

THE BOY AND THE CHURCH

When Is He "Too Old to Go?"
—Why is Your Mother Respected and Honored?

Where Did America's Ideals of Liberty Come From? — What is the Biggest, Most Powerful Business in the World?

(By Bruce Barton in "The American Boy" Magazine for July.)

I have a friend of nineteen who quit going to church last year; and when I asked him why he had quit he answered that a church was doubtless a good thing in its way—a nice place for women and children to meet on Sunday mornings, but no real place for a man, or a boy who was almost a man.

After he left me I got to wondering about what he had said. Is a church merely a place for women and children to go and sit and be preached to, or at? What is the church anyway? And at what age is a boy too old to take any more interest in it?

All of us have the very human habit of judging the big things of the world from a few small facts. We pick up the telephone receiver, and because central does not answer in a jiffy, we say: "The telephone system is all gone to pieces." We skip a parcel of Chicago by express, and if it happens to be delayed twenty-four hours we think that the express companies are terribly inefficient. We see a little unpainted church, with a preacher who is struggling to support his family on starvation wages, and we think that the church is losing out all along the line.

But if we could see the thousands of miles of wire, the great army of trained employees, and the huge central stations that are the telephone system, we would never make a telephone call without feeling a sense of mystery and awe. Think of the miracle of it—to be able to sit in your own home and without lifting your voice have it carried across rivers and mountains for hundreds of miles. If we stopped to remember that it took weeks to carry the news of Cornwallis' surrender from Yorktown to New York, we would have a little better appreciation of the marvellous feat that the express company performs when it carries our parcels from Chicago to New York not in weeks or in days but in hours.

In the same way we would get a very different picture of the Church if we could see its world-wide sweep. We would gain a new respect for the little unpainted buildings at the country cross-roads, for it is not an isolated unit, alone and unrelated.

It is really a branch office of the greatest business in the world. That business—which is the Church—has more paid employees than the greatest corporation; it has headquarters in every country; its total budget amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars. It supports hospitals in every great city; it cares for thousands of babies in orphan's homes; it is curing sick people in India and China with its doctors, and teaching the boys and girls of Turkey and Hindustan in its schools. Don't despise the little white church, then, because of its having a hard time.

Remember, first of all, that it is just one part of a great big whole—the local headquarters of a business that is bigger and fiercer and more inspiring than the business of the biggest trust or corporation that America has ever known. To run a business of that size is a job for men—big, red-blooded men; women can help wonderfully, but they cannot do it alone.



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light to honor? Who is the one to whom your father pays greatest respect? Who has influenced your life the most? Your mother, of course. It is our pride, as Americans, that we honor our mothers above everyone else on earth. Perhaps it never occurred to you that honor to mothers is a comparatively new thing in the world. But that is a fact. When Jesus of Nazareth started His preaching, women were hardly better than slaves. He gave mothers a wholly new place in the world; and His Church, in all the ages, has been the champion of women and of motherhood.

There are plenty of places under the sun where men still treat women as slaves. In the New Hebrides, for instance, it was the custom, when a man died, for his wife to be strangled to death and buried with him. That custom would still prevail in the New Hebrides, probably, if it had not been for a Christian missionary named John G. Falson, who was sent out by the Church. He carried reverence for women to those savage islands, just as Christian missionaries have carried it into every land. Wherever the influence of Christianity spreads, the lives of mothers are made brighter and happier. And any boy who is not too old to feel a love for his own mother is not too old to support an institution that is making life more worth while for mothers all over the world.

Some day you will fall in love with a wonderful girl, and have a home of your own and some boys and girls that will call you "dad." When that time comes you would be willing to die rather than have any harm come to those babies of yours. But do you know what used to happen to babies in the olden days? Men did not value them highly; often they were regarded as a nuisance. Sometimes they were sacrificed to the heathen gods; in Egypt, for instance, the great infant statue of Moloch was heated white hot, and mothers threw their screaming infants into its flaming arms. In Greece babies were left out on the mountains to die; in China they were drowned. The world had a very poor opinion of babies until Jesus of Nazareth came.

