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The recreation of adolescence from the standpoint of the church

-SENIOR THESIS-

THE RECREATION OF ADOLESCENCE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE CHURCH

Presented
by

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The Recreation of Adolescence From the Standpoint of the Church.

Many men have misinterpreted the age which preceded them by interpreting it in the light of the present and dubbing useless certain customs which rendered real service to the individual practicing them. So have men thought as regards boys. They have grown to manhood and then not entered sympathetically into the needs of the child. Thus, men have been unsympathetic with play. Formerly, play was considered not only a waste of time but harmful. Francke of Halle, in the eighteenth century, an educational organizer and philanthropist of considerable note said, "Play must be forbidden in any and all of its forms. The children shall be instructed in such a manner as to show them through the presentation of religious principles, the wastefulness and folly of all play. They shall be led to see that play will distract their minds from God the Eternal Good and will work nothing but harm to their spiritual lives."

The church has attempted to minister only to the spirit life. No opportunity or direction

was given by the church for play. Indeed, the message of the Church as regards recreation has been negative. Washington Gladden once said, "The historical attitude of Christianity to popular amusements has been one of antagonism".

Three factors have been primarily responsible for the transition which is taking place and which is by no means complete.

1. The impetus given by German experiments.
2. The newer psychology.
3. The modern social stress.

It has been recognized that there is no opposition between the play and the religious spirit as has been supposed. The Church is seeking to meet these recreational needs; this tendency is illustrated in modern Church architecture: artistic and aesthetic values while not being sacrificed, are secondary to a workshop for the boys. The paper will show in yet another relation how important has been the change. We will cite here one quotation to show the modern attitude toward recreation.

"Don't be afraid that all the time you spend with boys will not be profitable because part

of your activity is 'secular'. There should be no secular. The Church has been too small in its interests and the boys have been obliged to go elsewhere for the expression of their 'secular' life and the Church has lost. There should be nothing objectionable about a boy turning a flip in the Church basement. We have waited for the annual Sunday School picnic to suggest a potato race, the broad jump and the fifty yard dash. The average boy does not require the stimulus of the picnic to make him interested in these things. An athletic event is always in order and ought to be considered thoroughly religious."

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVING THE ADOLESCENT LIFE FOR CHRIST, AND THE NEED OF CHURCH ACTION.

The character of the dance, the theatre and unsupervised play will be brought out later; we wish to point out here that they as a negative factor make imperative Church action. Where is the man who believes in better conditions who has not been forced to the question--in the face of all this should the Church stand by with folded hands and lament the loss of her boys and girls?

The problem takes on larger import when we think of the conditions the educator faces and is trying so heroically to master with continuation schools, part time schools, manual training and the newer stress on the practical arts. I refer to the tendency for the children to drop out of the grades early. One author makes the statement that one half of the school children quit before they are twelve years old. While this may mean more work, it also means more play of some sort.

Parmalee from a wide study of the progress of the laboring classes in getting shorter hours, concludes that pretty generally the courts uphold legislation which aims at the lessening of the hours of labor to eight per day for women and children. He reasons that while the courts have not upheld legislation making for shorter hours for men, the needs of the men, probably will result in the not distant future in the upholding of such legislation for all. This seems to be the general opinion. From the standpoint of recreation, this means more hours for play of some sort.

E. F. Weller, Associate Secretary of the

Playground and Recreation Association of America, says that there are 4,000,000 hours of leisure every week in Grand Rapids, and 3,000,000,000 each week in the homes of the United States. He believes that the advance which will be made in civilization will come through the proper use of this margin.

Wellington said, "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton and Harrow." If these are facts, is there not here a great opportunity for the Church to mould the lives of our citizens by the proper use of their leisure?

The need of Church action is made rather clear by the seeming fact that adolescence is the period in which the church loses its grip on the man and the woman.

