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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN DOCTRINE OF
INFANT BAPTISM FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

By

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

That the Presbyterian Church accepts the doctrine of infant baptism is a significant thing. This doctrine, though all too commonly held without thought of its bearing upon life, does in a very direct way, when correctly understood, bring with it definite responsibility. This responsibility falls not only upon the church, upon its ministers and all other church workers, but also upon the parents who in the very act of the baptism of their children acknowledge their acceptance of this doctrine together with all its implications. Since there are definite implications in this doctrine for Christian education as it is found in the home and in the church it will be the purpose of this thesis to determine what those implications are in the hope that in thus presenting the implications some of those subscribing to this doctrine may realize more fully their responsibility and privilege of bringing their children up within the church and in the knowledge of the Lord.

The children of Christian parents have been called by Lewis Schenck in his recent book on the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism, the "Children of the Covenant". These words contain the distinctive element in this doctrine as held by the Presbyterian Church. The Presbyterian Church, however, has not always been clear about the significance of this doctrine. Schenck has shown in his book how a

certain formalism followed by the "Great Awakening" served to confuse the church in the 19th century so that in some instances there resulted a disuse of the practice of infant baptism and in others an emptying of the rite of all meaning.¹ In 1847 Horace Bushnell pointed out for the Congregational Church the inconsistencies between belief and life as then existing. The writing of Bushnell stirred Presbyterians to re-examine the significance of the doctrine held by them in common with the Congregationalists. To clarify the confusion of thought within the church itself Schenck has written his book, pointing the way back to the historic significance of the doctrine. This paper is based upon the historic interpretation which may be stated briefly as follows as it is found in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.:

"Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible Church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's... Infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him are in that respect within the covenant and to be baptized."²

Christian Education is a broad term. Within its compass may be included many movements of varying emphases. Amid these emphases is to be found the true nature and purpose of Christian

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1. Cf., Lewis Schenck: The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant, p. 1
2. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., The Larger Catechism, questions 165, 166

education. It will be the task of this thesis to determine what that nature and purpose are in the light of the extreme emphases found therein. When this has been accomplished it will be the final task of the thesis to set forth the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism for Christian education.

B. The Problem Delimited

It is not within the interest of this paper to consider the defense of the doctrine of infant baptism. A study will be made to make clear the Presbyterian position, but that position as historically interpreted is accepted in this paper without apology.

The doctrine of infant baptism is not peculiar to the Presbyterian Church. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to treat of the varying conceptions as held by Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists. The matter in hand is a consideration of the doctrine as held by the Reformed and Presbyterian bodies.

The specific concern of this paper is with the rearing of the baptized child of the church. In dealing with the whole purpose of Christian education this paper will necessarily touch briefly upon the church's responsibility for the child of non-Christian parents. However, the chief attention will be given a consideration of implications in respect to the baptized child.

C. The Method of Procedure

Since the reawakening of the consciousness of the Presbyterian Church to the significance of infant baptism came largely through

the publication of Horace Bushnell's book "Christian Nurture"; since modern religious education has largely found its roots in this book; and since this paper is concerned with the implications of the doctrine for Christian education, it is evident that the problem of this paper will be involved in the determining of the underlying spirit of Christian nurture as presented by Bushnell. This will be the task of the first chapter, and Bushnell's "Christian Nurture" will be the source.

So that it may be clear just what is involved in the doctrine of infant baptism as held by the Presbyterian Church in regard to the regeneration of the child and his status in the church the second chapter will be devoted to a study of the historical doctrine of the children in the covenant. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. as well as John Calvin and Charles Hodge will be the chief sources.

Since Christian education is an inclusive term and since evangelism groups and modern religious education are both within the field of Christian education it is necessary to ascertain what the true nature of Christian education is. Since the trends within Christian education must be studied, the Child Evangelism Movement has been chosen to represent the revivalism groups as over against modern religious education. Finally this chapter will show how both emphases are caught up in the true essence and aim of Christian nurture. The chief sources for this chapter will be Child Evangelism literature, Veith's "Objectives in Religious Education", Myer's "Horace Bushnell and Religious Education", Weigle in his religious education report for

the Jerusalem Meeting, 1928, and the Madras Series in so far as these two concern Christian education.

These three chapters will be interrelated as the paper proceeds. The summary and conclusion will be concerned with drawing forth the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism for Christian education.

D. The Significance of the Problem

The significance of this problem lies in the apparent confusion of a great number of Presbyterians as to the meaning of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism. This is evidenced on the one hand by a group who evidence an unthinking regard of the sacrament as a mere social custom, or at most as a religious rite accessible to anyone, and on the other hand by a group with a very real concern lest the sacrament be made meaningless in being given to infants who so far as they can see cannot fulfill the requirements which they feel necessary for baptism in that they have equated baptism with salvation. From the above it is evident that the former group have failed to realize the sacramental character of baptism and the responsibility connected with it if it is to have any use whatsoever; and the second group have failed to understand the provisional nature of the sacrament as applied to infants and so have forfeited the great privilege that is theirs through the covenant promise of God. These two groups in the extreme will be found to hold two seemingly antithetic views within Christian education. If this paper can serve

to point out to both these groups the real privilege and responsibility of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism in regard to the baptized child in the field of Christian education it will have served its purpose.

CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN NURTURE AS PRESENTED BY HORACE BUSHNELL

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CHRISTIAN NURTURE AS PRESENTED
BY
HORACE BUSHNELL

A. Introduction

In the early 19th century the rite of infant baptism was for the most part an empty ceremony. The whole church was confused on the issue. Lewis Bevens Schenck quotes in his recent book, "Children of the Covenant", from the "Presbyterian Magazine" of 1859 as follows, "The relation of the baptized child to the Church is one of the most difficult questions in some of its aspects within the range of the Church".¹ The Revivalism of the day was responsible for this uncertainty in the minds of the leaders even in churches holding to the practice of infant baptism.

Revivalism had become the accepted mode for bringing people into the church. The gospel was preached in the light of coming judgment. A drastic realization of the lost condition of man together with a high emotional conversion experience were the means recognized for entering into the joy of God's promise. There is no doubt but that the revivals were used of God in the expanding of his kingdom, but church leaders soon began to realize that there was an overemphasis upon revivals as the only means of grace.

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1. "The Revised Book of Discipline," The Presbyterian Magazine (C. Van Rensselaer, editor, 1859), IX, 109

Churches failed to make use of the periods between revivals. Furthermore Presbyterians began to realize that, in the light of the revivals, the historic belief concerning total depravity was being interpreted to mean that children were to be regarded as children of wrath until they too had experienced a climactic conversion. Many of the orthodox of the Presbyterian church had thus been swept by revivalism away from their traditional orthodoxy. Something needed to be done to call the church back to a consideration of the basis, significance, and implications of the doctrine of the baptism of infants. Someone was needed who could point out that the world was not a world of adults in which children should find their place only as miniatures of their elders, but that the world was one of adults and of children in which children had their own rightful place.

Sandford Fleming in his book, "Children and Puritanism" pointed out that, "Only a man of deep conviction and courage would dare to assail the method (of revivalism), and only a man of keen mind and wide influence could possibly succeed in such a task."¹ The 19th century found such a man in Horace Bushnell.

Horace Bushnell was himself reared in Christian nurture. His father was a Methodist, his mother, Episcopalian. His mother, before his birth dedicated him to the ministry of God, and continued

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1. Sandford Fleming: Children and Puritanism, p. 191

steadfast in prayer through his childhood and into the days in which he was preparing for the law. To his mother Bushnell pays high tribute:

"Praying earnestly for and with her children, she was discreet enough never to make it unpleasant to them by too great frequency--- There was no atmosphere of artificially pious consciousness in the house. And yet she was preaching all the time by her maternal sacrifices for us, scarcely to be noted without tears."¹

Not only did Bushnell have intimate first hand contact with Christian nurture, but during his days at Yale he was vitally affected by the revival of 1831. It was at this time that he decided to go into the ministry. Bushnell was, then, exceptionally well qualified to precipitate this issue involving the place of the children in the church.

Bushnell's book "Christian Nurture" is an epoch making book. And although the Presbyterians of the day took exception to the implications of 'organic unity' which Bushnell held to be the chief basis for Christian nurture, nevertheless, Charles Hodge, one of the leading Presbyterians contemporary with Bushnell, recognizing the pertinence of this work to the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism, commends the book highly for establishing the children in their true relationship in the church.

As infant baptism is integrally related to Christian nurture, this chapter will be devoted to a study of Christian

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1. Cheney: Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell, p. 8

nurture. And as Horace Bushnell is the outstanding proponent of this position, and the one from whom modern religious education received its impetus, it is the purpose of this chapter to study Christian nurture as set forth by him.

B. THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE

Down through the centuries Christian nurture has been the method of education in the Christian church though not without exceptions. Christian nurture is the phrase whereby modern religious education as opposed to the period of revivalism designates its educational process. Whether the trends of this movement have stayed true to the ideal of the one from whom they derived their principles is a moot question. But before any critical examination of modern religious education can be made it is necessary to study the writings of Horace Bushnell at first hand.

For him Christian nurture is not ordinary education with a Christian purpose, but rather it is education empowered by Jesus Christ with the intent of bringing the child continuously into a living relationship with Christ.

"There is then," he maintains, "some kind of nurture which is of the Lord, deriving a quality and a power from Him and communicating the same. Being instituted by Him, it will of necessity have a method and a character peculiar to itself, or rather to Him. It will be the Lord's way of education, and if realized in its full extent, terminating in results impossible to be reached by any merely human method."¹

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1. Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, p. 9

Christian nurture is different from ordinary education in that it is concerned only with a specific group, that is, the children of Christian parents. As the promise of salvation was made to Christians and to their children, Acts 2:39, it is reasonable to feel that God has provided this means whereby the children of Christians can grow up naturally into the faith of their fathers.

"What is the true idea of Christian education?" Bushnell asks. " I answer in the following proposition... that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise."¹ Christian nurture, then, is that process by which the child grows up a Christian. Christian nurture is a means of grace for the salvation of the child which makes unnecessary the climactic conversion of the child, for it provides a way of growth in which the child is continually conscious of his own faith in God and necessary obedience to him until the time comes when he has reached the age of accountability, and then by his personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as his Saviour he makes the faith of his childhood really his own, having, however, never known in his experience the consciousness of continuing in a state of rebellion or unbelief toward God. Christian nurture, then, is working toward the salvation of, rather than the conversion of, the little child.²

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1. Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, p. 10.

2. Cf., John Oliver: The Salvation of the Little Child, p. 8.

It is a means whereby the child may be under the continual regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, experiencing forgiveness for sin, and the blessing of fellowship with Christ.

Christian nurture is not ethical nurture. Too often the two have been confused even in Christian homes. The motive for right-doing is not the fact that such action is socially acceptable, or a credit to the child's parents, or a means even of building good character, nor even that it is in harmony with the laws of the universe. The motive for right-doing is the fact that God requires it of man. Furthermore, as it is impossible for man to come up to God's requirements, and as man sins before God whenever he does not do right, it is necessary for sin to be confessed before God and forgiven by him. Moreover, in his grace God has provided a means of salvation for mankind through faith in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ man can be accounted righteous and can find the power to live day by day a more righteous life in experience as he "puts on Christ". The child brought up in Christian nurture, having been baptized into Christ, may have the grace of God working in his heart, his will being made one with Christ's through the faith of the parents until such time as his understanding shall recognize that faith as his own. Under Christian nurture then a child does right because he is a child of God, and the parents for the same reason see to it that he does right before he arrives at the age of accountability.¹

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1. Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, op. cit., pp. 79, 330

The basic difference between the righteousness of ethical nurture and that of Christian nurture is that the first grows upon the roots of natural pride and selfishness, whereas the other is based upon the grace of God. The first builds against the second unless care is taken that the two be related.¹

The basis of this teaching of Christian nurture is the belief in the covenant relationship between God and the believer. From earliest Bible records God has been a covenant-making God. And the covenant has always been made with a specific provision for the children, and with recognition of the responsibility incumbent upon the parents to teach all things unto their children. Further, there is a basis for the expectation that children so brought up in the Lord will know Him. Bushnell quotes Gen. 18:19 where God is speaking of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

The underlying principle, so far as Bushnell is concerned, is that of organic unity. This gives a power over character which is more than influence.² Just as it is organic unity which carries sin from one generation to another, so it is organic unity that provides a means of establishing a state of faith which it will be necessary for the child to maintain rather than obtain when he reaches the age

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1. Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, p. 80
2. Cf., Ibid, p. 92

of accountability.¹ "What intelligent person", Bushnell asks, "ever supposed that the original constitution, by which one generation derives its existence and receives the bent of its character from another, was designed of God to be the vehicle only of depravity."² Furthermore, Bushnell argues, the character of the child is not born at the time of his physical birth. But just as the parents are responsible for the physical existence of their children so they are largely responsible for the character of their children. What could be more natural and more inherently right than that parents should also be the spiritual parents of their own children, being the ones by whom the children come into a knowledge of the Lord from babyhood.

"So if there be any organic power of character in the parent such as that of which I have spoken", says Bushnell, "it is not a complete power in itself, but only such a power as demands the realizing presence of the Spirit of God.. As Paul said, 'I have begotten you through the gospel', so may we say of the parent who, having a living gospel enveloped in his life, brings it into organic connection with the soul of the child."³

He further declares, "the Spirit of truth may as well make this living truth effectual as the preaching of the gospel itself."⁴

C. THE CONTENT OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE

To get a clear picture of the content of Christian nurture it is important that what is not taught be understood. In the first

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1. Cf., Horace Bushnell: Christian Nurture, pp. 31, 192.