He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." It is to Him that we owe our reverence for babies. His Gospel, wherever it has been carried, has changed the thought of men about children. And any boy who some day expects to have boys and girls of his own, ought to stand up for the church; for the church has been forever, and forever will be, the best friend that boys and girls have.

You hope to go to college, perhaps. And who was it that started our colleges? The state? No, the state universities are all of them comparatively young. The first colleges were started by ministers of the church, Harvard was founded by John Harvard, a Christian minister. William and Mary, the second college, was founded by a Christian minister. Yale was founded by a group of Christian ministers. Amherst, Williams, Dartmouth and scores of others were started by church people, and supported



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for many, many years by contributions from the churches. Today there are said to be about 45,000 students in colleges, universities, and academies in this country. And more than half of them are in institutions supported by the churches. So any boy who expects to go to college ought to be glad to go to church; for if it had not been for the churches we should have had no colleges.

You may be sick some day, seriously sick; you may have to go to a hospital, and that hospital may perhaps save your life. The chances are it will be a hospital that was made possible by the churches and still depends upon them for most of its support. There are thousands of boys and girls in the land whose parents died in their youth. Things would have gone very hard for them had it not been for the children's homes that the churches built and maintain.

Indeed you can hardly mention a single institution or society which exists for the common good that does not have its roots in the church. And you know enough about trees to understand how short a time a tree can live after you have severed the roots.

We celebrate this month the Fourth of July, the birthday of our nation. Have you ever stopped to think who it was

that gave us the ideals of liberty that have made America? Those ideals came across the ocean in a little boat named the "Mayflower." In the cabin of that boat the first constitution was drawn up by a Christian minister and the members of his congregation. The government they established for the state was modeled after the government they had established for their church. They chose their governors in the same way that they had chosen their preachers—each congregation had chosen its own pastor. The very institutions which we are proud to call American are institutions that were developed and tested first by Christian people in the organization and government of the Christian church.

And the men who have made America great—did they think when they came to manhood that they were too old to go to church? Washington drove to church with his family every Sunday morning.

Daniel Webster was in church the Sunday before he died. His was the greatest brain that America has produced; scientists studied and weighed it after his death, because it was so great; and it was a Christian brain.

Abraham Lincoln almost never missed Sunday morning worship. "God bless the churches," he exclaimed, "and blessed be God who, in this hour of our trial, giveth us churches." Nicolay and Hay, his biographers, say that in all the crises through which he was called to pass the churches were always at his back, ready and eager to respond to his call for support.

And Theodore Roosevelt declared: "I think it is the duty of every man to go to church. Frequently I have listened to sermons that bore me. But the church has contributed so enormously to civilization, its service to society is so great that irrespective of all other considerations I feel I ought to support it and to attend whenever I can."

Let us put away this id. that the church is merely a place for women and children to go. It is not a place; it is an influence, greater and more powerful than any other in the land. An influence that has made motherhood mean

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what it means to you and me; an influence that has given childhood a place of reverence in the thoughts of men; an influence that has created our colleges, and our social service institutions, and inspired the men whose names we honor most. Washington did not outgrow it; Lincoln never was too old to worship under its roof; Webster and McKinley and Roosevelt and all the men whose names we remember on the nation's birthday, were glad to do honor to its name and service.

Surely no boy of your age or mine need be ashamed to follow in the footsteps of men like these!

