

THE HOLDING POWER OF THE CHURCH FOR THE ADOLESCENT

by

DAVID B. BARTLETT

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

An important phase in the life of the church has presented itself as a problem in this present age. The writer has been aware for some time that the youth of the church tend to slip from the church's program during their adolescent years. An interest in this problem, and its solution, leads the writer to attempt to ascertain why there is a decided drop in attendance and interest of adolescent youth in the local church. The question of what can be done about it urges the work of this thesis. The writer cannot hope to have the full or complete answer, but is merely trying to correlate information gathered from many sources such as books, magazines and interviews, and deriving a conclusion based upon his own judgment. The supreme hope is that such a work will help some local church in its youth problem.

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to those who have made this thesis possible. His family have done their share in patient waiting and helpful counselling. Special credit goes to his wife, Blanche, for her constant encouragement.

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Many churches in this and past generations are on the horns of a dilemma. The local body of believing Christians is not only made up of adults and children, but that group of individuals who range between childhood and maturity. The adolescent age, roughly between twelve and twenty, not only presents the local church with the spark of enthusiasm, youth, the improvements of education, the opportunity of trained leadership, the art of fine musicianship, and the potential for hard labor for the Lord; but also the problem of the loss of these individuals to the interests of the world around us.

The rallying Sunday School which lures the child to Christ and a church home, lacks the inertia to sustain attendance throughout the teen age. Fathers and mothers rear their children under the influence of Christ and the Sunday School only to lose them to the "mad hatter" society of the youth of the world, with the hope of gradually winning them back to the church when the time comes for maturity.

A resounding chorus of appeal can be heard from the Christian educators of our evangelical society. Why? The question throws itself back in the educators' faces; what can be done about this problem? How can the adolescents be held by the church? The purpose of this thesis is to determine if there is an answer to this question, or not. There probably will never be an absolute solution to this problem of waywardness in the church life through the junior age of the adolescent, for each case is different than the one preceding. Every boy and girl is not alike in this nature, for some adolescents do stay in the church and accomplish great things for God. But you will find how-

ever, the majority seem to drift away. Is this divine election or a lack of proper methods?

Dr. Howard Hendricks, of Dallas Theological Seminary, in a lecture at Grace Seminary, pointed at the disparaging truth of the problem of American youth. "Three out of four American youth are under no religious instruction whatever. Four out of five young people who do attend church and Sunday School, drop out and are lost permanently to the church. J. Edgar Hoover has said that seven-eighths of the young people in Sunday School will not be there beyond teen age."¹ This statement from such an outstanding Christian educator and youth worker in the United States today only goes to point out the glaring facts of an already well known problem. The problem of wayward adolescents is not a new one, but an ever increasing one, for the age in which we live encourages a defiance among the youth of the present generation, which manifests itself in every phase of the social life of an adolescent -- home, church, school, etc.

The main interest involved herein is to understand why young people who have professed Christ as Savior in their early years, or have grown up in the atmosphere of Christian teaching at home and at church, possess an attitude of defiance for things Christian which leads into a life encumbered with the ways of the world. To determine this is to recognize the youth of today and their actions.

Firstly, there seems to be an overall resentment of the church by the adolescent. They enjoy the church life through the junior age of

¹ Hendricks, Howard, Lecture to Grace Seminary, Spring, 1959

Sunday School and then they take an about face and fight for freedom from the bond of love which Christ exhibits. If the church tries to create programs for them, they say that the "old fogies" should mind their own business. If there is no program, they say that the reason for their waywardness is lack of anything to do. They often become bored with doctrinal lectures and Christian guidance programs, again showing resentment toward any help which they feel they do not need.

"As children approach adolescence and begin to question authority of all kinds, they may revolt from church as well as from both home and school domination. A considerable number of adolescents investigate religion anew as a possible source of both emotional and intellectual stimulation and satisfaction. At each age beyond fifteen, more and more boys and girls become critical of religion. . . . Adolescents want to find something in religion, but many of them fail to do so, and their reactions to failure often take the form of intolerance, cynicism, and withdrawal from contact with church activities."²

However, the quest of adolescents may be toward God and not necessarily away from authority. They seek God through the church and if they do not find Him satisfactorily, they go elsewhere. But they put the blame on the church as a whole organization for their failure. They resent the fact that the church cannot help them as much as they wish, although they do not really know what they want.

Some adolescents have a genuine interest in the church and the things of the Lord pertaining to life with Him, but because of some outside influence, such as family problems, social problems, or mental problems, they lose interest at least for a time, and tend to drift here and there with no direction. One such case familiar to the writer is that of a boy with an overly strict and autocratic parental situation. The boy had shown definite interest in the church, especially enough to

²Cole, Luella, Psychology of Adolescence, (Rinehart and Co., Inc. N. Y. 1959), pps. 521-523.