2. Ibid., p. 111.

3. Ibid., p. 32.

4. Ibid., p. 22.

place, regeneration in baptism is not taught. The child does not receive regeneration without claiming the sacrifice of Christ for himself after he has reached the age of accountability. However, it is not taught that the child is, therefore, of course unregenerate during his infancy for baptism together with Christian nurture provides the means through which the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit may be accomplished. It is not taught that disobedience, bad temper, a gay boistrous spirit are signs of an unregenerate state; nor that a child is ever too young to be good, or to be Christian; nor above all is it taught that a child can never pray acceptably or do anything that is acceptable to God until he is converted; nor finally that some high point of climax is to be reached once for all. It is not taught that good works are done in self-regulation. Nor is it taught that the Christian life is hard, dry, or oppressive.¹

The child is to be taught depravity and atonement: that we are all sinners before God, displeasing him whenever we sin, but that through Jesus Christ we may be found acceptable in his sight, and through him we may be forgiven, finding strength in him through the Holy Spirit in times of temptation, coming to him who is our Father in the obedience of faith and life. Further the teaching of children is to be Scriptural; the child is to become familiar with the incidents of Scripture and with the characters found in Scripture.

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1. Cf., Bushnell: Christian Nurture, Chapter VII.

These are to be brought to him as standards of Christian living in relation to the experience of being good with Christ's help. Above all Christ who is Truth and his teachings are to be taught.¹

Teaching is to be done more implicitly than formally. The parents are to be living epistles through whom the children may learn the power of prayer, the forgiveness of sins, the communion of saints, the Fatherhood of God, the saving power of Jesus Christ, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, so that as the mind of the child grows the concepts learned may be filled with a meaning that goes back to experience prior to understanding, and looks forward to a continuous deepening experience in the state of faith which is his. Teaching is for growth rather than for revolution.²

D. THE METHOD OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE

Bushnell, by definition, makes Christian nurture more than a mere teaching process. Something is wanted that is more than teaching. Nurture supplies this in the relationship between the parent and the child. Under the power of the Holy Spirit the life and spirit of the parents flow into the life of the child, begetting in him the faith which is theirs but which little by little becomes more his own, changing thus into the realm of the child's volition, and yet remaining the same in character with the result that the child makes his own a faith for which he was prepared even prior to his own will. When

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1. Cf., Ibid, sic hoc

2. Cf., Ibid, p. 383

he reaches the age of accountability his responsible will is necessary, but under Christian nurture his will has been so inclined that there is no necessity of an effort to change his ways, but rather for an expression of a will to continue in that state wherein he has begun.¹ Thus the growth may be so gradual and so natural that the child may never know the exact time of the working of his own faith as a part of his salvation any more than he can point to the exact time that he crossed over into accountability. Nor is it necessary that he point to a specific moment of salvation, for if he has grown up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord his whole life has been blessed with the effect of saving grace, and his every choice has been an experience of faith. For, as Bushnell maintains, "Christian education . . . is to be itself a process of domestic conversion."² The children are thus converted by the grace which is sent upon the household. In further explanation Bushnell says,

"Perhaps I shall be understood more easily if I say that the child is potentially regenerate, being regarded as existing in connection with powers and causes that contain the fact, before time and separate from time. For when the fact appears historically, under the law of time, it is not more truly real, in a certain sense, than it was before."³

And these powers and causes in the Christian home under the Holy Spirit are what make it possible at each occasion when a choice of right or

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1. Cf., Ibid, p. 30
2. Ibid, p. 222
3. Ibid, p. 117

wrong ~~faces~~ the child, for the child to turn to the right, yielding his will to that which is pleasing to God, thus passing through a series of conversion-like experiences.¹

Christian nurture has a direct bearing upon the doctrine of infant baptism. Christian nurture, therefore, is carried on not so much by teaching as by living. "It is the loveliness of a good life, the repose of faith, the confidence of righteous expectation, the sacred and cheerful liberty of the Spirit...forming...by methods that are silent and imperceptible, a spirit of duty and religious obedience to God."² that make for faith in the child. For that reason the early years of the child's life are the most important. While he is still a baby a child learns to know the attitude, the love, the faith of the parents. The commands of a parent are regarded as law and then found to be in accordance with the law of God, and so it is that the child is trained in the right. When he has done wrong and is truly repentant for his wrong-doing he is forgiven by his parents and later learns that God forgives. The child learns that the true sign of trust is obedience and so learns that faith is expressed in obedience to God. The child learns that all men are sinners and can find salvation only through Jesus Christ and so learns to put his faith day by day in Jesus. The child sees his parents living by a life of prayer and so gradually learns to pray,

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1. Cf., Bushnell, op. cit., p. 383.
2. Ibid, p. 20.

and to draw his source of strength from God. The child hears the words of the Bible from his earliest days and so comes to respect and to love God's Word. And all this time the attitude of the parent is such that the child feels himself to be in the love and care of God, learning that all evil is contrary to the will of God and so must be repented of, and that all good is according to God's will and is therefore to be chosen as the only way of life fitting for a child of God.

All this the child learns from being in a Christian home and living under the discipline of Christian parents. He learns not so much by precept as by example. The parents who teach the truth without living day by day in the power of Christ cannot expect to have their teaching result in the salvation of the child. "It is not what you intend for your children", Bushnell points out, "so much as what you are, that is to have its effect. They (the children) are connected, by an organic unity, not with your instructions, but with your life."¹

E. THE RELATION OF CHRISTIAN NURTURE TO INFANT BAPTISM

There have been many who have maintained that Christian nurture should be the practice of all Christian homes, but who have felt that it is perfectly consistent with the belief which seeks

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1. Ibid, p. 118

the conversion of the child at some specific time. Bushnell in treating of the subject of Christian nurture deals at length with the doctrine of infant baptism and says at the close,

"I have been thus full upon the rite of baptism, not because that is my subject, but because the rite involves in all its grounds and reasons, the same view of Christian education which I am seeking to establish. One cannot be thoroughly understood and received without the other."¹

In this connection Bushnell cites Christ's own words, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Further he cites the example of circumcision which was the seal of faith in the Old Testament and was commanded for children who were born of parents in the covenant. He quotes Paul's words "...else were your children unclean, but now are they holy", not implying that the children are regenerate because born of believing parents but clean, that is, acceptable to the church for the rite of baptism. He points to the early practice of the church, quoting the church fathers. He points to the proselyte baptism in which the whole family was included. And he cites the three references to the baptism of households in the New Testament. He concludes that the church could hardly have been held back from infant baptism except by some specific revelation.² For, he maintains,

"The father and mother are not merely a man and a woman, but they are a man and woman having children; and accordingly it is the father and mother, that is, the man and woman and their

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1. Ibid, p. 45

2. Cf., Ibid, p. 144

children, that are to be baptized."¹

To this he adds,

"And it would certainly be very singular if Christ Jesus, in a scheme of mercy for the world, had found no place for infants and little children: more singular, if he had given them the place of adults and worse than singular if he had appointed them to years of sin as the necessary preparation for his mercy. But if you see him counting them one with you, bringing them tenderly into his fold with you there to grow up in him, you will not doubt that he has given them a place exactly and beautifully suited to them."²

The children then are to be considered with the parents, and what is more fitting than that they should be taken into the church with the parents, the sign of baptism being put upon them when the parents covenant to bring the children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. The covenant has been made with believers for them and for their children. Upon what grounds then should the seal of this covenant be refused to the children of the covenant? In Bushnell's own words, "It is one thing to have them about as strangers to the covenant of promise, and another to have them about as heirs of the same promise, growing up into it, to fulfill the seal of faith already upon them."³

The child himself is to be taught that he is a child of God because he has been thus dedicated to God and baptized into the

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1. Ibid, p. 146
2. Ibid, p. 54
3. Ibid, p. 192

promise of the regenerative power of the Holy Ghost; and that as a child of God it is his privilege and duty to live in trust and obedience to God, looking forward to such time as he shall make his own profession of faith before men.

Perhaps the clearest conception of the relation between the doctrine of baptism and Christian nurture can be found in Bushnell's definition of baptism:

"This is preeminently the child's sacrament; signifying no regenerating work done upon the child but the promise of an always cherishing, cleansing, sealing mercy, in which he is to be grown, as one that is born in due time; and which he is always to believe in, and be taking hold of, in all his childish struggles with evil. And he is to have it not as a sacrament dispensed once for all and ended, but as a perpetual baptism, always distilling upon him, pledged to go with him, over-living his many faults, and falls, and operating restoratively when it may not progressively, assisting repentances when it cannot growths in good. He is thus to be always putting on Christ, as being baptized into Christ, and to live in the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us through Christ."¹

It is thus apparent that the state of the child is the same as that of the believing adult. The adult believer having come into the family of God lives day by day in the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The falls upon the way are not an indication that he does not belong to the kingdom but rather that he has not yet wholly put on Christ. The child baptized into Christ and faithfully brought up in Him in Christian nurture may claim the promises of Christ, and be confident that God hears his prayers and supplies the grace necessary for the

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1. Ibid, p. 364

Christian walk. He, like the adult, can live in the fellowship of Christ, day by day dedicating his life to Him under the persuasion of the parents until such day as he shall as an independent act take upon himself the full responsibility for his continuance of that faith which he has had through Christian nurture. The baptism then is the seal of the faith which the parents believe will result, by the grace of God, as they bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The baptism is more than that. Baptism is a sacrament, bringing the work of regeneration of the Holy Spirit into the life of the child, bringing with it obligation and a means of fulfilling that obligation.¹

F. THE IMPLICATIONS OF BELIEF IN INFANT BAPTISM AND CHRISTIAN NURTURE

It has already been said that the result of Christian nurture itself may confidently be expected to be the salvation of the child. What are the results from the belief in the efficacy of Christian nurture? These are primarily two-fold, a bringing of a peculiar responsibility to the parents, and an emphasizing of the responsibility of the church toward its children. It behooves the parents to put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a complete investiture,² for thus alone can they fulfill the duty incumbent upon them.

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1. Cf., Ibid, p. 364

2. Cf., Ibid, p. 269

Bushnell states this principle as follows:

"Christ must be first in your love...that which fixes your aims, feeds your enjoyments, sanctifies your pleasures, supports your trials, satisfies your wants, contents your ambition, beautifies and blesses your character. No mock piety, no sanctimony of phrase...will suffice."¹

For the church the responsibility is just as great. Baptized children should be put upon the membership lists of the church as belonging to a distinct class of catechumen members. The church is to keep these children constantly in mind and provide for them a nurture which will supplement that of the home, while preparing definitely for that time when the children will come forward to acknowledge their faith and to assume the covenant as their own by choice. Such children are to be received not as converts, in the sense that they are turning from a life lived in opposition to the will of God, but as professing children of God. Moreover, children from an early age should attend worship in the church. A place should be made for them in the service so that they shall feel a part of the church. Furthermore, Bushnell points out, the orphan children whose names stand upon the church roll are to be a special responsibility of the church. They are to receive the nurture necessary for their growing up in Christ.²

If these above mentioned results accrued Bushnell is confident that "nearly all the subjects would be found in the church

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1. Ibid, p. 57
2. Cf., Ibid, p. 192

as brethren accepted by the time they are twelve years old, and the greater part before they are ten years old."¹ The full vision of the teaching of Christian nurture is found in these words of Bushnell:

"Under such kind of keeping and teaching, God who is faithful to all his opportunities, as men are not, will be putting his laws into the mind and writing them in the heart, and the prophet's idea will be fulfilled to the letter; it will not be necessary to go calling the children to Christ, and saying, know the Lord; for they will know him, everyone, the least as the greatest... each by a knowledge proper to his age."²

G. SUMMARY

Christian nurture, this study of Horace Bushnell's monumental work has revealed, is that means by which a child may grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise. It is the means through which the salvation of the child baptized in infancy may be accomplished, even as preaching is the means through which the adult believer is brought into a saving knowledge of Christ. However, salvation through Christian nurture is made possible only as the power of the Holy Spirit works in the life of the child. This effectual working of the Holy Spirit may confidently be expected by the Christian parent, for God in His covenant has appointed that children are to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and He has further promised that a child trained up in the way he should go will not depart from it.

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1. Ibid, p. 311

2. Ibid, p. 384

Moreover, Christian nurture, through the training of the parents who themselves are obliged to live in Christ and so to teach primarily by example and by influence rather than by word, provides the means by which a child may grow up in an experience of faith. He is thus enabled to come to God as his child even before he can make his own profession. His profession then becomes a ratifying of that state which has been his prior to this time, in the faith of his parents. The function of Christian nurture, then, according to Bushnell, is found to be to make possible that growth from potential regeneration into the actualization of a state of salvation in such a way that there need never be in the consciousness of the child a feeling of alienation from God. It must be remembered that the principle of Christian nurture is based upon the covenant relationship between God and Christian parents together with their children. The parents are, therefore, responsible for seeing to it that the child understands his relationship to God, realizing the Fatherhood of God, the saving power of Jesus Christ, and the comfort and help of the Holy Spirit.

It was furthermore found that Bushnell considers Christian nurture as the means whereby the baptism of Christian infants becomes valid. The vows taken by the parents at the time of baptism include the promise to bring up the child in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Without Christian education by teaching and by life parents cannot expect their children to grow up into the Lord. Therefore, he holds Christian nurture and infant baptism to be

mutually interdependent, for those who believe in Christian nurture have every obligation to give to their children the sign of the faith implied, namely baptism. And through the sacrament the grace of God is available to the children in a special way, working upon them a regeneration and a renewing of heart so that the children may grow up into Christ, under the persuasion of the parents as they themselves live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian nurture, Bushnell was also seen to stress, brings to the parents the responsibility of keeping within the home a living faith. To the church falls the responsibility of regarding all baptized infants as members of the church to be watched over and nourished and to be brought to that place where they shall make public profession of the faith which is theirs.