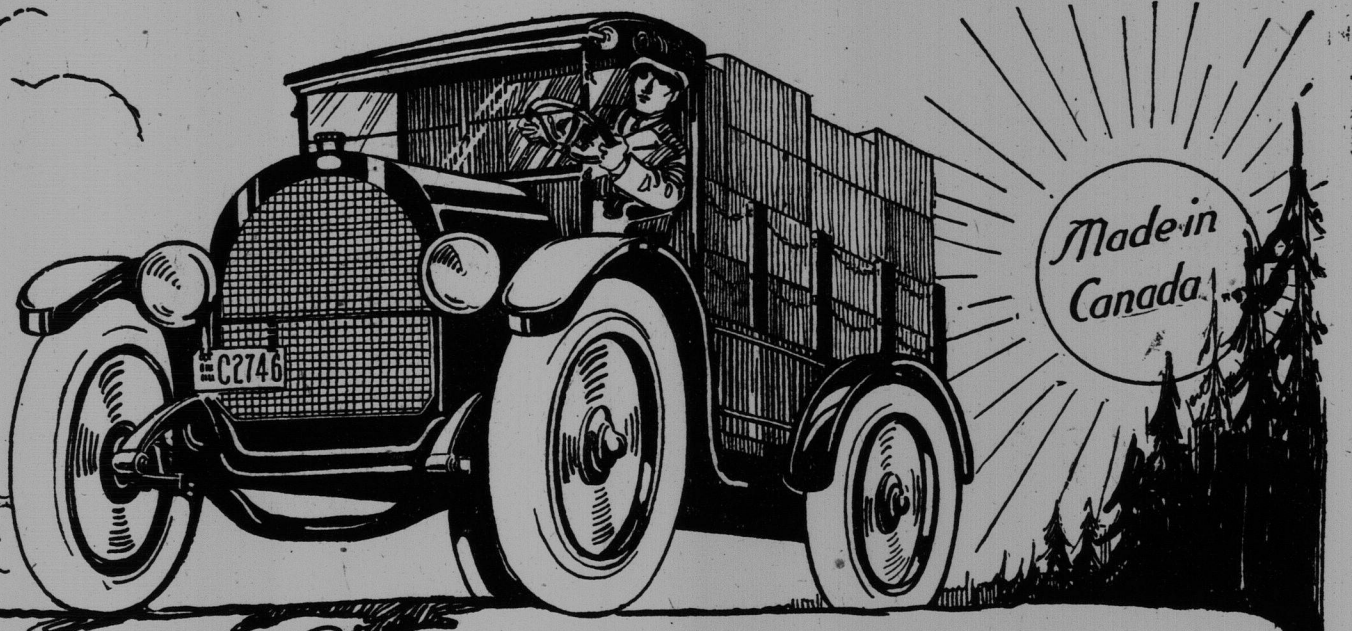
It is not an uncommon thing for one to fail to catch the name of the lady one has to take in to dinner, and how this may result in embarrassment is shown by the following incident:

An Englishman in this situation said to his partner, with reference to a dance that was to be given at Sir Lindsay Lindsay-Hogg's country house, "Are you going to the Figgeries tomorrow night?" "Oh, yes," brightly replied Miss Lindsay-Hogg. "You see, I am one of the flunies that has made motherhood mean

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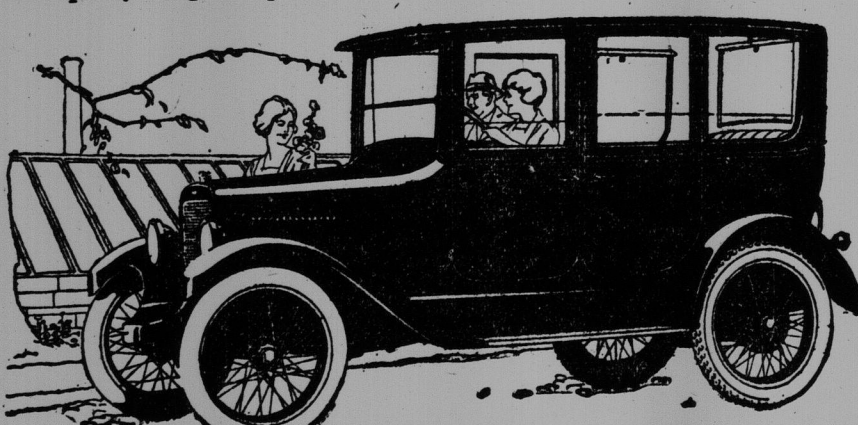
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