



# Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,  
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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## Thought Provoker:

There is no doubt that the perfect teaching of righteousness that the Lord claims for the law has a perpetual validity. Not content with it, however, we labor mightily to contrive and forge good works upon good works. The best remedy to cure that fault will be to fix this thought firmly in mind: the law has been divinely handed down to us to teach us perfect righteousness; there no other righteousness is taught than that which conforms to the requirements of God's will. In vain therefore do we attempt new forms of works to win the favor of God, whose lawful worship consists in obedience alone.

John Calvin  
Institutes

## The Invention of Adolescence

by

Otto Scott

Adolescence is now accepted by most Americans as a strange and difficult period marked by wild swings of mood, outbursts of temper, rudeness, rebelliousness, and personality changes—all involuntary.

They would be surprised to learn that this period was unknown, unrecognized and unseen in every previous civilization, culture and society throughout the immensely long history of humanity. It is, even today, unknown in large areas of the inhabited world.

I recall marveling at the calm that pervaded fami-

lies in South America during my last extended stay there in the early 50s. I did not hear a single rude response by a teenager to anyone. No doubt it was different in the slums, but this was the atmosphere among the middle and upper classes.

In earlier times this was once true even in the United States, the land now known for difficult children. There was even a time when there were no adolescents.

That was, of course, a time beyond the memory of even our oldest inhabitants: a time before the Civ-

il War, during the First American Republic. Our great social changes began after that conflict; after huge waves of immigration came via the new, safer steamboats; during the period when many Americans anxious for a higher, more complete education, went to Europe – and especially to Germany – to study.

One of these was G. Stanley Hall, who earned a doctorate in psychology under William James at the new Johns Hopkins University in 1878. Hall went to Germany for two years and was swept up in German psychological re-

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search, and became especially interested in the mental development of children.

After that immersion in what is usually termed “the latest scientific developments,” Hall returned to Johns Hopkins as a professor of psychology and pedagogy. (Wonderfully impressive terms!) Hall taught John Dewey, Lewis Terman (who later pioneered “mental” tests) and Arnold Gesell, later famed as a “child” psychologist.

Hall conducted numerous “studies” of children during the 1880s and 1890s, and in 1904 issued a landmark book cumbersomely titled *Adolescence: its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*.

That title alone should have warned the wary, but it was a time when a number of savants were appearing with novel theories about hu-

man behavior. Dr. Freud, addicted first to opium and then cocaine, had convinced many of his patients that he could read thoughts of which they were themselves unaware. Lombroso’s theory that a criminal was an anthropological type with certain physical characteristics still had a following; so did phrenology: the idea that the contours of a skull indicated mental and spiritual qualities. It was a time, in other words, when – in the name of science – human beings were being redefined by various individuals who claimed to possess supernatural powers of observation and insight.

Dr. Hall was one of these. His theories fit inside the spread of Spencer’s social Darwinism and the fashionable belief in the perfectibility of man through formal, secular education. He thought the embryo in the womb repeated Darwin’s evolution of humanity from the sea, and that the stages of childhood repeated the stages of social evolution from pre-savagery to civilization. He left the definition of civilization unstat- ed; and seemed to believe that it was a permanent condition, achieved in the West in 1905.

Dr. Hall argued that childhood consisted of “three stages each with a parallel in racial history” and each requiring certain set teaching approaches. Infancy and early childhood were equal to pre-stages of culture, and parent/teachers should allow the child to play with blocks and to exercise freely. At 6 or 7, he believed the child experienced various crises leading to the “pre-adolescent” years of 8 to 12, when behavior is comparable to “the world of early pigmies and other so-called savages.”<sup>1</sup>

At this point (6 or 7) the child was, in Dr. Hall’s view, ready for school – and its discipline. But a new period of crisis, he believed, arrived between 13 and 18 – *which he termed adolescence*.