Christians, he concludes, who regard their children as apart from themselves and outside the covenant have overlooked the provision made by God for the children, have robbed them of their birthright, and have made possible a period of time in which sin may well harden the hearts that rightfully belong to God. Instead, the children should be reared in Christian nurture so that it would never be necessary to call them away from the world to Christ, but only to lead them to confess the One who has saved them and whose they are.

CHAPTER II

THE PRESBYTERIAN DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM

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A. Introduction

Although the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism has not changed through the years the understanding of those holding this doctrine has been at times very vague and obscure. Indeed during the last century according to Schenck,

"On at least one important occasion Charles Hodge and other leaders found themselves compelled to defend the established doctrine of children in the covenant, when this doctrine was at least implicitly attacked in the proposed revision of the Book of Discipline."¹

The doctrine of infant baptism can be stated simply in the words of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., but it cannot be fully understood without a study of John Calvin and Charles Hodge who have not only systematized the Presbyterian faith, but also have defended it at some length, and in controversial works especially the full significance of this doctrine may be found.

Charles Hodge, furthermore, was a contemporary of Horace Bushnell and so among his writings we have an article written at the very time that Bushnell's discourses on "Christian Nurture" were published. In this way an even clearer understanding of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism in its relation to Christian nurture may be had.

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1. Schenck: The Presbyterian Doctrine of the Children in the Covenant, p. 2

As the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism cannot be known without an understanding of the doctrine itself this chapter will set forth the position of the Presbyterian church in regard to infant baptism, the status of the child in the church, and the relation of the child's personal faith to salvation. The final task of this chapter will be to determine the relation of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism to Christian nurture.

B. THE PRESBYTERIAN DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

Basic to the understanding of the doctrine of infant baptism is an understanding of the Presbyterian belief concerning baptism itself. According to the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. we find that:

"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life: which Sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world."¹

In respect to the one baptized it is to be noted that he is baptized into the visible church, and further that his baptism is a sign and seal of a covenant. Both these points are important. No man can be judge as to the validity of the profession made by a fellow man. Hence, of necessity, baptism must be granted to all those who, so far as one can tell, sincerely profess Christ as

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1. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of the U. S. A.,
Confession of Faith, section xxviii l.

as Saviour. The invisible church, the true body of Christ, is made up of all those who are of the elect in ages past, present, and to come. The visible church, however, is made up of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion together with their children.¹ Now baptism, being into the visible church, does not insure membership in the body of Christ. It is a sign of reasonable assurance of salvation. Unbelief makes void the benefits though it does not invalidate the sacrament.

Baptism is a sign and seal of a covenant. This is fundamental in the Presbyterian belief concerning baptism. As circumcision was given to be the sign of the Old Testament covenant so baptism is given as a seal of the covenant of the New Testament. Furthermore, as circumcision was given to Abraham after the covenant relationship came into being, existing through the promise of God and the faith of Abraham, so baptism is to be a seal of a covenant relationship existing prior to the moment of baptism, existing through the promise of God and faith on the part of the believer. Thus, the adoption into God's family which precedes the sacrament is ratified by baptism. No other means is needed other than the promise of God. Calvin says, "I only do not allow the salvation of the soul to be so tied to the sign as to make the Divine promise insufficient."² God has promised; God has made covenant. His promise alone brings

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1. Cf., Ibid, section xxv 2

2. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 347

salvation when the conditions are fulfilled. Wherefore, baptism is not administered to bring about salvation, but rather to seal it. Therefore, "baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him..."¹ and thus coming into a covenant relationship.

Further, baptism is to be a sign and seal of "ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life."² Now these are the benefits of baptism and are to be received by all believers. In baptism are figured the forgiveness of sins and spiritual regeneration, with the guidance and assistance of the Holy Spirit promised for the walk of life. These benefits extend only to those of the covenant. Baptism is not a mere figuring of the work done in the believer, but, as a sacrament, it carries with it the grace promised through it, provided the conditions are right. Thus the believer in baptism receives the forgiveness of sins, and the beginning of regeneration, and the power to walk in newness of life. Although, as Calvin says:

"It is erroneous to infer that the free course of grace is tied down to instants of time, still it must be realized that this is the perpetual virtue and utility of baptism, and that baptism is the ordinary method of dispensing grace."³

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1. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Longer Catechism 166
2. Ante, p. 29
3. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, p. 343

And again he says along the same line, "Believers in baptism are in some respects ingrafted into the church, though in a different respect they were previously ingrafted."¹ It is apparent then that baptism is a seal of what has taken place and yet at the same time is a fulfilling of the promise of God concerning the individual.

This is clearly expressed in the Confession of Faith in these words:

"The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."²

In the washing with water, then, is symbolized that regeneration which leads to adoption into the family of God. The minister in giving the sacrament does not effect anything by the baptism through its own merits but where the one baptized is of the elect it may be affirmed in the words of Calvin, "That in baptism we have to do with God, who . . . inwardly ratifies by his divine agency that which he figures by the hand of his ministers."³ And the testimony of this inner work may be found in the heart of the believer as the 'Spirit bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God'.

For further understanding of the benefits of baptism, the Presbyterian doctrine of regeneration should be understood. In baptism a full remission of sins is made, that is, sin is no longer

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1. Ibid, p. 339

2. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., section xxviii 6

3. Calvin, op. cit., p. 339

imputed to the Christian. Through the blood of Christ the stains of sin are washed away, and the believer is pleasing in the sight of God. However, he is not at the moment of his baptism fully regenerated but is given the promise of the power of the Spirit that he may grow in grace, putting on day by day the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of his corruption remaining with him until his death, warring against the spirit but through the power of the Holy Spirit made weaker and weaker. Regeneration is, therefore, to be understood as a work of God's free grace whereby the believer is sanctified and enabled to live more and more unto righteousness.¹

As has been pointed out this regeneration is not tied to the moment of baptism.² Indeed the Presbyterian Church holds that baptism is not necessary for salvation. To make baptism necessary for salvation would be to make void the promise of God, which in itself is sufficient for the saving of man, baptism being given as a seal of God's gift to man. However, as it is the express command of Christ that all nations be baptized, it is wrong to neglect baptism. The Confession of Faith states it in this way:

"Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."³

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1. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Shorter Catechism 35
2. Ante, p. 32
3. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Confession of Faith, section xxviii 5

Baptism is, then, primarily a seal of acceptance into the visible church in the faith that the accompanying benefits of baptism may be given. Calvin states the whole matter briefly in these words:

"Baptism is a solemn recognition by which God introduces his children into the possession of life, a true and effectual sealing of the promise, a pledge of sacred union with Christ, it is justly said to be the entrance and reception into the Church. And as the instruments of the Holy Spirit are not dead, God truly performs and effects by baptism what he figures."¹

C. THE PRESBYTERIAN DOCTRINE OF INFANT BAPTISM

1. The Doctrine Explained

From the foregoing study of the Presbyterian belief concerning baptism it is evident, then, that baptism is to be given to such as are rightfully members of the visible church, to such as have entered into a covenant relationship with God. Now it is apparent from the Old Testament covenant that the promise was made not only to the faithful but to their seed. As it has been shown, the new covenant fulfills the old so that the promise which is made to the Old Testament believer is made more fully to the Christian believer and to his seed. God has made one promise to man, though it has been worked out differently in the two dispensations. This promise is to all believers and to their children. So it is that children of believers are included in the covenant of God. If they are children of the covenant then to them is the promise, and it is

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1. Calvin, Tracts, Vol. II, p. 339

the promise which makes effectual the salvation of the individual. Wherefore, what is to prevent the administering to the children of believers the seal of the promise which has been made to them? Calvin admits that "did not the promise of life apply to them it would be a profanation of baptism to give it to them."¹ But in Acts 2:39 it is clearly stated, "The promise is to you and to your children." To Abraham was given the command that all children were to be circumcised at the age of eight days, else would they be outside of the covenant. The covenant in the Old Testament times was contained in the Jewish nation, the chosen people; it was the birthright of every boy born to Jewish parents to receive the seal of the covenant relationship. Moreover, it was an express command that circumcision be given, that the chosen people might be set apart as a witness to the promise of God which was to those of faith.

It is evident from the third chapter of Romans that circumcision of itself availed nothing, that rather it was to be an outward sign of a circumcision of the heart. Nevertheless circumcision was to be given to every infant son as a seal that the covenant promise was to him.

So it is with baptism. The covenant of the New Testament is contained in the visible church. It is the birthright of every child born to Christian parents to receive the seal of the covenant relationship. Baptism is to be given as a witness to the promise of

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1. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 109

God which he has given to the faithful. It has been shown that the visible church is not pure, that there are those whose baptism is made void by their insincerity of profession, that there are those, moreover, who though baptized into the faith as infants do not ratify their baptism, and that therefore the visible church is not to be confused with the invisible. However it has been ordained that baptism is to be the seal of acceptance into the visible church, and it is incumbent upon the church to receive into its membership all such as may claim the promise of God in the covenant relationship. In answer to the question, "Unto whom is baptism to be administered?" the Presbyterian Church makes reply in the Longer Catechism:

"Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him: but infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and are to be baptized."¹

Children of believers are seen, then, to be baptized into the visible church, and their baptism is seen to be a sign and seal of their covenant relationship. But what of the benefits of baptism? What of the remission of sins, of regeneration, of a newness of life? It has been stated that salvation is not tied to the moment of baptism.² Hence baptism is not a seal of salvation present in the child, but a seal of God's promise. And this promise includes the benefits which are to the believer. Now faith is a gift of God's free grace,³ and to

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1. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Longer Catechism 166
2. Ante, p. 32
3. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Longer Catechism 71

whom God imparts faith unto justification he also bestows regeneration, having in justification granted the remission of sins. It is evident, then, that the benefits of baptism belong rightfully to those infants that belong to the body of Christ. And children are not to be hindered from baptism because of their inability to express their faith and repentance more than are adults to be hindered who come into the covenant relationship by profession of their faith. Calvin states that faith and repentance need not precede baptism, that this is required only of those who are of an age capable of so doing, but that it is sufficient for infants to exhibit the power of their baptism later.¹ Moreover he states in this same connection that the force and substance of baptism are common to children so that to deny them the sign would be an injustice. (God who is faithful to his promise will certainly ratify his promise concerning the child, and the child, when he comes to the age appropriate to a confession of his faith, may then ratify his baptism for his part. But it is to be understood that the grace of God is given to the child in the promise so that he need not wait until he professes his faith to be conscious of the working of the Spirit in his life; his baptism is ratified in the promise in view of his potential faith. For:

"the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."²

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1. Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, pp. 87-89
2. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Confession of Faith, section xxviii 6

Those infants who are baptized into the church and who die before they reach an age of accountability are considered to be of the elect, saved by God's grace. Indeed infants not baptized are so considered as salvation is not dependent upon baptism. However, as Christ commanded that all nations be baptized it is the duty of all believing parents to present their children to the Lord in baptism. So shall the children be enabled to receive and produce the fruits of their baptism and acknowledge its reality upon growing up.¹ For God recognized already as his own those that are thus brought to him.²

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That it may be understood that the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism in no way contradicts the doctrine of the depravity of man the following paragraph is given as Calvin himself quotes it in defense of this very issue: "In my Commentary on the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, I speak thus, - 'How can this doctrine, that the children of believers are holy, agree with that which he delivers elsewhere, viz. that all are by nature the children of wrath... I answer, that the propagation of sin and damnation on the seed of Adam is universal, and that therefore, under this curse, all to a man are included, whether they descent from believers or from the ungodly. For believers beget their children, not by the Spirit, but the flesh. The natural condition of all, therefore, is in this alike, that they are obnoxious to sin and eternal death. But the special privilege which the Apostle attributes to the children of believers, flows from the Covenant, by the super-vening of which the curse of nature is destroyed, and those who by nature were unholy are consecrated to God by grace.'" (Calvin: Tracts, Vol. III, p. 348)

1. Cf., Calvin: Tracts, Vol. II, p. 89

2. Cf., Ibid, Vol. III, p. 347

2. The Status of the Baptized Child in the Church

All children of believing parents are considered to belong to the Church whether they have been baptized or not. It is this very belief that makes it imperative that the children of believing parents be brought for baptism, that they may have the seal of the promise which is to them on the ground of their filial relation to their parents. According to the Reformed Churches, the parents represent their children so that the children are born within the Church. They do not become members of the Church by baptism, nor is their membership in the church invisible assured; however, it is to be confidently expected, and the visible Church acknowledges them as its children. Baptism is the birthright of Christian children in the kingdom of God.¹

The baptism of children as has been shown in the preceding pages is based upon the covenant. Hodge says that the children of Christians are "presumptively within the covenant. That is, they are presumed (we are required by God to act on the assumption) that they will be faithful to the covenant and share in its promises."² So it is that the church looks upon children born to its members as actual members of the church. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church makes very definite the position of the Church:

"All children born within the pale of the visible Church are members of the Church, are to be baptized, are under the care

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1. Cf., Hodge: The Church Membership of Infants, Princeton Review 1858, p. 374
2. Ibid, p. 377

of the Church, and subject to its government and discipline; and when they have arrived at years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members."¹

3. The Relation of Personal Faith to Infant Baptism

Baptism is given to the child of believers on the assumption that this child will grow up to ratify his baptism. At the time that the child is dedicated to God in baptism the parents are instructed that the child is to be taught to pray, to hate sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.² Further, he is to be informed of his right to claim God as Father, Christ as Saviour, the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier, and that God has so promised in the covenant relationship.³ The child on his part is to realize that he is to live up to his baptismal vows. And when he has reached an age at which he is capable of understanding the nature of the covenant, and of examining himself he is to be informed of his duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper.⁴ This is provided for by the church in the following way:

"When persons baptized in infancy are to be admitted to full communion with the Church, they shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety, and shall in ordinary cases, with the approval of the session, make a public profession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation."⁵

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1. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Discipline I, 6
2. Cf., Ibid, Directory for Worship, Section x 1
3. Cf., Hodge: Bushnell on Christian Nurture, Princeton Review 1847, p. 509
4. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Directory for Worship, Section x 1, loc. cit.
5. Ibid, loc. cit.