accept the Lord as his personal Savior. However, he was forced to relegate that interest into the mold set up by class conscious parents. His parents were strong enough in the boy's life so that he took out his resentment, not only on the church, but on his social environment as a whole. He attended church haphazardly, but with no interest and as a mere bystander, although a gifted person in many ways. Until that time when he will break ties with his parents, he will remain passive and resentful toward the church. A church program either demands his active effort. Another case is that of a boy who had little or no parental restrictions, which culminated in a response to interests outside his home and church environment. These drew upon him and promoted a zeal for the gang and its activities. His interest in church was real, though, especially when influenced by a Christian girl whom he wished to date. But he built up a resentment toward the church because of guilt feelings brought about by his associations and outside interests. He attended haphazardly, and when he did come, he felt too convicted and belligerent to be active and useful to the group. The writer does not think that he was a born again Christian. However, his resentment and associations would have had to have been broken down before he would have been ready to accept Christ and become a part of the group. *via, she feels she cannot participate.*

These two cases show that resentments are brought about by some problem attaching itself to the youth and not by inheritance alone. Resentment is not something that happens to all adolescents, but it is created by a disturbing influence, either within the church itself, or in the background of the individual. The church program and its servants can not change the adolescent's background, but it can influence the individual for change which shall be discussed in a later section. *from her step-*

mother. A second reason, or more aptly, excuse, for adolescents to drift away from the church program is the simple attitude of laziness and inertia.

The adolescent generally does not want to do anything, simply because it takes effort. At this stage in his development, he is so used to having tasks done for him by his parents, that he feels irresponsible to committing himself to any endeavor which would either tax his brain or his brawn. If it were a sport, then there would be the interest of competition. If it were a party, there would be the added attraction of social intercourse. But the church may be dull and does not usually attract his social interest or his competitive spirit. A church program either demands his active effort, or his passive submissiveness. In either case, the adolescent cannot see benefit enough to arouse his interest and activity.

If there is no push from a parental source, there will usually be no drive from the individual source. (Usually, that is, because there are always exceptions to every rule. There are bound to be those individuals who have an active interest in everything and also have the initiative to participate.)

The writer knows a girl who, because of a difficulty at home in which neither parent feels responsible to impel, lacks any drive either to attend church, or participate in any of its programs. She has an interest and there is social intercourse there for her, but because of her basic attitude of lethargy or inertia, she feels she cannot participate.

Another case involves a boy who has more interest in the common time consumer of television than in a church program. TV does not have nearly as much to offer as the church program does, and the boy knows this, but the effort to rise and get ready is too much for him. This is often the case in this generation. Both of these cases cited could be remedied by a stronger push from behind, perhaps. The girl's father lacks the initiative to push and the girl does not accept the push from her step-mother. The remedy in this situation of no inertia is a good "alarm clock"

basic attitude of laziness is due to an attempt to return to
and free time of his not too distant past. The adolescent

problem the church faces is how to energize its program so
 interest enough to overcome the interest from outside sources.
 going to be an attempt made at this time to answer this problem,
 recognize it.

case involves a group of teenagers in a small community in which the only church is working. The nearest high school is active in providing recreational facilities, thus enabling its students to avail themselves of opportunities within the scope of their interest. The group of teenagers involved enjoy the opportunity to play in the school band, which, in itself, is most exemplary. However, the school band competes with drill teams from other schools, playing at various occasions of public interest. This involves practice which, in itself, involves the most convenient spare time for the majority of teenagers which happens to be Sunday morning. These teenagers, more than in the lively fellowship and competition the band drill affords,

neglect any and all church affiliation.

Of course, the ever present program of television is a problem with youth and any who work with youth. Although the fact is that more and more adolescents are ignoring TV in favor of other entertainment interests, some seem to relegate the relaxation of TV to Sundays. The general trend is that there is little problem with TV on other days of the week, but Sunday shows are not to be missed.

As we will see, the adolescent is prone to be active in some form or another. Thus he, or she, is going to be interested in diversified programs for the sake of activity. Many different activities will be required for the adolescent's need, and he is bound to develop a keen interest in one or several of them. The church needs to ascertain this need and focus it upon a thorough, energetic program within the church.

The dilemma of adolescence is before us more now than ever before. How is it possible for the church to meet the basic need of this problem? How can the church hold its young people within its organization? Upon realizing the need, we are obligated to re-evaluate the reasons adolescents act the way they do, before we can begin to determine a solution for the problem. This leads us into our second section of thought concerning adolescent psychology.

Chapter II. A Re-study of the Causative Action Behind Adolescent Psychology

A Spirit of Independence

Youth is spirited in many ways, one of which is a spirit of independence apart from everything in general as well as the particular. But more than the mere spirit of independence, adolescents possess a certain growth of independence. They are leaving behind them all of their old ways of doing things and thinking, and they are attempting to assert their own ways and thoughts, not only upon the world but upon themselves. They are neither adults nor children, so act at one time in the past and at another in the future. They are as a rabbit in the snow seeking shelter from its pursuer. The rabbit darts here and there to escape his foe. He has no set course, and yet he manages to reach safety, and cover ground in a certain direction, of which he was not really aware.

The adolescent is searching for himself, or his real person; what he wants to be.

