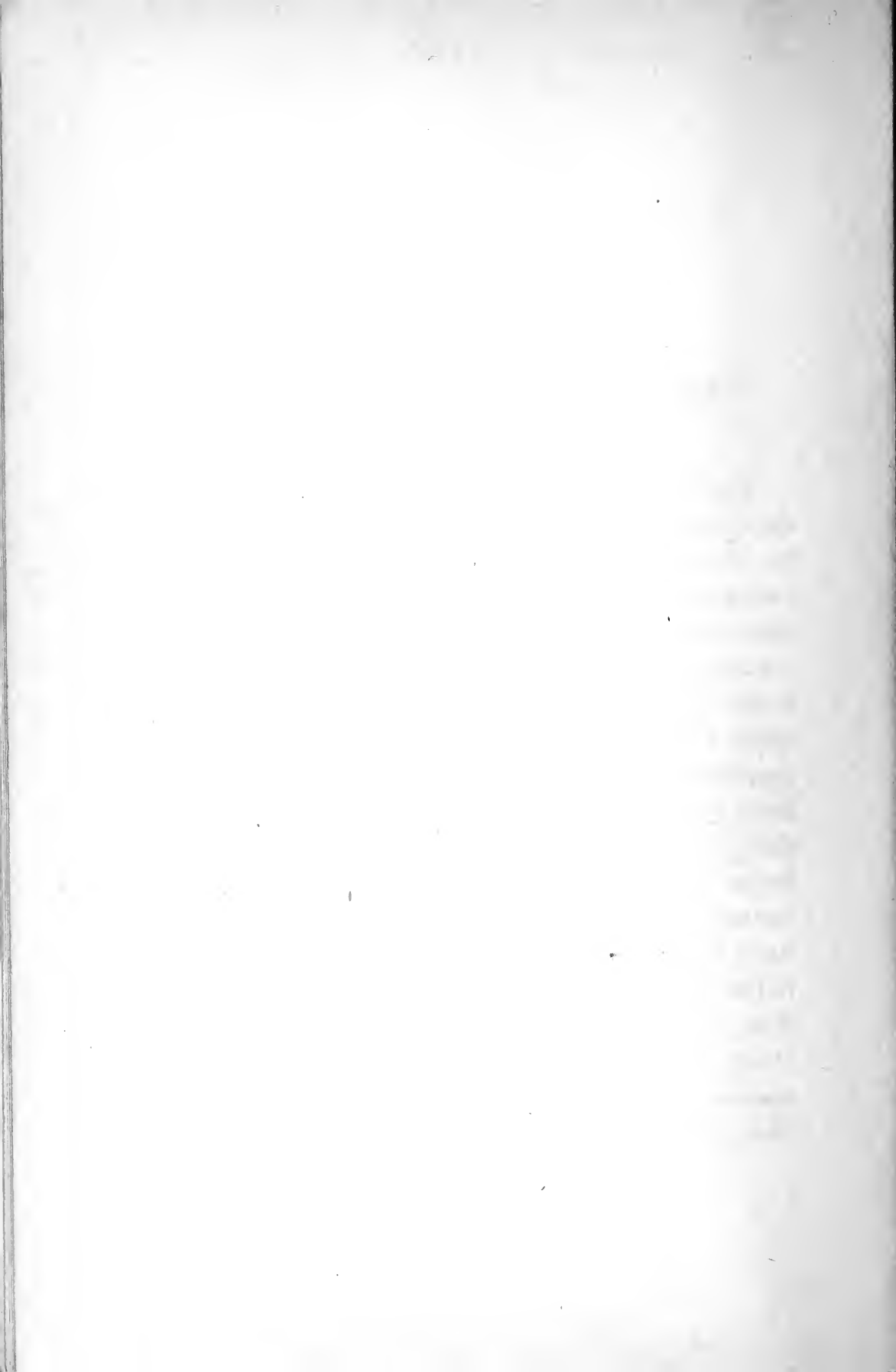
THE following pages have been written with the conviction that others have experienced perplexities similar to my own in passing from a religious childhood, through a religious youth, to a religious manhood without ever having consciously experienced conversion, and still finding no place for that sort of religious development in such preaching as I was permitted to hear; and instead of deriving comfort from religious services, being, rather, made miserable, lest my religious life was seriously at fault somewhere without being able to discover just where. Since working in the pastorate I have made the acquaintance of several young people all of whom were trying to fit the experience of conversion, as popularly preached, into their lives with the same unsatisfactory results that I had experienced in my youthful days. Their Christian lives were of a high order, and conversation with them along

PREFACE

lines similar to what follows seemed to meet a great need in their lives. My personal experience, coupled with this pastoral observation, suggested the need of a book written in simple language calling attention to a very vital religious principle, in no way newly discovered, but rather under-emphasized in general preaching. The subject-matter has been used largely in a series of sermons leading up to and culminating in Children's Day. The results have been gratifying in some respects in that young Christians have been helped and parents led to a more serious consideration of their opportunities and responsibilities in training children. These results have prompted me to put the thoughts into a more permanent form for perhaps a larger audience. There is no attempt at critical and exhaustive treatment. This is left for the extended works on systematic theology. The one thought is that perhaps a few pastors, Sunday school teachers, and parents may profit somewhat by the reading, and give unfolding childhood a better chance.

CHARLES CLARK SMITH.

CHAPTER I
THE CHILD AND CHURCH
ORGANIZATIONS



CHAPTER I

THE CHILD AND CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

THE organized church is manifestly a development from very humble beginnings to its present very large proportions, and because it is a development we may conclude that it is not of necessity a perfect piece of ecclesiastical machinery, but, rather, an institution calculated to grow still larger and become still better fitted to serve the needs of mankind. It is very plain that there has been a human element in the development of this great organization, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say these organizations, because viewed as ecclesiastical bodies we have several distinct churches. The writer believes heartily in the church as an institution, and believes that we should continue to study, as have our forefathers, that we may continue to show ourselves workmen that do not need to be ashamed. We are not as

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

perfect as we may become. Because there has been and is the human element in the church, there are for that reason imperfections and weaknesses. In the very rapid growth of the modern Protestant Church with its spirit of revolt from the ancient established church, it is not at all unlikely that we have overlooked some important principles, or in our revolt swung the pendulum of reform too far aside, and now that we have come to rather a more considerate day we will need to look over the past and see what we have neglected in our hurried advance. Principles are sometimes condemned when the defect is in the form of expression and not in the principle, and what we need to do, instead of condemning them, is to sift them and retain whatever is good. One may easily be deceived in studying the history of the church and be led to overestimate the value of certain activities a century ago because time has a fashion of exaggerating the luster of the good and diminishing the shadows of the manifestly bad. So we need always to be guarded in comparing the past, with its dim recollections of detail, with the present, in which everything is

CHILD AND CHURCH

clearly seen. But something of comparison will surely be helpful and will lead us to the conclusion that all that has passed is not useless, but, rather, constitutes the foundation on which the present is building. It appears that in at least one particular we of this generation are not on a par with the church workers of perhaps fifty years ago. Generally speaking, love for and devotion to the church is not so strong to-day as it was formerly, not so strong surely as it should be to-day in order that the church may do her best work. I am not pleading for a return to the sectarianism of the former age—far from it. True devotion to the church is as much above narrow sectarianism as true patriotism is above partisan politics. But I would plead for a return to that intense devotion to the church which our forefathers knew, and I believe such a return to be a great good which may be accomplished in this generation.

We may well be very hopeful for the future. The church was never better, on the whole, but it is destined to become still better. If we can intensify the powers already in our possession and utilize the wast-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

ing forces, we will greatly increase our efficiency. Therefore, without any disposition to glorify the past unduly, let us admit that the past can be our teacher in some particulars still. We greatly deplore some present-day tendencies which seem to manifest themselves among our young people. Every conference, convention or informal church assembly brings out this discussion. There is generally a lack of a sense of responsibility to the church, and often a disregard of those principles for which the church has long stood. We have lots of machinery planned to meet the needs of these young people, but we cannot refrain from asking whether we are doing as much for our youth with this machinery as the church of another generation did without it. If we are not doing all that we might, the remedy is not to be found in a criticism of the young people for their disregard of the church, nor in a decrying of the fact of much machinery in the church, but, rather, in educating parents so that they will work with the church in correcting the wrong conceptions and conduct. The secret of strong devotion to the church lies with the parents. The Protestant

CHILD AND CHURCH

Church must turn its attention to home training rather than to organizations of the church for a solution to this very obvious weakness in our practice. The church can help, but it cannot do the chief work. This means that the pastor must engage the assistance of the parents in the religious training of the children. How strange it sounds to imply that it is difficult to enlist the sympathies of the parents in the training of their children. And yet pastors will testify that this is one of the most difficult of all pastoral problems; difficult, not because the parents are really indifferent to the religious welfare of their children, but, rather, because they do not, as a rule, understand what is involved and what great things can be done. It is a question, then, first of educating the parents. The pastor must study this subject and preach it to his people until their thought is fixed upon it and their sympathies fully enlisted. He must convince and lead the parents until once again we have religious training in the home.

The church is largely to blame for conditions existing. Our theology of childhood has been wrongly preached, and the now

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

prevalent inactivity with regard to our children's religious life is the result. It is time to quit preaching an antiquated theory of the origin of sin that contradicts both the Bible and reason and to begin to preach what Christ taught with reference to the child and what modern pedagogic principles have made very plain to us. Our public school methods are much more intelligently applied than our religious methods. When the pulpit presents to the people a conception of child religion that fits the conditions and shows the possibilities of religious activities for the youth, then the parents will become interested in the proper development of their children.

Perhaps, then, I should revise a statement made above and say that the education must begin with the pulpit. The prevailing conception as it has been preached is that a child is a sort of religious nonentity until he comes to the age of accountability, when he must be converted before he can have a religious life. Naturally, from this conception there will spring no motive for early religious training. The parent who believes what has been preached generally will say: "What is

CHILD AND CHURCH

the use? We will wait till the child is a little older, and some time when there is a special opportunity we will seek to get him converted, and then he will be all right." Parents have been known to object to their children being catechized along religious lines because they were grounded in the belief that the child is a sort of zero quantity religiously. At least one case is known to the writer where parents, who were themselves members of the church and of average intelligence, objected to their children, aged ten and twelve years respectively, being taken into the church because, as they said, such children could not understand what was implied by coming into the church. Many other cases, perhaps not so extreme, have come to our attention, and it is the common experience of pastors. Such ignorance must somehow be dispelled and the pulpit must show that, according to Christ's own words, the fittest subject for the kingdom of heaven, and therefore for the church, is the little child. To this end we must bend our teaching and the offices which the church intrusts to us.

What pastor is there who has not been

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

greatly perplexed over the common distinction between church and Sunday school? What preacher has not had a suggestion of heartache as he was compelled to stand by Sabbath after Sabbath while his Sunday school filed out and his church filed in, or the reverse, as the hours may alternate? How he has longed for the opportunity of preaching regularly to that group of young people. I am not unmindful of the various devices employed to keep this youthful audience in the church, but at best such schemes are temporary and do not get at the heart of the difficulty. The child trapped or baited to attend church is not the ideal. The child loving to attend church is what we need, and this is not impossible of attainment. If parents and church will work together wisely, this good end can be accomplished, not only to the blessing of the young, but as well, a benediction to the older ones. There is no mistaking the two congregations in most instances. Here are the mature and elderly people who, as they wrongly suppose, have outgrown the Sunday school. The church is their special zone of influence. Here are the children and young people,

CHILD AND CHURCH

who feel that they have no connection with the church, which, of course, belongs to the older folks, while the Sunday school belongs particularly to them. This idea is as strong with the elders as with the juniors. They talk it in that way and live according to that plan, and what wonder that the young people have no other thought. We are of the second generation trained somewhat according to this notion. We must be rid of it before our children perpetuate our error. Some elders are not above resenting as a sort of encroachment upon their particular prerogatives any entrance of the young people into church leadership, and particularly so, if these young people are given places on the official board. They are at once accused of trying to run the church and of displacing the venerable brethren who have borne the burdens all through the years. The pastor may know that such a complainant ought to be removed from the board at once, but the accusation indicates a condition that is more serious than the complaint itself. It is a symptom of internal disorder that should be corrected. On the other hand, some young people think,

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

and are not slow in expressing their thoughts, that the older people should stay out of the Sunday school, or at least be very humble members. If they attend the young people's society, they must be silent spectators only. There is no need to discuss the relative merits of these two positions. They are both wrong, and if reduced to matter of debate we will all agree. It is our practice rather than our theory that is at fault. It is seriously to be doubted whether we ever outgrow the need for the Sunday school, and equally so whether we are ever too young to derive benefit from the church services. This telescoping of audiences cannot be other than painful to the thoughtful pastor, and anything which will help to stop it even a little is to be welcomed. The final solution lies with the parents. When they are brought to understand how important it is that the child shall be consciously related to the church, they will then quite easily effect the cure of the now too prevalent evil.

If the observation and reading of the writer have not misled him, this telescoping of audiences is not peculiar to one part of the

CHILD AND CHURCH

country but is general in all sections and in all denominations and with practically all sorts of preachers. We must make only one class of exceptions: the Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, churches who train their children, do not offer this problem to any great extent. The fact itself is serious enough, because these young people are missing the greatest opportunity which the church has to offer them. Serious indeed and difficult of approach is the cause which lies back of that. A very serious phase, perhaps the most serious, is that we quite generally assume that a highly organized church, such as we have to-day, can take care of all the spiritual needs of the child. The whole religious nature of the infant and adolescent is committed to the various children's and young people's societies. The home shirks its duty and the church proper gets little chance at the developing child. We have no complaint to lodge against the various departmental organizations as such, but the misuse of them as is common to-day must be corrected. We should bring the strongest possible protest before the parents against intrusting to the church auxiliaries the tre-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

mendously important work of training the child religiously. We can in no wise follow the line of least resistance in this matter. It may be easier to send the child to the Sunday school and to the junior society than it is to give him the time in the home and to take him to church, but we must know that the former method of farming out his religious training is inadequate and will bring him to young manhood knowing nothing of the church and caring nothing for it. He will need these auxiliary aids, but he will need much more than these. We have come to place the secular education of the child wholly with the public school, and it is doubtful whether this is altogether wise. In accord with this same idea we place the religious education and training also with outside parties, very much to the child's disadvantage. The public school has the advantage generally of trained teachers, while too often the Sunday school teacher, while the best that is available, is unqualified to teach the children great religious truths. This is an easy method by which parents may be led to think that they have done their duty by their children, but it will not meet the needs

CHILD AND CHURCH

of the child, no matter how efficient these auxiliary societies may be. The home must ever be the center of the religious training of the child. The home atmosphere must be conducive to religious growth. It must be the place where good church habits are established.

The young people of to-day, with noteworthy exceptions, attend worship, if at all, as a matter of social convenience rather than as a duty and as an opportunity, and have little thought of sacrifice on behalf of the church. Only the occasional young man or woman, reared in our church homes, will assume responsibility when asked, and very few indeed think of giving of their substance to the support of the church, although they have means in abundance to spend on pleasure. This may sound rather like a sweeping indictment, but unless we are greatly misled by our observation and reading it is true. At least it is too generally true to be passed over lightly by church leaders who desire genuine progress in future years. It proves beyond doubt a fundamental defect somewhere in our methods. Whether it proves too much dependence in

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

church auxiliary societies or not may be debated, but it most certainly proves a defect. Any system of church work that disassociates young people from the church proper needs to be corrected. The writer cannot escape the conviction already expressed that the home more than any other one thing must determine the spirit of loyalty to the church. The conception which the parent embodies into action will work itself out largely in the child. If church worship is looked upon by the parent as a convenience rather than a sacred obligation, if social functions and fraternal life and Sunday visiting and Sunday picnics and Sunday sports are allowed to take precedence over the church, it will be idle for the parent so involved to try to teach the child that the church is sacred above these things. The child will conclude, and rightly, that first things come first, and that for his parents the church is only a third or fourth-rate institution.

In the church of which the writer is pastor there is at least one remarkable case of loyalty to the church. It will serve to illustrate what has gone before. The young

CHILD AND CHURCH

lady who is church pianist has held that position for seven consecutive years, and during these years of service she has been absent from her post of duty only four times, and for each of the absences had a good excuse and had already provided for a substitute organist to take her place. During most of the time she has been a high school student and since graduation a teacher, but the church has learned to expect her services every Sunday, and for special meetings and often for funeral occasions, and she very seldom fails. The record is all the more remarkable when it is added that she was elected to the position when only twelve years old. This is a record of fidelity which will be hard to surpass. It should be said also that the young lady receives no remuneration for her work, which is more than average in quality, except an occasional present at Christmas time or on her birthday. Now, the explanation of this very remarkable case of fidelity lies not wholly with the young lady herself, but partly with the good mother who has spent much time training the daughter in fidelity to the church and in planning with her that she should

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

not be hindered in the performance of her duty to the church. What this mother has accomplished other fathers and mothers can do, and this sort of work with the young people in the home will give us many who are thoroughly devoted to the church.

If these pages have any excuse for having been written, it is the hope that they may contribute in some small way to the proper upbuilding of a home sentiment concerning the church and thus cause to develop early in the minds of the young people a sense of responsibility to that institution which has brought to them the good news of salvation and has made their day the most opportune of all the ages. The book is an appeal largely to parents, Sunday school teachers, and also to pastors looking to a saner view of child religion than is generally held and hence to a more practical view of what may be done for the child. That the present indifferent attitude of parents is due to a wrong theological viewpoint may be rather a bold assumption, but I cannot escape the conviction that such is the case and, furthermore, I can see no hope for a large betterment; to say nothing of a complete solution of

CHILD AND CHURCH

present-day conditions, until popular sentiment and opinion are changed.

The lines of thought which are to follow are in no sense new, for a careful study of the church and of theological thought reveals the fact that they have been held all along throughout the development of our great ecclesiastical bodies, but the principles have been overshadowed and have had no adequate opportunity to make themselves powerful. It is time to emphasize the Christ view. We have turned decidedly in that direction, and never before in the history of thought have we been looking so earnestly toward a solution. But we leave old thought positions slowly and accept different conclusions with difficulty. But Christ taught very plainly, and, surely, he is the authority. Our chief difficulty is that we have started our theology with man the sinner and have sought to work backward to the child and forward toward man redeemed. We must learn to start with the child, as Christ did, and turn our vision wholly forward. The parent must be awakened to the appalling fact of loss from our good homes and shown how much of this loss may be averted. He

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

must be shown that he has intrusted to his keeping not a soul blighted in sin, but a soul pure as heaven itself, pronounced by Christ to be the type of those who are fit for the kingdom.