It is at the time of coming into full communion with the Church that the child of the covenant accepts for himself the promise made for him in faith in his baptism. However, the moment of his salvation is no more tied to this time than to that of baptism. It is not often possible for him to state the exact time of his passing from death into life. And yet at the same time if he has been truly brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord the child will, in making his profession, be conscious of being wholly and voluntarily dedicated to the Lord whom he acknowledges as his Saviour. Without this personal acceptance of faith the baptism of the infant is rendered void. The baptismal vows made for the child in infancy must be ratified by the child. He must declare himself faithful to the covenant which is his by promise from God.

D. THE RELATION OF INFANT BAPTISM
TO
CHRISTIAN NURTURE

As seen in the preceding chapter, Christian training is the ordinary means of bringing the children of believers to faith.¹ In this chapter it has been made clear that, according to the Presbyterian doctrine of baptism, salvation does not depend upon the baptism of the child, but upon the covenant relationship which is ratified by God in baptism and which must be ratified by the child. The latter takes place through Christian nurture. As the world was

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1. Cf., Hodge, op. cit., (and ante, Chapter I), p. 513

prepared for Christ by the discipline of the law, so the entrance of Christ into the life of the child is prepared for by the discipline of the Christian home.¹ But as the children of Israel were not outside of the covenant although Christ had not yet been made manifest to them so the child of Christian parents is not outside the covenant during the time that he is learning to know Christ. God is faithful to his promise and thus children are to be received as members of the body of Christ inasmuch as their parents covenant to bring them up in the Lord.

Bushnell, himself, has indicated that Christian nurture cannot be considered apart from infant baptism.² And Charles Hodge, a contemporary of Bushnell and an authority in the Presbyterian Church, has clearly shown that infant baptism is vitally related to Christian training. At the beginning of his article entitled, "Bushnell on Christian Nurture", he declares that the leading idea of Bushnell's "Discourses", which is that of organic life as over against individualism, expresses a truth which is as basic and familiar to Presbyterians as household words.³ He continues in his analysis of Bushnell and points out the essential agreement with Bushnell, and yet the difference in the basis for the belief in Christian nurture. He feels that in the stress on the organic

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1. Cf., Ibid, p. 512
2. Ante, p. 20, note 1
3. Cf. Hodge, op. cit., p. 502

relation between the parent and child the supernatural element is practically ruled out. While disagreeing with the attributing of salvation to the natural relationship within the Christian family, Hodge agrees that it is through Christian nurture that the promise of God is worked out. His view at this point coincides with Baxter whom he quotes as follows:

"I doubt not to affirm that a godly education is God's first and ordinary appointed means for the begetting of actual faith and other graces in the children of believers...And the preaching of the word by public ministers is not the first ordinary means of grace to any but those that were graceless till they come to hear such preaching, that is to those on whom the first appointed means hath been neglected or proved vain."¹

The begetting of actual faith then is based on Christian nurture. This is the faith together with the means to faith which infant baptism recognizes and seals, inasmuch as the child is in covenant relationship to God. Hodge accepts Bushnell insofar as there is room allowed for the work of God in supernatural regeneration during Christian nurture.

It must be remembered that the work of Bushnell with which Hodge was concerned was the publication of his first two discourses on Christian nurture. The work upon which the first chapter of this thesis is built is the book entitled "Christian Nurture" and published in 1888. This consists of the original discourses together with thirteen additional chapters. In this fuller work can be seen an even wider basis of agreement between Bushnell and the Presbyterian

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1. Ibid, p. 513.

doctrine in that Bushnell himself makes reference to the covenant relationship, and further stresses the part of the Holy Spirit in the nurture of the child. Wherefore, it is possible for the interpretation of Bushnell to be accepted in relation to the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism if that doctrine be clearly understood to be a sign and seal of a covenant relationship based upon the promise of God, the command of Christ that all nations be baptized, the blessing of the little children by Christ himself, the declaring by Christ that of such is the kingdom of heaven, the fact that children of believers are considered, as stated by Paul, to be federally holy, and the fact that this sacrament is to be administered to infant members of the church in that all are by nature sinful and in need of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ and by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God.¹

E. SUMMARY

The study of this chapter has revealed that the Presbyterian Church holds the doctrine of infant baptism as based upon the covenant relationship of the child to God, together with his parents who profess their faith in Christ. The child in virtue of the promise of God to the faithful and to their seed is reckoned in the sight of God as of the household of the faithful and as such is to receive the sign and seal of baptism, which is the seal of his partaking of

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1. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,
Directory for Worship, section viii 2

the promise of God, not of his salvation. However, if the parents fulfill their vows to bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, God has promised that the child will not depart from his training. When the child makes his own profession of faith he ratifies his baptism and enters into the full communion of the church. Because God has thus ordained that man shall be saved through his promise accepted in faith it is the duty of all Christian parents to present their children for baptism that these may enjoy the benefits of the promise which is to the faithful and to their seed, that they may grow up within the household of faith into their own profession of faith.

It is clear that according to the covenant basis of infant baptism the child is considered to belong to the church prior to baptism into the visible church. Hence it is evident that all children of believing parents are to be considered as members of the church, as rightfully to be baptized, as under the care and discipline of the church, and as bound to fulfill all the obligations of church membership when they come into years of discretion, and make their own profession of faith.

It is evident from the preceding study that baptism does not save the child. Baptism is the seal of the promise of God; God's promise is ratified in baptism. The child must when he reaches an age of accountability ratify his baptism. It is the faith of the child in the promise of God, which promise is his in a special way

even prior to his own confession of faith, that makes possible salvation through grace.

It has been shown that infant baptism cannot be confidently expected to reach its fruition in the faith of the child if the parents do not live up to their vows to rear the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. By failing to do their part parents annul the special provision made in the promise of God and so rob their children of their birthright. It is only through Christian nurture that children of the covenant have any special relationship to God prior to their own profession of faith. It is evident from this study that a child baptized into the church but left without nurture may in later years ratify his baptism for the failure of the parents cannot annul the promise of God concerning salvation. However, the assured salvation of the child promised to the parents upon condition of nurture cannot be claimed if the parents fail in their baptismal vows. Thus it is seen that infant baptism while not nullified by the failure of the parents is rendered meaningless in that the benefits of baptism cannot follow without Christian nurture. Wherefore, it is evident that infant baptism and Christian nurture are counterparts one of the other.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A. Introduction

Within Christian Education there have been a great variety of movements. Traditionally these have been divided into two groups, those who believe that a child is lost and outside of the church until such time as he can be brought to confess his faith in Christ, and those who believe that a child can be a Christian, and so a member of the church from birth. In the present day these are generally accepted as being represented respectively by the International Child Evangelism Fellowship and by Modern Religious Education. These two movements are both related to the controversy in the middle 19th century in which Bushnell took such a large part, for child evangelism has arisen as a reaction to modern religious education which, in turn, is an outgrowth of the reaction of Bushnell to the revivalism of the early 19th century which held the same basic view as that of child evangelism. The seeming conflict between these views within the field of Christian education makes necessary a study of both movements in order to determine just what Christian education is.

In order to understand what values these two movements have for Christian education it will be necessary to determine what the outstanding emphasis of each is, and upon what basis it stands.

Since modern religious education claims the principles of Bushnell, according to A. J. Wm. Myers in his book, "Horace Bushnell and Religious Education", and as Bushnell's "Christian Nurture" is fundamental to the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism, it will be essential to ascertain the relation of the one to the other in order that it may be found whether Christian nurture is to be equated with modern religious education in its spirit and emphasis in the field of Christian education.

That the chapter may be connected with the two preceding, some implications for the program of Christian education will be drawn with specific relation to infant baptism and Christian nurture.

Since during recent years there has been a decided change in the field of religious education and since the two above mentioned movements have been involved in the change, the chief purpose of this chapter, then, will be to examine Christian education in the light of the child evangelism and modern religious education set in their immediate historical background to ascertain the nature and purpose of Christian education today. X

B. TWO EXTREMES OF EMPHASIS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: CHILD EVANGELISM AND MODERN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1. A Definition of Terms

Christian education is a term which has had various meanings but in most recent years it has come to be an inclusive term

which may cover many view-points and emphases. This paper is concerned chiefly with the emphases found in child evangelism and modern religious education as they represent two extremes in the field. Since the study of this chapter will reveal in a fuller measure the meaning of Christian education it is well at the start to distinguish this term from the one which has been closely associated with it but which here represents only a part of the whole: modern religious education.

The term "modern religious education" is used here to indicate that trend in Christian education which has arisen primarily during this century and which is thought of in close connection with such terms as "child-centered", "project-method", "purposeful activity". In emphasis and method this movement stands over against what may be termed as "revivalism" as represented by groups like child evangelism which uses such terms as "lost", "saved", "Bible-centered". Both groups may be recognized as working each in its own way in the field of Christian education. While the term "Christian education" is actually a narrower one than that of "religious education", in modern thinking it is a more inclusive one, for modern religious education has from the first purported to belong to the Christian church; it is essentially, then, a movement within Christian education even as child evangelism is a modern evangelistic movement within the field of Christian education.

2. The Historical Background of These Two Movements

In the early 19th century revivalism was the recognized

method of the day. Children were being evangelized in the same way as adults. Sandford Fleming in his book, "Children and Puritanism", has made a thorough study of the two centuries prior to that of Bushnell with regard to the place of children in the churches. He summarizes his findings thus:

"The evidence is conclusive that during the whole period of New England history prior to Bushnell's work there was no place for children as such in the churches. Viewed from the negative standpoint - the implications of the prevailing thought and practice, it is clear that children were not recognized. From the positive side - the treatment of children and their actual religious experiences, the evidence is overwhelming that children were regarded in precisely the same manner as adults, with no recognition of any differences in their religious characteristics, or in their normal religious experiences. Doctrinally, the dogma of total depravity was controlling; and practically, the mechanical way in which regeneration was regarded made no provision for individual differences or differences between different age groups. It was the prevailing practice to bring up children for future conversion, the experience of conversion being conceived wholly in terms of maturity."¹

How this viewpoint is related to religious education may be seen from another quotation from Fleming:

"Very important from the standpoint of the church was the inevitable obscuring of the real educational task of the church. Religious education was understood wholly in terms of an emotional conversion. The chief effort was expended in the development of conviction of sin, with the accompanying earnest seeking of salvation. The overemphasis upon the revival method operated against any recognition of the church's task as an educational one. Such overemphasis invariably obscures the importance of of religious education."²

Bushnell, seeing the dangers and inadequacy of this viewpoint as heightened in revivalism, especially in regard to children,

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1. Sandford Fleming: Children and Puritanism, p. 186
2. Ibid, p. 189

and realizing that there must be some means of grace more appropriate to childhood than an evangelism based in its appeal upon the experience of individuals grown to maturity without Christ, pointed out in Christian nurture a means which would not exclude one of the least of the little ones, a means which would make possible a natural growth in the Christian faith up to and through the time when the child should make his own the faith expressed for him by his parents in his baptism. This view stressed the position of the child as belonging to the church. The methods of Christian nurture became centered about the child, his understanding, and his capacity for response. Based upon principles which it acknowledged as those of Bushnell, modern religious education arose setting itself to bring up the children of the world as Christians who had never known themselves otherwise. When asked about evangelism the answer came as follows:

"Educational evangelism is a reverent attempt to understand God's laws of human growth and development, and intelligently to co-operate with Him in carrying out His purpose, that all may consciously and gladly love Him."¹

A modern group seeing the dangers and inadequacy of the above viewpoint, as found in modern religious education, formed a fellowship for child evangelism and changed modern religious education with the following:

"There are perhaps 10,000,000 children attending the Sunday Schools of the United States and Canada who have not been truly evangelized, and are not 'born again'.²

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1. Lewis Sherrill: Evangelism for Children, p. 4
2. Pamphlet: A Little Child in the Midst, p. 3

Now it is evident from the above that child evangelism is fundamentally in accord with the spirit of revivalism. The child is outside of the church until the child is converted.

The past century, then, has seen a swing from one extreme to the other and back again. And it is interesting to note that in the process, from both sides, religious education and evangelism have been equated. Each has defined the other in terms of itself. Yet the fact that the two still stand apart makes it apparent that the two are not the same. It, therefore, becomes necessary to make a study of each of these two movements as to their basic emphases.

