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Religion in adolescence

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

RELIGION IN ADOLESCENCE

Submitted by
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" "
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In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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RELIGION IN ADOLESCENCE

I

INTRODUCTION

Religion is probably the most dominant factor in human life. With its various forms and expressions, it has had a constant relationship with the actual life of human being. It has been the object of the work, not only of religionists, but also of philosophers, historians, and literalists. Religion, therefore, covers a vast field of phenomena of widely diversified character and various manifestations. However, we can hardly deny the tendency that it has been regarded as a matter of speculation, and consequently as a subject for mature people only. Unfortunately this situation causes certain troubles when we try to understand religion from the pedagogical stand point. In other words, if religion is considered merely in the realm of philosophy or theology, it can hardly leave room for the human child who

should be brought up by religious education. Therefore, we are going to look at religion from some other point of view than the mere speculation.

One fundamental thing in religion is the fact of the relationship between God and man in the actual life. Religion is not a mere postulate, but it is life itself; it is an actual reality. Accordingly, we are urged to go out of the sphere of the transcendental to the realm of the empirical, out of the speculation on the ultimate divine source to the real psychic experience of the individual. That is to say, we are obliged to go out of philosophy or theology to psychology. The psychology of religion has revolutionalized the idea of religion by taking it out of mere speculation into the dynamic world of reality. It understands religion by dealing with the system of ideas, feelings, beliefs, and actions. Especially, this psychological point of view is the only one way for us to keep the child in connection with religion. Through psychology the child may be free from the orthodox theology which considers him as a mysterious being.

Of course we do not mean that psychology is the only solution of religious problems. Yet we do maintain that without psychology religion can not be fully and satisfactorily understood. Psychology provides a scientific method for the investigation of religious life. "Psychology can only render more pre-

cise and complete what is already recognized in a partial way in the practice of the religious life."(1) Its relation to religion is "the same as that of any science to its corresponding art. Psychology is to religion what the science of medicine is to health, or what the study of botany is to the appreciation of plants. Psychology will contribute to religion by leading toward greater wisdom in religious education; by increasing our power of appreciation of spiritual things."(2)

We may investigate religion, therefore, exhaustively in the sphere of thoughts, emotions, and volitions. The first thing we can learn from this point of view is that religious experience can take place within the area of the conceptions and volitions that are possible at a certain particular age; religion of some kind and degree may be experienced by any subject capable of thinking, feeling, and acting, even though such thoughts, feelings, and actions with reference to God and His relation to men are naive, vague, and rudimentary. It must, therefore, be admitted that even little children can live a genuinely religious life in so far as their

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- (1) Coe, The Spiritual Life, Introduction
(2) Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion, Introduction.

mental states are consciously directed and adjusted with reference to God.

With this understanding we may investigate the religion of adolescence, dividing the whole problem into several sections. First of all we will discuss the nature of adolescence in order to get the general idea of the period of adolescence. In the second place, we will study the physiology and psychology of adolescence in general. Then we will enter into specific aspects, dealing with emotions, self-consciousness, the mental turmoils, and the criminal tendency. After that, we will investigate the problem of conversion and the essential factors of the religion of adolescence, touching also some pedagogical aspects of it.

II

THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE

Human life is a unity. Although the individual life may be divided into such stages as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and senescence, on the ground of certain features which distinguish one stage from others, such division is made only for convenience sake, and there is no essential difference in the individual life. If there should be, it is the difference of degree rather than of kind. Accordingly, adolescence is only a correlated period to other periods, having an unified character which comes from the previous stages and which is transmitted to the following stages.

Adolescence, according to the customary theory, is the period that intervenes between childhood and adulthood, or the period that extends from the beginning of puberty to the ripening of the reproductive powers. Chronologically it extends from about twelve years old to twenty-five years old, though these ages may vary according to race, climate, inherited disposition, habits of life, physical conditions, sex, and etc. The whole period may be divided into two parts owing to certain characteristics—early adolescence

and later adolescence, the division being made at the age of sixteen or seventeen. The prominent feature of early adolescence is the physical growth, and that of later adolescence is the mental development.