The biggest business we have in all the world is not the accumulation of wealth, the attainment of fame or position or the acquirement of ease and luxury; our supreme task is to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Such words are easy to write, and will receive a ready assent, but do we really believe it? Let us compare a couple of homes which may be found in any community. Here is a home where the passion for wealth and social position predominates, where the religious life of the children receives but slight attention. The husband, having inherited considerable wealth, thrives in business and acquires positions of influence by reason of the prestige which his wealth gives him. The wife wins a high place in the social circles and because of her elegant home and elaborate entertainments is highly regarded in the community. On the other side of the street is a home where the predominating

CHILD AND CHURCH

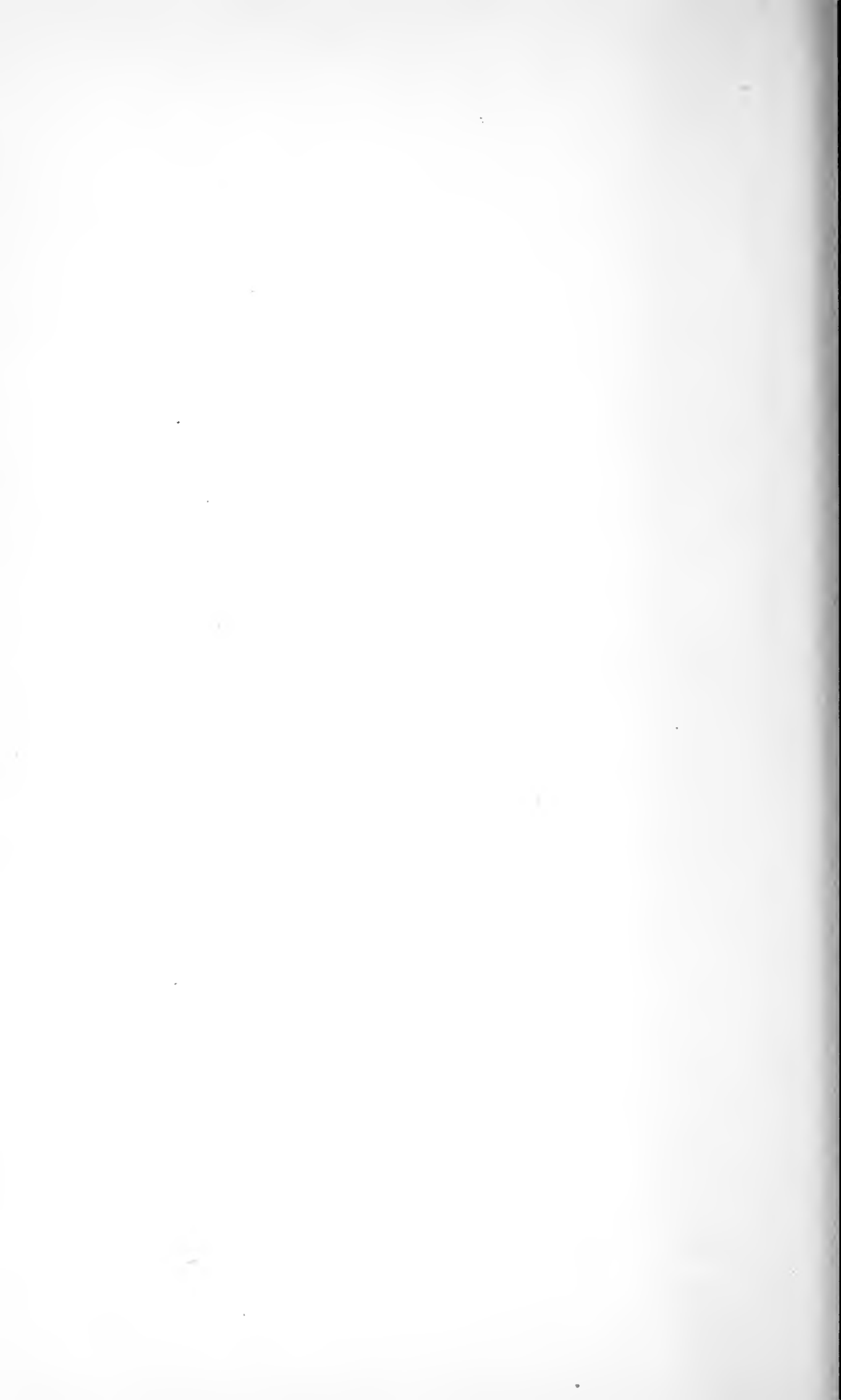
thought is character development. The father is industrious, but his initial capital was small and his code of honor forbids him doing a questionable thing in business to increase his capital, and so perhaps he does not become wealthy. There is, however, a high mental and spiritual atmosphere in the home, and much is said about honor and righteousness and religion. The family are devoted to the church and use their influence for good in the community. The father and mother teach their children not only by precept but also by example. They are genuinely Christian parents and count their gain not only in dollars and cents, but more particularly in the unimpeachable characters forming in their children. Their home is moderately humble and the father's political and social influence is small. The mother is not known socially in any large way. Which home will the average citizen point out as the more successful? Which home does popular judgment pronounce the better? Which home do we Christian parents deem the better? We will have no difficulty in learning the consensus of opinion in the average community with reference to this

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

comparison. Community life in general will pronounce in favor of the man who amasses wealth, paying little heed to the character forming in his children. But when we reflect we must admit that the family atmosphere where good character is formed, and from which children go out to found Christian homes, and in turn hand down Christian ideals to their children and grandchildren, is worth more to society and to the church and to God. We must reverse popular judgment and convince our young people that the greatest business on earth is not financial and social success, but, rather, right living. "We have but one great problem before us: How shall we best transmit to our children the fruits of our effort?" (Frank Crane.) There is only one answer: By transmitting good character bred to do the right and steeped in loyalty to the church and the propagation of righteousness. It is not implied by the contrast that wealth and attainment are necessarily in antagonism to good character development. It is implied only that we must keep them in the right relative proportions. The contrast is drawn to emphasize the assertion that our

CHILD AND CHURCH

biggest business is to build Christian character in ourselves and in our children. All other worthy ends must be related to that and not allowed to take precedence. It is a calamity when we miss the main end of life and follow a side issue. Very few will dispute this position, but too few make it a working principle in their everyday lives. If parents can be brought to realize the religious possibilities of the child and learn to work out those possibilities, much will be gained every way. We must preach conservation even more emphatically than we preach reclamation. "Keep the children," should be the keynote of all our preaching.



CHAPTER II

**THE MISSION OF THE LITTLE
CHILD**

And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.—*Isa. 11. 1-9.*

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF THE LITTLE CHILD

It surely will be no reflection on the true doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures to say that often the words of the prophets are more far-reaching than they themselves knew. Moved by the Spirit of God, they have uttered some profound truth concerning human events, but, meeting its immediate intent, the prophecy has swept on and out and has reached vastly larger realms than they in the nature of the case could have foreseen. Truth is eternal and springs from the very nature of God himself. A truth meeting one condition in one age will quite surely have application to phases of life in all ages. The prophets saw the situation immediately involved in their pronouncements and had indeed marvelous outlook toward the future, but the eternal truths to which they have in some cases given

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

expression have outreached even their fondest expectations. This will be found true, I believe, of the prophecy of Isaiah which I have quoted on the preceding page and which forms the basis for succeeding thought. The prophet was applying a great truth to a particular setting, and because truth is eternal it is not exhausted in use, but is, rather, accentuated and expands more fully with the years. I would not agree with those exegetes who see in this prophecy only the possibility of a literal fulfillment, and assume that, among other things, our Lord's influence is to extend to the animal world and eventually work out an equilibrium among all his creatures. It may be that such an equilibrium is yet to be; that some day the lion, the wolf, and the leopard, together with the cockatrice and the asp, will be so transformed in nature as to eliminate all possibility of struggle and conflict, and that man will become so saintly that he will be in harmony with everything in creation; that the animal of the jungle will be so transformed as to be a safe playmate for our children, and man will have no aversion to the so-called lower animals, but will re-

MISSION OF THE CHILD

ceive them as companions. This is conceivable under God's infinite power. It is rather enchanting to think of a great process of evolution working in all the universe by the power of God which is destined to eliminate all friction from the earth; but to stop here is to fall far short of the concept of the great prophet and to forestall the great on-sweeping of the prophecy. The elevation of the animal world up to a plane congenial to the best estate of the animal in man is not the chief work of the Messiah. Rather and far more important is his mission of subduing the animal nature in man and making it subservient to the higher spiritual nature. The viciousness of the lion, the cruel cunning of the wolf, the treachery of the leopard, the deadly venom of the cockatrice and the asp are all, besides many other animal characteristics, revealed in the human heart, and the crowning work of the Infinite is to subdue these and harmonize the warring elements in the kingdom of the soul so that the peace of heaven may abide there. As between the task of conforming the animal kingdom to a human ideal and that of eliminating the animal traits from the soul of man, there is

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

no common ground of comparison. One is entirely in the realm of the material and therefore wholly subject to the will of God. The other is in the realm of the spirit and, by divine appointment, not necessarily subject to the will of God. God himself is not equal to this task alone, for it is such a task as to require the power of the Infinite and the power of man. Infinite power is in no sense taxed when dealing with the material universe or with the lower animal orders, which are all subservient to the Maker. He can shut the mouths of the lions and bring a Daniel out of the lions' den unharmed if it meets his divine purpose. But man, by reason of the nature which God has invested in him, is a different type of subject and is not always so obedient.

Accordingly, we would take this prophecy away from the material and literal and let it sweep out into the realm of the soul and find its fulfillment some great day when men's souls have come wholly under the rulership of Him who came to earth as a child, who sprang as a new branch from the cut-away stump of Israel, from the root of Jesse, a famished Israel. We would find

MISSION OF THE CHILD

its fulfillment in that great day when the song of the angels ringing on that first Christmas night shall be again sung when the Christ is born anew in the hearts of men, and peace and good will have come to abide forever.

Christ's coming marks a new era for childhood. A glance over the history of nations shows that apart from the religion of the true God childhood has had little significance. The highest civilization of Egypt witnessed a Pharaoh killing hundreds of babes, that the enslaved Hebrew people might not increase too rapidly. Greece at her best gave little heed to the child as such, unless perchance he was considered an offspring of the gods. Israel witnessed Herod slaying numerous babes in order that he might intervent the will of heaven and kill even the Christ-child. In India to this day the parent regards the life of the child as secondary to his own, and the child is left to perish if thereby the parent's life may be saved. Or perchance a Hindu mother would make an offering to her god. Her child, if it were not for the intervention of Christianized civil law, would be tossed to

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

the sacred alligators of the Ganges or ruthlessly hurled under the wheels of the Jugger-naut car. In China childhood has only a little significance, and especially is this true if the baby is a girl. Frequently the girl baby is strangled or carelessly tossed out into the street to die, if perchance some kindly hearted missionary does not pick her up and nourish her little life. But wherever the religion of Jesus the Christ has become a power no such scenes as these are found. Around the cradle of innocency, in the humblest home or in the gilded palace of wealthy parents, brothers and sisters and envious neighbors stand and with rapt gaze look lovingly upon the little messenger from heaven, while all that is pure and holy in their natures swells up with joy that a new soul has come fresh from the hand of God. Here is one thing just as God would have it, without spot or blemish, and bringing into a sordid world a new suggestion of heaven's love. And who can describe what a good mother feels when she beholds for the first time that which God has given to her? When she presses to her bosom that tiny bundle of humanity and hears the little voice,

MISSION OF THE CHILD

what could purchase from her that heavenly treasure? The unmeasured sacrifice is nothing now in view of the reward which it has brought. She has forgotten her travail for joy that a child is born to her. Suffering, hunger, starvation will not compel the intelligent Christian mother to abandon her child. Nothing short of a power greater than her own will take it away from her. All this is in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. All this is because God has through Christ made known what parental love is.

But Christ's work for the child and with the child is not all done, even in Christian America. We must say with Bishop Bashford that there is a wide difference between evangelization and Christianization. America is perhaps evangelized in that we have heard or may hear the gospel message; but our beloved America is far from Christianized. Through Jesus the Christ the child is entitled to many more privileges than it now enjoys. When it shall have come, as it will come, that in our high social circles the women shall prefer the joys of motherhood to the glitter of the ballroom and the theater; when the home circle shall have become more

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

attractive than the card party; when babies are given preference over the pet dog; when the child in the factory is something more than a cog in a wheel, then the prophecy of Isaiah shall have begun to be realized. When it shall have come to pass that in all our homes the child is considered as a sacred charge from heaven to be nourished and reared in the fear of God, to be dedicated to God at birth, and taught as a religious person from its earliest days, then the prophecy of Isaiah shall have begun to be fulfilled. The animal nature within us shall have been put into subjection and the adult will be a safe playmate for the child, and the poisons of adult impurity will not contaminate infant holiness. When the serious-minded person realizes something of the severity with which Christ condemned the one who offends one of his little ones there will be less carelessness with regard to the religious life of the child and less disregard for the rights of the child in our social scheme.

A little child is a very decided factor in the affairs of life. Man generic is often declared to be God's chiefest work. This is not quite true. Not man generic, but man

MISSION OF THE CHILD

cultured and developed according to God's divine intention, is the noblest work of God. In this great plan the child is no inconsiderable factor in developing this highest product. Second to the name of Deity is the name "mother," God's highest creative achievement. The evolution of mother, besides being the most beautiful reality, is also the most potent social influence in our social life. In my home there is a series of rather unpretentious pictures clipped from a magazine and mounted on a card. It is to be regretted that they are not to be procured in some better form and that the artist did not give wider distribution to his thought. The pictures are entitled "Her Christmases." The first in the series is a little babe in the mother's arms. This is her "First Christmas," and very evidently the mother cherishes the little life as heaven's best gift. It is a Madonna, only the artist has caused the child to be the real center of the picture. The child seems to realize that it has come into an atmosphere of love and feels perfectly at home. The next picture is that of a little girl of perhaps eight years, sweet and pure still as the little babe, surrounded by

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

her playmates, who are sharing with her the evident surprise of a beautifully appointed Christmas tree. This picture is entitled "Her Merriest Christmas." The next is a maiden of sixteen sitting alone, evidently in a meditative mood and considering the Christmas occasion. She is the recipient of many gifts that stir deep emotions within. She is in that marvelous age of wonderment, just bidding farewell to the carefree gayeties of girlhood, reluctantly leaving that which has been so very dear to her, and yet gladly, if hesitatingly, turning to the responsibilities of womanhood. Her girlhood days have been very happy, but all the womanly instincts are beginning to surge within her and she turns hopefully to the future. This one is entitled "Her Sweetest Christmas." The next is the picture of a mother. In her arms is a babe; at her knee is a small child of perhaps three years, completely lost in his love for the mother and the little babe; near by stands a strong lad, whose divided attention is half given to the father, who sits in the background with a look of happy contentment upon his face, while his attention is divided between the happy family circle and

MISSION OF THE CHILD

the book which he holds in his hand. This is a beautiful home circle, and the world holds nothing better. This picture is entitled "Her Happiest Christmas." The last of the series is sad but inexpressively beautiful and suggestive. All alone sits an aged mother. There is the same beautiful face which we have seen all along, but now marked with age. This is "Her Last Christmas." If it were not almost sacrilegious, we might take a look into her thoughts and try to portray them. What sacred memories! What depths of reminiscent love! We will not try to portray them because we would only fail in the attempt. Perhaps some day we may be able to understand what this aged mother feels on this her last Christmas on earth. The artist has called this series "Her Christmases," but I have taken the liberty of naming it "The Evolution of Mother." Not man in the abstract, but mother is God's best work, and childhood is the way God has of developing the mother. Without the little child the mother is an impossibility. The child is God's last agent for effecting the most beautiful refinement.

The second best product of childhood is

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

father. Only a little less decided, but certainly as real and as necessary as the "Evolution of Mother," is the "Evolution of Father." Here are a young man and a young woman, joyous and carefree. They have been drawn together by that indefinable something implanted of God and best understood by him. Life seems to them to be a continuous round of joy undisturbed and their one thought is of themselves. They are lost to the world of hard reality, and struggle and sacrifice have as yet little meaning. But a true home is founded, and we behold them again as father and mother. How changed their life! Not themselves now but another. The father goes to his work with a new stride, because he is impelled by an additional motive more powerful even than he has known before. Once he worked to satisfy chiefly his own desire and the necessities of the newly built home; but now the true father-nature takes hold of him and he works to meet the need of his family. The boy or girl will need something. The home must be a place of comfort for the mother and her child, and his chief joy is in contributing to their joy. The

MISSION OF THE CHILD

child will need to be educated and equipped for life so that life will be a little less difficult for him than it was for the father and mother, and the son may have more of life's advantages. Sacrifice becomes a principle in the parent nature, and God is doing his great work in the parent heart. The dross of selfishness that was so unconsciously there is being consumed. The refining power of love is ridding their souls of one of the subtlest of life's imperfections and adding a touch to the soul that nothing else will give. The father shudders when he hears his boy utter a coarse word that perchance he has learned from him, and he refrains from such words for the sake of his boy. The mother trembles when she sees her baby daughter, now approaching womanhood, walking close to the danger line, and will counsel and practice very careful living for the sake of her daughter. The parents aspire to a better life for their child than they themselves knew, and so they strive to be better for the sake of the child. Isaiah is proving a true prophet. A little child is leading.

In giving the father a secondary position the thought is not that the refining power of

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

childhood makes greater demands upon the mother than upon the father. God calls the father to be as pure and good as the mother. But there is a quality of womanhood which a man cannot possess. It is that indefinable something which brings the strongest man to sit in profound reverence before a frail woman whom he calls mother; that softens his heart in the midst of taxing cares and brings a tear of fond remembrance to his cheek as he closes his eyes and dreams over childhood's days. "Mother" is a peculiar word which no one in all the world can define, but when once fixed in the mind nothing can efface. How many mothers there are who simply in the capacity of mother have stamped themselves ineffaceably upon the pages of history. A woman may possess all the purity and nobility of a true woman, and still she becomes more beautiful in motherhood. The purest, the best, the greatest become purer, better, greater when in God's way they offer themselves and receive from him a gift from heaven, a priceless gift—an immortal soul. The cleanest, noblest man, with life's achievements resting upon him, has not reached his highest unless

MISSION OF THE CHILD

he is a father. This is the divine ideal for God's children, and we are not quite what we might have been if this holy influence has not done its work upon us. The man who, when old, may not be called father has missed one of life's largest blessings. The woman who in her declining years has none to reverence her and call her by the holy name of mother has missed the richest joy that life can give. She has not known God's finishing touches upon her character and has missed a profound good. Heaven and eternity may supply this lack, but certain it is that earth life apart from this relation is measurably incomplete.