Miss Slattery says, in giving reasons for having left the Sunday School, "Hebrew and Catholic girls both employed and in school answered (to a questionaire to determine the causes of this dropping off) almost without exception that they had completed the work expected in their respective churches before leaving". Protestant employed girls who had left the Sunday School between the ages of thirteen

and twenty, said, "We had no regular teacher". "I didn't get anything out of it." "There were so few girls my age, I finally left." "My family moved and I didn't enter a new school." "The othergirls in the class weren't sociable and I got sick of it and left." "I think Sunday School is well enough for children but I don't see anything in it for a business girl." "I simply didn't like it." Some high school girls who had left the Sunday School said, "Not many girls my age go." I got sick of it." "The girls weren't sociable." Among suggestions, the girls made for change which might have made them wish to attend were,- "A large organized class"; "Some social life where we could get acquainted"; "Clubs and classes connected with the school."

Miss Slattery from her questionaire draws five conclusions as to the wants of the girls of the ages mentioned above, numbers three and four and five of which are especially significant for our study.

1. Competent and Interesting Teachers.
2. Some form of class organization.
3. Some social life connected with the class.
4. Something definite to do.

5. Lessons that have to do with life.

The above deals with girls; as good a case could be made out for boys. It has been the lament of pastors on all hands that they and their Churches have lost their grip on the adolescent boy.

It was Paul who said, "If eating meat cause my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat." Can the modern Paul say aught else than- if having no recreation cause my brother to offend, then I will use all my influence to provide recreation for the boys.

Frank L. Brown says, "We have lost a generation out of our Church" is the sad confession of many a pastor because of a failure to rightly compass and direct within the Church those surging forces of the years of adolescence that found too little response or channel within the plans of the Church for them, and breaking the shrill ways of the home and Sunday School make for destruction instead of conservation. It has been felt that most of the perils of the community for tomorrow will be avoided if we can put the right emphasis upon the adolescent life of today and that the Church and Sunday School are potent fac-

tors in the accomplishment of this program for today.

III. PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS IN ADOLESCENCE FOR RECREATION.

The following analysis is based on Minnie E. Kennedy's article, "The Adolescent Girl."

1. Hero Worship.

Miss Kennedy believes hero worship is stronger in girls than in boys. She thinks the tendency to imitate that which is admirable in the hero is a marked characteristic of the adolescent girl. Concrete rather than abstract truths appeal to her. She should therefore be thrown in contact with persons of large calibre.

2. The Social Instinct.

Girls are in the preadolescent period apt to find satisfaction in a chum. Later, however, her "set" corresponding to the boys' gang" is organized for work or play. While girls are more apt than boys to be exclusive, the desire for comradeship is part of the makeup of adolescent girlhood. This instinct will express itself in one way or another. Wise is that Church which provides an outlet--a wholesome channel for its expression.

3. The Religious Instinct.

In spite of the apparent frivolity and lightness of the girl of this period she can be relied upon to be fair in her estimate of the presentation of religion. The thinker will have her doubts; the thing to do is not to repress them but to stimulate thought and to convince her that the truth will not be injured by much or deep thought. Much of emotion has this girl and many times during this period, if she develops properly, she can be brought to the place of decision. If she pass through this period without deciding for Christ, she will probably be difficult to reach.

4. Altruism.

Sometimes selfishness crops out in the growing girl, but for the most part she will be willing to sacrifice self regardless of the cost. The large task, as well as the distant, appeals to adolescent girl. Foreign Missions enroll a large percentage of its volunteers from just these girls. She has much energy,-a large distant task challenges it. However, the near at hand will claim her attention if the problem is worth while.

5. The Maternal Instinct.

A distinction should be drawn between maternity and the maternal instinct. Some women are mothers and know little of the maternal spirit; while some have very strongly developed the maternal spirit without being mothers. The chief characteristics of the maternal instincts are "yearning, tenderness, self-sacrifice, an attitude of protection, a quick response to need." Very often these qualities misdirect the life, not because of passion, but because of the willingness to protect or to sympathize with an inferior man. She can best be understood by a woman who should intelligently advise her as to what to expect. The Church renders service to the womanhood of the nation if it capitalizes these qualities in the service of the King rather than letting them be misused or commercialized in various ways.

6. Constructive Imagination.

Every girl is a dreamer. Thbugh the dreams of girls may differ they all dream. The stuff with which she builds her dreams she gets from her experience and reading. The character of the reading she does will largely determine what sort of dream ma-

terial she has to work over for herself. The evil or good with which she is familiar will tend to be worked over in her character.