3. Child Evangelism

a. The Nature, Purpose and Basis of Child Evangelism

Child evangelism is a movement for the winning of boys and girls to Christ. The objective of Christian education within this movement is the evangelization of little children and the training of those who have been saved by showing them how they may develop in character and consecrate their lives to God so that He may plan their lives for them.¹

The basis of child evangelism is the belief that every individual must be presented with the gospel and must be given an opportunity to accept or reject salvation, and further that even a little child may be converted. All mankind must be converted from

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1. Cf., Pamphlet: Child Evangelism Bible Classes, p. 2.

its sin. Very young children are acknowledged to be innocent though they are not specifically considered to be the children of God.

Our boys and girls, growing older
Cannot long from sin be free;
And to us 'twas left to win them
If they would God's children be.¹

Evangelism then is necessary and there is no reason to wait for adult evangelization. Children too are lost and can be saved; therefore child evangelism is the golden opportunity to reach individuals before they have hardened in sin. To quote from an official publication:

"Jesus declared that such little children can savingly believe (Matthew 18:6). Then of course they are truly 'born again' from that moment. He said that little children are lost (or soon will be). In other words they are sinners and need saving (v. 11). It is the duty of all believers to go out and bring little children into the fold (bring them to salvation). To wait for children to come to Christ is not the teaching of God's Word (vs. 12, 13). If they are to be brought to saving faith they must have the way of salvation simply explained to them first--and by us."²

Nothing needs to be done for the child who is too young to understand nor can anything be done. However the age at which children can understand the gospel is considerably younger than most people have realized. And so it is that child evangelism starts with the children of grade school age. Before this time the children will have experienced sin in their own lives so that they will readily know that they fit into the class of those who need to be saved. Then the gospel may be presented to them, and they may be won for Christ. Each individual must be approached with the gospel message. Besides

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1. Cf., Pamphlet: Child Evangelism Bible Classes, p. 4.
2. Pamphlet: A Little Child in the Midst, p. 2.

the fact that many children in the Sunday Schools are not being truly evangelized, the child evangelism fellowship points out that:

" . . . tragedy of tragedies, only about one third of the children in the United States and Canada are in any Sunday School. And yet Jesus said, 'It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish'. We believe that the sin of the neglect of these millions of children is mounting up to high heaven, in the sight of God. We believe that the basic reason for this condition is that we have gotten away from the teaching of God's Word regarding the evangelization of little children."¹

b. Teaching in Child Evangelism

The teaching of the movement for child evangelism is explicit. It is centered in the Bible, and the truths found there are interpreted wherever possible in the light of the direct gospel. This teaching is based upon book-study, chapter by chapter. There is teaching concerning conduct in life but the chief emphasis is upon the gospel. "New methods are needed which require a genuine belief in child conversion. No new gospel is needed, just the old, old, teaching of the finished work of Christ on the cross."² The child is taught that he is a sinner, and is asked directly at every opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. The sudden is preferred to the slow way of entering the Kingdom of God.³ Classes are taught in homes. The course of the hour is pretty much set. It is to include prayer, gospel songs and choruses, learning and reciting Bible verses, a Bible lesson by the teacher, and a decision service.⁴

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1. Pamphlet: A Little Child in the Midst, p. 3.
2. Ibid., p. 4
3. Cf., Sherill: The Evangelism of Children, p. 2.
4. Pamphlet: Child Evangelism Bible Classes, p. 3,4.

Those children who have been saved receive Christian nurture. They are taught standards for conduct according to the Bible. They are taught the forgiveness of sins by confession to God through Christ. They are shown the joy of fellowship that comes to those who walk in the will of God, and whose lives are consecrated to Him.

c. The Child-church relationship in Child Evangelism

These children are to be connected with some Sunday School and church. How vital the church connection is to be is not indicated. Whether the child is received into full membership undoubtedly depends upon the age of the child. The important thing is not so much the membership of the child in the church as the experience of the child, his conversion.

d. The Dangers of Child Evangelism

It is evident from the above study that the viewpoint is individualistic. The thing of primary importance is the relationship between the individual and his God. Lewis Sherrill states it thus:

"They are concerned to keep all men aware of a decisive act, both by God and by the individual, when one becomes a Christian. As for God's act, they wish us to remember it is God's act, whether done through the church or apart from the church. And as for man's act, they wish us to keep things so that a definite, conscious, self-chosen act marks the new status of one who was out of the Kingdom of God and now is in that Kingdom."¹

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1. Sherrill, op. cit., p. 2.

There is a danger here that the stress upon a definite, decisive act will exclude those who do not find such an experience in their lives and yet who find the assurance that they are the children of God. Those, too, who are too little to understand such an experience are either left outside or are forced into an experience beyond their years. Further, children who are Christians but who cannot look back upon a definite experience are apt to be kept in a state of confusion and unrest by continual doubt as to their salvation.

e. Child Evangelism and Modern Religious Education

The rise of this movement so concerned with evangelism makes very apparent the lack of this emphasis in the movement modern religious education. As has been seen above, modern religious education has tended to identify evangelism with its whole program. The Sunday School or church school has been thought of largely as the evangelizing agent. Child evangelism points out however, as has been indicated above, that there are many children attending Sunday School who have not been truly evangelized, and who are not 'born again'. This would indicate that modern religious education has failed in great measure to bring up its children in the faith, into a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ. Indeed Lewis Sherill in his report on "The Evangelization of Children" given at the International Council of Religious Education in 1942, says in regard to evangelism that:

"Many people in the churches kept looking for that word in the books written by religious educators, complaining when they did not find it, --- and sometimes complaining at what they found when they found it!"¹

Child evangelism points out two specific things for modern religious education. First, in its emphasis upon the unsaved child, the fact that there are many who are not reached by the program of modern religious education, and second, the fact that to an alarming extent children in the present Sunday Schools are growing up under Christian influences yet without knowing themselves as Christians.

Child evangelism stresses the word Christian in Christian education. Christian education, it maintains, must be evangelistic.

4. Modern Religious Education

a. The Nature, Purpose and Basis of Modern Religious Education

To define the nature and purpose of the movement known as modern religious education is not so simple as the defining of the position of child evangelism, for within the bounds of modern religious education must be included people who differ radically in viewpoint. However in 1930 Paul H. Vieth published a book entitled, "Objectives in Religious Education". This study was based upon the writings of ten outstanding leaders in the field of religious education.² Vieth himself points out that the statements from his book

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1. Sherrill, op. cit., p. 4.
2. Paul H. Vieth: Objectives in Religious Education, p. 72. The following are the authorities quoted: Artman, Athearn, Betts, Bower, Coe, Cope, Hartshorne, Richardson, Soares, and Weigle.

should be presented not as

"the objectives of religious education according to a group of leaders in religious education and in general education" but rather as "the objectives of religious education as stated by the investigator in the light of his study of the writings on religious education by a group of leaders in religious education and in general education."¹

However Vieth's book has received a wide acceptance in the field and is itself now used as an authority as is seen by the fact that even the latest official statement of the International Council of Religious Education published under the title, "Christian Education Today", has given as its objectives those set forth by Vieth adding only one which concerns the home.² Since this chapter is not dealing in this section with Christian education today but with modern religious education the nature and aim of the movement will be given as found in Vieth.

The following statements give us a clue as to the nature of modern religious education:

"Religious education is related in kind to the process of education in general. Its distinguishing criterion is that it has for its purpose the making of religious persons and the fostering of religious living."³

"Education becomes religious when it is conscious of the presence, power, and love of God as the ultimate condition and supreme motive of human life, which includes and integrates all lesser values and motives whose proximate end is some form of human welfare."⁴

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1. Vieth, op. cit., p. 93.
2. Cf. Pamphlet: Christian Education Today,
3. Vieth, op. cit., p. 5.
4. Ibid., p. 14.

To religious education the viewpoint of Christianity adds

"the qualifying criterion of Christian, which implies the ultimate reference of experience to God as we know him in and through Jesus Christ."¹

"If education be thought of as a series of progressive changes toward an objective - that is, a process of growth - then religious education must be a process of growth in religious experience and life."²

The above conceptions of the nature of religious education may be summed up in the following statement:

"The processes of education for spiritual growth represent the human endeavor to enable each growing individual to adjust himself to his total environment, with particular reference to spiritual values. Religious education is not a substitute for the work of the Divine in human life, but sets as its task such working with God in bringing about the right religious adjustment that the highest spiritual development of the learner may take place."³

In the objectives which Vieth formulated there is room for a width of interpretation and necessarily so in that he is attempting to make his study inclusive. Vieth states them as follows:

1. To foster in growing persons a consciousness of God as a reality in human experience, and a sense of personal relationship to him.
2. To lead growing persons into an understanding and appreciation of the personality, life, and teaching of Jesus Christ.
3. To foster in growing persons a progressive and continuous development of Christlike character.
4. To develop in growing persons the ability and disposition

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1. Vieth, op. cit., p. 15
2. Ibid., p. 16
3. Ibid.,

to participate in and contribute constructively to the building of a social order embodying the ideal of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

5. To lead growing persons to build a life philosophy on the basis of a Christian interpretation of life and the universe.
6. To develop in growing persons the ability and disposition to participate in the organized society of Christians - the church.
7. To effect in growing persons the assimilation of the best religious experience of the race, as effective guidance to present experience.¹

In relation to these objectives it should be pointed out that the preponderance of emphasis is upon what is known as the social gospel. The objective within which the personal gospel would naturally fall has been so modified as to be practically meaningless. Vieth himself in the fuller explanation says that the ideal of education assuring the free growth of the individual prevents the necessity of a doctrine which must be accepted else the individual be damned.² Although man is lifted from baseness and sin to a higher plane of life through faith in Jesus his Savior, in the last event the child must be allowed to formulate his own belief in this matter as in all else.³

The basis of modern religious education is the belief that every child is religious and that through education the child may develop his own relationship to God, changing his religion in accordance to his own development. The past experience of the race must

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1. Vieth, op. cit., pp. 80-88.
2. Ibid., p. 125.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 141.

be known to the individual but this must be taught in the light of subjective experience, not as objective fact. The child thus shares with the race in the creative building of his faith.

"Who knows but that the Christ of the coming Christians, on the basis of the thought and experience of a generation so taught, may be even more grand, more sublime, more Christian, than we have yet conceived him to be!"¹

Basic to modern religious education is the idea that God may work through natural processes to attain his ends and that, therefore, education may be a means for promoting religious experience.²

b. Teaching in Modern Religious Education

The teaching of modern religious education is implicit. Teaching is thought of in terms of guiding the growth of the child. Experiences are shared. Religion is taught through living. Teaching is child-centered, experience-centered. By no means is there to be indoctrination. Teaching is creative rather than transmissive. This does not mean that the child is to go creed-less. He is to form his own creed upon the basis of his experience. If some creed of the church fits his experience he may well adopt that creed, otherwise he is to formulate truths which will be meaningful to him. The experience of the past as found in the Bible and all other religious literature is thought of as the experience of others related to the present in an ever onward-pressing quest for God; the past is shared

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1. Vieth, op. cit., p. 141.

2. Cf., Ibid., p. 97

that it may be built into the future. There is no finished faith.¹

c. The Child-Church Relationship in Modern Religious Education

As far as the church is concerned the child in the Christian family from his earliest infancy has contact with the church. "He literally grows up in the church society."² He is to be inducted into the church and to find happy self-realization therein.³ Furthermore the act of joining the church is a strategic time for the education of the child in the meaning of church membership in such a way that the child will shape his very life by the ideals of the church. They are to learn to give themselves to the church that they may in turn receive from the church "enriched personality".⁴ So the child is to grow into full membership in the church.

d. The Essence and Dangers of Modern Religious Education

It is evident from the above study that the viewpoint of modern religious education is social. The thing of primary importance is the religious life of the individual in relation to the world in which he lives. It is interesting to note, however, that this view with its social emphasis is still individualistic. The individualism comes in the belief in the validity of the religious growth of the child regardless of doctrine or beliefs. Weigle states the position

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1. Cf., Vieth, op. cit., p. 122.
2. Ibid., p. 235.
3. Cf., Ibid.
4. Cf., Ibid., p. 240.

thus:

"The educative ways are distinguished by their emphasis upon learning, upon expanding experience of the learner, upon continuity, progress, and growth in grace, and upon the development of free, intelligent, responsible persons, able and fit to stand upon their own feet in the presence of their fellow men, to know God in their own souls, and to draw for themselves upon the infinite resources of His grace."¹

Both these tendencies in modern religious education make it liable to the same danger, that of losing the conception of the need of personally confronting the child with Christ. Since the child is brought into the church early and completely by education there is a tendency either to ignore evangelism or to leave it entirely to the revivalist.² There is a further danger that if evangelism be not wholly neglected it will be equated, as has been pointed out above, with the whole of religious education.³ There is a further danger that, as a result of the refusal to indoctrinate, the underlying meaning of the Christian faith may never be understood, and consequently the religious experience of the child may never be brought to rest upon a foundation any surer than his own isolated experience or the changing modes of his social group. His faith will continue to be an eternal quest; for him there will be no assurance, no knowledge of Whom he has believed.

This study has shown that the responsibility for the fact, pointed out by Child Evangelism, that many children at present are

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1. Luther D. Weigle in Jerusalem Meeting, International Missionary Council, Vol. II, p. 171.
2. Cf., Sherrill, op. cit., p. 10.
3. Ante, p. 51

growing up without knowing themselves as Christians, may in all fairness be laid upon modern religious education.