If we are correct in supposing that in some measure Isaiah's prophecy is being fulfilled in this process of animal subjugation, we have, then, a divine agency at work, namely, the discipline of responsibility. The crying need is that Christ's gospel of childhood be preached and taught and lived until everywhere the child shall be placed in his proper sphere. The child, according to nature and in Christ's declaration, is not a neutral something, a matter of accident which needs no care until he can look out

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

for himself. To inure the animal to hardship early in his life may possibly fit him for the hardship of burden-bearing which he must undertake later on. But the same theory certainly will not fit the moral nature of the child. The child may partially recover from the injuries of early neglect by reason of other influences applied, but that does not change the fact that so far as parenthood has been concerned in his case it has been a failure. The child needs the parent and the parent needs the child. There is a reciprocal influence without which the circle of life is very incomplete. Home is an anomaly without the child, society is empty and meaningless, and heaven itself is incomplete if we obliterate the thought of childhood. Suppose that God, in his infinite power, should decide to replenish the earth with men and women fully grown, and presently we should know nothing more of childhood either as a fact or as an ideal. What sort of a place would this world become? Home would be merely a place to stay; society would become a mockery; heaven would lose half its glory. Zechariah seeks to portray the beauties of the

MISSION OF THE CHILD

New Jerusalem and the crowning glory of his thought is that "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Obliterate the parental relation and thus deprive us of the holy word "mother," and second to that the sacred word "father," and rob us of childhood and baby purity, and we would not long enjoy this world, as barren as the desert sands, no single flower blooming to brighten its gloom.

O thou who didst delight in the name "Father," into which thou hast wrapped both the tenderness of our human word "mother" and the strength of our earthly conception of "father"; thou who knowest all the value of purity and love, teach us to hallow these holy relations, and to crown mother with richest jewels and clothe father with a robe of sanctity and enthrone son or daughter on love's throne to bind together firmly all our earthly loves and fit us for heaven's atmosphere.

If there is happiness below,
In such a home she's shrined;
The human heart can never know
Enjoyment more refined.

The child is a religious person. A child is

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

a moral possibility rather than a religious actuality. A child is commonly considered a neutral factor religiously until such a time as he begins to talk religion intelligently, and then we are wont to assert that his moral nature has just begun to unfold. He has arrived at the years of accountability. Then we begin trying to "get him converted," and we strive to do something definite in his behalf. If we do not believe this we at least act as though we did and the result for the child is essentially the same. It is this belief—if in some cases it is a belief, or habit, if in other cases it is only following what is common without any definite belief—against which I wish to protest most vigorously and urge upon parents a more careful consideration of the child's religious nature. I repeat that a child is a religious person—is at birth and never loses that identity. We have been seeking through travel and the verdict of history to prove that man is universally religious. The proposition is sufficiently well established and generally accepted in philosophy, theology, history, and science in general. "I am satisfied that character is distinctly

MISSION OF THE CHILD

shown at the age of two or three months," said Oliver Wendell Holmes. Let us carry the fact to its reasonable beginning and admit that the child is inherently religious. We have brooded so long over "inbred sin" and "total depravity" that they have crowded out the conception of the divine in man, and we have come to talk of the child as though he were the offspring of Satan rather than the sweetest, purest gift from heaven. It is high time that we should blot some words out of our theological vocabulary and frame a language that fittingly expresses our beliefs. We have been so concerned with the theology of these words that it has blinded us to the real religious nature of the child. It would be interesting, if it were not so much a digression from the main purpose, to consider in this connection something of the history of childhood religion. Some references only must suffice. I stood one day before a large sepulcher in old Copp's Hill Cemetery in Boston. The tomb differed from all the others, being considerably larger, and so it elicited some questions from the company of people of whom I was one. We were informed by the sexton that

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

the tomb had been prepared in an early day, in the time of the Revs. John and Cotton Mather, to receive the bodies of all children who had died without having been baptized. The tomb contains the bodies of two hundred and twenty-eight children who were pronounced eternally lost by these and subsequent reverend gentlemen, whose bodies might not be buried beside those of their parents because such an act would contaminate the consecrated ground; and the sole crime of these children was that they had died without having been baptized. And this has not been so very long ago, for Cotton Mather died in the year 1728. Moreover, it is not to be supposed that this idea passed away with him. It held firm place in the minds of great theologians for some years after that. I am persuaded that about the first vision that was granted these very worthy fathers was a chorus of these same little children singing the glad songs of heaven and extending a welcoming hand to these good men, and rejoicing that now, by their final emancipation from the narrowness of human thought, they are released from their gross ignorance and superstition.

MISSION OF THE CHILD

“Merciful God, make room for a little fellow,” prayed a lad who was dying and who had been taught after this fashion, and I believe God heard that prayer. Who of us would dare to stand before that tomb to-day and say that all those children are lost eternally because they died having not been baptized? Who of us would stand beside the casket of our own babe and feel for the smallest instant that there is any question of his acceptance with God? And all this too without there having been any ecclesiastical intervention whatever. God never spoke any such doctrine, and the Christ who took a little child in his arms and said, “To such belongeth the kingdom,” had a right to say what he did and knew what he was saying. Shall we not recognize his teaching as authoritative? Shall we not act consistently thereto? Dr. Rishell has well asked, “Will God do more for the child dead than the child alive?” If the babe in the casket is God’s chosen, why is not that one in the mother’s arms also? It is our duty to receive the child from God’s hand, and, working in obedience to his will, help the child to unfold its religious nature as the sun and

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

the dew and the breeze help the rose to bud and bloom. If blight strike the rosebud, it unfolds with difficulty. The parent must shield the budding child soul from the blight of sin. The child is responsive to all influences which correspond to implanted instincts. He will respond to proper appeals to his religious instincts just as surely as he turns to his mother's breast for nourishment. Intelligent religious parenthood will seek to know those religious instincts of the child and will zealously apply the proper stimuli to them to awaken them into activity. We must father and mother the religious possibilities of the child just as earnestly, or even more earnestly, than we do the physical and mental possibilities. We are not to rear simply a physical and mental being, but also a religious person.

We unthinkingly assume that because the child cannot reason in just our way and converse in our high-sounding religious terminology, he cannot think about God and truth. We are sometimes startled by the sudden revelations of mental currents in children. What parent has not been thus startled and sometimes greatly perplexed

MISSION OF THE CHILD

to know how to answer the child question? A bright girl of six years, the daughter of a Methodist preacher, rather startled her father one day by asking concerning a certain sermon which she had heard him preach, "Papa, was that the truth you were telling to-day, or were you just preaching?" The father discovered that he had a critic who took the liberty of even questioning the veracity of her father. He discovered that this youthful daughter was revolving over in her mind the things he had declared, and because she was having a hard time reconciling them to her own meager experiences she was inclined to doubt them. It was personally very important to him that he should hold that daughter's confidence in his knowledge and veracity and that he should be able to convince her that when he was in the pulpit he was declaring sacred truth. If this child mind was inquisitive, why may not all our children be thus inquisitive, and, therefore, how great is the responsibility of the preacher as he stands before children? These thoughts sobered the father-preacher, as well they might, and he recognized as never before that "just

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

preaching” is not all there is to standing in the pulpit. The same daughter accompanied her father to hear a neighboring pastor preach on a certain occasion. At the dinner table following the morning sermon the daughter manifested great earnestness of thought and finally broke into vigorous conversation. Bringing her little fist down upon the table she declared, “I just don’t understand this business.” “What business?” asked her father. “Well, that preacher said that Jesus was the Son of God, and then turned right round and said he was the Son of man. I just can’t understand such talk.” That girl of six summers was wrestling with the problem of the incarnation even as older folks have done. She was thinking big thoughts.

If a very personal reference may be pardoned, I will illustrate the thought further by an incident that transpired in my own home. One day our little boy, at that time four years old, was sitting on his mother’s lap talking very intimately with her. It was eventime, and as he was wont at that hour he was in a very confidential mood. Suddenly breaking away from the line of

MISSION OF THE CHILD

conversation which had until then engaged them, he said, "Mamma, when I grow up you won't need two men will you?" To which his mamma replied: "I suppose not, son. Why do you ask?" "Well, then," was the answer, "when I get to be a big man, and you don't need two men, then I will go way over to China and tell the little heathen boys and girls about Jesus." What did this mean? "Nothing at all. Just a childish fancy." That is what most people will say, but I do not believe it. I think it means much. It means that that mother, because she was interested in missions and had talked sympathetically with the boy about the children who had never known about Jesus, had stimulated a very proper religious impulse in the child's heart. She had touched one of the divinely implanted springs that God had intended should be touched to help open up that child's life. It means that, in case we are able under God to keep that child heart open toward God, the Father will have a chance at the man's heart, and if the crying needs of China and the mission fields are kept before his youthful mind in the next few years as they have been in the past, that

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

his heart will most likely go out in yearning for God's great work and he will quite likely hear the voice of God verifying the impulses of his childish mind. God help us that as parents we may do nothing that will thwart his divine purpose and forestall his leadings. May the Great Father help all parents to do their duty and let him have a chance at the child heart. May we make it easy for God's Spirit to get a hearing in the ear of the children.

What, then, is the significance of these undercurrents of child thought that occasionally break out in such startling manifestations? There is nothing miraculous or unnatural about them. It is the subconscious self, upon which impressions have been made, becoming the conscious self and assuming control. The child soul is very impressionable and is constantly being affected by the atmosphere in which it lives, and these outbursts of thought are simply the evidences of these impressions. The child mind is bringing forth of those things which it has in store. But these impressions are of the greatest importance because some of them are lasting. It is not uncommon for

MISSION OF THE CHILD

our great religious leaders to remember these early impressions as the beginning of their distinctive call to religious work. There can be no reason to doubt that many a mother has been used of God to assist him in fixing the call to definite religious work in the mind of the child. A case is known to the writer of a mother whose early desire was to go to the mission field. That was her intention, and as a girl she prepared herself for that work. But when she was ready to go the Mission Board could not send her for some reason, and she was compelled to enter religious work at home. Later she became a wife and mother. To-day her seven children are all in distinctively religious work, some filling prominent pulpits, while three are in the mission field. Who shall say that the consuming desire of that mother had nothing to do with her children's call to the work? The writer's own experience verifies this same principle, if he may be allowed to relate it. When a lad of eight years I joined the church on my own motion and without extra persuasion, except that a revival meeting was in progress and that many were being converted. At that time I

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

had a distinct conception that when I became a man I would become a preacher. It was no idealizing or following after a youthful hero, but a distinct inward conviction. I do not hesitate to say that even then I had "a call to the ministry." I said nothing about it for fear of being teased. (May some superior wisdom help us not to tease children about these sacred things.) Later in life, as I came to be about eighteen, I decided that I would not preach, but would fit myself for the profession of law. I was religious still, and all the time had a consciousness of what God wanted me to do, but was rebellious about it. Finally, during a series of special services, I was led to consecrate myself to whatever service God wanted. I went home from that service to tell my mother what I had done, supposing that it would all be news to her. When I told her she calmly but with very deep feeling said, "Well, I knew you would do it. I consecrated you to the service of God on the day of your birth. You were my eighth son, and I thought out of so many surely I ought to have one who would be especially a servant of God and the church." Let all

MISSION OF THE CHILD

disparage these influences who may so desire, but I for one prefer to give them their full credit. I cannot escape the conviction that this thought, having been thus fixed in the mother, found expression in her life in various ways, consciously or unconsciously, and thus influenced my subconscious self, and all this apart from the power of my mother's prayer. There is a reciprocal and psychological action here as well as a direct answer to prayer, in both of which I heartily believe. I wish, however, to emphasize the first condition, because if we neglect that, we make it quite hard for God to answer our prayers. We ask God to bless and use our children, while possibly we are doing little to make the answer to the prayer possible. We can touch the divinely implanted springs in the child soul and help him to unfold them. God expects us to do our part in giving him access to the soul.

Thus the child assumes its natural position in Christ. It comes from God and its nature is godlike. Its soul is not sin-tainted but pure as heaven itself. Its Christlike nature responds to every Christlike ministration. If only we can get away from our

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

careless moments and wisely determine the impressions our children shall receive, we will have helped the Divine by so much in shaping the future. Dr. W. B. Inge, professor of divinity at Cambridge, has forcefully summed up this general idea in the following words: "It is certain that in individual experience authority is the earliest ground of belief. We are none of us born with a belief in God; but we are all born with a tendency to believe what we are told. A child can be made to believe almost anything. He does not believe because he wishes to believe, or because the things presented to him for acceptance appear to him to be useful or beautiful or desirable in any way. He is quite as ready to believe in ghosts and hobgoblins as in angels and good fairies. As he began to speak by parrot talk, so he begins to think by accepting facts without criticizing them, and assumes that whatever he hears and understands has a place in the world of reality. It is only after sad experience of the deceitfulness of appearances that he unlearns his first confidence, and begins to doubt and question and disbelieve." Thus we see the nature with

MISSION OF THE CHILD

which God invests the child. Rest assured the Father is doing all in his power for his little child and expects us to do our part. The subconscious nature of the child is being molded by us now, but one day it will assume control of the child. The largest and most potent influences will be planted in the subconscious nature of the child. Thank God for good fathers and mothers! Thank God for the church and the Sunday school and godly men and women! These are indeed the chief agencies in molding the men and women of the future. We cannot be too careful in selecting the material that goes to make up the web of the delicate child soul either to mar or make it of surpassing beauty. The home atmosphere, the church atmosphere, the playmates, what we say to the child in its earliest years, what we do not speak before the child that we should speak, how we act before the child—all these things are determining factors in the child life. Why not speak good things to the child rather than merely amusing things? Why not steep the little mind with things that you will wish him to retain and will be glad to see unfold later on rather than things

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

which he must unlearn? Such teaching is well worth our while, and to neglect it is to neglect our greatest opportunity as parents.

What, then are the demands of the child's religious life? Remembering that the child is naturally religious but without fixed beliefs, we discover that there is great need of care and careful training. As parents we are to discover the God-implanted instincts and so encourage them with proper stimulation that they will respond and awaken and lead the child in the right direction. The child has a right to a religious opportunity. The rose makes its demands, which being denied, it will never bloom. Child nature makes its demands, and if they are denied in part or as a whole, a dwarfed product at best is all that can be obtained. We must come to regard the child as Christ regarded him, and, recognizing the delicate nature of the task, strive manfully to do the blessed work that God has placed in our hands. We have the tools and the material. Let us study to be workmen that need not to be ashamed, always remembering that it were better for us that we had not been born than that we should offend one of his little ones.

CHAPTER III

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

And they were bringing unto him little children, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.—*Mark 10. 13-16.*

... the innocents alarmed
Amid the throng of faces all unknown,
Shrink trembling, till their wandering eyes discern
The countenance of Jesus, beaming love
And pity; eager then they stretch their arms,
And, cowering, lay their heads upon his breast.
—*James Grahame.*

“O, the trusting, sweet confiding
Of the child heart! Would that I
Thus might trust my heavenly Father,
He who hears my feeblest cry.”

CHAPTER III

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

LIFE is complex, being composed of numerous factors. It is impossible in any case to analyze life completely and separate it into all its component parts. We cannot trace with absolute certainty many resultants to their initial causes since various influences and forces overlap and intermingle so that it is impossible to completely differentiate them. We have accustomed ourselves, however, to some general classifications which serve a purpose and enable us to identify influences and thus make a more careful study than would otherwise be possible. Character is a resultant of three major factors—heredity, environment, and choice. No one can draw a clear line of distinction between them, indicating just where one leaves off and the other begins. No one can tell how heredity and environment have affected choice, and in turn no

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

one can tell to what extent environment may be the result of choice. The respective influences that we classify under these heads blend into each other, and it is impossible to make a scientific classification of all the various threads of influence that have come to make up the great chain of life. So, then, in using these commonly recognized classifications there is no thought of being arbitrary and of forcing certain influences into one class and others into another or of attempting to distinguish clearly between these various realms as though they were very specific. We use them merely as aids to our thought and not as a final and complete analysis. We are not at all concerned about the classification, but desire very earnestly to understand the workings of the various influences so as to make an intelligent use of them in the religious training of children. Child life will surely move along certain lines, and the more we can learn about the lines along which the child life will surely go, the better able will we be to assist properly in directing it. We will find on careful study that these forces are of such a character that we can intelligently

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

conform the environment in relation to the heredity and bring them to bear upon the child life with a desired resultant in view.