7. Secretiveness.

Whenever a girl's advisors cease to understand her and to be sympathetic, she locks up her secrets from them and confides in a chum which may or may not be for her well-being. Another aspect of her secretiveness may best be described as reserve. This is a marked characteristic of some natures and where she is drawn out prematurely, shallowness is apt to result.

8. Love of the Beautiful.

In the field of art or literature, this factor is an indispensable one to success. "The beauty of holiness" is more to be desired than aught else. Girls manifest this love of the beautiful in the large amount of time and attention they give to dress. Very often the love of the beautiful is allowed to expend itself, frazzle out over, dress. While a rightful balance should be maintained and a due proportion of time given to pretty clothes and a pretty life. This tasteful choice, the cultured

of the Church should tactfully teach those who need it.

9. A desire to please.

This may be used to make a woman womanly or deceitful. A desire to please may lead a girl to stress appearance rather than being. All sorts of extravagances result from the attempt to seem, perhaps, rich, or popular, or pretty. Now this tendency followed to its conclusion will lead a girl to do anything rather than seem unpopular. The great need for such a girl is a woman who can be confided in, who can sympathize and advise so that the desire to please may be used to please God and a wholesome character result.

The Psychological Characteristics of the Adolescent Boy.

1. At puberty, the time of the coming of which veries in different individuals, the young man ceases to be a kid. There have taken and are taking place certain physiological changes which make his a new body. The boy before twelve was satisfied with sensations; he now demands thought material. While

he is not a kid, neither is he a man--manhood must come as a result of growth. How the years from twelve to twenty are spent will determine largely what the man will be. There have come to maturity certain sex powers which make him a man. The great problem is not the suppression of these instincts but their guidance in channels which will make for manliness.

2. The association fibres of the brain begin in early adolescence to unify, bringing together in usable shape ones previous experience and making possible rational thought. This results in his questioning everything while authority was previously sufficient guide. Here is a crucial point at which sympathy and reason are needed to satisfy his inquiring mind.

3. Hitherto, his life has been self-centered. He now becomes social and altruistic; he will belong to a gang of some sort. He may easily become God-centered. He may become a Jesse James. He will become something.

4. Neuro-muscular development or the coordination of muscular action with thought takes place

very largely in this period. The work and recreation he has, should bevelop the fundamental sets of muscles so that his may be a well rounded physical development. "Hard work is relished by the adolescent for he craves the result in poise, control, and psycho-physical equilibrium."

The greatest fact of adolescence is the beginning of sex life; at this time the boy has a man's passions with a boys brain and will. "Most prostitutes start their unhappy lives at about sixteen years of age and criminal statistics show the boys fall at seventeen." The boy needs comrades of the right sort and friends in whom he can confide. This will make a barrier which will tend to strengthen his will. There are values here of unknown worth.

IV. THE WAY OUT.

A. From his wide knowledge of the subject, Mr. Brown makes the following suggestions.

1."The Church must recognize the call for recreation and social life as a God given instinct with a clear right to normal expression.

2. "The Church should hail this opportunity as

an opportunity for a new grip on the young life as a point of contact at a time of life moulding.

3. "The Church should know community conditions both wholesome and harmful in order to provide for this need.

4. "The Church should actively cooperate with all community organizations and forces which are aiming to provide wholesomely for this need.

5. "The Church should organize to oppose those forms of community recreation involving peril to the young people.

6. "The Church should supply what is wholesome on recreational and social lines not adequately provided by the community, provided wise leadership can be secured."

B. The finest way to insure the interest of the adolescent in any kind of recreation is to educate him to it. A system of graded recreation suited to the needs of the boys of the different ages would be best calculated to give this result. If the recreational leader would control adolescent recreation, let him control first preadolescent play

Let the Church grip the young life rather than lament its failure to hold the adolescent. The religious educator faces this primary requisite that if he is to educate a boy to be a normal citizen he must give the boy a normal education.