There are four main aspects in the study of adolescence which are very closely related. They are the physical growth, mental expansion, social participation, and religious manifestation. It is during this period that permanent health habits are achieved or the opportunity for realizing permanent health is lost; sex organs mature and sex differences are established. Mental powers unfold rapidly; great response of imagination, memory, attention, skill and reason may be shown. The group sense is strengthened and team or group play is achieved. Conscience begins to function and the formation of character is in the forefront. Especially, religious sentiments and beliefs may be naturally grown.

In investigating the religion of adolescence and in attempting to build programs of religious education for adolescence, these four aspects should be always taken into our consideration. Even the study of religion itself in adolescence can not be taken up without reference to the physical, mental, moral or social aspects in the meantime. We must remember that the religion of adolescence is but an integral part of the total life of adolescence.

The most important thing in the present study, however, seems to be emotion, because emotion has a two-fold significance. It is an essential character of religion, and it is also the most characteristic phase of the life of adolescence. Adolescence is "the period when emotion becomes sentiment. It is the time of romance. Attraction for the opposite sex now causes interests in dress, etiquette, and the grace of polite society to develop. This is the time to awaken the nobler sentiments of patriotism and religion. Lest the child go through life emotionally maimed and crippled, cold, dull, and emotionally unresponsive, the period should not be allowed to pass without awakening the deepest sentiments and letting them find expression in song, art appreciation, literature, the drama, and reverent worship, care being taken not to produce morbidness by overstimulation."(1)

Adolescence, any way, stands out as the most beautiful stage in human life. However, it faces a great life's crisis at the same time, on account of the physical as well as mental disharmony. It is necessary, therefore, to examine carefully every phase of the life of adolescence. For this reason we may begin our study from the investigation of the physical growth and the mental aspect in general.

(1) Athearn, The Church School, p.245-6.

III

THE PSYCHO-PHYSICAL ASPECT OF ADOLESCENCE

A well-known fact as to the relation between body and mind is that they affect each other. Certain physical conditions may cause certain mental states. Likewise certain mental states may influence certain bodily conditions. Our special attention should be paid, however, to the fact that the individual's life is fundamentally conditioned by his physical states, and consequently his mental states are largely the products of his bodily conditions. For in the body we find the source of much of mental process. We must not forget this fact especially in the treatment of many problems in adolescence. Therefore our task is to investigate the growth of physical organisms in adolescence, before entering into other aspects of the adolescent's life.

Adolescence, especially in its early period, shows acceleration in the growth of the organism. It begins about the age of ten or eleven, a little earlier in girls than in boys, and continues until the age of fifteen or sixteen, finding its most

rapid growth at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Girls, as a rule, reach their full development in structure by the age of eighteen or nineteen, while boys still continue to grow for two or three years longer, though the rate of growth is greatly diminished. The growth takes place not only in weight or height, but also in the length of the various parts that contribute to the total. Above all, the most striking feature in adolescence is the growth of reproductive organs. Those changes are mostly internal rather than external. They govern most of activities both in physiology and psychology in adolescence.

The characteristic of the physical growth of adolescence is its assymetry. And, as a consequence, the general health of the body is unstable. The nervous excitement and strain, unlimited appetite, immoderation, disorders and irregurities are the main characteristic features during this period.

If we turn from the physical aspect to the mental aspect of adolescence, we will find there a significant fact that adolescence begins to manifest a remarkable development of the mental life along thinking, feeling, and acting. The general characteristics of the whole mental life may be represented by two typical terms—emotion and intellect. And it is well said that the emotional element is stronger in early adolescence, while

the intellectual element is more dominant in later adolescence.

Unstability and assymetry are the characteristic phenomena in the mental life of adolescence, as it is in the case of the physical development. The control of feeling by thought is less constant and less certain than in the period of childhood. Desires, aversions, tastes, and preferences determine in many cases the way of thinking and acting. Many adolescents often possess unusually high emotionalism or sentimentalism. Similarly, preconceptions and pre-judgments often become an objection to the entrance of new ideas and thoughts. The result is in general personal discomfort and social awkwardness.

Intellect, though it continues to increase its capacity, is not matured at this period. Thus the adolescent "becomes a conscious logician. A passion for argumentation take possession of him. He will settle everything by rigorous logic. It was at this period of life that Descartes entered upon the course of thought that produced his principle of doubting everything that can be doubted. The adolescent is a remorseless critic. There is no limit to his captiousness and censoriousness. The least slip in pronunciation, the least infelicity of rhetoric, the least fault in dress, in manners, or in conduct, is seized upon wherever found, and playmates, teachers,

pastors, and parents pass under the rod of his scorn. Then appear pride, conceit, self-will, and rebellion against authority."