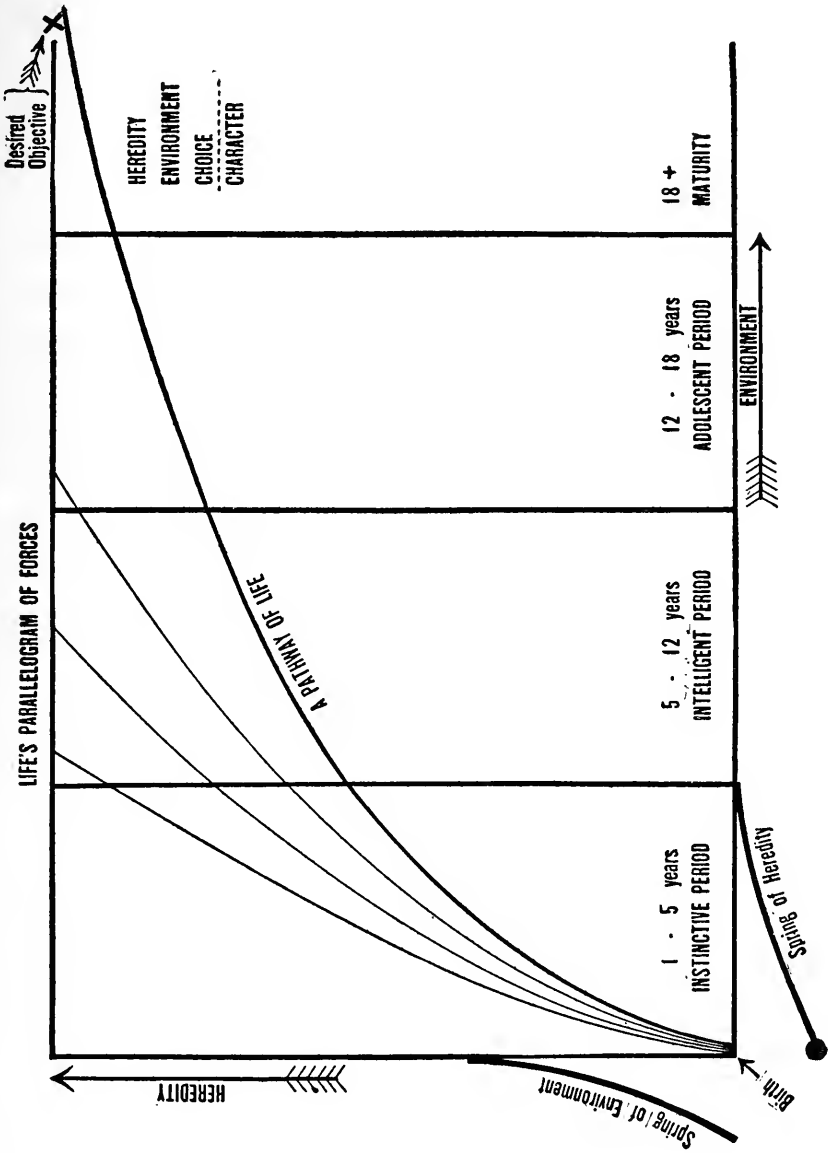
The accompanying chart is intended to assist us in fixing more firmly some principles which work in the religion of childhood by inducing us to use both our eyes and our ears. It is a very simple diagram, or perhaps we might better say two simple diagrams combined into one chart. The parallelogram has to do with both illustrations. The heavy line curving across the chart called A Pathway of Life is the chief feature of the first. This line is designed to represent a resultant of two forces, heredity and environment, operating simultaneously upon the life of a child. The parallelogram divided into sections is intended to represent the relative natural divisions in child development. This manifestly cannot be arbitrary because children differ; but it has a value as an approximation. From one to five years is the infancy period, or the age in which the child is impelled largely by instinct. Somewhere near five years the moral consciousness begins to unfold and the child begins to do things from the stand-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

point of reason. Therefore from five to twelve is called the intelligent period, or the time when intelligence comes into control. From twelve to eighteen there takes place the great transformation, physically and mentally and morally, which causes this age to be called the adolescent period. Beyond this we have not attempted to go, and, accordingly, we have left the chart open toward maturity, indicating that we are not attempting to follow the lines of influence clear through to the end. We are seeking to deal only with childhood. As the child gradually passes from one stage to another the element of choice increases in forcefulness and should be the one predominating force at maturity. As a matter of fact, many people in maturity are not controlled by intelligent choice, as they should be, but are still creatures impelled by external influences, as in childhood. Doubtless we are all susceptible of influences in all our years, but it is manifestly the divine intention that intelligent choice should play the predominating part.

I have called this chart Life's Parallelogram of Forces. The idea of the chart had its rise in a very simple experiment in ele-

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT



PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

mentary physics, known as the parallelogram of forces. Let the rectangular figure of the chart represent the top of a table and you will have the experiment before you. At one corner of the table are arranged two flat springs, set one parallel to the side of the table and the other parallel to the end of the table and therefore at right angles to each other. These springs are so arranged as to be set and discharged either one at a time or both simultaneously and the discharged springs will roll a small marble across the table. The direction of this ball is determined by the amount of force expended relatively by each spring. Set one spring alone so as to strike the ball and the ball will travel in a course at right angles to the base of the spring. Set both springs at equal tension and discharge them simultaneously, and the ball will travel in a line bisecting the angle made by the lines drawn through the base of the springs, or at an angle of 45 degrees, being influenced equally by each force and dividing the difference between the two. Set one spring at eight ounces and the other at four ounces and discharge them simultaneously, and the re-

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

sultant will be in the ratio of two to one, or 60 degrees to 30 degrees. Accordingly, any desired resultant may be obtained by determining the relative force to be applied in each direction. Increase one spring above the other and the resultant pathway will be bent in that direction. Now let one of these springs represent Heredity and the other Environment, as indicated on the chart. The element of choice we leave out because we are dealing with childhood in its earliest days when choice is at most a very small factor. Let the marble, placed in position ready to be sent on its way by the force of the springs, represent the life of a child just launched upon the pathway which it is to travel. Heredity is a force to be considered. Environment is a force to be reckoned with. Can we modify these forces and obtain a desired resultant or are they fixed principles determining the child life with fatalistic surety? Every child begins life with these great forces bearing upon him. In a given case what will be the resultant? Manifestly, the early steps of the child will be determined by these forces and the relative pressure of one against the other will cause the life to

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

travel in a line which is determined by these relative pressures. If we have a desired objective point in mind for the child and can in some degree influence these forces, we can by that assistance help the life to arrive at the desired destination.

Much discussion is occasioned often because we fail to understand each other's position and use words which do not convey the same meaning to all. "Heredity" and "environment" are words which different people invest with different meanings. I think it will be well for me to make plain, if I can, what I conceive these forces to be, and then in future use of them seek to confine myself to that conception. This I will endeavor to do. What is heredity? Heredity is a biological law according to which a parent transmits something of his own nature to his offspring. This is the simplest definition that I have been able to find. Notice, heredity is a biological law. Many people upon hearing the word "heredity" entangle it with moral laws and soon have it so involved that it is devoid of intelligent meaning for them. Heredity proper has nothing to do with morals. It is not a bad

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

principle of which we are to be afraid and which we are to seek to eliminate from human nature. It is a divinely implanted law, and only its neglect and abuse have brought it into disrepute. Heredity has to do with the physical self only. The newborn soul is God's handiwork and is therefore perfect. The human machinery through which the soul must express itself may be badly affected by heredity, and because we in this life allow the flesh to command the soul so often, heredity working on the flesh may lay the foundations for evil acts and thus come indirectly to have a moral bearing. But we cannot properly say that a result of the law of heredity is one with the law itself. Heredity may be employed to lay the foundations for good deeds just as surely as for evil. For this reason we want an intelligent understanding of the law which the Divine has implanted in our physical natures and which he wants us to use for good instead of allowing it to work evil against the divine will.

Manifestly, there is a law according to which a parent tends to transmit his own likeness to his children. I need not dwell

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

on this at length. Color of hair and eyes, the shape of the ears and the nose; in short, the general type of the parent is often perpetuated in the children. We expect our children to be measurably like us, and are disappointed if this likeness is not marked. These family resemblances and mannerisms go down for many generations, as is evidenced by comparison of family portraits and family records. Nor is the likeness limited to physical characteristics. Temperaments are handed down from one generation to another through a long line of descendants. All this is very well known. We have said that heredity itself is not a moral law, but that does not preclude the possibility of the results of this law, as it lays a foundation upon which our moral natures must act.

Most of our mature accomplishments are acquired. The little babe cannot do many things. He is a bundle of instincts, which, being stimulated, cause him to practice some simple movements until he acquires dexterity. He wants his thumb in his mouth, and for some time he is not real sure whether it will arrive at his mouth or in his eye. Give

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

him time to practice and he will be able to find his mouth very readily. Now, heredity did not impel him to put his thumb in his mouth probably, but it did help him to decide whether he preferred his right or his left thumb. Native instinct which is common to all impelled him, and after a while he will have coordinated his nerves and muscles so that they will work together, and he will be able to do something well. He will have acquired a habit. So throughout life our nerves and muscles respond within limits to the demands which we make of them repeatedly. You watch a skillful smith drawing out a piece of steel. It looks very easy, and you understand the theory of steel working perfectly. All there is to it is to bring the steel up to a certain temperature and then hammer it into the desired shape. Yes, that is all; but you take this smith's hammer and go to work, and you will find that while your brain may know enough still your arm is untrained. You cannot readily do that which seems so easy for the skilled mechanic. You observe a carpenter dressing a board, and it looks very simple just to run that sharp plane up and down the board, smooth-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

ing off all the rough places. Anybody ought to be able to run a plane. Try it and see. Your arm will probably fail to harmonize with your brain or nerve centers, and you will dig more holes in the board than you smooth out. A musician sits down at a piano and his fingers glide over the keys so lightly that your eye can scarcely follow the movements, and so rapidly do they move that it is impossible for the musician himself to think out each separate movement. How does he do it? He has developed his nerve centers somewhere so nicely that they take care of the movements without the necessity of individual thought for each movement. This is simple physiology, and well known and commonplace, but it is also very significant for our thought. We discover that the brain and the nerve centers of these men who are skilled in some line that requires thought and develops dexterity are somewhat different from the same organs in the ignorant and unlearned. Because of the demand for enlarged nerve centers the brain must have more surface for the distribution of the gray matter, and so we find the brain convolving or folding

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

over itself more pronouncedly on the part of the thoughtful man than on the part of the man with idle mind. Things done repeatedly, therefore, have an effect upon the physical formation of the brain and tend to perpetuate themselves. It is easier for us to do the second time what we have once done and so on until habit is formed.

Now, this is the point for our consideration in this connection: may not the parent transmit his brain formations to his child to a certain extent and thus predispose the child to act as he acts? If our physiologists are right in their observations of the brain, and their conclusions that all action springs from certain specific nerve centers; and if certain acts tend to conform the brain and become permanent, leading to habit with the parent, why may not the parent transmit to the child a brain pattern like his own just as well as a skull shaped like his or a general physical type like the father's? If we measurably affect the color of the eyes and hair, the complexion, the build, the manner of walking—all these familiar inheritances—why may we not also have something to do with perpetuating these brain forma-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

tions, bringing the child into the world already inclined toward certain actions? There go a father and son. They walk almost exactly alike. How comes this to be true? The father's motions are controlled by certain nerve centers, the physiologist tells us. So also are the son's, and the nerve centers must be similarly organized to produce so similar movements. How responsible is the father for transmitting that predisposed nerve center? Clearly, there is a relation. How intimate is the relation no one can say exactly. But heredity has done this—this biological law of which we are speaking, and this is what heredity does, and this is all that heredity does. It predisposes the animal foundation through which the soul must express itself to move in a certain way. It becomes moral only as it eventually involves a moral action. But this is no small matter. It is large enough, for the parent who comprehends all that is involved in this will surely think twice before he forms a habit that will tend to work toward evil results in his son. It has been said that if you would pick a man, you must first pick his grandfather. In this very

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

democratic age we do not quite like to apply this rule to men, but it is true in part at least. We apply it to the lower animals for more than two generations, and it holds in man as truly, only that man has more power of recovery than has the unreasoning animal and may regain what his father has lost. There seems to be no valid reason, therefore, why the brain and nerve centers may not take their shape after the parents just as well as any other physical feature. This being true, we find that the physical foundation for our conduct is a subject worthy of our most careful study. Deeds springing first from inherent impulse, and hence innocent, come to have a moral aspect. It is well to know what prompts us to do the things which we do. If we have inherited a tendency to move in a given direction, or if we observe that our children have inherited a tendency to move in a certain direction, we will be called upon to foster that tendency if it be good or to eradicate it if it be evil. We are also called upon to see to it that we transmit only the good.

It is observed that children of a musician are rather more likely to become musicians,

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

or at least to evidence musical genius, than the children of the unmusical. The children of a mechanic are usually of a mechanical turn. These are commonly observed facts; but carry them on a little further and into slightly different realms. The child of a drunkard is likely to have predisposed tastes in that direction, which if once aroused, are hard to suppress. The father who uses tobacco makes it more probable that his son will follow in his steps. Some illustrations will emphasize this fact. In a certain county-seat town in Iowa there was a school superintendent who used tobacco. He had one small son, who at the age of four years got hold of a cigar and was endeavoring to smoke it. The father thought he would cure him of such tricks, and so he sat him upon a chair and lighted the cigar for him and commanded him to smoke it, supposing, of course, that a few puffs would make him very sick and cure him of his desire for tobacco. To the dismay of the father, however, the lad very calmly smoked the cigar all up and politely asked for another. Evidently, he had enjoyed the cigar without the least suggestion of nausea

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

which usually follows in such cases. That lad never would have any trouble in using tobacco, and why? Because he had come into the world immune to nicotine poison. A certain man who is the father of seven sons, all of whom use tobacco, rather protested against some remarks made by a preacher about parental influence in this particular. He declared that he quit using tobacco in the home and carefully taught his boys to avoid it, but in spite of his example and precept every boy seemed to take to it naturally. Surely—and why? Because he did not quit in time to get the habit out of his nature before he became a father, and, taking his own story for the case, he had doubtless predisposed his sons in that direction. In a town where I was once pastor there lives a greatly afflicted child. Upon inquiry, I learned that the child was born while both parents were addicted to the use of morphine, and the child is drunk with that drug all the time, and will be so long as she lives. She herself knows nothing of the drug, but acts just like one who is under the influence of morphine. The father is dead, and the mother, a very intellectual

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

woman, is taking the best of care of her afflicted daughter; but there is no cure for this outworking of the biological law which we are studying. Her nerve centers are organized after the pattern of her parents when they gave her life, and she persists in being controlled by those same nerves.

What, then, are the logical conclusions concerning these facts? There are at least two: 1. The parent should be a well-trained individual. 2. We should think of our attainments not alone as something which we may enjoy, but also as something which we may transmit to our children. The parent should cultivate only those qualities which he wishes to perpetuate in his child, and should seek to eliminate from his own character all those things which he does not desire to hand down to his posterity. No act or thought should be allowed to become a part of our lives that we would dislike to see developing in our child. We ought to give as much attention to the ancestry of our children as we do to our driving horses, our cattle, and our hogs. The laws which govern the development of our fine stock are just as operative in the production of boys and

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

girls. We do not expect track horses from Norman stock, nor beef cattle from Jersey breeds, nor pork from Missouri "Elm Peelers." Neither do we expect the best sort of children from parents who dissipate any power of mind or body. But we must not dwell too much upon this phase of our subject lest we be diverted from our main purpose. The question proper is this: Given a child already possessing the impress of heredity, some elements working for good and some for evil, what course shall we follow to further develop the good which heredity has preserved and at the same time eliminate that which is evil? This is to be our chief consideration, and while we realize that it is a great question, we will nevertheless attempt to discuss it with a view to helpfulness to those who may study with us. If we have recognized the fact as it is, and note the possibilities in the case, we are better able to deal with it than otherwise.

Plainly, the force which we must balance against the power of heredity to conserve the good and destroy the evil is the influence of environment. By environment we mean all influences which have their rise external

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

to self; influences which arise from our social, educational, business, and religious life. We are necessarily subjected to influences from these sources. No man liveth to himself, and if he could isolate himself from his fellow men he would still be influenced by the natural conditions surrounding him, and his conduct and hence his character would be influenced thereby. We usually take what comes by way of environment as a matter of course, so that with most people the ultimate effect is determined by accident rather than reason. This need not and should not be the case. The parent cannot wholly determine the child's environment, but he may have much to do with it—much more than the average parent does. If he will give his attention to it, he may correct some very objectionable features of his child's surroundings, even to the extent of changing communities if need be, because the child character is more important than social or business advantage. The father can well afford to make something of a financial sacrifice, if in so doing he can better the surroundings of his children. If a man have an ideal of life toward which he wishes

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

to direct the life of his child, he may to a very large extent determine for and create around the child certain influences which will tend toward that desired end.

A certain father, known to the writer, has three daughters. A very unfortunate sickness robbed these girls of their mother, a woman of unusual personality, who had impressed herself quite definitely upon her daughters, though they were still mere children when she was taken away. The father and mother had together held highest ideals for their children, and the father, after being deprived of the mother's help, determined still to carry out the ideals of the home. He wanted his girls each to have a good education and the development that comes with a good college course. Accordingly, he talked education to the girls from childhood. He kept the thought before them constantly, and in all their plans this one thing was uppermost and the one end toward which business and social plans were bent. The father outlined their high school course with them with reference to their college course and never allowed them to get their eyes off the completion of their college work. As a

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

result of this fixing of home influences and determining of environment, those girls are moving easily and naturally in the direction outlined. They have scarce thought of anything else than that they were going to college and master the course offered.

This is a good illustration of what can be done in this regard. Many more homes might be doing this if only they would give it the time and effort. It requires that we shall make the desired end very definite and enforce that thing with every opportunity. Many a life has been molded by wise conduct on the part of the parents, who, recognizing certain possible results from a very undesirable environment, have purposely formed environment to meet the needs of the child. Thus environment is a force that may be regulated to a very considerable extent and molded perceptibly in accordance with our wishes. For the very young child environment may be made largely a matter of the home circle. Wherever environment, external to the home circle, cannot be changed materially, still those elements under the control of the parents may be regulated and made to play the larger part in the develop-

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

ment of the child's life until he can be so trained that he will reject the objectionable and use the good. Thus by parents controlling the home influence they can determine the largest factor in early environment. As a matter of fact, they can go far beyond the home, as we shall see as we proceed with this discussion.

Given heredity, then, as a fixed force in the life, what shall we do with the force of environment to make the outcome what we desire? We are starting with the little child for whom the parents have done all they can by transmitted influence. They have invested him with tendencies good and bad. We desire that the resultant of that life shall be a certain fixed goal. How shall we bend the young life so that it will arrive in its pathway at the place desired? This is the big problem before us as parents and church workers. God has given a soul into our hands to mold after an ideal which he has been teaching us. It is serious business, the very biggest work we have to do.

With this preliminary explanation of these two forces clearly in mind, we are now

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

ready for a study of the chart. Let one spring represent heredity working in a certain direction as indicated by the arrow, and let the other spring represent environment working at right angles to the spring of heredity, and it will serve to illustrate the way in which we must work seeking to regulate the pathway of life and to accomplish a desired resultant. One phase of the chart illustration needs to be qualified in order to be true. In the experiment in physics from which the illustration comes both forces are constants and the value of each may be determined from the beginning. The force of heredity, as we have said, is a constant, but environment is a variable. At birth there are wrapped up within the child all the tendencies which heredity can impart. They will gradually unfold and reveal themselves, and sometimes one will appear as a new force; but if it is an hereditary force, manifestly it is unfolding from within the life itself. So the resultant of heredity is a straight line. That is to say, if there were no law operating on the life except heredity, it would follow in the line of ancestry absolutely. This is largely true of our animals.