C. Feasibility of the Use of Motion Pictures by the Church.

1. Importance of them in our National Life, ~~as~~ They are Here to Stay.

There is no exact date dealing with the number of attendants upon the motion pictures in the United States. In Cleveland, on weekdays, it was estimated that 115,000 attended, while on Sundays and holidays, 200,000, that is, one in six of their population on week days and one in three on holidays and Sundays. San Francisco has 65% of the showgoing public at the motion pictures. In Kansas City there is a weekly attendence of 449,064 or almost twice her population. Walter P. Eaton, the dramatic critic, made this estimate in the latter part of 1913, that there were 10,000 motion picture houses in the United States with a probable daily attendence of twenty million at a cost of two million

dollars a day. The investment behind all this--besides the popularity of the pictures and the educational possibilities wrapped up in them make a reasonable basis for the statement--they are here to stay.

2. One of the arraignments against the modern city is that it has destroyed the neighborhood feeling which used to obtain and which served as a moral berrier to the growing youth, as well as a powerful factor for democracy. To be sure the city boy knows ten or fifteen lads who live on his own street, but the country boy knows and is known by everybody in town; this helps him to go straight, but where no one knows one it doesn't seem to matter so much. This wider acquaintance which is brought about by reaching many boys strengthens this negative moral stimulus. When churches introduce the moving pictures "immediately the people gather to find themselves neighbors and friends."

3. Rational Necessity for its Use.

An objection met on every hand arises from the so-called lack of sancity of the motion of introducing the Motion Picture into the Church. Clear

thinking is needed on just this point. Some very earnest Christians while emphasizing the sanctity of the Church building have lost sight of the sanctity of life. Their God is not Creator, else the laws of the cinematograph would be God and not devil made. The readiness with which one learns through the eyes is widely known. The memory is apt to retain the impression when presented in such a vivid fashion.

The pictures today are for the most part less barbarous than six or seven years ago. Yet the themes, teaching and vulgarity of many pictures are unquestioned facts. Statistics vie with one another in telling of juvenile crime instigated by motion pictures. Now there are four courses open to the church: (1) Hostility, (2) Inactivity, (3) Encourage a wise Censorship, (4) Use them. If we assume the first, the barbarity of theme will not be lessened, and the church will not only not gain but will lose the respect of many thinking men. If we assume the second we may increasingly expect to see our young men and women seek their so-called "secular" entertainment outside the Church, in which

case the Church is not only not influencing them but they are being weaned away from it. If we adopt the third course, the type of picture will be apt to be bettered and the people more edified, but what of the Church: if there are educational possibilities, and spiritual, in the pictures it would seem that to encourage their use by extra-church forces would be bad institutional and social economy. To adopt their use would be to influence the non-church pictures to a higher plane and to hold the people, thus making more possible the advancement of the Kingdom. If we believe in a well-rounded life can we stress only soul growth and leave the squaring ot the other side of men's natures to chance--no not even chance?

It was a Methodist bishop who said, and that not so long ago, when a certain church was contemplating the putting of a bell in the steeple,- "A steeple and a bell,-the ~~first~~ next thing you will want a choir and then, farewell Methodism." The choir has for some considerable time been a factor which has contributed to the spiritual life of the church and few signs of decadence are evident from its

introduction. May it not be that what we need is not suppression but use and supervision?

4. Progress- Four Hundred Churches Point the Way.

Thus far the use of motion pictures by the Church has been limited. The motion picture producers have not catered to the trade for the demand has not been sufficiently strong. Under the direction of Dr. Charles Stelzle, "four hundred churches in as many cities are soon to be supplied with films each week. There are to be sixty centres with a motion picture machine and operator for each centre. The operator with his machine and films is to travel over the territory in the circuit plan, covering not only Sunday nights but week day nights as well."[c]

5. Benefits and Conclusion.

I passed a motion picture house about the middle of January. The school children had recently been dismissed; six hundred between the ages of four and thirteen, stood in line waiting for six hundred others to come out. One has but to recall the laws of psychology(attention, habit, interest) to predict a prosperous business in five years for that theatre.

Will the Church continue to hurl anathemas at the motion pictures while these unused opportunities of moulding for Christ are wasted?