Hall compared this to ancient and medieval civilizations. He believed it was a crucial period, “because it prepares the youth for the acquisition of knowledge, mores and skills that will determine the future of the individual and, by extension, that of the human race.”

He also believed that it was “a stormy period ... when there is a peculiar proneness to be either very good or very bad.”<sup>2</sup>

There does not seem to be any basis for this conclusion. Throughout all the previous centuries of Christianity – and of Judaism before that, 12 had been considered the age of maturity. Both confirmation in the Christian religion in Pre-reformation centuries, and the Bar Mitzvah in Judaism (then and now) took place at that age. Thereafter, a young person was expected to behave as a responsible adult, and to assume a place in adult society.

Boys in New England whaling towns went to sea and rose to become masters of clipper ships in their early 20s. Girls married at 16 and set about raising a family, managing a home and behaving as matrons. Their counterparts around the world behaved the same. Life began early; tantrums may have occurred, but they had no general rationale connected to age: everyone was held responsible, and God was not blamed for anyone’s misbehavior.

1. *How Old Are You? Age of Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 67.

2. *Ibid.*

Social life, however, is replete with imitative patterns. People are apt to behave as they are expected to behave: whether well or foolishly.

Hall's ideas fit the fashion: it would not be fair to say that they were deliberately conceived to do so; it would be accurate to say that Hall was a man of his time, more than a man of original insight. He codified ideas about children and youths that were then floating in the air: that was the reason his argument was so easily swallowed by educators and other professionals. True originality has a much harder time.

In any event, Hall's work provided a basis for segregating school children by age. Elementary school children were segregated from secondary schools along the lines of his "observations." Twelve was the age of the break. The new fashion spread even into religion, and the clergy began to aim different lessons at special age groups: the Bible was too much for the young.

The movement mushroomed into special courses for special ages. At certain ages a child was expected to learn this much – and no more! To learn behind the group was a cause for concern, so in time, was to learn ahead of the group. Norms came into being; to fit the norm became (as it is now) more important than to sprint ahead – and to fall behind is a calamity. Never mind that different children grow at different rates at different times, and that even individual progress is sometimes fast, sometimes slow. Differences were put in the background: age in the foreground.

At a certain time, therefore, in the lives of contemporary American children, certain behavior patterns are expected – and subtly mandated. Nor is this only true of children.

There is now an expected beginning and end to a working career: one cannot be too young – or too old.

We have today an entire hierarchy of social groups based on age: from Day School to Leisure Village. There are assumptions surrounding each age group: from expected tantrums by adolescents to PMS for women of a certain age – and an end to creativity for the old.

There are many variations of this development – from youth gangs to forced retirement. In fact, we have almost achieved a society nearly completely segregated by age, in which generations have been narrowed from the traditional thirty years to far fewer. Age now separates us more than ever before in any society; persons raised only a few decades apart find one another nearly incomprehensible. Dr. Hall, therefore, can be said to have influenced us as much (and perhaps more) than Darwin and Dr. Freud, and like these more celebrated "thinkers" has brought us at least an equal load of distress, disturbance and unhappiness.

So Far By Otto Scott.  
Additional Comments  
By Murray McLeod-  
Boyle

Mr. Scott's contention is a valid one. All throughout our society we see the proliferation of this preference for adolescence. As an example, they are to be judicially excused. Apparently adolescents are old enough to commit crimes, but not old enough to be accountable for them. They are to be preferred to adults as employees. As an adult you are not able to work for a few dollars should you choose. No, this is demeaning to every other working adult; at least that is

what the unions would have you believe. Consider an adult with responsibilities; wife, children, mortgage. He is unemployed. He wants to work. He will do anything. He is not too proud. However, he cannot gain employment flipping hamburger patties, manning a shop counter, cleaning a store or gathering shopping trolleys. Why? He is not an adolescent.