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Given their ancestry, we know reasonably well what they are going to be. But manifestly human nature is different. We are the same as to animal foundation, but that life principle which gives us superiority over the lower orders of animals also magnifies the principle of personality and makes possible a larger divergence from the original. There are other forces brought to bear upon man. But the force of environment, which is a variable, may be increased in some particulars and reduced in others, and thus be made to yield a greater deflection continually, so that the resultant of these forces working together on the same life will be a curved path something like the dark line of the chart, the curvature of which will be determined by the relative strength of the two forces. It may be that instead of the dark line, which we will suppose represents the ideal, the life will follow one of these other paths, according to conditions. Notice especially that an increase of the force of environment early in the development of the curve has a far greater determining force than when applied later. This is one of the points which I wish the chart

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

to impress. The curved line is a segment of an ellipse, and a deflection at the point of greatest curvature has much more effect than at any other point. Thus a direction given to the infant life is vastly more effective than at any other period in life. The best time and the easiest time to determine the resultant of the combined forces of life is at the earliest possible moment when a little direction means so much. This, therefore, is a plea to the parents to study the early environment of their children, and to determine some things for their children which, if undetermined, will come in a more or less accidental way, but if determined properly, will practically assure the desired ultimate outcome. Our greatest weakness as Protestants to-day is our wanton neglect of the religion of our children. When will we arouse ourselves to some saner method of preventing the loss which is so apparent and so painful to us all?

The child is susceptible to external influences at the earliest moment. The child is a soul, and there is wrapped up within him a subconscious nature as impressionable as wax, upon which the parent will make deep

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

impressions and upon which the wise parent will desire to make only the right impressions. That little bundle of humanity, which a few hours ago was so susceptible to prenatal influences, is now only a little less impressionable. We are gentle with the mother, very properly for her sake and for the child's sake, but we must remember that the child's impressionable self has changed but little at birth. It is still quick to receive any impression. Shall we say that it makes no difference into what atmosphere this little soul comes? Shall we say that, so far as the intelligence and disposition are concerned, the first six months or a year might just as well be spent in one environment as another? Personally, I must declare my belief that the first six months of a child's life will have a very decided bearing on his whole childhood and hence his life. His nervous mother can jolt and trot a nervous temperament into him regardless of his naturally rugged constitution. Or given a nervous disposition, a little sensible handling may help very materially to correct that defect, and certainly very much more rapidly now than at any later period. This fact makes it im-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

possible to distinguish very sharply between heredity and environment.

There can be no doubt that we often attribute certain traits to heredity which have been trained into the child rather than born in him. The system of nursing children which modern high social life demands without doubt often reproduces the nurse character as much as the mother character. Very early in life the child will begin to reciprocate the smiles of his mother's face, and just as surely will feel the reflex influence of her tired and cross looks. Some mothers are compelled to work so hard that they have little of their better self to give to their children. But pity the child whose mother allows social functions of any sort to sap her vitality until she has nothing but cross looks and curt replies for her child. Will not his disposition most surely be affected thereby? The child upon whom genuine affection is lavished will certainly respond with affection, and the tendency will be to develop a loving and gentle nature. The reverse of this is equally true. The child who never has affectionate treatment is likely to be rather cold in his temperament.

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Now, these are common observations, but they serve to illustrate a principle that goes even deeper than the matter of affections. Just as the child will receive these material and temperamental impressions long before he is conscious of what they involve, so also will he receive religious impressions. Indeed, we may say that these temperamental qualities are moral because they become the foundation for action that after a while comes to have moral significance. There never has been a greater heresy preached than that we should do nothing religiously for the child until he is able to choose for himself.

Some parents assume to be very liberal and broad, and do not desire to predetermine some things for their child. They do not wish to prejudice the child. They forget that it is their chief business to prejudice the child very decidedly in favor of religion, and if they do not do it, the forces of evil will be very busy prejudicing the child against the good and in favor of the evil. What has God given the child parents for if not to secure proper direction for youthful feet? "It is a mistake to suppose that

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

children are not able to comprehend the fundamental reasons for taking up the Christian life which we would use in trying to persuade adults to the service of our Lord. They ought in all fairness to be told that a religious life is not merely a beautiful dream, which is to end in a glorious transfiguration of those who pursue it, but that it is a resolute attaching of one's life to Jesus Christ, with the intention of serving him and those for whom he died" (Northwestern Christian Advocate Editorial).

I repeat that it is the parent's chief business to have the child very decidedly prejudiced in favor of the good as against the evil by the time he is able to choose for himself. The influences of evil surrounding the child are very active and will most surely have bent the child in that direction if we have not filled the child life with good things. It is simply the voice of ignorance and misinformation that declares otherwise. History is replete with the names of men and women whose characters have been wonderfully molded in childhood. Nations have trained their children to certain ideals and thus have molded their citizenship after

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

their national ideals. The Hebrew people thoroughly trained their children in the worship of Jehovah, and in that training we find the secret of their peculiar development. They were a nation apart from their barbarous surroundings, and because of their religious tenets came to be a superior nation. Israel could never have been a nation of peculiar people whose God was Jehovah had they followed the altogether too prevalent modern notion that it is wrong and narrow to indoctrinate the child for fear of prejudicing him. The Roman Catholics and the Lutherans put others to shame in this particular, and at the same time show us what is possible for Protestantism to do in the same general direction. To suppose that God did not intend us to use those very impressionable years for good is not only irrational, but now, in the light of modern thought, is positively irreligious. "Indeed, I have learned that environment is commonly (not always) decisive in shaping character, that the body profoundly influences the soul, and that the individual is in a very large measure what society has made him" (Josiah Strong). The Christlike

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

method is to begin with the child as soon as the Divine commits it into our hands, and from the very first day give it a religious atmosphere, as essential to the proper development of the child nature as sunshine is to the rose. Let the child's dawning consciousness behold the parents returning thanks to God for food and material things. Let him see the parents devoutly kneeling around the family altar in proper recognition of our dependence upon the Creator. Let him feel from the very earliest moment of his life the atmosphere which prompts to such a spirit of worship. Let him be taught to pray just as soon as he can lisp a few words. Better teach him a prayer or a sensible story than a meaningless Mother Goose rime. The mental discipline will be just as good and the moral effect will be much better. Give him a part in the family worship as soon as he can repeat a little prayer. Let him associate the idea of his prayer with the act of worship on the part of the parents. Let him discover that the parents are very much interested in the church, and are regular attendants, and are not to be kept away from divine worship for every trifling

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

excuse. Let his keen intuition discover that the religion of his parents is genuine. Take him to church and teach him that he is a member of the church. Have him baptized and let him know that he is a Christian and is expected to act as Christian people act. Never let him ask, "Am I a member of the church?" and be compelled to tell him "No." He will ask you why, and you cannot answer him. He will want to belong to the church if father and mother do. Do not ever allow him to feel that somehow he is under condemnation for a mysterious sin which a mysterious Adam committed uncertain eons ago, and which has in some unexplainable way descended upon him. I can almost hear verbal protest to this. I have heard them when preaching this phase of the subject. Some will say it is unscriptural. Others will say it is all of no use. It is purely mechanical and the child does not understand. Of course he understands only up to his capacity and as his parents and teachers help him. He will understand a great deal more than we usually think. But what are parents for if not to help their children in these things? It was very biblical

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

for the Jews to circumcise their male children on the eighth day and to consecrate them to temple service and count them established in the religion of their fathers at twelve years of age. Christ put his approval upon this principle of consecrating childhood, and the whole spirit of biblical teaching is in that direction, and history abundantly confirms the wisdom of it. The history of Susannah Wesley's family is known round the earth. Was she not thoroughly Christian and perfectly sane in the care of her many children? It is simply a question of determining the environment of the child, particularly as pertains to religious influences. It is bringing good influences to bear and shutting out bad ones. It is causing his dawning moral consciousness to know that he is a moral being and that both God and his parents expect him to be good and do the right. It is bending the resultant line by augmenting the power of environment. In childhood is the best time to influence the direction of life; and if we neglect it through carelessness or through fear of prejudicing the child, we will find to our sorrow that evil has not hesitated to use

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

those moments and has turned the child life very decidedly in the direction of evil.

To condense this argument: Religion is an instinct born in the child, planted by the hand of God. Given the proper stimuli, it will respond very readily. The child is full of instincts. Professor James has named twenty-four. Place the child to its mother's breast and it will draw its nourishment without being able to explain a single law of physiology or of physics which he uses. If he is feeling very good and the mother plays with him a little, he will smile, and he is not yet able to tell just why it is that he laughs, and possibly if he should live to be very aged he could not explain the peculiar and almost irresistible response to that peculiar stimulation. Who of us understands the psychology of a mother's smile? We smile in return, and the only known reason is the child's reason—" 'Cause." The child's instinct of motion, of grasping attractive objects, of fear, of love all awake when properly stimulated. Religion is an instinct with the child and akin to these. It will respond to stimulation, and the way to stimulate it is to put the child into contact with religion. Have

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

him perform his part, be it ever so mechanical, and one day he will respond naturally and do quite intelligently that which he has been doing mechanically. The impressions of childhood will serve him well. He will have formed "brain grooves," in which his conscious self will act as a matter of habit. The resultant line of his life will have been bent in the right direction. He will not have been left to the blind powers of heredity and to uninformed choice. It is better thus to conform environment than to submit to blind chance. The very unfortunate way into which we have fallen calls for protest. Only a very few homes have any religious exercises. Children grow to maturity without ever having seen their professedly Christian parents pray.

A theological student was spending his summer out in New York State supplying a charge. He was going around calling upon the people, and being of a serious turn, he believed in the old-fashioned way of having worship with the people. At one place he asked the privilege of praying with the family before leaving and the privilege was accorded. The amazed children, however,

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

were unused to any such performance, and one lad, perhaps ten years of age, after holding in as long as he could, called out, half in fear, "Ma, what's he do'n?" Needless to say, it brought the prayer to a sudden termination. It would be well at least to have our children so well taught and trained that they will understand what one is doing when offering prayer. A more or less regular attendance at Sunday school is all the religion the average modern child sees till, perhaps, at the age of sixteen or eighteen he begins to attend church for social reasons. The parents do not keep the child in the church service because, perchance, it would injure his nervous system, notwithstanding there is little evidence of children ever having been injured in this way. Our forefathers were reared in the church under sermons three or four hours long, and, as a rule, they were rather a sturdy lot both physically and morally. The real reason is that as parents and preachers we are not willing to stand the bother. Or perhaps I should put it a little more mildly and say that we do not understand the importance of this sort of training. Doubtless we would

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

be willing to pay the price if we realized its real value. O for the days of the family pew, when father, mother, grandmother, and all the children were habitually seated together in the church service and worshiped as a family regularly! Such a custom is what we need to-day along with a genuine home religion, all of which would be calculated to bring the religious instinct within the range of proper stimulation and determine as far as may be the power of environment, and therefore have the proper bearing on life's resultant.

CHAPTER IV
INSTINCTIVE, INTELLIGENT,
AND ADOLESCENT PERIODS

She called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of Jehovah. . . . For this child I prayed; and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth he is granted to Jehovah. . . . And the child did minister unto Jehovah before Eli the priest. . . . Samuel ministered before Jehovah, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. . . . And the child Samuel ministered unto Jehovah before Eli. And the word of Jehovah was precious in those days; there was no frequent vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was: that Jehovah called Samuel: and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. . . . And Jehovah called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And Jehovah came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth.—*1 Sam. parts of Chapters 1, 2, and 3.*

To thee, Almighty God, to thee,
Our childhood we resign:
"Twill please us to look back and see
That our whole lives were thine.
—*Isaac Watts.*

CHAPTER IV

INSTINCTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AND ADOLESCENT PERIODS

ONE point on which I have sought to place considerable emphasis in this protracted study is that in the early days of childhood the parent must stand, in some measure, in God's stead before the child. God has ordered that the parent should be the agent through whom his message shall be carried to the child. The parent is thus the divinely appointed means of communication between God and the child—a very sacred priesthood. We will find a very good scriptural foundation for this thought in the lesson quoted on the page opposite, where God caused Eli to be the agent whereby he found contact with the young lad Samuel. The child Samuel had been placed under the care of the godly Eli, and his chief thought as he was growing up was to be obedient to his appointed guardian. The

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

source of all authority for the child was in his godly foster parent. He knew no other source nor needed another. But one night the Lord chose to speak directly to Samuel instead of indirectly, as heretofore, through his servant Eli. At the first call of the Lord the child was sure that his master Eli had spoken, and for several times he recognized no difference between the call of Jehovah and that of his guardian, and it took wise direction on the part of the old prophet to enable the child to distinguish between the voice of man and the voice of God. Samuel got a message from Jehovah that night which might easily have been denied him if Eli had said: "O, you foolish child, go back to bed. You are just dreaming or imagining something. It is nothing. You are nervous and need rest. You are altogether too young to commune with God." In other words, if Eli had been possessed of the prevalent modern notion of childhood religion, he would have undoubtedly defeated the Lord's purpose. But, fortunately for Samuel, the man under whom his mother had placed him for training was a man of God, and knew very well that the God who

PERIODS

is the Creator of the child soul can speak as readily in a language that a child can understand as to speak to an adult. Therefore he would not for anything come between God and this child who had been so well trained that he was so easily competent to commune with God. Samuel, reared in this religious atmosphere, was naturally and easily religious. "But," you say, "all that was an especial case for the purpose of raising up a great man. That was miraculous dealing." Nothing of the kind. God, in developing his great leaders, used no principles which would not wonderfully elevate the soul of any man and make him greater. There is not found a single principle in Samuel's training which is not perfectly natural and which may not be duplicated in kind by any child or parent. "He rocks the cradle of Samuel no more than he guides the steps of the good men in all ages" (Bishop Fowler). Samuel is simply an historical illustration of the principles which we are endeavoring to get firmly fixed in our minds. He was a child who was given the proper religious stimuli, and his religious nature responded to the stimuli, and his

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

strong religious character was the result. His guardian bent the line of life early in the instinctive and intelligent periods so that the ultimate direction was quite easily determined. The poet Cowper says:

'Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears,
Our most important are our earliest years;
The mind, impressable and soft, with ease
Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,
And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clue
That education gave her, false or true.

This is true of religious education as of secular where it is commonly recognized.

Let us again turn our attention to the chart. We will use the second feature of it now for our illustration. Observe the rectangle again and note the several divisions representing the various stages in development from infancy to young manhood or young womanhood. It is universally recognized that this period of growth falls into divisions more or less clearly defined. Let me again request that no one conclude that I am seeking to make any arbitrary divisions or assume that they can be made. It would be folly to try to fix these divisions arbitrarily, for every school teacher knows

PERIODS

that while five years is fixed generally as the legal school age some children at five are more mature than others at six. It doubtless would be very hard to get the average mother to admit that her neighbor's child of five was brighter than her child a year older, but disinterested parties know that such is often the case, and, what is more, we know that it has very little significance. Precociousness in children is no sure sign of great promise at maturity. But there is evidently a difference in children, and this difference will show itself just as markedly in these moral fields as in the educational field. Moreover, social conditions have a great deal to do with the development of the child. This reverts somewhat to our former study of environment. The rate and nature of a child's religious development will be affected by his surroundings. The tendency of our modern social conditions where the sexes mingle freely together in large numbers, as in our day schools and in our Sunday schools, parties, etc., is toward a more rapid development to-day than formerly when people lived in sparsely settled communities where social and educa-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

tional advantages were limited. The modern village boy of sixteen who has not been compelled to work very hard and has had numerous companions all his days is likely to be more mature in many ways than the country boy who has had many good hard days' work to do, and has of necessity been by himself most of the time, will be at eighteen, or even twenty. The bashful country girl, living somewhat removed from others, will scarcely have thought that she is anything but a girl at sixteen, while in most cases the village girl of fourteen thinks she is a woman and able for all the social requirements of the present day. The advantage is generally with the slower development. One reason why we are compelled to go to the farm and small village communities for so much of the sturdy manhood and womanhood is because there the young people do not assume to be men and women quite so early, and their development is more normal and their judgment is likely to be more mature when they do come to that estate. Social life and conditions do undoubtedly affect these periods of development, not only physically and mentally but

INSTINCTIVE PERIOD

morally as well. Different children under the same general conditions vary so it is impossible to fix any arbitrary divisions. We use simply those which are commonly suggested, which certainly have a value for thought: 1. The Instinctive Period—from birth to five years. 2. Intelligent Period—from five to twelve years. 3. Adolescent Period—from twelve to eighteen. We will consider each in turn.

1. INSTINCTIVE PERIOD

This is the age when the child is to be trained much and taught little. Here is a little babe, kicking and wriggling about, impelled by certain instincts of motion and of grasping, but none of his motions are very intelligent. The ordinary barnyard animal at his age can far outdistance him in the intelligent use of his body; but give him a little time and things will change. He wants to make a meal out of his thumb, but he is not real sure, as previously suggested, whether his thumb will go into his mouth or his eye. He sees a light across the room and reaches out for it, not knowing that the light is ten feet away and that his arm is scarcely

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

ten inches long. He kicks because instinct impels him to kick, and if he can get his feet against something, he will push with all his might. He does not know why. Instinct is impelling him. Presently his kicking and pushing will manifest itself in efforts to step on his feet. His feet will not go where he wants them to go and he is not at all sure of his equilibrium. Imagine the father trying to teach the son how to walk and saying to him: "Now, son, just you watch me. This is the way to walk"—and across the room the father goes with easy strides, telling the baby how it is done and how very easy it is to do. What will the babe know about that? That is teaching. He needs training. Take him by the hand and give him some help. Let his legs wobble and go in numerous directions if they want to. By constant practice he will soon begin to find himself and do a great deal better. Keep this up for a time, and one day his legs will be under his own control and he will not thank you for further assistance. He can walk alone. He is measurably well trained in walking.