(1)

In the normal case of mental development, the process may follow the order that emotion gradually decreases its intensity, and a certain degree of rational reflection comes in to be harmonized with it. In other words, the forces of passion pass under the power of intellect. And new individuality may be established. The meaning and purpose of life begins to be definitely conceived; the relative value of things may be clearly judged; conduct will be governed by far-reaching purposes. In a word, the adolescent discovers himself.

In considering the religion of adolescence and in building the program of religious education for adolescence, it is necessary to discuss the mental aspect in detail and to deal with specific parts of mental activities of adolescence in the following sections.

(1) Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, p.37.

IV

EMOTION AND AESTHETIC NATURE

The principal factor in the mental life of adolescence is undoubtedly emotion. It governs nearly the whole period of adolescence. For this reason, and also for the reason that emotion is dominant in religious life, we may investigate, in the first place, emotion and the aesthetic nature of adolescence.

The simpler emotions are in fact not different from the primary instincts; they are rather different phases of the same thing. In this sense, emotion is more primitive and more fundamental than reasoning activities. Physiologically emotion is most closely connected with the sympathetic nerve system and also with the cerebro-spinal system. Emotion is the basic element of affective quality, as well as of all mental states, as in the case of forming a system of ideas, or performing volitional acts. One of the characteristics of emotion is its susceptibility to the influence of slight cause, and the other is its variability both in quality and in intensity. We must remember, however, that emotion never occurs alone; it is aroused by ideas in consciousness, and in return finds various forms of bodily expression, like gestures and other muscular movements.

During childhood the primary instincts are the leading force of behaviour, and its feeling phase is composed of simple emotions such as fear, anger, and repulsion. The pleasure feeling of little children, for instance, is limited to pretty things, bright colors, rhythmic movements, and sounds that rhyme together. These emotions are not qualified to organize the higher characteristics of emotion which is seen in adolescence. However, there are some evidences of the development of emotion during later childhood. Children from nine to twelve years old are generally fond of animals and birds, and this indicates a larger power to appreciate the beauty of more complexed features and organisms.

It is only during the period of adolescence that emotions such as admiration, awe, reverence, gratitude, scorn, contempt, hatred, joy, grief, pity, shame, the aesthetic feelings and the sentiments of moral approval and disapproval, come into the full development. The capacity to appreciate the beauty in all forms shows a great advance. Nature and beauty seem to be the most intimate friends for young people. They seem to live only in their imaginations, visions, and dreams. The wonderful manifestations of the universe and the unthinkable range of the cosmic may exert upon their mind a mystic fascination. During this period with many young people the love of beauty and the

enthusiasm for the artistic reaches a high level.

The emotional development in adolescence is partly due to the intellectual expansion, or the unfolding of the capacity of the judgment and reflection. In other words, ideas and judgment participate in determining the character and the intensity of emotions. Hence the emotions must be reached indirectly through the ideas of intellect and through the activity of the will.

It is a common opinion that there is a close relation between the awakening of the aesthetic nature and the dawning of the sexual function, or between the sexual love and the passion of beauty, moral enthusiasm, or religious aspiration. This may be true on the ground that they alike require the concept of value in the object in which the feeling is directed. This is admitted also when the meaning of sex is taken broadly, so that the matter of sex is not confined merely within the physical relationship, but on the contrary, is acknowledged as purely abstract and aesthetic. The fact as to this close relationship between the sexual love and aesthetic nature may be clearly shown in the field of art. Love is the theme of the poetic, of literature, of music, and of pictorial art. The chief forms of art are expressed in the portrayal or the celebration of the passion of love.

In them human love is idealised in its highest and noblest form.

Emotion not only does warm the coldness of intellectuality and widen the narrowness of practicality, it has also a recreational value. An actual contact with the thing that is beautiful may be accompanied with the thrill of emotional response. And this will arouse the adolescent to an intellectual interest that absorbs him. This is, to follow Tracy, the very quintessence of a 'liberal education' in the best sense.