"The adolescent's search for himself appears, then to be more than merely an attempt to find something that is already there. More basically, it is also an active attempt to create a personality. As he tries on various roles and manners, his interior experience crystallizes and becomes his own to feel, to think about, to change, to conceptualize, and to act upon. Particularly in early adolescence, does the child feel that he is capable of being or doing anything -- if only he knew what he wants to be or do. Like the preschool child, he more or less systematically sets about trying on the ready made roles provided by the culture, in search of the one that fits him. Some of these roles are modeled after particular personalities -- movie stars and parts, heroes of the day, and so forth. Some are based on culturally defined 'types' More and more, with increasing age, roles are based on occupational types. And throughout, of course, the adolescent is seeking to model himself

according to the ideals of his peer culture."¹

But what his peers develop into is not what he becomes. Through all of this growth pattern, he remains a distinct personality with his own traits and talents. He seeks himself, finds someone else, and ends up as himself.

The growth of the adolescent's independence is apparent in his actions. The old childish things no longer interest him; he rejects them with disdain, calling them things a baby would do. Yet he does not have enough experience to do the things his adult acquaintances do. He tries, but either is punished or fails to gain recognition for his action. He wants to be free to spend, think and play on his own. But, again, he still wants the parental crutch there to catch him if he falls.

The church is the one place where he is able to exercise his independence. There is no one to push or prod him into a certain mold and if he feels he must not cooperate, or if he believes his peers do not appreciate his relationships, or if he feels he is hurt psychologically in some way, then he will gain momentum and assert his freedom. He wants out of his childhood world, and anything that smells of that mold is distasteful to him. In his "dependent" independence, the youth is searching for the group, program, people, organization, or philosophy which most closely fits his own mold or goals. The group he finally joins is the group that has the outward appearance of fitting in with his goals. The church and the adolescent must meet halfway for successful co-existence.

¹Stone and Church, Childhood and Adolescence (New York, N. Y., Random House, 1957) pps. 305, 307

A second point which further explains the reason behind the adolescent's action is displayed in his need for security. In his state of independence the youth is still in need of a certain amount of security. He is still dependent upon his parents and those around him for the necessities of life. Because of his schooling, he cannot support himself as he would want to and must resort to outside beneficial resources, although he resents this and often welcomes the chance to earn even the few pennies a part time job pays. But the security of life's necessities is but a token of the security the youth is seeking. True, money plays a large part in the life of the adolescent, but he is not so bogged down with the idea of earning a living that he doesn't realize the need of more security than mere financial security.

The adolescent has a basic urge for love and to be loved. This, perhaps, is a carry over from his childhood days, but it is more developed with the advancement of puberty and physical growth. He is made aware of his sex, and as this sexual awareness is stimulated, his love urge shifts from that of his parents to those around him. He sees for the first time his relationship to those of the opposite sex, and he feels the need for a life partner security. This search is not always a bed of roses.

"Even the person who continues to grow up emotionally may find that from time to time he slips back to an earlier stage of love feelings. When we are tired or frightened, or feel unloved or unwanted, we all long to go back to a place in our growing up where we felt loved and wanted. This is quite understandable. In fact, all our lives we move up and down that ladder of love development, being quite mature at one time and rather immature at another. Growing up in our ability to love

is a lifelong process."²

The need for love security brings the adolescent into focus again as the rabbit searching for its den, under pursuit of a foe. The teenager's foe is the world around him, and his den is any place he is able to find his "home" security. He wants to belong. This desire to belong either pushes him into association with a church group, or sets up a reaction within him to leave the group with which he is now associated, and seek other channels for the expression of his love urge. To repeat, he wants to love and to be loved. This fact alone causes him to seek companionship, either within the church, or outside of it. Companionship will be discussed later in this chapter.

The need for security goes farther than love and financial security. The adolescent must feel that he is accepted as a person. He must have self security. He must know that he belongs and is not considered an outcast by the majority of his acquaintances. As a child, he feels this urge and manifests it by seeking to get the attention of everyone around him. Often, as adolescence progresses, the person feels that he is being neglected in many ways by those he loves the most. This is not necessarily true. However, he seeks to belong to such an extent that when one of his parents shows affection for the other, or toward someone else in the family, he feels left out. He rebels in retaliation. His rebellion only succeeds to frustrate conditions through the punishment that is meted out. He needs personal security within the scope of the family.

The adolescent also needs personal security within the scope of his social environment. He must be accepted as a person by the

²Duvall, Evelyn M., Facts of Life and Love for Teen-Agers, (New York, N. Y., Popular Library, 1957), p. 179.

"gang" or he again feels left out.

"Apparently, one of the deepest of adolescent needs is the need to be supported and approved by his peers. Deviations of any sort from the mode of the group are painful. An adolescent cannot afford to risk ridicule of his intimate friends because he is too dependent upon them for approval. ... As the years pass, the values of the crowd gradually mature and approach the adult norm for their social group. Also, the crowd tends to disintegrate under the pressures of later adolescence and early maturity. But while it endures, it is the most formative influence in the life of the average boy or girl."³

The gang is one of the harshest critics anyone can find. Many teenagers have a notebook in which they keep a record of critical remarks about themselves and their friends. They accept them at face value and do not consider the notes to be derogatory in any way. They use the notes as a means of determining personal acceptance or rejection. This is a good system and should be used everywhere. However, most teenagers must rely on the verbal assent or rebuff of their fellow peers; and this is harder to take than the written word. The gang tends to be a clique formation, which in turn makes it easier for the members to give out rebuffs and acceptances. If the adolescent can be steered away from the gang and into an organized group, he is more apt to develop normally into a healthy individual.

experience through the action of the discussion group. And they are right. But there must be a control, which they often set up for themselves.