The child's early religious ideas are about as wobbly as his legs, and the wobbling has

INSTINCTIVE PERIOD

about the same significance. It is simply the natural demand for training. But the instinct of religion is just as surely there as is the instinct of motion and will respond as truly under the proper stimuli. What shall we do with this religious instinct? Shall we talk religious platitudes to it? No, that is fully as irrational as to walk before the child and expect him to discover how to step from watching you. Religion is not something external to the child to be forced into him as a curative for "inbred sin," much as a dose of raw quinine might be given to cure a fever. Religion is wrapped up in the child to be nurtured and unfolded. Train him religiously along the lines indicated by his religious instincts. Do not assume that he simply needs to know the truths of Bible history in order to be a man furnished to every good work. He may become very proficient in the knowledge of the Bible as a man without it having any very appreciable effect upon his moral nature. An attorney of average reputation is very gifted in using Scripture quotations in pleading before a jury, and there is no doubt that he knows more Bible history and fact than

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

the average minister in the pulpit, and yet he is utterly godless. His knowledge has little if any bearing on his moral nature. Give the child something to do religiously and more to see during the infancy period. Answer his questions on religion by illustration rather than by theory. Encourage rather than discourage his disposition to ask questions on religious things. Relate all problems of discipline to his moral nature. Teach him that when he disobeys he has not only broken a parental mandate but has also grieved a loving God. Remember that he is watching your every motion and will develop your habits. Remember that it is quite likely that he has inherited tendencies that make it easy for him to do what you do, and, remembering this, encourage the good and discourage the evil dispositions that he may manifest. You must show him how to be reverent and worshipful. He must be led to transfer the seat of moral authority from his parents to God very early in life. Follow the thought of the kindergarten and get the right thought to spring from the right act. The parent must do absolutely nothing that he does not wish his child to

INSTINCTIVE PERIOD

do. It will avail nothing to tell him that a certain thing is wrong and then do that thing yourself, for he will surely follow the example and not the precept. An acquaintance of former years used to whip his boys for swearing, and follow with the declaration that if there was any swearing done around that place, he was going to do it himself. His teaching was no better than his training, and as a result his boys all learned to swear. The sum of it all is that we must constantly study to conform the child life. We cannot afford to let the child live by accident and trust to luck for the result. It is something to be carefully studied. We must not hesitate for any reason to determine his youthful days for good. Determine that the home atmosphere shall be religious not only in spirit but also in form; determine as far as possible his companionships, and if some neighbors' children have evil ways that you do not wish to develop in your child, do not hesitate to forbid them being together because of a neighborly sentiment, because your child's moral life is of more importance than even neighborliness. Determine the church atmosphere; that is to say, take him

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

to church and be very guarded about your talk concerning the church in his presence. If you have adverse criticism to offer concerning the minister or some prominent member of the church, do not make it in his hearing. Let him learn to respect highly the church. Be as Eli was to Samuel, the means of communicating God's will to the child, until such time as God can commune with the child direct.

2. INTELLIGENT PERIOD

Passing to the intelligent period, we have different moral conditions. By the intelligent period is meant that age in which the child comes to reason about things, the age in which his reasoning powers are beginning to unfold and he begins to be able to take hold of moral problems somewhat independent of the thought of others. Somewhere about five years of age the normal child will begin to recognize right and wrong as a matter of principle. His moral consciousness will begin to unfold. If during the infancy period he has been carefully trained, he will have some quite clear ideas of right and wrong.

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

To illustrate this thought allow me to use an experience which I remember quite clearly from my boyhood days. The incident happened to be quite definite and made a clear impression on my mind, and perhaps for that reason I remember it rather more distinctly than is ordinary in such cases. I was a small lad of barely five years. Like any other child, the only thing that had directed me thus far was parental authority. Father and mother had told me to do certain things and not to do others, and they were the sole source of authority. A thing was right or wrong according as it was permitted or forbidden by my parents. Of course they tried to make me understand that their commands and advice were based on principles of right and wrong, but so far as I remember this element in their teaching was not consciously recognized by me. It undoubtedly made its impression upon my subconscious self, but as a child I did not recognize that fact. Accordingly, one day when I was playing at a neighbor's I discovered a carpenter's rule that attracted my attention and I was seized with a sudden desire to possess that rule, and, yielding to the impulse, I put

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

it into my pocket and at the first opportunity I made way for home. I only got part way home, however, when I began to feel very uncomfortable about the rule. I remember very distinctly what a new sensation I had. I am sure that my conscience awoke to its own authority at that time. The rule fairly burned in my pocket and I was tempted to throw it away. Somehow it came to me very plainly that I was doing wrong, and I sat down upon the little bridge in the valley and thought the whole thing through and came to the conclusion that I had done a great wrong. There was no person near to tell me that I ought not to take something that did not belong to me. I suppose, beyond doubt, I had been told that many times, as all children must be, but now I did not need to be told. With this thought there burst upon me with terrible force the wrongness of stealing, and I got up and, hurrying back, put the rule where I had found it. I had done a great wrong and knew it for myself, and had for the first time some appreciation of what real wrongness or sin is. My moral consciousness was waking and I was passing from instinctive action to in-

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

telligent action. Who shall say that I did not experience a great moral victory that day? As I recall it now it seems to me to be one of the greatest of my life, though from adult standpoints there was so little involved. Some experience in the life of each one of us marks a similar change and indicates the rise of our moral sense. Not every one will happen to get such a definite impression of their first moral choice as I did, and thus only a few will have it so vividly fixed in mind. But the fact is the same in all persons, though the very sudden transition may not occur.

I was listening to a conversation carried on by a group of very intelligent ladies recently. They were old neighbors and dropped into reminiscent moods. Each one of the group had had some experience in childhood that corresponded with mine. Two of them had been implicated together in stealing some cookies from a neighbor and had gone through this same experience of discovering themselves to be thieves. If we will recall, there will likely be some experience in the lives of us all when our moral selves began to be assertive. With this

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

beginning, therefore, and some years after, until the moral sense is quite developed, we term the intelligent period, from five to twelve years approximately. This is a division commonly recognized and has been recognized from early ages and has a fairly accurate basis. What, then, is the moral significance of this period and what are the religious opportunities? This is really the important part of the discussion, though our answer to that question will be determined largely by our thought of what has gone before. What are we to do for the child in this age?

From what has been already said you have concluded that my thought is that, as a rule, the child may be naturally directed to God and not allowed to wander away from him. My contention is that, given a reasonably good heredity, with an infancy period of rational training, the child during the intelligent period will be turned easily to a conscious relation to God and a knowledge for himself that he is a child of God. With his discovery that there is a seat of power somewhere superior to father and mother who is really the determiner of right and wrong,

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

there should be little difficulty in teaching him that God is that power and in inducing him to transfer his affections there. If, like Eli, we at the proper time succeed in turning the eyes of our children from ourselves to God as the supreme authority, we shall have done well indeed. If we enable God to get an interview with the child, it will surely be to the advantage of the child. This must be our chief concern in those days when the moral sense of the child is developing and when he is beginning to find out the difference between right and wrong, or else he will get away from our control and refuse to recognize any authority above his own impulse and become a sort of moral anarchist. Some parents never succeed in convincing the child that they have authority. The child considers the father as one who is the larger, and therefore the one who can punish, and hence the child does not conceive that there is authority anywhere apart from compulsion. Many children are governed through fear and have regard for their parents only because they are forced to through dread of punishment. The father is the stronger, and therefore the son has to

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

do what he is told; but one day the son discovers that he is a person and about as strong as his father, and he rebels against that sort of government and very naturally against all authority, unless by some circumstance he is induced to look upon the authority of God in a different light.

This period also brings in new possibilities. Now the child may be taught as well as trained. This is the memory age and the time for abundant seed-sowing. Barring reasonable physical limitations, the child should be kept in the Sunday school and also the church. He should be encouraged to read religious literature, and certainly a reasonable amount of church and Bible history. Bible history is presented in forms as fascinating as any fiction, and usually more wholesome. Generally, with a little help from the parents the child mind may be stored with facts concerning the Bible, and especially Bible characters, as this is the hero age for the child and the Bible is full of heroic characters. Margaret E. Sangster's Bible stories and others of this character will be preferred usually to the ordinary storybook if the parent work with the child

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

a little and help his tastes to form along right lines. The child will not need much logic or much theology just now. He will want narrative in such forms as to convey the fundamental truths to his mind. Induce him if possible, and if this cannot be done, insist that he commit to memory the best portions of the Bible. The notion that such a course will give him a repugnance to the Bible is wrong. It is proven over and over again that a child needs to be held to many a task that after a while becomes agreeable to him. No normal boy will work very long at any task unless there is authority back of him. We do not hesitate to hold a lad to taking music lessons for many days, not fearing at all that when he is a man he will as a consequence have a dislike for music. This must be done as a part of life's discipline of work, and so also in the religious realm. It is a good thing for the child to use the memory age for committing what will be of invaluable service to him in after years. Therefore he may well be held to the task. We are making a great mistake nowadays by allowing the child to crowd out all things religious during this memory period

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

because the day school requires all his time. What right has secular education to demand all of a child's time? Religious instruction is the most important thing of all just now, and rather than neglect it lighten the school work if necessary to the extent of losing some time. As a matter of fact, this work can be accomplished in catch moments without requiring much time. A reasonable presentation to the child mind of the Bible by those who earnestly believe in the Bible will not only be possible but will also be welcomed by the average child. The great difficulty lies often in the way it is presented. Our Sunday schools are lamentably weak, as a rule, in presenting truth. A large class of young ladies who are very faithful in attendance upon the Sunday school service, and all of whom have been in the Sunday school from childhood, were asked recently what the name "Nazareth" suggested to them, and not one knew what it meant. These girls are from fourteen to eighteen years of age and constitute what is considered one of the best classes in the Sunday school. This is just a hint of the inadequate teaching our children are getting gener-

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

ally. It is no reflection on the Sunday school, but indicates that we must not trust entirely to that agency for religious instruction of the young.

We will need to remember that in this period the child is still controlled considerably by instinct. The transition is not sudden. Religious enthusiasm is easily kindled by enthusiastic religious leaders. Remember that the child who so easily grasps things in memory now will soon change, and unless his mind is stored in this memory age he will have to work very hard to acquire the desired knowledge later. Our familiarity with the word of Scripture depends quite largely upon our handling of it in childhood. Of course we may overcome this handicap to some extent, but we will all witness that the things which we learned in childhood are the things which abide. If memory is trained at the proper time, it becomes stronger for use in after years. It is quite difficult for a mature man to do much memory work unless his mind was trained to it from childhood. There are stages in life when some things are natural, and when those stages are closed that opportunity has

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

largely passed. We must also remember to trust the child's developing self. When he begins to show that he has a moral sense of his own we must allow him to use it. Put him on his honor and let him know that he is trusted and expected to do the right thing. We can no more expect his moral nature to develop if the parent does all the choosing than we can expect his muscles to grow properly without exercise. He will surely make some blunders, but so do grown up people, and his blundering will come out all right in the end.

Perhaps this matter is not so interesting as some of the phases which we have been discussing, but it is of vast importance. The course suggested means hard work for the parents. But we must learn that we cannot rear our children well by following the line of least resistance. We must give thought and time to the matter, and unless we are willing to do this we are not worthy to become parents. We must not allow this period between the ages of five and twelve to go by without having stored the child's mind well with Bible knowledge. The catechetical age is the time for seed-sowing,

INTELLIGENT PERIOD

and if the springtime is allowed to pass without a sowing the harvest is likely to be small. We must also develop a moral sense in the child. He must presently be able to meet the world with some laws of righteousness well grounded in his nature. It will not do to keep him in ignorance of temptation, thinking to shield him. Mothers keep their daughters in ignorance of sin in order to keep them pure, and doubtless many girls go astray who would never do so if their foolish mothers had taught them what they are entitled to know. The same is true of boys. Let us give children of both sexes the knowledge that they are entitled to, and teach them to do right on moral principles instead of intrusting to chance or instinct to guide. They cannot exercise a moral choice when they are ignorant of what is involved.

The child from the Christian home ought surely to be led into a personal knowledge of God and brought into the church before he has left this period in his development. If the church and the home will do their work together as it ought to be done, there are very few children who may not be well

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

grounded in the things of religion before this age passes. This does not need to be argued further. It is being demonstrated on every hand. This being done, we will be all the more free to give neglected childhood its due amount of religious teaching and training. How can parents neglect this all-important age? If parents and church would but live up to their opportunity in this particular, we could soon have a conquering church in the land.

3. ADOLESCENT PERIOD

The third period in the development of youth is known as the adolescent period. Adolescent is a word applied to the transitional period between childhood and maturity. It is used, therefore, to define the marked change that takes place in the development of a youth as he turns to manhood. One day the parent discovers that his son or daughter is becoming different from what he or she formerly was. He is growing more independent in act and thought and is noticeably inclined to dispute some commonly accepted things and to show a disposition to argue everything. He will even question

ADOLESCENT PERIOD

the very fundamentals of religion with the utmost audacity and perhaps startle the parents by assuming to be a sort of agnostic. This will undoubtedly worry the parent, and he is likely to grow very impatient with the child; but now of all times is when he must be patient. His child is passing through a transformation, physical, mental, and moral. This is no time for arbitrary commanding. The son is very proud of his new-found mentality and will greatly appreciate a deference being paid to it, and will sternly resent any depreciation of it. The individuality of the child has suddenly come to be so strong that he will not submit to methods of discipline at one time perfectly proper. Now is the time when the parent must depend chiefly upon what he has done in childhood to tide him over this uncertain age. He must appeal to the sense of honor and rightness already established in the child. If proper care has been given to the child during the infancy period and during the dawning of intelligent choice, this coming young man will most likely pass through this period of rough sailing all right. If there has been little done in these formative

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

periods, the outcome will be wholly uncertain. This is the period also when the church must exercise great care in its work. The church must induce the child to confirm for himself all the good which has been selected for him in the years of parental oversight. The church will need to be attractive to the youth in this period and elderly people will need to have some good judgment. The pastor will need to plan for and with his young people and cause the church to mean the most possible for the young. It will not do to construct the church simply to the needs of the elders and demand that the young shall conform their tastes to the standards set by the church. This does not imply a lowering of moral standards in the least. It simply implies the need for adaptability on the part of the church. No greater field awaits and no demand is more imperative than that the church be attractive and offer something that will appeal strongly to the young people. If a wise church and a wise pastor work together on children that have been properly trained in the earlier periods, there will be little loss. For this reason I have been

ADOLESCENT PERIOD

placing so much emphasis on early training, even in the very earliest days of childhood. Those periods of careful training will have so conformed the child's nature that if he does not choose the good during his adolescent period, he will have to go against every element in his nature. It is not at all likely that he will revoke all the principles that have been fixed as habits in his early days. If he is not, with his new-found self, consciously religious, this is the time for the church to induce him to choose positively to serve God. It is nothing to be alarmed over if at this period he should show a disposition to waver in the religious habits of his childhood days. This is the golden harvest age. It is the age of the fixing of choices, and religion must be given a fair presentation, one suited to his changed personality, in the strong hope that the youth, with his new-found mentality, will confirm his earlier decisions and continue to be religious. It is not strange nor a matter of great concern that he should have some mental uncertainties. Keep his conduct right, if possible—and it is usually possible if the earlier training has been right—and the vagaries of

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

adolescent thinking will soon pass away. The parent must at this time use all his persuasive power or he will lose the advantage of all the years of effort. So often the parent will not appeal personally to the child on religious subjects. This is an unpardonable mistake. All the influences of love must be brought to bear upon him, for evil is seeking to win him in a way perhaps never equaled in life again. He must be appealed to as a person, independent and capable of making moral choices for himself. Let him feel that you have placed the responsibility with him and are trusting him to choose right. Counsel but do not attempt to force. If only the parent has succeeded in keeping the confidence of the child, and can in these years use his experience to help the child's inexperience, he will surely be the agent in God's hands of properly directing the child. Like Eli, he will bring him to God for further instruction when he discovers that God is speaking to the youth.

The adolescent is in danger of getting one of two erroneous ideas concerning religion. Either he will conclude that religion is a very sober affair, and thus become morbid

ADOLESCENT PERIOD

and self-conscious, or, on the other hand, he will conclude that religion is a very trifling affair and not to be taken seriously at all, just a polite convenience and good form in general, and from this come to conclude that moral distinctions are of little moment after all. He may either seek to assume a "grandmother experience," and be so very old in his religious conceptions that he is unnatural, or else fail to take the matter seriously enough, and yet all the while consider himself a Christian. Both these conditions must be guarded against. Religion is a perfectly normal state for a young person as well as for an old man or woman. A young person should certainly not have a morbid religion nor, on the other hand, a religion without moral distinctions. It ought to be and may be a religion that meets his needs as a young man and at the same time prove a very decided help toward right living. This the parent and the church can provide if the proper work has been done by way of preparation. If there has been no preparation, no foundation work done, the task is much harder and the outcome decidedly more uncertain. Manifestly, if

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

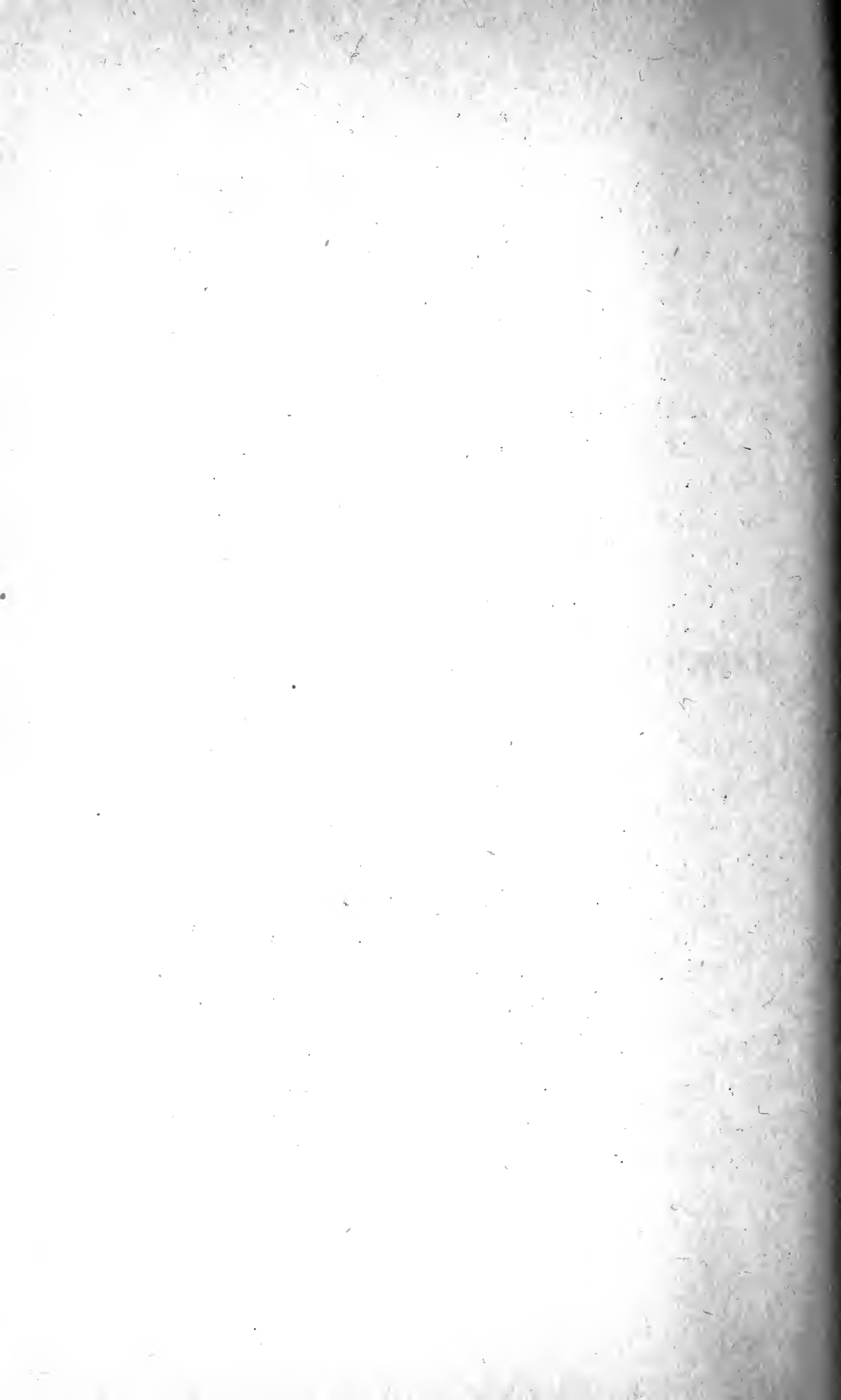
there has been neglect of opportunity in the early days, there will need to be desperate measures used to catch up, and then at best there is lost ground that can never be fully regained. There is no better Christian than one trained to the work of Christ from childhood. Every church has many workers who have been servants of God from early childhood, and they are a type to be depended upon. Every thoughtful man will look upon the time spent in sinfulness as lost, morally speaking. He may go on to a very good life, but he looks upon the years of boyhood spent in recklessness as a great waste. Why, then, this paralyzing indifference on the part of parents? Why this almost criminal indifference on the part of the church? We see our defects. Why not apply ourselves to the remedy?