Then it is obvious that emotion is the main agency of producing ideals, art, and religion. It is the fundamental quality of religion. Especially love emotion is religiously so important that it should be substituted for an intense love for God. The emotional life of adolescence, if taken care of well, would promise the highly cultivated moral and religious life. For the complete development of the individual consciousness, it is necessary to cultivate the sense of beauty and to secure an aesthetic consciousness. Athearn is right in emphasising the importance of art in the individual life, including music, pictures, drama, and literature.

The task of religious education must be achieved by means of emotion. It is necessary therefore, to provide special programs of emotional education for adolescence at home, in school, and in church. The adolescent idealism should be kept high and strong by

cultivating noble emotions. The aim of religious or emotional education is to develop such feelings as will stimulate the intellect, motivate the will, and appreciate the beauty.

We must remember that emotion in adolescence often means blindness. The power of feeling is stronger than the power of judgment, thought, or volition, lacking the power to direct itself along motor lines and to give its expression in motor terms. This situation is apt to cause the destruction of the natural and normal development of the tender natures and high ideals of adolescence. Nevertheless such emotional life of adolescence would be balanced and harmonized with the growing capacity of concept and thinking that mature gradually in later adolescence.

V

SOCIAL-SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS
AND THE CRIMINAL TENDENCY

One of the most important phases of mental life in adolescence is the discovery of self. The meaning of self in our discussion should be understood from the psychological stand point, differing from the meaning given by philosophy which assumes it as a means of forming a kind of unity of the different elements of experience. In psychology we may observe simply the content side of consciousness, made up of sensations, ideas, emotions, memories, desires and volitions. Therefore, self appears active and dynamic in this empirical field, with a mass of instincts, habits, tendencies, and attitudes.

The little child is unable to make distinction between the self and the not-self, or even between objects and persons at first. The consciousness of the self, while it was obscure during childhood, becomes an identifying factor of various experiences in adolescence, giving a clear, distinctive consciousness between the self and the not-self. As to the gradual development of this consciousness we may quote from Breese:

". . . it dawns upon him that certain objects (persons) in his environment react in a peculiar and unique manner, unlike the rest of the objects about him. Persons minister to his needs in a way that objects do not. . . They are peculiarly sensitive to his own acts and modes of experience. At the same time they are capricious in their movements. . . The child is, therefore, made aware of a certain independence and self-initiative in others which reflected back to himself. He begins to be conscious of his own independence of action. From this point on he both identifies and contrasts his acts with the acts of those other objects which he comes to know as persons."(1)

In this consideration we may notice that so-called self-consciousness involves the consciousness of others, and that it is really fostered by the environmental factors. Therefore self-consciousness means social-consciousness. Coe says: ". . . individuality is itself a social fact. Conversely, society, as distinguished from herds, arises in and through the individuating process, that is, through the increasing notice that one takes of another as an experiencing self. Neither term then—society or individual—is static; neither merely imposes itself

(1) Breese, Psychology, p.438.

upon the other, but the two are complementary phases of one and the same movement."(1) This fact contains a great significance in religious education of children. We must prepare an adequate environment for them from the beginning of our educational processes.

The growth of social-consciousness by which the youth recognizes that he is an integral part of the social whole means a vast expansion of mental outlook, that is, the growth of the cognitive faculty. While the organization and consolidation of ideas are local in their character and restricted in their range during the later period of childhood, the quality and the range of conception are remarkably expanded in adolescence. Through the growing capacity of concept the adolescent sees the meaning in the objects about him. He is now ready to have new individuality, feeling a sort of inner authority within his own mind. Many of the controlling activities are now transferred from without to within. Consequently he will never easily listen mere arbitrary social customs or rules.

The growth of conceptual capacity may be manifest even in sensuous experiences which occasionally make deep and abiding impressions upon the mind of the youth. In many cases adolescents find through imagination

(1) Coe, The Psychology of Religion, p.143

a kind of companionship in such inanimate things as myths and fancies which may become of absorbing interest. In this case, however, we must recognize that his imagination involves a great deal of conception, containing meanings in these sensuous experiences.

The new self-consciousness of adolescence, if it is guided by proper self-mastery, may become the basis of moral life. And gradually the individual as well as social conscience may grow out of it. If the adolescent initiate his social activities with certain moral content through the practice of reevaluating his conduct, it may be called a wholesome process of adolescent life by which his personality is ultimately unfolded. However, there are many cases that are contrary to it. The new self, on account of its immaturity, accompanies with it several cases of danger usually found in the social aspects of adolescent life. They are shown in the so-called sins and crimes which are the most vital problems of the present age with respect to adolescence.