Should modern religious education rest upon a sure foundation then the method and the objectives expressed would be beyond question. However, as presented above, it is open to question. It has been divorced from evangelism and needs to heed the following warning:

"If in discarding outworn evangelistic methods we become lukewarm in our interest in individuals, lose that baptism of holy concern for their salvation, all our religious education is like the loveless life, 'sounding brass and a clanging symbol'."¹

During the last decade this danger has gradually been recognized and to a certain extent counteracted by a change in emphasis. However, since it is modern religious education according to the above admittedly liberal interpretation which claims Bushnell as its prophet and nurture as its method, it is necessary that a study of Bushnell and modern religious education be made before the most recent trends in religious education be taken up to determine whether religious education is true nurture.

e. Modern Religious Education and Horace Bushnell

"There is no doubt that religious education, the outstanding movement in the church in this century, finds itself in harmony with Bushnell's spirit and teaching. Almost every student of Bushnell emphasizes his preeminence as preacher, writer and citizen, but some of them seem unaware that his most revolutionary influence was in religious education."²

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1. James Asa White: Christian Education Objectives, p. 42
2. A. J. Wm. Myers: Horace Bushnell and Religious Education, p. 104

So speaks one of the outstanding men in the field of modern religious education, A. J. Wm. Myers, in his book on "Horace Bushnell and Religious Education." And again he says in referring to progressive religious education, "The whole movement is in the spirit of the principles expounded with so much eloquence and power by Horace Bushnell."¹ Modern religious education claims Bushnell as its prophet. In confirmation of this Myers quotes Washington Gladden from his book "Horace Bushnell and Progressive Orthodoxy".²

What then are the principles which modern religious education finds implicit or explicit in the teachings of Bushnell? First and foremost there is a recognition of a change in method. This has been marked from the time of Bushnell on as Myers points out, quoting Cheseborough, a Sunday School leader contemporary with Bushnell, who says:

"Whatever may be said in favor of special revival agencies.. has no applicability to the case of children... And piety cultivated under the quiet and unforced training of the Christian home, of the Sunday School, and crowned by .. the teachings of the pastor, cannot help but be .. better balanced than a piety formed under the powerful stimulus of revival scenes."³

Dr. Munger writing in the late 19th century says:

"It (Christian nurture) has taught the churches that the law of their growth does not lie in revivals, but in the nurture of the young."⁴

Again Myers quotes from Frank K. Sanders, president of the Religious

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1. Myers, op. cit., p. 121.
2. Cf., Ibid., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 109.
4. Quoted in Myers, op. cit., p. 174.

Education Association in 1910:

"It was a tremendous step forward in Religious Education when the idea of Christian nurture began to supercede the idea that a child must be born into the Kingdom of Heaven with some sort of spiritual convulsion."¹

The change in method, then, is seen to be one from revivalism to nurture. That this principle is basic in Bushnell's teachings is evident from the very title of his book: "Christian Nurture". He deals specifically with the change from revivalism as method to nurture as method in his second discourse on Christian Nurture:

"for she (the church) will cease to hold a mere piety of occasions; a piety whose chief use is to get up occasions; she will follow a gentler and more constant method, as her duty is more constant, and blends with the very life of her natural affections."²

Since modern religious education is based upon Christian nurture it would seem that Myers is justified in claiming Bushnell as their prophet. It is well, however, to examine a little more closely the six principles which Myers designates as "a few of Bushnell's chief tenets" which have a recognized place today among liberal educators.³ First among these principles is this:

"There is then some kind of a nurture which is of the Lord... The child should grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise."⁴

This according to Myers deals a death blow to the doctrine of total

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1. Myers, op. cit., pp. 118-119.
2. Bushnell, op. cit., p. 62.
3. Cf., Myers, op. cit., p. 123.
4. Ibid., p. 123.

depravity. That Myers is not the only one among liberal educators who thus interprets Bushnell may be seen in two quotations which Myers makes in different parts of his book. Dr. Charles F. Dole, who writes in 1899, he quotes as follows:

"Aside from the vigor and charm of his style, these books ... were a new ferment in religious thought through the middle of the century. No more subtle disintegrating force ever touched the old Calvinistic theology of New England in its strongholds ... It was and is a new religion... the religion of the ideal Christ; that is, the divine person that waits to be in the soul of every man,-"¹

And W. S. Archibald, who writes in 1830, as follows:

"His book 'Christian Nurture' is a prophetic book, for we build today... on the foundation which he declared; and that foundation is the potential good in human nature. In every individual is the possibility inherent in the fact that every child is a child of God. And the ideal life is this: that potential good is to grow, in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man, that it will never know itself as being otherwise than of the nature of the Eternal Goodness."²

It is clear from the above quotations that modern religious education interprets Bushnell in regard to this first principle in terms of a natural process of growth. It is interesting to note that this same interpretation of the nature of man is found among the leading men in the educational field. Dewey, Myers points out,

"opposes' the habit of basing religious instruction upon a formulated statement of the doctrines and beliefs of the church' advocates 'bringing the child to appreciate the truly religious aspects of his own growing life,' and not 'inoculating him

1. Quoted in Myers, op. cit., p. 168.

2. Ibid., p. 119.

externally with beliefs and emotions which adults happen to have found serviceable to themselves'.¹

For G. Stanley Hall conversion is simply an evidence of psychological maturity.² Starbuck sums the whole position up pretty well in these words:

"Our work is like that of the gardener.. to tend, to cultivate, and watch; if it is a rose, to try to produce the most beautiful rose; if it is a lily, then make it a perfect lily."³

There is no doubt but that modern religious education has been greatly influenced by the progressive education and the pragmatic philosophy of the secular schools. The very terminology and the quoted authorities give evidence of that. It could easily be shown that the spirit of modern religious education is essentially that of modern secular education. The question in hand is whether this spirit is that of Bushnell or whether perhaps a different interpretation has been put upon his words in the presentation given above.

Throughout his book Bushnell speaks of Christian nurture in terms of the Christian home. He is not dealing with the nature of the child as such when he speaks of a child growing up to know himself as never having been otherwise than Christian. Rather he goes to great length to show that this experience is based upon the relationship of a child to his Christian parents, and further that this belief in nurture avails nothing unless the parents

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1. Myers, op. cit., p. 117.
2. Cf., Jerusalem Meeting, International Missionary Council, 1928, Religious Education, Vol. II, p. 45.
3. Myers, op. cit., p. 117.

themselves are really Christian. In speaking of the practical qualifications necessary for the rearing of children Bushnell points out the fact that there are no parents free from defects of character which will mar their work. There is none capable to produce 'roses and lilies' naturally. Of this he says:

"The reason why we have so many of these spots and disqualifying vices is, that we are only a little Christian. Whereas, if we could be fully entered into Christ's keeping... we should live, in every part, and be kept in holy equilibrium above our defects... Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ... If Christ is made, to those who trust in him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, what is there that he can not and will not be made?"¹

For the child's part Bushnell says:

"He is thus to be always putting on Christ, as being baptized into Christ, and to live in the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost..."²

because the promise of God has been claimed for him in baptism. To make clear that the term regeneration means for Bushnell more than a natural process of growth the following quotation is given from a sermon of his on regeneration:

"'Born of God', remember, is a Christian idea, not born of self exercise; 'created anew in Christ Jesus', not self-created."³

It would seem then that there is some deeper significance to the words quoted by Myers himself, some significance which should enter into the understanding of Christian nurture and which is seemingly missed by modern religious education. The words are these, "There

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1. Bushnell, op. cit., p. 269.
2. Ibid., p. 364.
3. Bushnell: Sermons for the New Life, p. 123.

is then some kind of nurture which is of the Lord."¹ Christian nurture is more than an educational process with specific reference to the religious nature of the child. Thus the spirit of Bushnell's writings holds throughout a note which is apt to be found wanting in modern religious education.

The second principle is as follows: "'Something like a law of organic connection' subsists between parent and child."² This thought of Bushnell's Myers makes equivalent to the 'social heredity' of today, as a concept which may apply as well outside the Christian home as within. According to Bushnell, however, as noted in the foregoing study of his position,³ this concept is not the sole basis for Christian nurture; Christian nurture is based upon a covenant relationship.

Myers gives as his third principle: "The home should be characterized by comaraderie and love with the type of control and freedom gained in this way alone."⁴ Here again might be added a few words from Bushnell which more fully give his thought along this line:

"...you are never as parents, to lose out the parental; never to check the demonstrations of your love; never to cease from the intercourse of play... And so it will be your satisfaction to see, in due time, that your reward is coming; that your children are growing into all truth and order together; melting into all confidence and good understanding with authority itself.

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1. Ante, p. 66.
2. Myers, op. cit., p. 132.
3. Ante, pp. 13, 14.
4. Myers, op. cit., p. 134.

You will have your house in subjection with all gravity; a little bishopric, as the apostle would say, gathered in heaven's truth and unity, obedient, Christian, filial, and free."¹

Together with the camaraderie, Bushnell makes plain, is the sense of the sanctifying presence of God in the household.

The fourth principle is given as follows: "Growth not conquest is the true means of extending the Kingdom."² and the fifth is simply stated as: "Teaching suited to the age of the pupil."³ These two principles are evident in Bushnell and are certainly basic to modern religious education.

The last principle is this: "Experience rather than doctrine is the basis of teaching."⁴ Myers himself says that this idea is but germinal in Bushnell's writings. It will serve simply to call attention to the fact that Bushnell was interested that the full significance of the doctrine of baptism be kept before the child, not necessarily in its formal statement but in its meaning for his life.⁵ Further, experience as opposed to doctrine is not necessarily an experience divorced from doctrine, for doctrines are a formulation of the truths that underlie experience. In conclusion Myers quotes Luther A. Weigle as Horace Bushnell professor at Yale Divinity School:

"The modern movement for the better religious education of children owes more to Horace Bushnell, doubtless, than it any other one man. His 'Christian Nurture' was in sober truth an epoch-making book. In it he sharply criticized the extreme individualism,

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1. Bushnell, op. cit., pp. 336, 337.
2. Myers, op. cit., p. 135.
3. Ibid., p. 138.
4. Ibid.
5. Cf., Bushnell, op. cit., p. 364.

the reliance upon emotional revivals, and the one-sided supernaturalism which had characterized the thought and practice of American churches throughout the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries; and he vindicated for childhood its normal place in the Kingdom of God, and for the family its function as the instrument, by God's grace, of Christian nurture.

...It is remarkable in how many respects Bushnell's dissent from current theories and practices anticipated the development of later days. He opposed what was called 'indoctrination', which consisted chiefly in the memorization of dogmatic catechisms, and favored a larger emphasis upon the understanding of Scripture; he advocated the graduation of methods and materials of instruction in Christian truth; he recommended greater freedom in conversation with respect to the objects of religious belief, and more sincerity in answering children's questions and in dealing with adolescent doubts; he believed that the play of children, instead of being a symptom of original sin, is a 'divine appointment', of educative value, and 'the symbol and interpreter of Christian liberty'; he conceived the goal of education in terms of what he called 'the emancipation of the child'.¹

The above presentation of the view of the relationship between Bushnell and modern religious education shows that modern religious education has caught the spirit of Bushnell in respect to the method of nurture. But little is said in reference to that which makes that nurture specifically Christian. Liberal educators have laid little emphasis upon "a larger emphasis upon the understanding of Scripture". Liberal educators have little to say about the relationship of the child to Christ. To help a child to express his religious nature does not make that child Christian. To point out the social implications of the teachings of Christ and to get the child to conform to Christian standards does not make that child Christian. Education divorced from doctrine cannot be evangelization

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1. Myers, op. cit., p. 176.

for the evangel is doctrine, and it is the evangel that makes education Christian. Here it is that modern religious education has in the past strayed from the spirit of Bushnell. For Bushnell's whole book is permeated with the thought that these children are growing up Christians because they are Christians through the promise of God and that the means for their Christian growth is the Christian family. Without this Christian family, in virtue of which the promise is given, there can be no Christian nurture. Basic in the covenant promise is the evangel. Christian nurture is Christian only because it is based upon the evangel. Nurture in non-Christian homes can become Christian only through evangelism.

It has been shown that the basis of modern religious education is not the belief as expressed in Christian nurture, "that a child should grow up a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise," - a statement which cannot be considered apart from its relation to infant baptism and the covenant relationship with God, but rather the belief as found in secular education that every child is religious and has within himself all that is necessary to make him a Christian adult. For this philosophy evangelism as the personal acceptance of Christ is not necessary. It is not Christ but the ideals of Christ that claim the allegiance of the individual. Wherefore in so far as modern religious education has left the evangel out of its program it cannot claim to follow Bushnell in Christian nurture.

Modern religious education stresses the word education in Christian education. Christian education, it maintains, must be educative.

C. THE CONSERVATION OF THE VALUES OF BOTH EXTREMES
IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Although there has been considerable embarrassment in past years over the term 'evangelism' in modern religious education, recent years have brought a new understanding of the term. As seen above the term was for a while almost completely dropped. Words like conversion were redefined. Christianity was thought of largely in its social aspects. But in 1928 when the International Missionary Council met in Jerusalem, Weigle was asked to draw up a preliminary paper on religious education upon which the council might act. While this paper points out the compatibility of modern psychology with religious education, while human nature is defined in terms of 'a modifiable organization capable of development under wise guidance into intelligent, unified, and spiritual personality',¹ at the same time Weigle does not equate the two. Modern secular education based upon modern psychology provides a method and an instrument for the Christian purpose. He further proceeds with these words:

"A false antithesis has often been drawn between evangelism and religious education. The truth is that they belong together. Evangelism denotes the Christian purpose; religious education describes the normal method of its fulfillment . . . Any method that brings the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bear in vital, effective, saving power upon the lives of human beings, men, women, or children, old or young, is rightly to be conceived as a method of evangelism."²

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1. Cf. Jerusalem Meeting, I.M.C., 1928, p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 48.