"The motion picture has demonstrated in scores of cities and towns that it has a more powerful hold on the man than has the saloon. Liquor licenses are falling off; the corner saloon is disappearing and sobriety in the home of the working man is supplanting the waste of charity money and home life across the bar. All of which demonstrates incidentally that human nature is good and that when is has the opportunity to choose between the higher and lower, all other things being equal, it will choose the former." The author of the above believes that pictures have had a part in increasing sobriety throughout the country. "The part of wisdom would seem to direct that the Church cooperate in its development and use it in every possible way in religious instruction and in reaching the unchurched masses."

C. Should the Church Use the Dance?

The prevalence of the dance is a fact which cannot be overlooked. Next in importance to the

motion picture to the adolescent is the dance. An investigation made in Manhattan showed that 64% of the school children under fourteen years of age knew how to dance, and that 88% of the girls knew how. The investigation brought out the further fact that 85% of the boys and 96% of the girls like to dance. This seems to show that girls like to dance better than boys and that they learn earlier.

Reports of commissions* agree that dances vary in harmfulness from the parlor in good homes to the public dance hall. Several facts stand out prominently:-

1. The country replenishes the city dance hall: i.e., in all probability social restraints made the rural dance respectable, these fed the public dances in the cities.

2. The dance hall has, if good, has fallen into bad company, viz., the saloon and rooming house where no questions are asked.

3. The prevalence of dancing and the sensuality of much of the public dancing make imperative some

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* Kansas City 1911 Milwaukee San Francisco
Chicago Louisville New York

church action. The wide-spread use seems to indicate a need. At present elimination, if wise, is unlikely. Supervision would then seem to be the wise immediate program.

The adoption of a church dance program would be unwise for:-

1. In all probability the church dance would be a feeder for the public.

2. Whatever values the dance has of rhythmic expression, physical exercise, aesthetic qualities, companionship, etc., the church can supply in a more wholesome atmosphere. A very real need for just this program exists.

3. A traditional opposition based on the history of dancing.

D. Clubs.

The following, Mr. Hall thinks are the organizations most widely in use by the church for the ages between twelve and twenty: Boy Trust, Boy's Brigade, Kings Daughters, Kappa Sigma Pi, Boy Scouts, Knights of King Arthur, Knights of Methodism, Camp-Fire Girls, Christian Endeavor, Junior Brotherhood, Girls' Friendly Society, Church Attendance League,

Covenanter Companys and Miriam Chapters,, Knights of the Holy Grail, Queens of Avilion, Brotherhood of David, Knights Crusaders, and the Lincoln Anti-Cigarette League.

After giving a description of these auxiliary organizations, the author makes the following statement. "A few of the keener observers of these organizations are doubtful of their ultimate value. Not a few insist that multiplication of organization is becoming harmful as well as wasteful and that a simple inclusive organization is needed." At any rate the large number of organizations, the large number of approaches to the problem show its enormity and further the desire of the church to meet in an adequate way the need of the adolescent, physically, religiously, and educationally, by way of social service and recreation. The Christian ideal man is a well rounded individual;such the Church is striving to produce.

E. Outdoor Recreation.

Indoor play is suitable for only a part of the year. There are certain advantages which accrue

from outdoor play which make it desirable to have as much outdoor play as possible.

Play influences every part of the individual development, physical, mental, moral and spiritual, and social. Unsupervised play often results in spinning tops and such games which have no special value for muscle development. Organized play results in summetrical development of the body through the use of a variety of muscles. The laws of use and disuse of muscles will beyond question result in development or atrophy. Mangold cites the case of the difference in height of three inches between the wealthy and the East End Jew of London, and further the case of the slum population of Glasgow, although of the same racial stock is about four inches shorter than the people living in the surrounding country. Organized play can be made to benefit these people whose playground is for the most part dirty streets, fire-escapes and foul dance halls and saloons. The conditions of survival of these people can be made more favorable.

Those who have fought tuberculosis have sought widely a remedy for this dread disease. Experts now tell us that the best remedy for it is the

thing nearest to us,-fresh air. Statistics show that tuberculosis is most prevalent between the ages of thirty and forty and that it is for the most part a filth disease. The economic and social losses from it are inestimable. A strong constitution is the best guarantee that one will not have it. Outdoor play is coming to be recognized as the factor above all others which will give the man or woman the stamina to resist.