It is admitted that crimes are committed more by adolescents between the ages of fourteen and eighteen than in any other period of equal length up to maturity. They are more likely to commit offences against the rights of property or of personality. Crimes against property include not only theft, which, according to Hall, is mostly

committed between the ages of twelve and fifteen, but also wanton destruction of property, the case of which is seen, for example, in the rough pranks of students in colleges and of pupils of high schools, and also in the practical jokes perpetrated by boys on many festival occasions that are devoted by tradition and custom to this sort of pastime. Of the crimes against persons, a common one is the misuse of sex relationship. It is said that the majority of prostitutes enter upon their vicious careers between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and that all manner of abuses of sexual functions prevail among both boys and girls at this age.

An important reason for these types of crime may exist in modern social conditions. In one case it is necessary for a majority of young people to pass from economic dependence to self-support, and in the other it is almost common thing that many young people are sent to colleges. The consequence in both cases is that they necessarily break the home tie, being free from any guidance in the majority of cases. They are indeed in a very critical situation, because it is the time when the temptations of life are most subtle and most numerous. Many young people are easily conquered by them. They talk lightly about the dark side of common social affairs, including matters of marriage, divorce, elopements, marital infelicities,

and etc. And they may gradually become a prey to low incitements, unless there are influences at hand that will redirect the misguided energy.

There is a clear understanding among most of the people as to the necessity of social or sex education for young people. The problem may be only methodological so far as practical life of adolescence is concerned. In order to achieve this task we must provide, first of all, good social environments in which ideals are upheld. At home parents should give sex instruction by themselves; by means of natural science, for example. The school, the church, and every other institution should co-operate with the home in attaining desirable results, and in revealing virtues and merits of adolescence. They must furnish wholesome and adequate opportunities for youthful social expression, and it is a desirable thing to get for adolescence an adequate program of athletics, oratorical, literary and debating clubs, orchestras, musical and dramatic societies, and high school publications.

The criminal tendency in adolescence should not be considered so seriously as in the case of mature people, for adolescents lack the deeper sinister motives. It will be gradually corrected by the growing capacity of judging and reasoning power in adolescents themselves, and also by the environmental influences. The

most important factor here may be the leadership and comradeship of men and women of the highest character. Problems of adolescence could not be solved, unless there are mature men and women who are sympathetically connected with the daily life of boys and girls in their homes and communities. In other words, personal attachment is the greatest necessity for them. The significance of personal influence of leaders is clearly illustrated by King's trial in which he requested his high school pupils to state the things that made the strongest impression upon them. The response showed that the greatest was the personal influence of the teacher.(1)

(1) King, The High School Age, ch.IX

VI

THE MENTAL TURMOILS AND CONVERSION

A certain amount of dislocation of both intellectual and emotional natures caused by a marked acceleration of their development leads to the problem of adolescents mental turmoils. Now the adolescent appears as a truth-seeker, trying to construct the system of his thoughts. But in the mean time he meets inevitable difficulties and contradictions in his mental pursuit. Many orders of emotion are to all intents and purposes new at this time, and they are apt to disturb the mind with a power that is well-nigh irresistible. Thus many adolescents manifest all degrees of fluctuation between the two extremes of joyousness and gloom. Under this condition he scarcely knows what to do with his powers of mind and of body; with the power of feeling, images, ideas, and with the vigorous current of muscular and nervous forces. Starbuck says: "Adolescence is a time of acting and acting wrong, of running against a wall and suffering, of sinning and repenting, which

results finally in remorse and lack of self's confidence . . . This is evidently one element in the differentiation of ideals."(1)

The mental turmoils are, in general, the results of self-analysis. There may be, as McDougal mentions, two self-feelings—negative and positive, or self-depreciation and self-appreciation. Each of them has advantages and disadvantages in adolescent life. The excess of this self-analysis is always accompanied with unfavorable results. Especially the negative self feeling is a main feature in adolescent mental life from which such phenomena as mental turmoils occur. Starbuck investigates most of the negative and painful experiences under two heads— "storm and stress" and "doubt". So-called "storm and stress" includes such mental states as a vague sense of incompleteness, indefinable aspirations and dissatisfactions. A sense of sin is sometimes exceedingly vague and sometimes quite definite, varying from the consciousness of some particular offence to the indefinite conviction of having committed a great sin. We must not forget that a main factor in this mental state is, in fact, emotion.