I must close this part of the discussion. I hope I have not failed in making plain what I set out to discuss. I started out to argue for early religious training. I have found that it all reverts to that idea. We must begin at the beginning, and if we do not there is at best a gap left. Successful work in the period from five to twelve de-

ADOLESCENT PERIOD

pende in a measure on what has gone before in the infancy days. Most surely does the outcome of the adolescent period depend on what has gone before. It has seemed to me that the many writers on religious work in the adolescent period have largely overlooked this fact. The storminess of adolescence is measurably averted if proper care has been taken before. We must begin at the very beginning and carefully bend the resultant line.

The life of every true parent is wrapped up in the child. His welfare is the parent's welfare, and anything we may do for him to make him better is not only a privilege but a God-given duty. To neglect the early religious life of the child is almost an unpardonable sin. The Master himself said that it were better for us that a millstone be hanged about our necks and that we be drowned in the sea than that we should offend one of his little ones. What Eli did for Samuel we in most cases can do for our children. Let us resolve that henceforth we will give earnest and prayerful thought to this parental duty and see if we cannot assure more of our children for the Kingdom.



CHAPTER V

**THE THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD
RELIGION**

CHAPTER V

THE THEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD RELIGION

IT is not within the proper scope of these discussions to undertake a technical treatise on the theology of childhood religion, and perhaps the subject heading is somewhat misleading. It is necessary, however, in view of some suggestions made previously, to consider some points more fully than was possible in the midst of discussions which did not easily permit of digressions into distinctively theological fields. It is not at all within the mind of the writer to seem to have undertaken the task of giving a comprehensive study in theology on the subject under discussion. Such a study would be well worth while if some mature scholar should see fit to undertake it. In some research work along the lines of these pages we find that there has been much written on the points involved, but always so intermingled

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

with other matter as to be somewhat confusing. We have wished, in view of the modern emphasis on child-training, that some scholarly volume were available which would confine itself entirely to childhood religion. In these pages, however, from the beginning the aim has been to keep within the range of conversational language, and to bring some thoughts which are usually treated in the language of the scholar before the minds of those most vitally interested in childhood development in such a way as to help them in their very responsible task. The average parent and church worker, however well educated, unless he happened to be versed in the technical language of theology, would get very little help out of the writings in which this subject is most generally treated. We are having much discussion of child-training in all our church conventions, conferences, and elsewhere, and this is a hopeful sign. It is something to be awake to the problem. One phase of the question needs particular emphasis and would seem to be the necessary starting point. We would change the customary form of the question somewhat and state it

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

something like this: What can be done to train the parents with reference to the religious welfare of their children?

It will have been noted by the careful reader that so far nothing has been said about the possible work of the Holy Spirit during the infancy and intelligent periods of childhood development. The failure to introduce this unmeasured power into the discussion for the time was intentional. For the sake of clearness and that we might keep our minds fixed on the main points under consideration, and because there is no contradiction in leaving the specific mention of the Spirit out of a discussion of this character, we proceeded with the two influences heredity and environment and trusted to a supplementary statement to introduce the fact of the Spirit's power. In fact the Spirit's influence is not altogether omitted from the argument. We have insisted that certain religious instincts invest the child soul and respond to proper stimuli, and we may class the work of the Spirit as chief among these stimuli. We very properly say without contradicting our principles that the work of the Spirit is the greatest incentive

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

in the unfoldment of the child life. The Great Father creates the soul with reference to the natural surroundings in which it must be placed, and the Spirit undoubtedly cooperates with what we choose to call natural conditions or environment. It would not be far wrong if we should broaden our conception of environment so as to include the Holy Spirit. Certain it is that this beneficent power can do his work for the soul more easily if we choose an environment for the child in harmony with the Father's will. We speak of an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit may work, and the expression is not lacking in appropriateness. On behalf of the child the parent can create this atmosphere. If we do what has been urged—place the child in contact with religious activities so as to stimulate his religious nature—we do thereby place the child where the Spirit has the best possible chance to affect the life for its unfoldment. There is scriptural evidence that God can speak to the child in language that the child can understand, and experience tends to confirm this teaching. There is close sympathy between the Great Father and the child life. How-

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

ever, this in no way contradicts or conflicts with the necessity of parental care and training. It is a commonplace in religious thought that God will not do a work for us that we may do for ourselves. So with all confidence in the cooperation of the Spirit in the matter of child-training it still remains that the parent has a tremendous task on hand, the greatness of which only a few recognize.

The conviction remains that we will not get far in the solution of our child problem so long as we continue to look in the direction so prevalent among many classes of church workers to this day. Much of our inactivity is due to a wrong theological viewpoint, and there will be no marked change in this field until we change our thought with reference to the natural moral condition of the child before God. Many methods of child-training are being devised, but what they imply in their application is inconsistent with the prevailing thought as to the moral state of the small child. We must presently revise our theology or else abandon such modern methods as we have thought wise to adopt, or else be guilty of a gross incon-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

sistency between thought and practice. The worker in the field has gone ahead of the theologian in his closet and has by his experience made necessary a restatement of principle.

I am well aware that the plainness of some foregoing statements will give the impression of running directly counter to the prevailing thought as to the natural moral condition of the child. But what has been said is in no sense new, nor is it at all unusual, nor even so much of a digression from prevailing thought as might seem at first glance. The method of presenting it may cause it to appear as such. No less a person than Irenæus (A. D. 177) taught doctrines leading in this same direction, though not always consistent with himself. Through all the ages of theological discussion some have given expression to similar thoughts, and certain phases of the discussion have been touched upon, but since such writers were in the minority, and supposedly greater themes were under consideration, child religion has been pretty generally overlooked. But modern thinking is turning in another direction and the child is soon to come to

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

his own in the realm of theology. In a recent volume from the press of Charles Scribner's Sons, entitled *Christianity and Sin*, Dr. Robert Mackintosh reviews in a scholarly way the historical development of the doctrine of sin and shows clearly the trend of modern scholarship. On the phase of thought under discussion the trend is certainly in the direction of Christ's great pronouncement concerning children and the Kingdom. We shall quote freely from his book as we proceed.

Christ certainly is the supreme authority in so far as we are able to understand his teaching. All other teaching from whatever source must be interpreted in the light of his word. Unfortunately, there have crept into our theology during the ages of discussion certain words and phrases that have assumed fixed form and are absolutely unyielding to the progress of thought. Strangely we have come to ascribe almost sacred meaning to these words, as if they were written into our Scripture under divine inspiration. But we need to remind ourselves occasionally that even antiquity is not a guarantee of absolute accuracy, and that

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

it is not sacrilegious to question some of these man-made expressions. Furthermore, we have been so concerned with what we have chosen to consider the more important phases of theology that we have failed to consider the child phase as carefully as we should. In dealing with children too often our starting point has been wrong, and our direction biased accordingly. Inevitably we have failed often of arriving at our desired destination because of this wrong start. The man of theology is man the sinner, an abstract man, and having fitted our theology to this one model we proceed to dress up all humanity according to that one pattern. Manifestly, that is a wrong procedure, and this book is a sort of protest on behalf of the child against wearing the theological clothes of the elders. If this book will cause some pastors, parents, and Sunday school teachers to challenge and review their old inherited theology of childhood and to study the matter over again from the beginning, it will have met the most ambitious aim of the writer. The professional theologian writes necessarily in the language of the scholar, and his readers are few. It is the business

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

of the pastor to gather the theologian's best thoughts and to present them to the people in the language of the people who are busy with the world's work and have no time for the technical language of theology. The average person will think with the greatest theologian if he will talk in conversational language, and often the heart of humanity keeps nearer the truth than abstract reasoners. The aim of these pages is to bring to those nearest childhood some thoughts which are fundamental, and if possible help them in properly carrying on the greatest work before the church to-day.

We cannot go far with a discussion of childhood religion until we are confronted with two very aged and much-discussed theological questions. We cannot attempt a full treatment of them within the limits of this volume, nor is it at all necessary or desirable, because anyone who might wish to study them fully can do so to better advantage in the many exhaustive works on theology. The two questions are, From whence comes the soul? and, From whence comes sin? Happily for us to-day, there is greater agreement than ever before on these ques-

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

tions, and the tendency of modern thought is plainly toward the acceptance of a solution. This solution, or theory if it must still be called a theory, lends much to an understanding of the question before us. In fact, it furnishes the necessary starting point toward any very intelligent study of a system of childhood religion.

Various theories as to the origin of the soul have been advanced from time to time, but succeeding biblical and philosophical scholars have settled upon a minimum of two. It is true that we still hear occasionally from those who believe in the preexistence of the soul; that is to say, according to this theory, all souls that are or ever will be created were created at one time and by one act in some indefinite æon and, as occasion demands, those souls are sent out to inhabit human bodies. This conception is held by only a few at best and need not seriously engage our attention. There remain, then, the two theories which receive the attention of the scholarship of the present, known respectively as traducianism and creationism.

According to the traducianists, the soul

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

is a fractional part of the parent soul and emanates from the parent just as the physical organism has its rise with the parent. The soul, according to their contention, has the possibility of dividing itself indefinitely and thus of propagating other souls, while God who was concerned with the original has now nothing to do with the immediate origin of the newborn soul. All that the Divine has to do with the creation of the soul is that in the beginning he invested men with this power, but he does not now exercise a direct creative act in the birth of a soul. We need not dwell on this view at length. It is not our purpose to treat it critically. Suffice it to say that such a conception involves one in some very grave metaphysical difficulties from which entanglements the traducianists have not succeeded in extricating themselves. It involves a strange conception of the soul to declare it a divisible something which, after repeated division, is in no wise diminished and any division of which has the power of dividing itself indefinitely. Such a conception at best makes the soul a material thing and contradicts all necessary laws of thought in

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

proceeding to an endless division without diminishing. We can hardly bring ourselves to conceive of a process of multiplication through division. There are not many through-and-through traducianists who will be willing to take this extreme position when brought out in bare outline. We hear to-day of a modified traducianism, but the modification does not do away with the main difficulty. It continually reverts to materialism. But the thought has so permeated our theology that few of the great writers have had the courage to completely break with it, and consequently much of it remains to our confusion. Some theologians find it easier to retain a smattering of this conception than to revise their entire system of theology, which they would need to do if they should abandon the terminology which this system of thought has given us.

The other answer to the question, From whence comes the soul? is called creationism. This theory brings the Creator into direct relations with finite subjects in his great creative act. It is not to be supposed that from the critical standpoint this theory is without fault, but we are convinced that it

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

is much less open to objection than the former. This theory holds that time is relative to human limitations and speaks of God's work not in the past tense but in a continuous present. It declares for an immanent God at work in the world. Humanly speaking, God not only has created but is creating souls. It does not go back to the garden incident, where God is recorded to have breathed into the nostrils of the material man a soul, and find the completion of his creative act there. The soul of the child, according to this answer and in popular language, comes fresh from the hand of God. To test popular thought on this point I have asked many intelligent but theologically untrained people the question, From whence comes the soul of the child? Invariably, without a single exception, I have received essentially the answer of the creationist, "From the hand of God." Any mother who looks with love into the face of a newborn babe will not hesitate a moment to answer. In spite of all our preaching and teaching to the contrary, the heart of Christianized humanity has kept so close to the heart of the Great Father that it balks

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

at any theory which separates God ever so little from the soul of the child.

This conception, then, of an immanent God entering into relations with his finite creatures in his great creative act is accepted quite generally by scholarly men, and certainly by devout people everywhere. Almost universally among lay Christians it is held in substance that the child soul comes from the hand of God; it has had no previous existence; it is individual, absolutely pure and immortal. The immanent Creator is still working in harmony with his divinely instituted laws and is investing the bodies, which are human, with souls of his own creating, and is, accordingly, taking man into cooperation with himself as from the beginning. The tragedy of Eden has loomed so large in our thought that we have unconsciously assumed that God had to change his plans and resort to various expedients because of man's fall. God is the same Father toward mankind as from the beginning and has in no wise changed his divine activities. He continues to breathe into us the breath of life. If we accept this—as we surely must do in the face of the preponder-

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

ance of thought and of heart demands in its favor, as well as the scriptural teaching and implication with reference to the origin of the soul—we are brought face to face with some very pertinent theological questions. If every newborn soul is a fresh creation of God, how, then, is the soul tainted with “Adamic sin”? God surely will not send a soul into the world already sin-tainted. We revolt at the thought and declare that the soul from the hand of God is as pure as heaven itself. The parent, having nothing to do directly with the origin of the soul, cannot possibly transmit any moral bias to the soul. Therefore whatever bias the parent is responsible for is wrapped up within that part of the individual for which the parent is responsible. I am well aware of some of the ancient objections that will be raised to such a statement—for example, “dualism,” “belittling the Infinite,” etc. But that is where the matter rests when stripped of all adornments and reduced to its lowest terms. If God creates the soul at all, that he creates the soul pure goes without argument; and unless he has set a power operating in man which he cannot stop, for the origin of which

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

he is responsible, it remains that whatever of bias may conceivably be transmitted must be derived from human parentage. The physical foundation through which the soul must find expression is most certainly affected by the human parent, as we have already seen under the study of heredity. But the soul, apart from the body, certainly is not affected by the earthly parent only indirectly through the body. If the creationists are correct—and we cannot see how it can be otherwise—then we must keep clearly defined the human part and the divine part in the inhabitation of a human body by an immortal soul and learn to place the implications of such an explanation properly.

We come, then, to the second question, From whence comes sin? It would seem to be necessary before we proceed with this discussion first to define our conception of sin, for we find that scholars use the word with different shades of meaning. For example, Dr. Orr, in his book *Sin as a Problem of To-day* (p. 287), uses the following words: "Sin is at first a principle, a tendency undeveloped." Manifestly, if we define sin

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

thus, "a principle undeveloped," and on occasion being a something without guilt and on other occasions having guilt, we will need to proceed along different lines than when we define sin as most commonly conceived. On the other hand, Dr. Mackintosh, in his book *Christianity and Sin*, declares that "Sin is guilt against God," "an abuse of free will," "Sin is a wrong assertion of the lower self," and many similar expressions. This latter is more in line with the popular definition of sin than the former. It makes a vast difference, however, which definition we take as to the outcome of our discussion. We choose to consider sin as willful transgression of known law. Thus defined, from whence does it arise? The ancient and generally accepted answer is that through Adam's fall sin entered into the world, and since then has been transmitted from parent to child, and all humanity, having sprung from the one first man, is, because of parentage, sin-tainted. This answer has been glibly given without seriously asking, "How is it possible?" and with surprising assurance in the face of a very small scriptural warrant. This fact is aptly stated by Dr.

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

Henry C. Sheldon, professor of systematic theology in Boston University School of Theology, and one of the most careful and conscientious scholars of our day. I will quote him at length because he shows clearly where we stand on the question of scriptural warrant for transmission of Adamic sin:

“One familiar with the theological teaching of the centuries, with its confident and explicit indoctrination on original sin, or the Adamic connections of human sinfulness, is naturally surprised when he turns to the Bible to find it well-nigh silent on this theme. In the Old Testament it is not awarded a single direct word. Only one New Testament writer makes specific mention of it, and that in the course of historical parallels where the line cannot be regarded as sharply drawn between literal fact and admissible symbolism. In neither Testament is there any approach to the assertion that the moral state of the race was so conditioned upon the conduct of Adam that if he had continued obedient to the divine command the race would have infallibly persisted in holiness. This is a monstrous imagination which limits the notion of probation to Adam alone, if it

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

does not cancel it entirely, and throws the whole responsibility for the occurrence of sin upon the will of God. For if God could have kept every one of Adam's posterity from falling, then we are obliged to conclude that he could just as well as not have kept Adam from falling, and the fact of his transgression is clear proof that God was well pleased to have him transgress. But this conclusion makes a mock of sin, since it is perfectly manifest that what pleases God ought not to make anyone sorry, or else that it is obligatory to regard the divine pleasure as a subordinate interest.

“Indirectly the Scriptures may be regarded as making considerable account of Adam's trespass in its race connections. In the first place they strongly and repeatedly emphasize the fact of human sinfulness. Then again they place no little stress upon the continuity of human sinfulness, or its transmission through natural descent. In the light of these two representations it logically follows that from the scriptural standpoint a serious import pertains to Adam's trespass. It may not have been so destructive to Adam or to his posterity as

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

theology has often pictured, but it had a great and somber significance *as beginning* [italics mine] the work of destruction. As an evil beginning, it initiated the depravation of the race, and so may properly be put in antithesis, as it is by Paul, to that glorious beginning of regenerate life which was consummated by the coming of Christ into the organism of humanity.