Companionship involves more than the mere use of the discussion group. Companionship involves the actual experience of the presence of another person or group of persons.

"A powerful factor, growing out of the gregarious impulse and the desire for approval, is the dominant loyalty. Membership in any group involves some degree of loyalty to that group. Each of these is influential. But in each

³Cole, Op. Cit., pp. 389, 390

God has created man for the major purpose of fellowship with Him. Man has desecrated this purpose, and striven to maintain his own ideas and purposes. One of these major purposes of man is fellowship with himself. He cannot get along without his own people, race or kin. As much as the person tries to get along by himself, he is not able to evade the ever present mass of humanity about him. The adolescent is no exception in this effort.

The adolescent has another basic need -- companionship. This involves more than just a family relationship. True companionship involves social intercourse with other people of both sexes. The youth of today, in this age of fast transportation and the telephone, are more aware of this fact than the youth of past generations were. They want "out". They want bull sessions and jam sessions where they can talk over the major problems of the day without being disturbed by the scrutinizingly inquisitive adult. They lack experience in thinking and decision making, and believe they are able to gain this experience through the medium of the discussion group. And they are right. But there must be a control, which they often set up for themselves.

Companionship involves more than the mere use of the discussion group. Companionship involves the total experience of the person with another person or group of persons.

"A powerful factor, growing out of the gregarious impulse and the desire for approval, is the dominant loyalty. Membership in any group involves some degree of loyalty to that group. Each of these is influential. But in each

life one loyalty is likely to tower above the rest and to dominate in any conflict of allegiance. It may be the gang, the club, the home, or the school. Or it may be a single person, a hero, a friend, a loved one. Such loyalties may be wholesome and uplifting, or they may be quite otherwise, and they need not be at all permanent."⁴

Along with loyalty to a person or group of persons, companionship involves participation. The youth must not only be loyal to that person or group, but he must participate in every activity with which he may be involved. He must share in his friends' activities, likes and dislikes. If he is in a group, he must be willing to cooperate in ventures the group attempts. The adolescent seeks this type of companionship. He wants to be loyal, to be loved and to love. The basic urge for security demands that the adolescent have companionship and to satisfy this urge. This urge brings the two sexes together. The companionship influence is strong in the life and environment of the adolescent in molding him in the pattern which he will follow for the remainder of his days. Right control and right personal companionship will do much to insure a proper relationship with the youth and his society. Youth wants to be with others. Let's put him in the right group.

in groups where this is possible, or with individuals who will share his interest. He has a need for security, so he takes an interest in those things and persons around him that give him the security he craves. He wants independence, so he alters his life to the degree that he feels independent. He takes an interest in becoming independent. His interest moves on to the life force. His interest soon takes into account history, science, languages, speech, literature, religion, and God. Radio, television, the movies, sports, along with reading.

⁴Stewart, Frederick W., A Study of Adolescent Development, (Phila., Pa., The Judson Press, 1929), p. 172.

The Ever-Widening Interest Span

Yet there is a new trend among adolescents in which they seem

The child has an interest in the things and happenings within

to have an ability to handle more interests earlier.

its own small environmental world of the home. The interest of the

"The high school student in 1961 has a new view of life."

primary child is focused upon the school activities as well as those at

For example, students now carry five major subjects

home and within the community. The adolescent, however, has the widest

Trier Township High School, 57% of the students took

possible interest span. For he has interest not only in the home,

the school and the community, but his interest roams the countryside,

the stars, the past, the future. He is looking out for "number one,"

and must seek his own financial future, his own marital future, and

the future of his fellow man as well. good literature through the cheap

medium But his interest does not take in all of these aspects at

one time. He deals with them in a hit or miss fashion as the need

arises. As he grows and matures, his interest develops into certain

categories, specific to his goals. At one time his interest is in

girls exclusively, while at another time he has no interest whatsoever

in the opposite sex. The reason behind this scatter-shot pattern is,

in my opinion, his urgent desire to find the answer for all of his various

goals he has set up. He wants companionship, so he develops an interest

in groups where this is possible, or with individuals who will share

his interest. He has a need for security, so he takes an interest

in those things and persons around him that give him the security he

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His interest moves on to the life force. His interest span takes into

account history, science, languages, speech, literature, religions,

and God. Radio, television, the movies, sports, along with reading,

Article, The New High School Kids, Time, Vol. 78, No. 25,

December 22, 1961.

collecting, and listening all tend to push the adolescent into so many interests that he is unable to pursue them all.

Yet there is a new trend among adolescents in which they seem to have an ability to handle more interests easier.

"The high school student in 1961 has a new view of his possibilities. At Philadelphia's Central High School, for example, students now carry five major subjects instead of four. . . . At suburban Chicago's New Trier Township High School, 57% of the students took extra courses last summer, mostly for the fun of it."⁵

The students of this new trend are no brighter, but they also are not dull. They are the product of better guidance, testing and prodding. Television has boosted their vocabularies and widened their horizons. They have gained the valuable art of good literature through the cheap medium of the paperback book. They desire an education more than just grades.