If a conscientious youth, whose ideal is high and whose desire is for moral achievement, repeatedly puts himself in the mood of introspective analysis, he may come to

(1) Starbuck, Psychology of Religion, p.258

regard himself as unworthy, and to believe himself much worse morally than he really is. His conscience appears morbidly scrupulous and exacting in this case, in spite of, for the most part, a sane and reasonably sensitive attitude. He is too conscientious, concerning even the most ordinary matters of fact. He longs to be exactly right, and to know that he is right.

Another case, an instance of the excess of self-appreciation may be furnished by what Starbuck explains in terms of the sense of estrangement. He says: "It is a very frequent experience for persons to feel themselves shut off from others; to think their individual revelations peculiar to themselves; to look upon customs and conventions as external to their own experiences; to feel that they have a newer and greater revelation than other people have. . . There is a consciousness of the fresh life within, and everything is judged in terms of it; it becomes the center to which all else is referred, hence the sense of aloofness and estrangement from other people." (1) The cases are quite familiar in the orient in our religious life as well as in general.

The moodiness of young people, in which they pass from extreme depression and melancholy to extreme hilariousness, has its roots in the emotional unsteadiness of the

(1) Starbuck, Psychology of Religion, p.255

period. Self-consciousness becomes acute, self-scrutiny and introspection may possibly develop into fixed habits. And the danger exists in the tendency to all sorts of morbid conditions, including melancholia, hysteria, precocity, mania, hallucinations, and religious crazes. We feel it necessary to ascribe causes of mental disorders to organic conditions such as nerve fatigue. And if adolescents happen to be faced with this difficulty, the surest way to overcome it is, first, through physical hygiene, and in some cases, through medical treatment.

Certain phenomena of so-called "doubt" have been stated in our discussion of "storm and stress". "Doubt" includes, however, more intellectual forms of adolescent turmoils, and it begins usually after the emotional perturbations of "storm and stress" have got under way. Yet fundamentally, the beginning of doubt corresponds to the period of arrested mental and emotional activity. The cause of doubt is two-fold. It is caused by the internal explosion as well as the external influences. It is partly due to psycho-physical organism, and partly due to the study of science and philosophy. As to causes of doubt, Starbuck gives the following list:(1)

(1) Starbuck, Psychology of Religion, p.236

Occasion of Doubt	Female	Male
	Per Cent	Per Cent
Educational Influences	23	73
Natural Growth	47	15
Calamity (Death, Misfortune)	9	9
Misconduct of Christians	2	3
Unanswered Prayer	7	0
Ill-health	12	0

In most cases the things doubted, according to inquiries of Starbuck and others, belong to the class of propositions which have been taught dogmatically in the period of childhood, and which have been accepted by the childish mind on external authority and with a minimum of comprehension. So Pratt emphasises the theological prepossessions with which youth are so often brought up. He says that the tendency has been to make "conviction of sin" a more normal adolescent phenomenon than it really is. The psychological literature on this subject gives the reader the impression that the sense of guilt belongs naturally to human nature in these youthful years; and one is seldom reminded that this literature is very largely based upon the biographies of "evangelical" theologians, and on the result of questionnaires which have been answered chiefly by people brought up to believe that they were by nature poor sinners and that "conviction of sin" is the primary condition of salvation.

We find, therefore, that those doubts are mostly concerned with doctrines touching the origin of things, the authority or inspiration of the Bible, the person of Christ, certain of the divine attributes, certain of the attributes of the human soul and its destiny and also immortality.