It is thus recognized that evangelism has a place in modern religious education. This new vision of the meaning of modern religious education, however, necessitates a change in name to distinguish it from the above. This name has followed in due time for today those who realize the place of evangelism speak of the church's educational program as Christian education. The conflict between modern religious education and that of Christian education lies then in the fact that evangelism has been interpreted by many liberal religious educators to be something far other than the definition given by Weigle. Among the leaders of religious education Betts, Bower, Coe, and Hartshorne do not consider evangelism in relation to religious education as anything more than an education toward life and service to the community according to Christian standards. While Athearn, Weigle, and Vieth on the other hand do use the term in relation to the acceptance of Christ as Saviour,¹ the former group has been predominant. Furthermore there has been a stress upon method in all modern religious education writing to the exclusion of practically all else. There has been a swing away from what is known as indoctrination for it was felt that the experience of the individual child was paramount. Weigle agrees that it is a mistake to neglect love, justice and mercy in the adherence to some particular creed of doctrine, but nevertheless he points out that it is equally a mistake

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1. Cf. Krisel: A Study of Present-day Evangelism in Religious Education, pp. 27, 28.

to conclude that doctrine is profitless; that beliefs don't matter so long as one lives a good life, for

"Developing Christian experience . . . is not a matter of habit, custom, and social suggestion merely. It is motivated by intelligible convictions concerning God, man, and the universe. The growth of a Christian is thus in part intellectual, and the Christian Church has always rightly considered instruction on doctrine to be a vital and fundamental part of its teaching work."¹

and further,

"Only a reasonable faith can in the long run be depended upon to endure amid the changing conditions and increasing complexities of life."²

Thus while the Jerusalem conference recognizes the importance of modern method in religious education, it nevertheless made a definite place for doctrine and for the gospel.

Despite the definite recognition on the part of the representatives to the Jerusalem conference of the place of evangelism in religious education there has been a decided lag in the general field so that the conclusions of the more recent Madras conference come as a new emphasis. Moreover there has been a definite development in the understanding of the whole problem, during the past decade. This is evidenced by the fact that in the Jerusalem report modern religious education was taken up primarily as religious education with an explanation of the implications of the word Christian

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1. Jerusalem Meeting, I.M.C., 1928, p. 57.

2. Ibid., p. 58.

in connection with the movement. The chapter concerned was entitled "Christian Religious Education". In the Madras report, on the other hand, the chapter is entitled simply "Christian Education" and under this is discussed modern religious education. The fact that the word Christian is used in preference to religious implies a concern for that which is central in the Christian faith. There is thus an added emphasis today on evangelism and a recognition of the necessity for a term which will free this interpretation from the limitations of the movement known as modern religious education.

In the educational program of the church at Madras it is of interest to note that the first aim drawn up is the acceptance of Christ. This is placed before the objective, fellowship with God,¹ a fact which further reveals the shift in emphasis noted above. During the course of the conference itself the trends of the recent years were set forth. They are as follows:

1. "There has been a growing disposition to use the term "Christian education" . . . "religious education" is general . . . has become ambiguous in view of its use by nontheistic humanists . . .
2. . . . a new interest in the philosophical and theological bases of Christian education, and in the content of Christian teaching as contrasted with . . . preoccupation with . . . method
3. . . . a new recognition that the church itself is of indispensable importance in Christian education . . .
4. . . . adult Christian education, including education for parenthood
5. movements of Christian youth . . . and . . . Christian education.
6. . . . Kingdom of God . . . gift of God, yet cannot be out of relation to human conscience and endeavor.

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1. Madras Series, Vol. IV, The Life of the Church, p. 61.

7. . . . education of laymen . . .

8. . . . character education . . . can be . . . a secular rival or substitute for religious education.

9. The principle asserted at the Jerusalem meeting, that evangelism and Christian religious education are properly not rivals nor incompatible, but are organically related, has won general recognition both in theory and practice - though here, as usual, practice does not always square with theory."¹

It is evident then that Christian education not only makes a nominal place for evangelism but that it recognizes evangelism to be an integral part, a basic part of its program. This evangelism is the same as that of the revivalist group. It is the New Testament evangelism set in its eschatological background, the evangelism which recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and presses for a decision concerning His claim to man's utter devotion, involving the two imperatives: repent! believe!² However the method of Christian education is different from that of child evangelism in that it assumes that the child of Christian parents is already in the household of faith.³ This very assumption points out the failing of modern religious education which assumes that the nature of man is such that the child only needs to be educated into full Christian manhood. Evangelism in the New Testament sense for children of Christian parents means:

"the taking every reasonable and necessary measure to bring it about that children do not slide along toward maturity with no decision on their own part."⁴

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1. Madras Series, op. cit., pp. 153, 154.
2. Cf. Sherrill, op. cit., pp. 6, 7.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Ibid., p. 12.

For the children truly brought up in Christian nurture there is no danger of the above ever happening in that Christian nurture is based upon the child's relationship to Christ and every decision that the child makes from infancy on will be for Christ so that when he reaches the age of accountability his decision will, according to the promise of God, be for Christ, for he is His. However Christian education is confronted not only with the children of Christian parents but with those who are reared outside of the covenant. Furthermore, Christian education is faced with those children born of Christian parents for whom the promise is not claimed and who have been robbed of their birthright in Christian nurture. Children outside the covenant promise but not yet having reached the age of discretion are regarded as under the grace of God in a special way. This view the modern evangelistic groups also hold.¹ The method of Christian education with these children is to lay the ground-work for evangelism. Much that children need to know is not evangelism at all.

"It serves no good purpose whatever if we make the word "evangelism" into a pious-sounding mantle which we try to spread over the whole curriculum. But we can truthfully say that whenever we teach children of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, we are laying the ground-work of evangelism because the children are that much better prepared to enter understandingly into the experience of being confronted with the living Christ and his supreme claims upon our life and loyalty."²

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1. Intra, Chapter III, p. 9.
2. Sherrill, op. cit., p. 13.

Furthermore these children are to be brought into intimate relationship to the church before as well as after their profession of faith, for Christian education "unashamedly exalts Christian group life",¹ believing that "a child professing his faith is not engaging in some solitary transaction between man and God . . . but is also entering into the full responsibility in the visible body of Christ."² Thus withal its acceptance of evangelism as essential, Christian education has not lost the value of the methods as found in religious education.

Christian education, then, to be Christian education must unite the emphases of the two groups, evangelism and modern religious education. Within its program must be included the personal commitment and guided growth of the child.

D. SOME SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The field of Christian education is made up of three circles of influence, the home, the church, and the community. For each of these there are specific implications in relation to infant baptism and Christian nurture.

1. Implications for the Home

That the Christian home is basic both to the doctrine of infant baptism and to Christian nurture was emphasized in the Jerusalem Conference report:

"The primary principle underlying the Christian education of

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1. Shemill, loc. cit.
2. Cf. Ibid.

children is that of their fellowship with older folk in social groups which are wholeheartedly and genuinely Christian in spirit and life. Of these groups, by far the most important is the family."¹

It is the parents who are responsible for presenting their children for baptism without undue delay;² for bearing in mind the fitness of the administration of baptism at a worship service within the church in that the child is received through baptism into the visible church.³ It is the parents who are responsible in a large part for the Christian nurture of their children. It is they who must lead their children to put on the Lord Jesus Christ as a complete investiture.⁴ They are to pray with and for their children; to set an example of piety and godliness; to use all the means of God's appointment for bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;⁵ to teach their children to read the Word of God; to instruct them in the principles of the faith as contained in the Scriptures; to make use of the help found in the Confession of Faith and the catechisms of the Presbyterian Church;⁶ to teach them to understand and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; to teach them to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.⁷

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1. Jerusalem Meeting, International Missionary Council 1928, p. 65.
2. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A., Directory for Worship, Chapter viii, section 1.
3. Cf., Ibid., loc. cit.
4. Ante, p. 23, note 2.
5. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A., Directory for Worship, Chapter viii, section 2.
6. Cf., Ibid.
7. Cf., Ibid., Chapter x, section 1.

Gerrit Verkuyl in his book "Christ in American Education" points out that parental indifference seems to be found in about 95% of church homes, the manse excluded, to the extent that there is not even a blessing at the table.¹ It does not seem out of place therefore to state that implications for the Christian home include giving thanks at mealtime, accompanying the child to Sunday School and church, helping the child find time for Sunday School assignments, discussing problems in the light of Christian principles,² encouraging the child in personal devotions, and maintaining a family worship which will be real and which will be planned with the children in mind. It is paramount that family worship shall be so much a vital part of the family life that the children may come to realize as Bushnell says: "that it (true family religion) has such scope as to include and harmonize all the ways, and works, and cares of the house."³ This lays upon the parents the necessity for planning to be in their undertakings just what they pray to be in their prayers.⁴

2. Implications for the Church

The part that the church plays in the program of Christian education can in no way be a substitute for that fulfilled by the home. However, the church has in a way a wider task in that it is to the church that the home looks for its nurture in the Christian life. This, too, the Jerusalem Conference has taken into account:

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1. Cf., Gerrit Verkuyl: Christ in American Education, p. 150.
2. Cf., Ibid., p. 149.
3. Bushnell, op. cit., p. 407.
4. Cf., Ibid., loc. cit.

"There is no greater task for the church than that of training the parents to exemplify toward their children the traits of a divine parenthood, to maintain in the home an atmosphere that is thoroughly Christian..."¹

Many parents are totally unaware of their privileges and responsibilities in rearing a Christian family. It is the task of the church to help these parents to realize the fundamental role of the Christian home in Christian nurture. The cradle or nursery roll of the church provides a bond between the church and the new-born babe in his home. These children belong to the church in a very real way and are to be baptized, and trained for full responsible communicant membership in the church. It is the minister's responsibility to make sure that those parents bringing their children for baptism are themselves Christians,² and further that they understand before the ceremony is arranged for just what the basis for the belief in infant baptism is, and what the implications for the parents are. In the case of members of his congregation who do not realize the importance of infant baptism it is the obligation of the minister to approach such members on this matter. Just before or after the administration of infant baptism in public worship the minister has an unusual opportunity to present to the children and adults present the significance of the act and to exhort them to live as befitting those who bear the name of Christ. Since the child is being baptized into the visible church³ there falls upon the congregation as a whole a certain

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1. Jerusalem Meeting, International Missionary Council 1928, Vol. II, p. 68.
2. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Confession of Faith, Chapter xxviii, section 4.
3. Cf. Ibid., Directory for Worship, Chapter x, section 1.

responsibility for the nurture of the child, and upon the session a responsibility for discipline and for the examination of the child for entrance into full communion at that time when the session shall judge the child to have arrived at the age of discretion.¹

In regard to the education of the child the minister is now the recognized leader in the church program.² The work of the church school should be vitally linked up with the work of the minister. The whole program of the church is to be coordinated. Just as the Christian nurture of the home can avail nothing without the consecration of the parents, so within the church the minister and church workers must look to it that they by their devotion to Christ set an example and provide a spirit which will enliven their teaching. For only living spirit can awaken true worship. The task of the church lies in training the child in prayer, service, worship, and giving.³ The regular worship service of the church should be built with the child in mind that the child may enter understandingly into the fellowship of adult Christians. The church school program should provide worship graded according to child levels. Through experience the child may learn of prayer, worship, service, and giving. The teaching of the social implications of the gospel has its place in the curriculum. The relation of religious truths to life must be

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1. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Confession of Faith, Chapter xxviii, sections 2,3.
2. Cf., Madras Series, op. cit., p. 160.
3. Cf., Ibid., p. 102.

taught. Worship and ethics must be interrelated. But the church school must not fail to provide an understanding and acceptance of the Christian faith through the study of the Bible, with the use of such aids to interpretation as is provided in the catechisms.¹ Central in the teaching must come an emphasis upon the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. At least one unit of study should be specifically devoted to evangelistic aims, by presenting the claims of Jesus Christ for complete devotion and by pressing for a decision on the part of the child in terms of inward response and open committal.² This unit must be closely coordinated with the Communicant's Class. At this time the child must be taught the meaning of relationship to Christ, and to the church, and he must be taught concerning the significance of the sacraments. Because of the unashamed exaltation of the Christian group life³ care must be taken that "the idea of professing faith and the idea of responsible membership in the church do not get separated".⁴ It is the responsibility of the minister and the church school staff to call to the attention of those who do not come of their own accord that it is the duty and privilege of those baptized in infancy who have arrived at years of discretion to come to the Lord's supper.⁵

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1. Cf., Ante, p. 81, note 6.
2. Cf., Sherrill, op. cit., p. 14.
3. Cf., Ibid., p. 13.
4. Ibid., loc. cit.
5. Cf., Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Directory for Worship, Chapter x, section 1.

In relation to the home it is the responsibility of the church to provide guidance and instruction for the use of the family. The church should make available forms of family worship, and should suggest activities for the forming of Christian character.¹ For the child himself there should be provided devotional helps suited to the age of the child. It is the place of the church to emphasize the importance of prayer and Bible study.

"The educational work of the church may be summed up as follows: to bring the acceptance of Christ, the fellowship of God, a Christian philosophy of life, the development of Christ-like character, an intelligent share in the improvement of the social order, and a life commitment to the church in worship and work at home and abroad."²

Without the home the church cannot provide adequate Christian nurture for the child for the simple reason that the child during its early years is necessarily almost exclusively under the influence of the home, and it is these years which are acknowledged as the most important for the formation of character. But the Christian nurture of the home is not complete without the church in that the child of the Christian home is a member of the household of faith which is the Church of Christ.