However, another new trend seems to be just as prevalent.

Modern day adolescents are called the "cool" generation. Nothing seems to bother them. A recent article in the Saturday Evening Post of December 23-30, 1961, by Dr. George Gallup and Evan Hill, defines modern American youth as a "pampered hothouse plant" with little spirit of adventure. "In general, the typical American youth shows few symptoms of frustration, and is most unlikely to rebel or involve himself in crusades of any kind. He likes himself the way he is, and he likes things the way they are." But the writer believes that this trend will pass, if it is a trend, and that youth will again return to its normal actions. Basically, the adolescent does not change. His environment and conditioned responses change, producing a certain amount of change within him. But, as this article points out between the lines,

⁵Article, The New High School Kids, Time, Vol. 78, No. 25, December 22, 1961.

he still has a certain amount of rebellious feeling and a decided gregarious nature, which push him toward adulthood.

All of these new trends only show that the adolescent is widening his interest span along with his growth span, and in many cases his interest span far surpasses his growth span. This is as it should be, for in primitive societies today the youth are allowed no adolescent period as in this country and Europe. They are pushed directly into adulthood after the fact of puberty is ascertained. They have no waiting and conditioning period, but must go directly into their life's work. True, they do not have the education or interest span of our culture, but they do have a certain amount of the frustration of basic adolescence, which they must work off rather than exhibit. In our highly developed culture, one must gain their attention and their interest in order to gain them.

Kids love fun and to be with other kids that also love fun. They are active in spite of a heavy work schedule. This activity takes the form of many things and ways of expressing themselves, as indicated in the tables below.

The Percentage of Adolescents Engaged in Certain Types of Leisure Time Activities. (Adapted from Bell, R. M., *Youth Tell Their Story*, Washington, D. C., American Council on Education, 1930)

Activity	Boys (N. = 112)		Girls (N. = 112)	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Individual Sports	21.4	1	11.1	1
Reading	16.7	2	35.0	2
Team Games	15.7	3	1.1	3
Loafing	13.3	4	5.4	4
Dating and Dancing	10.9	5	13.7	5
Viewing Pictures	9.4	6	12.0	6
Hobbies	7.2	7	13.4	7
Radio	1.8	8	2.2	8

Finally, the highest outreach of the adolescent is his activity. The separate subjects have been feeding into this end subject of what the youth of today does and what they want to do. The subject matter has been evolving from the self of the youth to this final outspread of his gregarious appetite. The adolescent has the urge to do something. Anything will do as long as he is active.

Although the new trend in adolescence is for a busier educational experience,

"The notion that all this leaves no energy for fun is far from accurate. The more adolescents are challenged, the more energy they seem to generate. From coast to coast, high school students are still flocking to dances, football games, beaches, ski slopes and mountain trails. 'They have the same old biological urges,' says one teacher, 'and they express them in the same old ways.'"⁶

Kids love fun and to be with other kids that also love fun. They seek activity in spite of a heavy work schedule. This activity takes on the form of many things and ways of expressing themselves, as indicated in the tables below.

The Percentage of Adolescents Engaging in Certain Favored Leisure Time Activities. (Adapted from Bell, H. M., Youth Tell Their Story, Washington, D. C., American Council on Education, 1938)⁷

Activity	Boys (N.-6872)		Girls (N.-6635)	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Individual Sports	21.6	1	11.1	5
Reading	16.7	2	35.0	1
Team Games	15.7	3	1.1	8
Loafing	13.1	4	5.4	6
Dating and Dancing	10.9	5	13.7	2
Moving Pictures	9.4	6	12.0	4
Hobbies	5.5	7	13.4	3
Radio	1.8	8	2.2	7

⁶Article, Time, Op. Cit., p. 39.

⁷Stone and Church, Op. Cit., p. 282.

The Percentage of Adolescents Reporting a Marked Increase or Intensification in Certain Attitudes or Activities. (Adapted from Valentine, C. W., Adolescence and Some Problems of Youth Training, British Journal of Educational Psychology, 1943, 13, 57-68).⁸

Attitude or Activity	Boys		Girls	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
Reading	90	1	79	1
Interest in Other Sex	84	2	61	11
Religion	78	3	74	3
Group Games	73	4	70	6
Music Appreciation	69	5	71	5
Great Ambition	66	6	57	12.5
Depressed Mood	61	8	76	2
Appreciation of Nature	61	8	66	7.5
Gregariousness	61	8	64	9
Writing Poetry	56	10	57	12.5
Playing Music	54	12	66	7.5
Art Appreciation	54	12	62	10
Father's Influence Less	54	12	39	19
Same Sex Attachment	50	14.5	72	4
Writing Stories	50	14.5	48	16
Drawing and Painting	45	16.5	57	12.5
Father's Influence Greater	45	16.5	27	23
Mother's Influence Less	44	18	35	20
Aversion to Other Sex	43	19	45	17
Mother's Influence Greater	40	20.5	42	18
Idea of Running Away	40	20.5	33	21
Thoughts of Suicide	38	22	29	22
Teacher Idealized	37	23	57	12.5

"We should note that the research on which these tables are based was done some time ago, under different social conditions (economic depression, wartime) and even, in one case, a different country. And though they tell us about preferences, they do not tell us how much time youngsters spend on various activities."⁹

For our usage here these tables have the benefit of showing the varied activities of the adolescent in his self life as well as his social life. The pattern as seen varies with the circumstances. Youth by himself has certain activities, loyalties, and attitudes which are far apart from the youth as he mingles with the "gang". Again, we see that the crowd influences the individual in what he does and how he does it. Peer culture is important and should be stressed.