The loss of balance in the mental turmoils of adolescence is temporary in a vast majority of cases, and it will be corrected, as I have already said, under proper treatment. And our hope really exists in the fact that all the instability, anxiety, uncertainty, and even the extreme pain is a way for producing a full-fledged human being with a high degree of self-reliance and spiritual insight. The desirable development of positive self feeling has much to do with the progress of human life and the negative self feeling, in due proportion, is the root of many of the noble deeds and of high attainment of character and purpose. Doubt is "a process of mental clarification; it is a step in the process of self-mastery; it is an indication that all the latent powers are beginning to be realized." (1)

Therefore, our attitude toward doubting youth should be free and generous. Let him believe what he wants to. Someday his beliefs, feelings, and aspirations will be fixed upon a solid foundation. And what we can do for him at the time of doubt is that we may correct the plain misapprehen-

(1) Starbuck, The Psychology of Religion, p.242

sions as to faith; we may replace foolish questions with wiser ones; we may guide his reading in the wider range of thought; we may frankly tell him that we are unable to answer all his questions, and that we ourselves have passed through similar difficulties.

When the emotional and intellectual and moral turmoils are over and there comes a transition from a state of unrest or distress to a state of rest or peace, we call that phenomenon conversion or the New Birth. Conversion means the control of conduct through the ideal. It requires, therefore, desire of a convert to be renewed, and the sympathy and loyalty to the ideal.

Religious awakening and conversion occur, in a vast majority of cases, during the adolescent period of life. Coe has secured a report from ninety-nine men as to their age of each marked religious awakening, that is, of each period of marked increase of religious interest, conviction, etc. It shows that there are three well-marked periods of awakening, namely, at twelve and thirteen, sixteen and seventeen, and twenty. As to the decisive awakening or conversion, the vast majority of them, as many other statistics mention also, are between the ages of twelve and twenty-five when the experience occurs. The majority (perhaps five-sixths) of these are between

twelve and twenty, and the larger proportion are between fourteen and eighteen, and the most fruitful epoch for pronounced religious experiences lie about midway between these last. It should be recognized, however, that the age of conversion has been getting younger. From the result of his recent survey, Athearn announced that the average age of pupils who joined the Methodist churches was eleven or twelve. It must be the task of religious education in the church school to let pupils join the church as early as possible, and to keep them remaining in it as long as possible.

Conversion takes place with several forms according to differences in native disposition and temperament, or in early training and environment. In one case, the individual like John Bunyan believes himself to be under condemnation on account of his sins, and exposed to spiritual ruin through the righteous judgment of God. In other cases, it will occur without such consciousness of personal guilt before God, or without positive sin, but only with the consciousness of personal failure to realize an ideal. Still in another cases, we may find a type of conversion that is entirely emotional in character. So the issue and outcome do not depend on intellectual processes, nor even on the exercise of religious faith. It is spontaneous.

The first case seems to occur more commonly among persons to whom conviction

of sin has come later and persons in whose early training the doctrine of Sin and Atonement have been stressed. The second case is most common in adolescence, for this is the age of ideals and aspirations, and where the early teaching and environment have been ethically wholesome and inspiring. Consequently, it is not impossible that a girl "at the age of 14, while she was walking in a neighbour's garden, suddenly the thought came to her that she had passed from death to life."(1)

As Tracy says, the post-conversion stage, from the very nature of the case, may be less positively joyous and peaceful than in the previous case. For, while the consciousness of pardon may come in a moment, in all its completeness, the consciousness of a realized ideal never can. For it is characteristic of ideals that they expand and recede as we advance and achieve, so that the sense of short-coming and failure is never wholly eliminated.

The adolescent tends to look at his life as a whole, unifying the self with other selves and objects. It is natural for him to spiritualize, to moralize, and to think in terms of personality, of duty, and of ideal. His consciousness is filled with life's purpose, responsibility, and vocation. It is, therefore, the period of the great serious decisions and deliberate choices that will determine the direction

(1) Coe, The Spiritual Life, p.49

and career of the following life stages. It is indeed the normal period of conversion, as positive and definite decisions in regard to the claims of religion are made more commonly in this period than in any other. And it seems to me that the most desirable thing in the present age is to provide the situation in which many adolescents may declare their loyalty to Christ in natural and normal way.

VII

THE ESSENTIALS OF ADOLESCENT RELIGION

The nucleus of religion is the idea of God. Religion or religious experience is essentially our attitude towards the supreme person. This attitude is mostly emotional in character. However, this emotional element is gradually joined with the intellectual in the course of mental development. Accordingly, the attitude towards God varies in accordance with the mental equipment of an individual. What is, then, the idea of God in adolescence?

