

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENTS

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The religious education of adolescents by Norman E. Richardson

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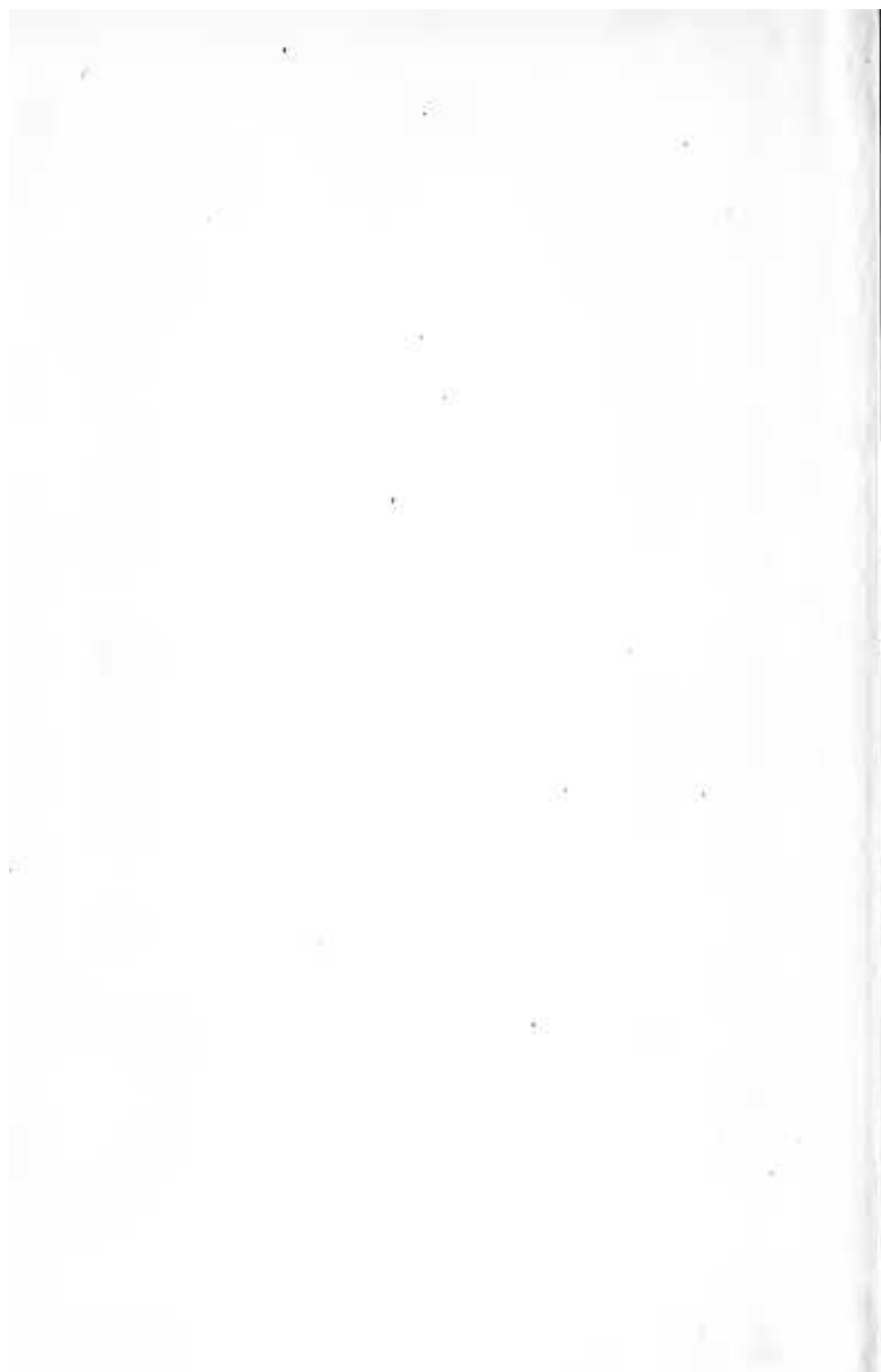
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NORMAN E. RICHARDSON

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BY

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Including material contained in a pamphlet entitled: *The Government of Adolescent Young People*, prepared by William Byron Forbush and revised by Mary E. Moxcey, the copyrights of this and other pamphlets published by the American Institute of Child Life of Philadelphia having been purchased for the Department of Religious Education of Boston University.