⁸Ibid. p. 283

⁹Ibid. p. 284

Because of this peer culture, the adolescent of all ages seeks those activities with which he can be with his peers; team games, dancing, partying, loafing, and the such.

The activity urge takes the adolescent upon many roads of recreation and activity. He seeks to learn through the process of doing. He wants to make the boast good that he is able to accomplish much that is profitable and good both for society and himself. He goes about this with a peculiar ardor and zeal realized only by his brand of person. He is unique in that he seeks a thrill in a task that an adult would hesitate to begin to accomplish. A case in mind is a recent adventure of two youths upon the craggy peaks of Mt. Washington in central New Hampshire. They sought the adventure and thrill of climbing the precipices on a day that turned especially chilly and rainy. They had only their meager summer clothing on, yet the temperatures went to below freezing. They were stuck on an overhang and could not go, in any direction. When rescuers reached them they were dead. But the amazing part of the story is the fact that they went up the slippery steep at all, being inexperienced climbers and unfamiliar with the conditions of that particular locale. They sought a thrill of which expert mountain climbers are wary.

Other activities could be mentioned which this age group attempts. Some of these would be classed in the category of the thrill and adventure seekers, such as playing "chicken", petty thievery, etc. Of course, not all are after as big a thrill as has been cited. The majority are content merely with the simple thrills of camping, hiking, skiing, etc. A few get their thrill through the medium of chemical and scientific experimentation. Others depend on books for a thrill. A significant modern medium for thrills is television, and self identification with the characters projected on the

screen. As in the past, youth has an irrepressible desire to be a "Walter Mitty", a person who wished to live and be in command of every adventure known to man. Thus, when a young person views a TV adventure he enjoys, he places himself vicariously into the episode, living the actor's life. Thrills can come from many sources, and each source defines and exploits the thrill for itself. Here again, right control produces a right response.

CHAPTER III. A RENAISSANCE OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM.

CHAPTER III. A REHABILITATION OF THE CHURCH PROGRAM

The problems have been faced, the psychology behind the problems looked into, to a small degree as it concerns us, and now it is up to us to determine what can be done about the situation. How is it possible to hold an adolescent within the scope of the church if he is as determined to kick free of the bonds of all authority save his own? As is more than evident, there cannot possibly be any pat solution to this problem in every case that arises. However, conclusions can be drawn and conditions can be developed in which the general climate of the situation can be changed.

Of course, all solutions and advisory conclusions hinge upon the main fact which is the appropriate message at the opportune time. Without the proper message there cannot possibly be any hope for a proper change. The right message for the day and adolescent is the message of the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and ultimate return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The supreme purpose, achievement and result of this message is the regeneration of the created man into a renewed fellowship with the Heavenly Father. Unless the adolescent realizes his need of a Savior for the remission of sins which he recognizes, there cannot be any hope of accomplishing a work among teenagers. The message is important as the unifying force bringing about the concluding result. Without it the church will succeed only as a mere social organization. The youth of this land must be held within the confines of the church, that this message may be projected into their hearts and into their lives, to the immediate end of propagating the message and the ultimate end of glorification with Christ.

offers Involved in any group work are personalities, and the extreme cooperation of the group depends upon the individual persons within that group. The most important persons in the group are its leaders. This particular discussion is developed upon the work of the leaders themselves.

We have seen that the adolescent is impressed by the performance of the individuals he comes in contact with in his everyday experiences. The influence of the person has almost as much power as the influence of the peer culture about him. To hold the adolescent within the church program, that particular church must solicit the aid of the right person for the job. In other fields of the church's program, persons are important for what they know and what they are. For example, the loving mother in the nursery program, the musically talented person directing the music program, and the financial wizard in the economic program. The Youth Director must be a particular person suited for the job. In an interview with one teen ager, the writer noted the fact that he was not impressed with the program of the church so much as he was impressed with the person in direction of that program. The kids received a "bang" out of the individual leader. The right supervision for the job is thus imperative.

The question always arises as to who is right and who is wrong for the job. Here again, there can be no definite rules laid down for the individual because the task varies both with the person involved and the group concerned. One leader will fit one job and not another. A right leader in a group from a farming community will not have the same success in a group of city "toughs". The church must

consider its locale and recognize its particular need in the matter of selecting just the right person for supervision.