During childhood the mind rests in the unities of single things. The child, unable to achieve a larger synthesis, brings many things under the unity of a single comprehensive concept. The reality of the unseen, untouched, untasted, unsensed realm can hardly be comprehended by him, although he may speak of it with certain understanding. For this reason the child needs, in his early stage to feel personal objects. God is to be presented with anthropomorphic attributes. And in general, God is a creator of the flowers, fruits, or birds, and also a merciful giver of good and perfect gifts.

This personification impulse may be carried up to a higher level and used in a deeper way in adolescence. The mind of youth is, as we have learned, strongly disposed to find spiritual meaning in, rather than apart from, the objects of nature and the events and relationships of human life. The adolescent is now a romantist, an idealist, and a social pursuer. God is accepted as a commender of affectionate happenings in the circle of human affairs, or as the hero of heroes who can command everything in the world. The spirit of loyalty, which is manifest in various social unions, as in the gang, in sets, in the team play, in athletics, and in various clubs and associations, is the same spirit and attitude that are taken to God, or rather, the attitude expressed in loyalty and service for social unions is itself of religious significance.

The adolescent's religion, therefore, can stand neither on the level of mere sense-perception, simple feeling, or habitual reaction such as are found in childhood, nor on the level of formal, fixed doctrine, lacking emotional insight such as is found in mature individuals. It is not anything like a deep thought or speculation, but it is a concrete social atmosphere in which social self consciousness of adolescence is fully embodied and satisfied. Therefore, the adolescent's religion must be a vital religion. It must be a joyous, goodtime, social religion with religious practices and observances.

In laying out programs in the religious education of adolescence, it is necessary to observe three main points—worship, instruction, and expression. Worship is mainly for the satisfaction of emotion. Instruction is for the fulfilment of intellect. Expression is for the growth of religious experience and social nature. In order to achieve this task adequate methods should be employed, together with some admirable technical performances. To follow Athearn, ". . . more symbolism and ritual will add to the effectiveness of worship; there should be more class responses and prayers, with instruction by way of interpreting personal religious experience. Service of worship must be administered in the beauty of holiness. There must be beauty, sublimity, and grandeur all heading up in the pulpit and joy of the sense of the presence of God in the soul."(1)

Adolescence is at the same time the period of enriching knowledge. Accordingly it is a great opportunity for telling adolescents about great religious, social, and missionary works to inspire their spirit of service and sacrifice. Great religious leaders should be studied. The like-mindedness of all nations should be taught with the spirit of brotherhood and love.

Religious life also cannot be fulfilled without activities of expressions. Expressional activities along various arts are, as

(1) Athearn, The Church School, p.259

we have seen in our study of the adolescent's aesthetic nature, effective for cultivating religious nature. At the same time positively there is a wonderful opportunity for young people to become teachers, and helpers in the church school. No doubt this will aid them in realizing religious significance and value.

The religious education of adolescence covers a wide field, including physical, mental, social, and religious aspects. It aims to guide the unfolding of the personality of adolescents by teaching the individual the control of conduct in terms of ideals. And if this control is to be through religious experience, the ideal must be conceived in a broad way as the will of God. Their physical conditions must be improved; their mental activities should be made vivid and strong along emotions, thoughts, and volitions; their individual as well as social conscience and activities should be purified and nourished; their religious insight should be deepened as a fundamental motive of all phases in an adolescent's life. The completion of these lines is the only goal toward which every effort is to be directed.

VIII

SUMMARY

Psychology is the key of the study of religion in adolescence. According to the psychological investigation the religion of adolescence is different from the religion either of childhood or of adulthood. Its striking physical as well as mental states naturally condition the type of religion in adolescence.

The prominent features in adolescence are found in its emotion and social-self-consciousness. Emotion, though it is often accompanied with dangers on account of the lack of intellectual elements, is the essential quality of religious experience. There is no religious education without emotional education. The new self is also accompanied with criminal tendency and various forms of turmoil on account of its immaturity. But it is the foundation of the unfolding of the personality.

The task of religious education for adolescence, then, is to provide the situation in which the natural tendency toward sociability and idealism may be fully and rightly developed. In other words, it must provide a wholesome social atmosphere in which adolescents can satisfy the need of their emotions and of their social

participation in terms of the highest ideal or God. In order to achieve this task it must provide adequate organizations and programs which may cover the physical, mental, social, and religious aspects of adolescent life.

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