“This is the sum of the scriptural teaching on the subject of original sin; that is, the first trespass stands out as initiating the moral depravation which is a general characteristic of the race. It, of course, brought condemnation upon the person of the transgressor; but the Scriptures nowhere explicitly assert that this condemnation was at the same time that of the race, and in a fair construction they cannot be regarded as implying that it was. The most that can be alleged from the Old Testament is the list of instances in which the later generations are seemingly held accountable for the sins of the earlier. . . . As for the New Testament, only two or three Pauline passages come into the account, as having any real appearance of making the race sharers in

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

the guilt or condemnation of Adam's sin [1 Cor. 15. 22]. . . . Men did not actually sin in his [Adam's] sin, or become sinners through him without an exercise in detail of personal agency, any more than they were actually crucified with Christ. Why should a prosaic and rigorous construction be demanded in the one instance and excluded in the other?"

This extended quotation from *System of Christian Doctrine*, edition of 1900, pages 311-314, may be taken to represent fairly the best conservative thought of the day on this much-debated subject and surely dispels somewhat our familiar and very confident answer as to the origin of sin. It does not follow that the biblical story of the fall of Adam has no significance for theology, but, rather, that we have been reading too much into it. "The heart of the meaning [Adam Story] is that sin began and begins when men do that which they know they ought not to do" (Bishop McConnell). What we are interested in just now is to emphasize the conviction that the transmission of a sin-tainted soul is an impossibility. "A guilty infant is a contradiction in

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

terms.” “We do not believe that any individual act of sin is forced by circumstances or by heredity upon a reluctant will.” “Sin before the presence of will is not sin at all.” “Worldliness is a tone of mind” (Dr. Mackintosh). These quotations forcefully express the thought of many scholars and indicate a change in the direction of thought on the part of devout Bible students. We conclude, therefore, that we must look for the fact of sin in that realm over which man is allowed control. We do most certainly inherit much from the past, but that inheritance must be traced in the flesh rather than in the spirit. All of heredity is wrapped up within the physical organism, for which the parent is responsible, and inheres not at all in the soul, for which God is responsible. If we care to retain a consecutive line of inheritance, there can be no objection, provided we remember always that there have intervened between us and Adam a good many generations. This fact of a physical foundation that is more or less affected by sinful parents, inhabited with a soul as pure as God can create it, brings into proper proportions the tremendous importance of

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

child-training, and the demand for a training which shall begin at the earliest possible moment. There can be no question that the physical organism of the child is invested with certain human tendencies. We may call them Adamic if we wish, but as parents we must never forget what a part *we* have played in reproducing them. It hardly becomes us to try to afflict Adam with responsibilities which are plainly our own.

Looking in this direction, then, we come to the really vital question, which is: Given a child whose soul is as pure as heaven, but whose body, through which that soul must express itself, is invested with certain human tendencies good and bad, how shall we deal with the child to best conserve the good and eliminate the evil, so that when he comes to the age of intelligent and responsible action he will choose to go in the right direction? The answer is very complex, and no one is fully competent to make it, but the modern study of the problem is advancing toward a solution. The foregoing suggestions have been added to what has already been said and written to help a little in working out the problem. It is the parent's problem and

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

the church's problem, and thus far as a church we have not seriously undertaken its solution. Surely, our homes generally are not applying themselves to the task as earnestly as the occasion demands. If, however, the child is a sinner born and bred, there is little to do but to keep him in proper bounds by home discipline and await the time when he can intelligently grapple with the problem of personal redemption. This is what we are doing generally, and we cannot escape the conviction that the main reason for our doing this is the ancient theological notion that has possessed us. If, on the other hand, the child is born a child of God, then our big business is to keep him such. All rational methods of training are consistent with this thought and further developments are to be expected.

The Catholic Church has been consistent throughout the years because of her teaching that ecclesiastical intervention meets the need for the child. Protestantism long ago abandoned that idea but failed to bridge the inevitable gap left. We have resorted to some very strange expedients to avoid the ancient but only consistent idea that if a

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

child is born a sinner and dies before conscious regeneration takes place, he is lost. The church of John and Cotton Mather, and, indeed, much later, conceived with the Catholics that baptismal regeneration met the need. This notion was banished from Protestantism, more by popular thought than by the reasonings and research of the scholar, but some substitute must be found to round out a system of theology. To meet this need it was concluded that the child was redeemed through the unconditioned atonement. It is evident, however, that since the child has no option in this matter, its application is about as mechanical as baptismal regeneration, or ecclesiastical intervention of any sort, against which we have protested so vigorously. It is an atonement for sin for which the helpless child is held responsible, though he has not intelligently committed a sin, and the atonement takes place without the consciousness of the child in a way equally as mysterious as the imputation of the unintelligent guilt. When put thus in its simplest form we must see how contradictory such an idea is. We have persistently ignored the plain teaching of Christ

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

when he spoke with reference to the child and said, "To such belongeth the kingdom." Christ has given us not the least hint that the child who has not intelligently committed a wrong act is a sinner. Rather he strongly indorsed the child relation to himself and declared it to be the ideal to which all must subscribe in order to be saved. As we have already said, we begin our theology with abstract man the sinner and try to fit all humanity into that one mold. We must learn to start where Christ did—with the child—and conform ourselves to that ideal. Our chief concern must be to keep the child in the relation approved by him.

What shall we say of "inbred sin"? It is at best a misnomer. The expression is altogether too large to convey the meaning evidently intended and will not admit of the restrictions commonly forced upon it. The expression is too well put to convey any other meaning than that which appears on the surface. Used literally, it contradicts our contention that sin is a fact of the soul accomplished by willful disobedience to known principles of right. We can in no way harmonize the two. If the soul is

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

traduced from the parent, we may properly speak of "inbred sin." Otherwise we must modify the term. In common thought, apart from theology, guilt is not attached unless there is intelligent infraction of the law. In cases of mental unbalance or insanity we may restrain the unfortunate person but we do not impute guilt. This is a principle plainly understood in civil law and holds throughout. But we desire to keep away from the critical and within the bounds of the practical, and there are still some commonplace questions to ask. What of the "bad tempers" which more or less all children manifest? True enough, a child of a few days will manifest temper, and naturally enough, because he is the son of his parents who happen to have tempers. A small colt will also exhibit a "bad temper" and bite and kick the mother if she does not do to suit it. Who ever thought of attaching a moral significance to ill tempers manifested by the colt? Such manifestations are on the physical basis entirely and obtain throughout the entire animal order, and of themselves have no moral significance. Moreover, the thoughtful parent would account it a great

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

misfortune—indeed, he would consider it an affliction—if his son should evidence no temper. It is an evidence of a quality of embryonic character very essential to manhood. Why look with horror upon something which is very essential to well-developed character? What the temper needs is not to be called bad names, but to be cultured into proper channels with developing intelligence. So with all the various outworkings of young life which have within them the possibilities of great evil if left uncontrolled. The temper in the child is properly a matter for careful discipline because, if allowed free course, it will run away with him, and after a while, when the intelligence develops so that he does those naughty things with purpose, he becomes a sinner. So with all these inherited qualities—they are not of themselves sin, but if uncontrolled they will lead to sin. The home institution and the long period of infancy seem to have been designed for the very purpose of naturally and wisely developing these qualities. This view fixes the tremendous responsibility on the part of the parent. We cannot fathom the intricate relation of soul and body, but

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

we do certainly know that because of the failure of parents to properly train the animal manifestations of childhood and because of their failure to stimulate the soul qualities into control of bodily functions many youthful souls are early blighted by sin. It is no small matter to have the responsibility of parenthood.

Allow me to emphasize this point further. The assertion that there is no sin (in the sense of guilt) in the child who has not yet arrived at intelligent regulation of his conduct is not intended to convey the idea that these physical manifestations of inherent tendencies have no moral significance. Far from it. The intention is to emphasize their colossal importance and to urge a careful consideration of them on the part of parents, teachers, and church workers. We want to have them properly named, however, and we need to understand clearly what we are dealing with. A proper diagnosis of a case is the first essential to intelligent treatment. Here is where the home, the church, and the Sunday school continue to make their colossal blunder. They assume that the child is something apart from God;

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

but the child is God's child, and our work is to keep it such. "They were born his, and only in so far as they have gone from him must they return" (Bishop Quayle). We must wisely direct the childish instincts and curb what tends toward evil and cultivate what tends toward good. Good tendencies largely predominate. God is a greater factor in the child life than the parent. God gives every Adam a new chance. If only we would do our part as God does his part, how much better the world would become speedily! The normal child is sweet and sunny and loving. The occasional bad temper is rare. We should not provoke wrath but rather cultivate the love and the sunshine of the child. Let us give God a chance with the child.

Another big term to which we have been clinging for a long time as if it were a sacred expression is "total depravity." Some way we seem to think that this idea has been written by the divine hand into our Scriptures and for one to take exception to it is little short of sacrilege. This is an expression which we should erase entirely from our religious vocabulary. Surely, if this expres-

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

sion ever has any proper application to souls made in the image of God, it must be in that region where those condemned to eternal death are commanded. By no authority of Christ can we apply it to any of his children here upon the earth, much less to the little child of whom he said, "To such belongeth the kingdom." The man who has a spark of the Divine in him, who may yet be redeemed by the Christ, is not totally depraved. Why will we persist in allowing expressions made by men to carry us far beyond the reality of the thing described and thus divert our attention from the vital idea? It is high time that we were emphasizing the worth of child souls and recognizing that, having been made in his image, the impress still abides though expressing itself through human bodies. "Crime is largely social in its origin, and all of us are more or less responsible for those among us who fail to preserve a moral equilibrium" (New York Times). We can very well afford to emphasize the advice which Paul gives to Titus: "Let no man despise thee." An incarnated soul is of great importance in the sight of God, and therefore worthy of

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

our attention. Surely, we may say with Christ's authority: "Let no man despise this child which has come fresh and pure from the hand of God, and let no man neglect this child which God has intrusted to his care. It were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck and that he be drowned than that he should offend one of these little ones."

There remains at least one other great principle involved in this discussion which needs some consideration for the sake of clearness—the question of childhood conversion. This has been a much-discussed question and there is no need to enter into it minutely except to make our position clear in view of what has already been said. I am convinced that much of the difference of opinion on this subject arises from different conceptions of what is involved in conversion. You will find opinions differing all the way from a simple change of mind toward God as one extreme to the most cataclysmic transformation on the other extreme, and between the two extremes numerous shades of opinion. If we seek to apply the term "conversion" in the extreme cataclysmic

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

sense to the child who has not consciously gone into sin, it must be doubted whether it has any application. If we insist on the universal necessity for conversion and can conceive of a gradual unfoldment of the child life toward God as conversion, as some do, it becomes simply a matter of definition and no one will object to applying that term in that sense. But the more common notion of conversion involves a sense of guilt and a definite repentance and a definite sense of forgiveness, which are all beyond the child mind in the instinctive period. In such sense we must protest against the use of the word "conversion" as applied to child life. We must protest also against the common practice of trying to force children into this experience and causing them to profess an experience which they have not had. If Christ is to be accepted as the authority in this matter, there is left no room for this sort of experience. He was speaking to religious adults when he said, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18. 3). It is only a fair inference that children may enter in, since they are

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

held up as the example like to which we adults must become if we would enter in. The spirit of these words is carried out through all the teaching of Jesus. What does it signify? Only one meaning can be attached to it, and that is that the child who has not gone into willful wrongdoing is for that reason acceptable to him. Instead of setting up a transformed adult as a model of Christian virtue Christ sets up the pure child. This leaves small necessity for childhood conversion as we commonly speak of it.

The late Dr. Emory Miller, a man of profound spiritual vision, was accustomed to define heaven as "a place of harmonious activity." No one can think that the little child in the mother's arms, if taken back from whence it came, would introduce much discord into that realm of absolute harmony. We have long since revolted at the idea of a little child being lost when it is taken away from us. Why not consider them saved when they are still with us, and treat them accordingly? We may accept Christ's words unconditionally and take the child for what God intends him—a pure soul with no taint

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

of sin resting upon him. That much is God's work, and now ours is begun. Our problem is to keep him pure and free from sin, to induce this new Adam to want to do the right instead of the wrong. I believe wise parents and a wise and sympathetic church can succeed very markedly in doing this thing, though it is no easy task. We can, by the grace of God, take hold upon those child instincts and help them to unfold, so that with the dawning of the moral consciousness the child will want to do the right. If the child is God's child at birth, and if with his first intelligent choosing he has been so trained that he chooses to continue as God's child, who shall deny him the right? He will doubtless do many wrongs, but the godly parents will have so connected wrongdoing with sin against God that the child will understand it and will by proper repentance seek forgiveness of God for the wrong done. The transition from instinctive to intelligent action is made, and during the gradual change righteousness becomes the choice of the child and he is consciously serving God of his own volition. Why, then, should we force that child

PARENT, CHILD, AND CHURCH

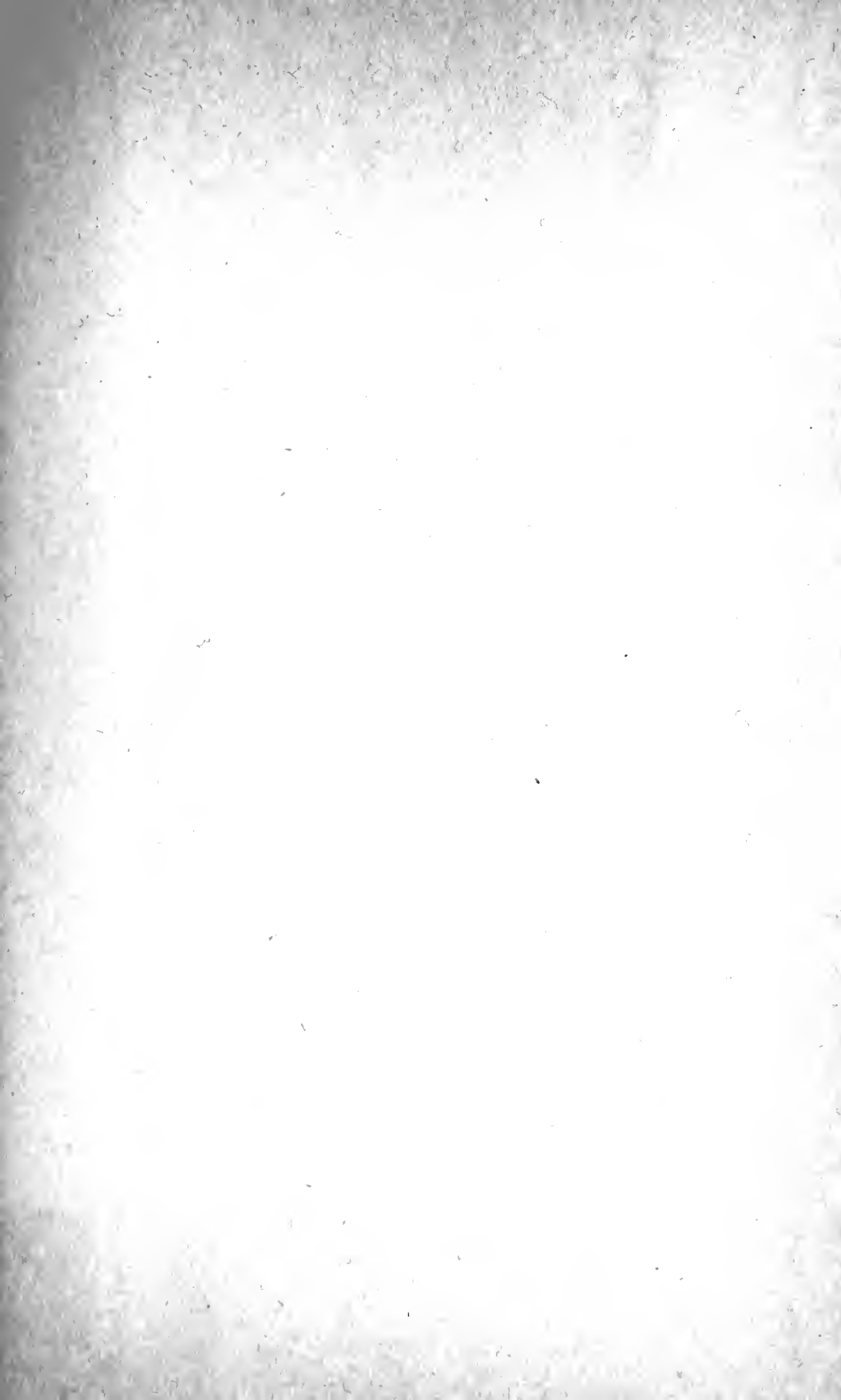
through a process well suited to a hardened sinner, and make him believe he has been converted while all the time he has had his heart turned toward God? The most earnest adult Christian, even though he may have had a most glorious and cataclysmic conversion, will doubtless have need of forgiveness for wrongs done against God. Shall we not accord the well-trained child the same privilege of seeking forgiveness for specific sins? The advantage is with the child because of the simplicity and sincerity of his purpose in coming to God. This outlines a tremendous responsibility for parents and the church, but certainly this responsibility is ours and we cannot lessen it by closing our eyes. That too many of our children are wandering away is evident. That more care for the child's religious life would help to stop the prodigal waste is conceded by all religious teachers. Therefore let nothing be left undone that will help to save the boys and girls to God and the church.

The late Professor Borden P. Bowne used to caution classes of young ministers against trying to get people to experience theology. Plainly, this is what we have

CHILDHOOD RELIGION

been trying to do with our children. We have been trying to get them to experience adult theology. We have had a system of theology and we have been greatly concerned about fitting children into the mold, and childhood has suffered as a result. We cannot place too much emphasis upon conversion for those who have willfully gone into sin. The tendency to-day is to minimize this important work of grace. But to try by some doubtful expedient to force children into an adult theological mold is unpardonable. The disciples deserved the Master's rebuke when they hindered the children from coming to him. We shall surely be sorely rebuked if we continue to block the child's path to the throne of God.





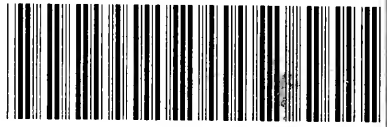
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