The definition of right supervision is that which not only offers the most consistently concise, clear message of the love, hope and salvation of Christ on the level of the understanding and attitude of the youth he supervises, but also offers the opportunity to be accepted and to "belong" in the social and personal relationship of the group. Many right supervisors are themselves but a few years older than the youth to whom they minister, while a few are in their later years of life. Both are highly successful in their job of holding the adolescents within the church program, and soliciting their cooperation and services. Age seems to have little to do with the job, but it certainly is an asset to be as active as possible and join in with their many activities. It also helps to be nearer to their age level, in order to better understand their problems and their ways.

The person in charge of administering the service of the church to these young people, must realize the fact that this is no second rate job. This is a full time job with the future of the church, and the world, in his hands. This is a serious job demanding serious, prayerful consideration and wise, but flexible, judgment for its success. The right supervisor must understand his young people and their ways, and with patient tolerance must fight the good fight of victory, in keeping them an integral part of the church program and in keeping them but one step behind him in their activity.

He must be actively engrossed in an active job. This is no job for irresponsible "late sleepers". The leader must show as much zeal and spirit as his young people display, and if they are lax, he must supply them with his spirit. It is important to have the right super-

visor for the job. An education cannot make a right supervisor, but it certainly helps to acclimate him with his youth. The person should have as much education as possible in Bible and psychology, especially. Bible college, university or seminary training are desirable; moreover, the best education is personal experience with youth and their problems. Many educated men have failed to succeed in this field, because of a lack of zest and ability to bring his education to the level of the adolescents. On the other hand, the youth of today demand more from their leaders in their ability in knowing and understanding sensibly any subject they wish to discuss. The most requisite knowledge for a supervisor to have is that of the Bible and what it has to say of Christ and His message.

First and last, the right supervisor must be a man of God's own choosing -- a man of God. No committee can take the place of the right supervisor, and no committee can adequately choose the man for the job except as God gives guidance.

The adolescent inclination toward hero worship will not permit him to accept a group over an individual. There must be one person to do the job. That one must not be a dictator, but an understanding supervisor. He must be one who can stand back and let the young people formulate their own policies and make their own plans, and yet he must be capable of guiding them in the right channels through well timed and discreetly worded suggestions. At this point, the supervisor is much like the "pilot" of a model airplane while it is in flight. Although the plane maintains its position in the air by its own fuel, the guide wires from the "pilot's" hand must be so maneuvered as to keep it from crashing to the ground. Right supervision means right influence, with a right outcome.

A Right Type of Companionship

To meet the need of the adolescent for companionship, the church is obligated to look at the type of companionship which is best suited for that particular group. Certainly, the teen ager who wants security within its own peer group is not going to become enthusiastic over the church program which incorporates the whole Sunday school into one unit. And, on the other hand, the church which permits its youth to run loose, without any guidance, does not have a program within the church but a separate institution outside the realm of the church. The adolescent craves companionship. The church must give him this companionship or else he is lost to the companionship of the secular world.

What is the right type of companionship? To define the term here completely, it would require the direct knowledge of the particular individuals within the particular church. The writer believes a right companionship is one in which the total needs of the person are met through the means of the group and personal experience. There must be an attitude of sharing as well as understanding, of acceptability as well as receptability, of belonging as well as including, of serving as well as administering. This is to be a two-way circuit through which the current must pass both ways. The adolescent, as well as the church, must give and receive alike. There must be shared responsibilities, talents, tasks, service, time and experience. We are cautioned to help our brother lest he fall, and what better place to do it than in the church with the adolescent, who actually is a weaker brother.

Companionship means more than just having the pastor get up once a month and proclaim to one and all that the local Youth For Christ

is meeting at such and such a place and all are welcome, including the adults of the church. In the first place, this is merely an announcement and not an appeal to the youth of the church for action. Also, however successful it may be, this type of meeting does not convene often enough to hold the interest of the youth group of this particular church. Another thing which greatly annoys the young people is that they do not want the adults to be invited "en masse". They want this to be their meeting, for their benefit, and the lack of the pure peer culture may prevent many young people from coming, those who should be there to receive the message. This type of church needs its own youth program, at least once a week. It needs to realize that the adolescent wants to be by himself to run it. Also, this church must give the youth a chance to express itself and let the appeal for some outside activity come from the youth themselves. Companionship means accepting the adolescent and making him a vital part of the church.

Just a hit or miss Sunday school class does not meet the requirements of a sound youth program. Not all young people have a parental "push" to arise early enough on Sunday morning to attend Sunday school, even if the class was of highest quality, but all young people are awake on Saturday night. The writer believes that a sound program can be built up and prosper even if there are just two or three in attendance. A great deal of companionship can be achieved with a strong leader and a small group. As they develop and have fun, more will be induced into the group until it is large enough to split into competing units. This is companionship -- showing the adolescent what he can do and letting him go ahead and do it.