Another important point is the social values of outdoor play. It can be said of indoor as well as outdoor play that the values which come from cooperation and antagonism are many. The need of united action to win binds the group more closely together. Thus is developed the spirit of team play which in the world of achievement makes a man a good partner, a man able to do committee work, a man able to see what forces must be coordinated to achieve his end. This will enable the men of the country to work together for some political end,- the establishing of national prohibition or the adoption of a better system of city government than the one now in force. This development will make for democracy,- a condi-

tion where all will work together for the wellbeing of all. It is necessary, here, to point out one factor which is of great importance. Whether the instincts of cooperation will make for good government of bad will depend largely on the sort of a gang which a boy belongs to, on the sort of cooperatig he does in his teens.

The one who plays out of doors will find the great life processes carried on properly, will find his mind functioning in an adequate way. There is a keenness of insight and an optimism which result from physical wellbeing which give flavor to the whole of ones thinking.

The spiritual value may be emphasized in this connection as it is easier for a boy with a delight in nature and the life about him to interpret the world theistically,-he can see God more readily behind it all when his body and mind are in good condition.

The increase in the number of playgrounds in the United States is indicative of the larger interest that is being taken in the play movement. In 1906, there were fewer than thirty cities which had

playgrounds. In 1913, there were 642 under paid and unpaid workers. This is the tendency both in city and rural communities throughout the world. Some of the cities maintain their play program only through the summer. The number which maintain their grounds the year round is increasing at about 12% per year. The economic and social arrangement or argument for lighting the play ground at night would seem to indicate that there will soon be a wider use of the public playground in this direction. New York has spent $17,000,000 on its play system in the past fifteen years. Chicago spent $13,000,000 in the past ten years. The amount being spent in the United States is increasing at the rate of about 50% a year. Play programs are increasingly coming to be the rule in our public schools. The tendency is to have the playground about twice as large as formerly. Many schools employ play directors. The majority of the Normal schools of the United States have one or more courses in play. The out of door play movement is being furthered by such organizations as the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls, summer camps; in more than a hundred cities the Public School Athletic

League has succeeded in having established under the direction of the board of Education, organized athletics.

Conclusion.

"On a brightly lighted street thronged many girls, school boys, children, country folks, and working people. But there was something strange about this street. It seemed to have only one side and the people's faces were turned one way. The side to which the people flocked was light, the other side was, comparatively speaking, dark. The visitors crossed from the bright to the dark side and discovered there, dimly illuminated by an occasional flickering lamp, interspersed with comfortable homes, stretching in dull array the very institutions of civilization itself. . . . Here was the library spacious and solid. . . .I read a card also affixed to the spike gateway fortifying the heavy doors,-'This Library Closed at 5 P. M. during July, August and September.' It is closed Sundays, holidays, and Saturday afternoons. Beyond the Library was the High School, substantially built, designed to endure for many years. . . . Yet this great agent of civiliza-

tion, the measure by which Western nations tell of their progress, seemed lazy and infidderent. I could use it in no other way except to sit on its steps and watch life on the other side of the way,-and the steps were dusty. Its inhospitable air hurried me on to a cozy dwelling under elm trees....But as I paused, a policaman crossed the street, closed the gate, tried the catch and looked at me as if to say, "How came that gate open'?..... I learned that the house was once the home and is now the memorial of a famous poet. Summer travelers make a point of visiting it, the policeman said, and it would be worth my while to stay over to see the great man's cradle and his grandfather's clock. I could not stay over, I objected, whereupon he replied severely that it was worth patronizing if only for the sake of the public spirited committee of leading ladies who opened it daily from two until five o'clock. . . . 'That,' he said more affably,'is the Old First Church built in 1798, and the statue in front is of its great minister who preached from 1800 to 1850.' 'Have you a good man now?' I asked idly? 'Fair,' he replied; 'But the church is closed during the Summer, you know.'

properly pointed spire, standing demurely among the city of the dead and sheltered by weeping willows, is unfitted to the newer age. The church building of the present day has lost its sepulchral whiteness and has moved onto a prominent corner to stand among the living, with open doors each day and night and with a message of good cheer to all who pass by".

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