

PARABLE FROM A CHURCH PEW

In Which a Penitent Parent Points Out the Folly of Substituting Distractions for Worship in the Life of a Child

And there were a young father and a young mother and they were loath to bring their child to the church, saying: "He is too young; we must each take our turn and sit home with him on the Lord's Day." And so they did.

And the child grew until he was of the age of the cradle roll, and the young mother took him there and brought him home thereafter while the young father went to church. And sometimes the young father took his child to cradle roll and sat home with him thereafter while the mother went to church.

And thus it continued, and the child grew until he was no longer of age for the cradle roll.

And lo, the young mother and the young father brought him to Sunday school, and immediately thereafter brought him home.

Then the young mother and the young father said, "Our child is now seven years old, and behold we have nurtured him these years, we have stayed home from church, each of us a Sunday, for this, our child. Lo, now he is old enough to go with us to church."

But they were sorely vexed when they considered their child's welfare, and said, "Surely it is too much to expect that he be in Sunday school and sit also beside us through the entire church service; yea, surely, he will fidget and be grievously bored."

SUPERMAN AND SCREWY SQUIRREL

So they brought with them such as should delight the soul of their child. And so it was that when the pastor read from the word of God, the child read of Superman and of Screwly Squirrel; and when the pastor rightly divided the truths of the Most High, their child cut pictures and coloured them.

And the child found pleasure in his comic books and his scissors and crayons, and he found not the temple of the Lord too dull. And it concerned him not, nor his parents, that those who sat round about him were sore displeased at the noisome confusion and could not discern the message from the pulpit.

And when the child was eight years old he laid aside his crayons and his scissors, but forsook not Superman and Screwly Squirrel but added unto himself Dick Tracey and Donald Duck.

And the young father and the young mother, considering that their child was sitting in a church pew, took thought and said, "We must find him something more in keeping with his surroundings."

And being diligent parents, they forthwith brought with them some Sunday-school papers and a book of Bible stories.

But the young child was loath to leave off the reading of his comic books, and forsooth he raised a rumpus so that he was permitted to bring Superman and Screwly Squirrel and Dick Tracey and Donald Duck together with the Sunday-school papers and the book of Bible stories.

And lo, he found no pleasure in these latter, but continued to grow in the wisdom and stature of Superman.

And the child grew until he was nine, and lo, Donald Duck no longer went with him to the temple of the Most High. For in truth, the child had added unto himself even livelier literature for Lord's Day reading.

And the child grew until he was ten, and lo, the father and the mother became sorely wrought and said, "Son,

The King's Highway

GUEST EDITORIAL

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD CONVERSION

James F. Gregory, Editor, "Free Methodist"

When Jesus came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan preaching the gospel, Mark tells us that parents "brought young children to him, that he should teach them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-14).

If these children had been brought to Christ for physical healing doubtless the disciples would have given them plenty of room. But they did not see that these little ones with bright eyes and active bodies needed the touch of the Master's hand for another reason. The parents were wiser. They recognized their children's spiritual lack.

Children have great religious capacities. Spurgeon once said: "I have more confidence in the spiritual condition of the children that I have received into this church than I have in the spiritual life of the adults received. I have found even a clearer knowledge of the gospel, and a warmer love to Christ, in the child-convert than in the convert . . . I know a boy of fifteen who was soundly converted to God. Older Christians often said, 'That boy is sixty years old—he speaks with such insight into divine truth.' The child has great capacity for spiritual truth."

The value of a soul does not depend upon its years. We are prone to feel that when a terrible sinner is converted, the church has seen a great triumph. So it has. But when a child is brought to Christ, both a soul has been saved, and a life has begun for Christ. When a child finds Christ in a church service, and is the only one to do so, let no one say, "It wasn't much of a meeting. Just a child came to the altar." Rather, "Isn't it wonderful? A child was saved tonight."

Should children be received into church membership? By all means, as early as they know the difference between right and wrong, and have placed their faith in Christ as Saviour. Those who keep the children out of church membership, to see if they will hold out, are as lacking in wisdom as farmers who keep lambs born in March out in the snowdrifts to see if they will live under adverse conditions. Church fellowship is a place for training and spiritual growth.

Children, when provided encouragement, do hold out. We have seen them "as steady as the march of a planet." History supports us in this view. Jonathan Edwards was converted when seven years of age. Adam Clarke and Matthew Henry were both converted at four. W. B. Godbey was also converted at four and was preaching to children at six.

Shall we not plan with the greatest care for the salvation of the children? Perhaps, too, we should pray that God will give us a genuine burden for their conversion. The field is white unto harvest.

it is time for you to leave off these childish things and learn to sit reverently in church. Today we shall no longer bring forth out of the house these comic books. Only the Bible story books may you bring with you if you find the sermon too long and tedious in its half hour."

And the child was sore displeased and grumbled and found no pleasure in church that day.

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