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INTRODUCTION

In selecting and preparing the material for this little volume, the author has intentionally avoided the exclusively academic and scholastic point of view. The needs of parents, teachers and other adult leaders, who are facing practical problems, have been kept in mind. Indeed, many of the paragraphs were written for the express purpose of answering questions which had been asked by persons who were facing perplexing situations in their own homes or schools.

During the past three years, the author has delivered several short courses of lectures in community schools of religious education and in summer schools on such subjects as: *The Psychology of Adolescent Boyhood*, *The Religious Nurture of Adolescent Young People*, *The Psychology of Religion*, and *Principles and Methods of Recreational Leadership*. As collateral reading in these courses, one monograph of a series of pamphlets formerly published by the American Institute of Child Life of Philadelphia: *The Government of Adolescent Young People*, prepared by William Byron Forbush, was used. The demand for it soon exhausted the third edition.

Numerous requests have been received for these lectures, made available in book form. During

the Summer School of the Canadian Young Men's Christian Associations held at Lake Couchiching in 1918, particularly, the Boys' Work Committee of the National Council together with representatives of several evangelical denominations strongly urged the immediate preparation of such a volume. It was pointed out that the material should be made available for the training of teachers and other workers in the Intermediate, Senior and Young Peoples' Departments of the church school as well as for boy workers in the Canadian Y. M. C. A.

The following chapters are the result of an effort to do three things. First, to gather together material for an introductory study of adolescence that will be helpful to teachers in church and public schools, leaders of recreational groups, parents and social workers. Second, to organize this material so that it will prove to be a serviceable text-book to be used in third year specialization teacher-training classes in community schools of religious education and in other study groups. Third, to inspire students and others with the conviction that they can perform a notable service for the Kingdom of God by guiding young people through the tumultuous years of adolescence.

In several instances the contents of the pam-

phlet: *The Government of Adolescent Young People*, after having been revised and enlarged by Mary E. Moxcey in the interest of adolescent girlhood, have been reorganized and included in the following chapters. The copyrights of the series of pamphlets to which it belonged were purchased for the Department of Religious Education of Boston University in the year 1917.

The writer wishes to express his deep conviction that a teacher or other adult leader who is responsible for the training of youth in any one of the three eras of adolescent unfolding should not confine his study to that particular era alone. In order to understand the majority of middle adolescent young people, it is absolutely necessary to have intelligent insight into the experiences and characteristics of normal later adolescence. Multitudes of boys and girls are socially and intellectually so precocious that at thirteen years of age, their interests are those that belong naturally, to middle adolescence. The spiritual life is unusually fluid during adolescent years. Charts and classifications are ruthlessly violated. A brief survey of the entire period is necessary before one is prepared to face the practical problems of any one era within the period.

The worker with adolescent young people should frequently remind himself of the fact that

his task is not to hurry them along as rapidly as possible toward maturity. Our whole nation is suffering from the results of the over-stimulation of its youth. A few may need to be stimulated. Multitudes need influences that will retard their unfolding. Help the child to maintain a normal rate of development. He needs, most of all, to live a whole life at each stage of his advancement. It is first the blade, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear. Too many boys and girls are growing ears when they should be perfecting blades.

In order to recognize these instances of precocity and of belated development, the adult leader or teacher must have intelligent familiarity with the normal experiences of the periods preceding and following the one to which his pupils naturally belong. The first step in the task of self-preparation to render efficient service for early, middle, or later adolescents is the careful study of the entire period of adolescence.

The author wishes to express his gratitude for the helpful suggestions and criticisms of the Rev. C. A. Myers, Rev. Frank H. Langford, Miss Mary E. Moxcey, Rev. James V. Thompson and Dr. Sidney A. Weston.

NORMAN E. RICHARDSON.

Boston University,
October 25, 1918.