This, however, is not the worst. By far the most insidious representation of this "invention," as Otto Scott terms it, is found within the Church. It is fair to say that nothing in the last thirty years has torn at the unity of the Church as much as this monstrosity. The Scriptures are about One People under One Lord. God the Holy Spirit speaks through the Word with singular clarity. He speaks one message to this one people. At least, that is the way it used to be.

Now we are told that our adolescents cannot worship God in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24). They now have to have contemporary worship—whatever that may mean! This "contemporary" worship is supposed to secure the long term viability of the Church. After all, it is obvious that two or three generations are missing from most pews, so to holt the rot we have the panacea. What is this silver bullet? Ecclesiastical euthanasia!

Although we are missing a few generations, the hailed remedy is to line up those who remain and machine gun them all; all, that is, with the exception of the adolescents. These are the new power brokers, the very untouchables in the Church. For them we will split a congregation and deny the unity of the body. For them we will restructure worship services. We will eradicate anything that triggers the boredomometer. We will rewrite the hymns. The tunes, well... need we say more! Of course sym-

bolism is out. The communion table will have to go to make way for the new sound system, *which we are reliably informed is guaranteed to destroy the foundations of the Church!*

All this change. It certainly is radical. Will it work? Well, we are not convinced. You see the poor adolescents seem to have suffered a few birth defects. For starters, the poor dears seemed to have been born without an attention span. That is why they wear their hats backwards. They have forgotten which way they were going. This also, no doubt, accounts for the fact that their clothes never fit properly.

Then, as though things were not bad enough, they seem to have a musculoskeletal abnormality which afflicts the arms in particular. Due to this palsy they are unable to lift a hymn book. Phew! Just fortunate we live in a techno age and we can use overheads.

The strangeness of this disease is that it seems to afflict the adolescent in various modes. They cannot hold hymn books, yet they can clap to the groovy beat. They seem to be unable to reach deep into their pockets to retrieve ten percent of their junior wages for a tithe to God, yet they seem totally uninhibited when doing handstands at the skateboard park.

It also appears that these adolescents were afflicted with a unique nerve problem that vexes their posterior. It seems that in the first instance this condition prevents the young derrière from being paddled. Colloquially, we refer to this as “applying the hand of knowledge to the seat of learning.”

In the second instance, this ailment seems to cause sleep or severe restlessness when it comes in contact with a church pew. Once more, there

seems to be evidence that the seats at the picture theatre and concert hall are made of a special material that do not cause this affliction to flare. These seats can be occupied by adolescents for long periods, much longer than the average church service, without the manifestation of any untoward affects.

The question that arises is, how do we interpret the data before us?

The best that can be made of the current situation is to see that, the “chooks,” alluded to by Otto Scott, “have come home to roost!” The emphasis upon adolescence within the Church is nothing short of an adoption of humanistic policy.

For the last few decades the secular emphasis has been pumped into our children. Let’s face it. Few Christian children are spared the pleasures of a state education. Parents, via their children, have been brainwashed.

How so? you ask. Children have been taught *their* rights. They openly tell their parents that they cannot be smacked. They are brazen in their contempt of authority because they have been instructed that they are the measure of all things. If an adult handles them, it is assault. If their father does not let them go to a party, they simply tell their teacher that dad abuses them. Without question the children will be believed and the father vilified.

This secular situation has now progressed into the Church. Parents raise their children according to the world’s philosophy and not according to God’s. Children rebel. Children speak back. Children defy their parents. Children are abusive. They are demanding. Last, they are non contributors—they are dead weights.

This humanistic belief system,

upon entering the ecclesiastical realm, manifests itself in children who do not want to go to church. Children who are bored with a sermon. Children who have to colour through the service. Children who do not live as godly children. Children who do not relate to reality but unreality. Children who do not understand the majesty of God. Children who do not express a love for God and rejoice in His mercy to them.

The doctrine of adolescence has turned good order on its head. Paul writes:

When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man I did away with childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Paul’s instruction here ought to be heeded. His teaching comes in a most unusual context. He has just dealt with the instruction on love. He ends by speaking about the mysteries of God. So why this context?