3. Implications for the Community

It is recognized that the community is not wholly Christian and yet the community has a great influence upon the child. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Christian people in the community

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1. Cf., Jerusalem Meeting, International Missionary Council 1928, Vol. II, p. 210.

2. Madras Series, op. cit., p. 61.

to inaugurate or to cooperate with every possible means for making the community more Christian. In so far as negative elements can be removed from the community, and positive influences of Christian expression and action be built up, to that extent the community may serve as an agent in Christian nurture, providing for the child an atmosphere which in all phases of living speaks of Christ.

Central to the Christian community is the church. Within the church lies the home. If Christ is at the heart of these widening circles of influence then the child in the midst may here truly grow up a Christian never knowing himself otherwise.

E. SUMMARY

The findings of this chapter concerning the nature of Christian education may be summarized in a statement from the Madras Conference of 1938.

"Christian education includes 'religious education' whether as instruction in the faith or as training in worship and conduct. But its range is wider. It presents the Christian affirmation in the context of all learning and the growing experience of life. It makes no sharp distinction between sacred and secular studies. It claims the whole man and his whole life for God. "Christian education in the full sense includes evangelism. For it believes that no man can enter into the fullness of his heritage until he has been brought face to face with the claims of God in Christ upon his life."¹

It has been found that modern religious education has made a contribution to Christian education today in its emphasis upon guidance in growth, while child evangelism has brought to the fore

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1. Madras Series, op. cit., p. 52 (underlining the writer's).

the necessity of the personal commitment of the child to Christ. Both of these movements are partial. Only as the two emphases are seen to be parts of the whole will Christian education be what it should.

Child evangelism and modern religious education are based on fundamentally different views of the nature of the child. The former considers the child lost, and in need of salvation even as a non-Christian adult. The latter considers the child a potential Christian in need only of guidance in growth according to Christian principles in order to attain Christian adulthood. Both of these views present a vital factor for Christian education but neither provides a philosophy adequate to include fully both an evangelism which requires the regeneration of the child and an education which provides even for those years, however few, before the child can make his own profession of faith.

It has been seen that the belief that a child born of Christian parents may grow up a Christian and never know himself otherwise belongs rightfully to those who hold to Christian nurture as presented by the one who first penned the phrase.

Evangelism does not lay claim to the term Christian nurture. And it has been shown that modern religious education has missed the essence of Christian nurture in the Bushnellian sense and so has forfeited the right to the name. This study has indicated, therefore, that there is a third viewpoint which is basic to Christian nurture, which is not found in either of the partial views of Christian

education. It has been shown that evangelism and nurture in the sense of education have rightly been required of Christian education by these partial views and may be found in Christian education as it is interpreted by the Madras Conference.

This chapter has shown that the problem is further complicated by the fact that both extreme views must recognize that there are children of Christians and children of non-Christians to be considered. Revivalism regards all children as lost regardless of a Christian heritage. Modern religious education regards all children as potentially Christian. The study of this chapter has indicated that Christian education must deal with all children. It has further been shown that evangelism and education may be so understood as to meet the needs of children, both those regarded as within the church and those without.

It has been found that there are specific implications for the program of Christian education within the circles of the home, church, and community which bear directly upon parents, church school workers, ministers, and congregations in relation to the baptism of infants and Christian nurture.

Christian education, as has been shown, is more closely affiliated in method with modern religious education than with child evangelism. However, the dynamic of the evangel of child evangelism has become a part of Christian education today. This may best be shown by the statement given by Dr. Roy G. Ross at the 1942 Quadrennial Convention of the International Council of Religious

Education as a summary of the past 'momentous' years':

"Out of them has come a new perspective, a recognition of the eternal and timeless which involves a realization that our message is more important than our method, a renewed emphasis on the importance of the Bible as the one indispensable textbook, a reiteration of the evangelical purpose of Religious Education, and a continued emphasis on the relating of religion to life."¹

In conclusion, it has been found that Christian education must be "effectively Christian", and "educationally sound".² Nor can this be accomplished by man's efforts alone. Christian education must place its work in the hands of him whose work it is.³

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1. Quoted in a report of the International Council of Religious Education Convention in the Biblical Seminary Bulletin, Vol. x, No. 2.
2. Madras Series., op. cit., p. 60.
3. Cf., Ibid., loc. cit.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY
AND
CONCLUSION

In order to set forth in conclusion the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism for Christian education there follows a summary of the findings developed from the study in the three chapters of this paper.

Since Horace Bushnell's epoch-making book "Christian Nurture" was the chief factor in the 19th century in awakening Presbyterians to a reconsideration of the significance of their doctrine of infant baptism the first chapter was devoted to an analysis of Christian nurture.

It was found that Christian nurture is that means by which a child may grow up a Christian and never know himself otherwise. It involves on the part of parents a sanctification of life which will make possible the imparting of faith to their children through the unconscious influences within the home. The teaching is to be more implicit than explicit. The whole atmosphere of the home is to be pervaded by the presence of God; the parents are to be indwelt by Christ; the power of the Holy Spirit is to be working within the child with the result that from earliest days the influences of the home may flow into the child as a still inarticulate yet nevertheless real faith. It was seen that Bushnell based Christian nurture largely upon a theory of organic unity between parent and child which makes the parents parents of the character as well as of the physical being

of the children. It was shown, however, that Bushnell recognized that Christian nurture could not be considered apart from infant baptism; that acceptance of the belief in Christian nurture obligates parents to present their children for baptism in that baptism is the seal of the promise of God which makes possible the belief that a child may grow up a Christian from infancy. It was shown further that Christian nurture involves on the part of the church a responsibility to consider the baptized child as a member of the visible church, and so to bring him to that place where he shall make a public profession of the faith which his baptism has ratified.

In the light of the study made of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism as set forth in the authoritative statements of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and as elucidated in the controversial works of Calvin and Hodge, it was found that infant baptism in the Presbyterian Church is based upon the covenant relationship of God to those who, with their children, come to him in faith. Thus the child of Christian parents is, through the promise, within the household of faith and a member of the visible church. He is thus rightfully to receive baptism, which is the seal of God's promise and which may be ratified by the child when he comes to an age of accountability. It has been shown that salvation is not tied to the moment of baptism but that through the promise the benefits of baptism, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins, are to be his, provided the parents really bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord according to their part of the covenant.

The bearing that Christian nurture in its full meaning as set forth by Horace Bushnell has for those who hold the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism is then evident. For Christian nurture is that means by which, through the grace of God, the salvation of the child born within the covenant may be assured according to the promise of God. It is the means through which the benefits of baptism may be made real to the child.

It was seen to be necessary, before the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism could be drawn for Christian education, to determine just what the nature and purpose of Christian education is. This was done in the light of two extreme emphases found within the field of Christian education, that of child evangelism on the one hand and that of modern religious education on the other hand. It has been shown that child evangelism, with its stress upon the salvation of the child through the direct presentation of the gospel even to the little child, has pointed out an entire lack of evangelism in modern religious education with its emphasis upon a guidance in growth which will bring out the natural religious nature of the child, which when developed along Christian principles it is believed will produce Christian manhood. That this accusation is just is evident from the above statement concerning the basic philosophy of the modern religious education. Thus this movement is only a partial interpretation of Christian education as it cannot in any way accomodate evangelism without redefining terms. Evangelism, in its turn, has been shown by Bushnell himself, in his discussion

of the revivalism of the 19th century, to be but a partial view, in that it cannot incorporate an education or a nurture which can care for those years previous to that age at which a child can make his own profession of saving belief. Thus it was that Christian education, to be true to its essential nature and purpose, must exhibit both the dynamic of the gospel as emphasized by child evangelism and the guidance in growth as set forth by modern religious education. This was found to be confirmed both by the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928, and to an even fuller degree by the Madras Conference in 1938.

There was found still one complication in relation to Christian education. Christian nurture as set forth by Horace Bushnell was involved in the accusation of child evangelism against modern religious education in that the latter movement claims the spirit of Bushnell as its own. However, through a comparison of the interpretation of the principles set forth in A. J. Wm. Myers' book "Horace Bushnell and Modern Religious Education" and the principles as found in the context of Bushnell's "Christian Nurture" it was made evident that, while the emphasis upon guided growth is in line with Bushnell, modern religious education as a whole is not in the spirit of Bushnell. For Bushnell's Christian nurture is based upon the covenant relationship to God as found in infant baptism, and the very act of baptism recognizes the necessity for salvation from sin through the blood of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus it may be pointed out to those two groups within the Presbyterian Church for whom infant baptism means little that in their viewpoints they, to some extent, hold respectively the two partial views presented above in the field of Christian education, the one viewing the child as the son of God by nature and so having no real need for the sacrament of baptism, and the other feeling that the child is lost until he can savingly believe and that thus he has no right to the sacrament which they interpret to be a seal of salvation. Now, it has been shown that the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism regards baptism as the seal of the covenant promise of God with no power for the salvation of the child without the ratification of that faith by the child himself, but with a promise of the benefits of baptism to the children of such as have faith and will bring their children up in the Lord. It has been shown that Christian nurture is thus the only view which can adequately include both the evangel and the means of caring for the child from earliest years so that he may grow up a Christian. Therefore, it may be pointed out that there is a definite responsibility for Presbyterians in the doctrine of infant baptism, and further that there is in it an inestimable privilege for those who will accept the responsibility, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with their whole being, present their children for baptism, and covenant to bring them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

For those who realize the significance of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism and who would like to know its practical relation to everyday life, there have been set forth some specific

implications in the field of Christian education for the home, for the church, and for the community.

In conclusion the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism, as has been indicated, is concerned specifically with the children of Christian parents. The problem of this thesis, then, has been to determine what Christian education is to mean for the baptized child.

The baptized child is recognized through the covenant promise as a member of the household of faith. This means that he is to be regarded as a Christian. It is evident, however, that the child cannot responsibly be within the household of faith without an understanding of that faith. It is also evident that the child cannot have a disposition toward the faith without coming into contact with Christ who is the "author and finisher of that faith".¹ Further the child cannot be expected to grow in the faith without guidance. It is in answer to these three needs that this doctrine bears implications for Christian education.

Christian education must provide the intellectual basis, the emotional basis, and the directed volitional basis for the faith of the child. The intellectual basis involves the evangel, the knowledge that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life."² The emotional basis lies in the glad acceptance of

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1. Cf., Hebrews 12:2
2. John 3:16

this Gift, in the experience of the love of God, and in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The volitional basis involves a knowledge of right and wrong and an experience of the working of the Holy Spirit in an inclination to the right.

The responsibility for the above lies in the field of Christian education for, as it has been shown, Christian education in its true nature includes the evangel and guidance in growth, and furthermore belongs to and comes from the Christian group life which can provide the atmosphere in which Christian experience may be had.

It has been shown that the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism calls for Christian nurture as the means by which the baptized child may grow up a Christian and never know himself otherwise. It has been shown further that without Christian nurture infant baptism carries no promise for the salvation of the child. Nurture is indispensable to the doctrine. Christian nurture was shown to be the rearing of the child in a home so thoroughly Christian in all of its life that the child even in infancy will be conscious of the presence and power of Christ. All actions of the parents toward the child will be such that from them the child may learn of the love and justice of God. Thus implicitly the child will learn what it is to be a Christian long before he can express his faith in words. Together with this emotional response comes the specific teaching that through the covenant relationship sealed in baptism the child may claim God as his Father, Christ as his Saviour, and the Holy Spirit as his guide and comforter. And further in the matter of conduct the child

is to be guided into the right. He is to be taught to choose the right because it is God's will and because in a child of God any transgression of God's law is especially grievous. Through experience he is to find the forgiveness of sin, the reality of prayer, and the blessing of Christian fellowship as it is found in the home and in the church. The work of Christ is his through the promise of God ratified in baptism. This is made real to him through Christian nurture, even as the gospel claims are made real to the adult through preaching. The salvation of the evangel is his through promise; this he acknowledges by his life and his response of love; and later when he comes to the age of discretion, as an act of his own free responsible will, he acknowledges Christ as his Saviour realizing fully that "all men are by nature sinful and have need of cleansing by the blood of Christ, and by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit"¹; thus he ratifies his baptism and signifies his desire to enter into the full communion of the church as a responsible member of the body of Christ able to examine himself to make sure that he comes worthily to partake of the Lord's supper. Christian nurture does not cease nor change with the public profession of faith on the part of the child. He is to continue in the fellowship of the saints, seeking ever the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and through the sharing of experiences with fellow Christians that he may grow in grace and that all life

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1. Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Directory for Worship, chapter viii, section 2

may be filled for him with the fulness of the glory of his calling in Christ Jesus.

Now it is evident that Christian nurture provides the means through which the promise of God in the covenant sealed in baptism may be realized in the child, meeting the needs of his life for the bringing about of a vital faith. But it has been shown that the answering of these needs falls within the field of Christian education. And it has been shown in the previous chapter that Christian education in its real nature includes both the bringing of the evangel and providing of guidance in growth, under the guidance of God. Therefore, it is evident from the above that the implications of the Presbyterian doctrine of infant baptism for Christian education are that for the baptized child Christian education shall be Christian nurture. Thus Christian education finds in Christian nurture its fulness of meaning, for it is thus more than a guiding of growth along Christian principles, more than a presentation of the good news for a decision; it is a vital throbbing living and teaching of the claim of Christ upon those within his covenant in that he has redeemed his own through his blood. This means, ordained by God in his promise to the faithful and to their seed and in his specific commandment that the child of Christian parents be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is the highest fulfillment of the purpose of Christian education in that thus the child of Christian parents may from earliest years be within the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit as he puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, growing in grace into the fulness of his inheritance.

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