But you say, how can I bring even the first two in? The answer is, as it is to most aspects of church life, visitation. And not just once by the pastor, but repeatedly by other members of the church,

especially the youth supervisor. While interest is gained through visitation, it is sustained through curriculum and supervision. The youth group should have a definite purpose and program to hold the attention of the individuals. Various youth programs are suggested by many publishing houses. Any program which meets the youth on his level, then seeks to lead him on a right track toward Christ, is a good program. But often the curriculum is not the only answer. It is up to the supervisor to lead as he sees fit. This may mean rejecting a prescribed plan entirely. The youth love "bull sessions", or brainstorming sessions, and learn from them. The "bull session" pertaining to such problems as dating, dancing, smoking, etc., often can, with the wise leadership of an understanding moderator, lead naturally into a presentation of what Christ teaches on these matters and the life He wishes us to lead. The writer feels that sound Bible study, developed on the plane of the youth and geared to their interest, will do much to develop a sound spiritual basis for a determined Christian youth group which will make a sturdy underpinning for a church. Competition and testing will do much to maintain their interest in a Bible study program. A particular curriculum, however, does not make a sound youth program. The initial and final testing of a youth program is through its leader. A supervisor can make or break a youth group. The adolescent must have right companionship to achieve a successful program. Adolescents are "from Missouri", they have to be shown to believe and be interested. The church must take the initiative and do the showing. They must help the adolescent help himself and he will grow into the church program, aiding in every way he can. The adolescent has much to offer -- a youthful mind, ambition, vitality, a spirit of adventure, and the potential for becoming the strength of the church. The church can ill afford to neglect its youth.

A third and final point of rehabilitation of the church program is activity. The adolescent is enthusiastic toward anything that spells fun and uses energy. They are near enough to the childhood years to enjoy playing, only now it is aptly organized. But nonetheless, activity is important in the holding power for the adolescent. Of course, the right use of it involves the right sense of supervision, along with the right type of companionship. If all three aspects work hand in hand, the writer believes that a church has greatly advanced toward holding its youth and drawing more youth into the church.

The definition of the terms pertaining to the right use of activity would be activity that both inspires the adolescent toward higher goals of Christian service and example, and permits him to express himself in mind, body and spirit. Adolescents learn through example, and it is the writer's opinion that such activity, if completely expressed and used, will provide the right example to produce the right result. Without such activity, the youth will become lax and drop out into the grasping hands of the unregeneracy.

There are many books written describing good activity for adolescent youth. A few of the more important activities will be mentioned as examples. Two types of activity are implied by the use of the word. The one which is more important to the over-all program, is that which employs the brains and spirit of the young people. Such activities are programs of service where they may be participants in the ministry of the church -- such as visitation, jail service, hospital calling, missionary projects, etc. Included in this category are the reading programs, Bible studies, debates, "bull sessions", panel discussions,

and sermons. Interspersed with this type of activity is the second, which may better be spoken of as recreation, or activity for the body as well as the mind and spirit. This category includes all the various games, both team and individual; weekend retreats, which in themselves are able to accomplish much toward the development of the adolescent; a summer camping program, one of the best methods of getting the adolescent into the church and into the aura of the right companionship of the total church group; plus all the facilities of the local area so far as stimulating exercise is concerned. Summer camping is called by some the whole answer to the problem of holding youth within the church. The writer cannot agree to this, because of the nature of the adolescent which demands a full time consideration for his needs. Summer camping is most important in reaching those that are unreached by any group, but it does not guarantee that they will stay within the confines of the church after the summer activities are over. The total program must appeal to the young people if their interest is to be sustained. Variation develops the theme and brings results. Therefore, it is pertinent to consider the total program, not one activity in particular with no mention or appeal toward another.

A right use of activity helps to ease the burden of the church in its goal of reaching the teens. Activity is a great force in the holding power of the church for the adolescent.

interest span and his activity urge, as well as allowing him to exercise his independence.

Conclusion

As a final thought, the writer prays that the Lord will use this

thesis. A correlation of all points and aspects of this thesis sums itself into one sentence. The adolescent lacks the interest and driving force to keep him within the church program, because his natural tendencies are toward independence, a need for security, and an activity urge along with a widening interest span; therefore, there is a need for the rehabilitation of the church program with right supervision, companionship and activity. The adolescent is not a machine to be categorized into a strict mold and punched out on an IBM card. He is an individual, with distinct characteristics. Therefore, if one is looking for the complete answer to the problem of the wayward adolescent he must not look to any one source. This thesis is but an attempt on the part of the writer to bring out what he believes may be one solution to the problem.

The writer believes the church should take stock of its resources, and seek in what particular way it falters in its attitude and energy, in the use of the three aspects mentioned in the last chapter. True, this will not be the complete answer, but the writer believes the honest application of this solution will go a long way in producing results in the adolescent program of the church. The right sense of supervision answers the need of the adolescent's for a sense of security and permits him to display his spirit of independence as well as providing him with a right companionship influence. The right type of companionship answers the adolescent's need for group security, as well as giving him the right companionship influence. The right use of activity meets the outreach of the adolescent with the proper activity to care for his widening

interest span and his activity urge, as well as allowing him to express his independence.

As a final thought, the writer prays that the Lord will use this thesis to His glory in permitting some church to better establish its youth program to meet the full need of the youth. Although much depends upon the parental training in the early life of the child, yet the church cannot dismiss its duty and sit back waiting for the parents to take the initiative toward promoting a better youth movement.

The responsibility does rest solely with the church of which teens are a part. It must do all within its power to claim these adolescents for Christ and His message.

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