Very simple. If we asked you for a list of childish attributes, what would you give? Lack of knowledge? Children need to learn a great deal about the world, ethics and decision making, don’t they? A child is selfish. “ME first!” is every child’s motto. A child thinks in the short term only. “Eat all the cake, *now!*” A child is invincible. Dad is invincible. Addressing all you dads out there, what was the worst day of your life? We would hazard a guess it was around the time that your child went from, “My Dad knows everything!” to “Dad (shake of the head), how embarrassing!” This is disappointing for us dads, but it is a sign our children are maturing. They are gaining understanding. A needed transition is beginning to take place.

To this we can add the fact that children do not naturally share. Eve-

ry birthday is their birthday and they are entitled to a present. Children also lie quite readily. We have not yet met a parent that has admitted to teaching their children to lie, yet the little blighters manage to spin some fantastic yarns.

We believe that there is no greater testament to the concept of original sin than *the child*. Everything that a child becomes needs to be taught. Yes, some positive characteristics may come through in a personality. However, the simple fact is that Tarzan does not exist. There is and never will be, “a noble savage”.

With this in mind, think now of the essence of Paul’s exhortation. The Apostle outlines the difference between love and other attributes. Hence, we have a list that may be titled, “Love versus Common Vices.” However, the text is really entitled, “Maturity versus Immaturity.” For Paul, Biblical love is the acme. It is the pinnacle. It is what governs us and it is that at which we aim. Note clearly that we are speaking of Biblical love, note the poor substitute that is bandied around today. So we are told that love is patient. Not arrogant and boastful. Love is sacrificial. It is not selfish. Love endures. It does not seek revenge.

The question for us is, Which of these attributes would a child more readily display?

The truth, as hard as it may be for some to bear, is that the sinful nature

would go for the arrogance, selfishness and vengeful action every time. “My dad is better than your dad and if you don’t believe me I’ll smash ya!” is something which is heard in most playgrounds. You know this and can relate to it because you did it or heard it when you were young. It has manifested itself in some way in your children, nieces or nephews. Last, but by no means least, those who are grandparents sit back and laugh with a broad smile upon their faces. Why are they in this state of euphoria? They are enjoying the payback. They can see the same spirit in their grandchildren as they did in their children. The advantage is that now they can hand the problem on to someone else.

This is precisely why Paul concludes with his statement and comment on the mystery of God. The relevant aspect is that “we know in part, then we shall know fully.” This is the situation of the Christian. We are born as children and must become adults. Too often in the Christian walk we act as the adolescent. We have half the picture. What we should be doing is striving for maturity so that our decisions and actions are wise. So Paul tells the Corinthians, in no uncertain terms, that they are but children. Their squabbling shows that they are not mature and that they have a need to press on to maturity.

This is the situation of the child. The child knows only in part. Therefore, the child needs humility above

all else to realise that he does not have the whole picture and that he would be foolish to make decisions with only half the information. This is precisely why Paul uses his analogy. Children are not adults, neither are adolescents.<sup>3</sup> They are not mature.<sup>4</sup>

One simple illustration. We once told our eldest daughter that we could not do something because we did not have any money. This was not a problem to her young mind. The solution, “Go to the bank and get some!” If only it were that easy. To her, it was. She had witnessed us go to the bank to withdraw money many times. To her, we just asked the nice lady behind the counter for some money and she, out of the generosity of her heart, gave us a pile of cash. My darling did not understand that one had to work to earn the money. That the money then had to be deposited. Then it was to be budgeted. So much for this and so much for that. She had only half the picture.

Now let us transfer this to the ecclesiastical realm. We have foolishly adopted modern humanistic philosophy which dictates that we should hand over the reigns to immature people with only half the picture. Thus the direction of the church is dictated by people whose understanding of life and of God is only partially formed. The doctrine of the church is written by people who have not matured in their understanding. T.C Hammond wrote a small handbook on Christian Doctrine. The title, “In Understanding Be Men,” is the

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3. We believe very much in what Mr. Scott has posited in his article. However, because of the effects of modern philosophy it would be rare that a 16 year old female would be able to raise a family. These children are told that they are many times smarter than their parents and the previous generations. This may indeed be so. However, the adolescence are not informed that they have learnt in an insular and sterile environment. They may have knowledge, but they are not wise. They know not the ways of the world. More importantly, they know not the ways of God.

4. Now, we must clarify this point. Mr. Scott talks about the invention of adolescence. In other words, a new category has been formed. As we alluded to earlier, adolescence are given great freedom, but no responsibility. In short, the Biblical order is overturned and this is the insidiousness of this invention. They are like straw men. They give the impression that they are whole (mature adults), but they really lack substance.

KJV rendering of 1 Corinthians 14:20. It is a title, nay, a call to arms, that those in our day need to hear. That text in full reads:

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature (NASB).

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men (KJV).

T.C. Hammond had an insight—A small handbook on doctrine so that the children could become mature adults. Our generation has thrown out this Biblical counsel and we walk in disobedience to God's holy command.

This is foolishness *par excellence*. We have, on bended knee, asked these adolescents to tell us what they want to see in worship. First, that is a question no one has the right to ask as God Himself dictates how He is to be worshipped. Second, worship is, in the first instance, an act unto God. Believers, by God's grace, come to praise and worship God for His saving mercy. That there may be a blessing for the believer is secondary. This is the consequence of covenantal relationship. We obey God and He, faithful to His word, blesses our actions. So, why are we asking people about what *they* want from worship? Third, why are we asking people who do not understand the dynamics of

the Church for their perspective on worship? A four year old wants a colouring contest, not a sermon. The modern rebellious adolescent wants a rock concert not a hymn. The words that are sung are meaningless to this group. The important aspect is the groove.

If you doubt this, look at the styles of worship brought in to most "contemporary" services. Music plays an important part. We have been told point blank that worship cannot happen unless a particular type of music and instruments are used. Question. Is God now limited by electric guitars?<sup>5</sup> Consider the text of John above. Worship is commanded in Spirit and Truth. These can take place anywhere and at any time. When John Bunyan preached in barns, he could lead people in worship because the key ingredients were Spirit and Truth. There can be no John Bunyans today because electric guitars cannot be plugged into hay bails, nor drum kits used because they would bring the ever hearing authorities. Despite the talk of enhanced worship, modern efforts are a reduction because the emphasis is upon the means and not the Master. Further, take note of the lyrics in many of the choruses that now abound. Most are short, one verse pieces that must be sung repetitiously. Many do not contain a reference to God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. They refer to "he" or use some other

nebulous euphemistic term. Similarly, most are stuck firmly on the pronoun "I" and emphasise our contribution. The result of this is that God is almost excluded from worship.

All this comes together not as a means of worship to God, but a means of pleasure for the adolescent and some others. We who should know better have acquiesced to those who only have half the picture and as a result we really only enjoy half the worship and half the blessing—if that!

Some who read this may take issue. We would simply ask that they pause and consider the situation. We do not find "septuagenarian pastors," but we find "youth pastors" Delegations are not sent to the "young marrieds," but they are sent to the "youth." We have "youth services" as a means of attracting the adolescents, yet we do not recall a "geriatric service" being called in recent times.

We have erroneously pandered to the adolescent. We are now paying the piper. We have an adolescent worship, a worship in part, a worship not yet come into its own. Yet Jesus, the fulfilment, has come. The exact representation of God has come and shown us the Father. We should be seeking completeness and maturity, not partiality and adolescence.

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5. Are we really to believe that from creation to now, God has been patiently waiting for the invention of electricity so that he can finally be worshipped properly?