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A COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS
OF REPRESENTATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS
ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF GOD
IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS NURTURE

by

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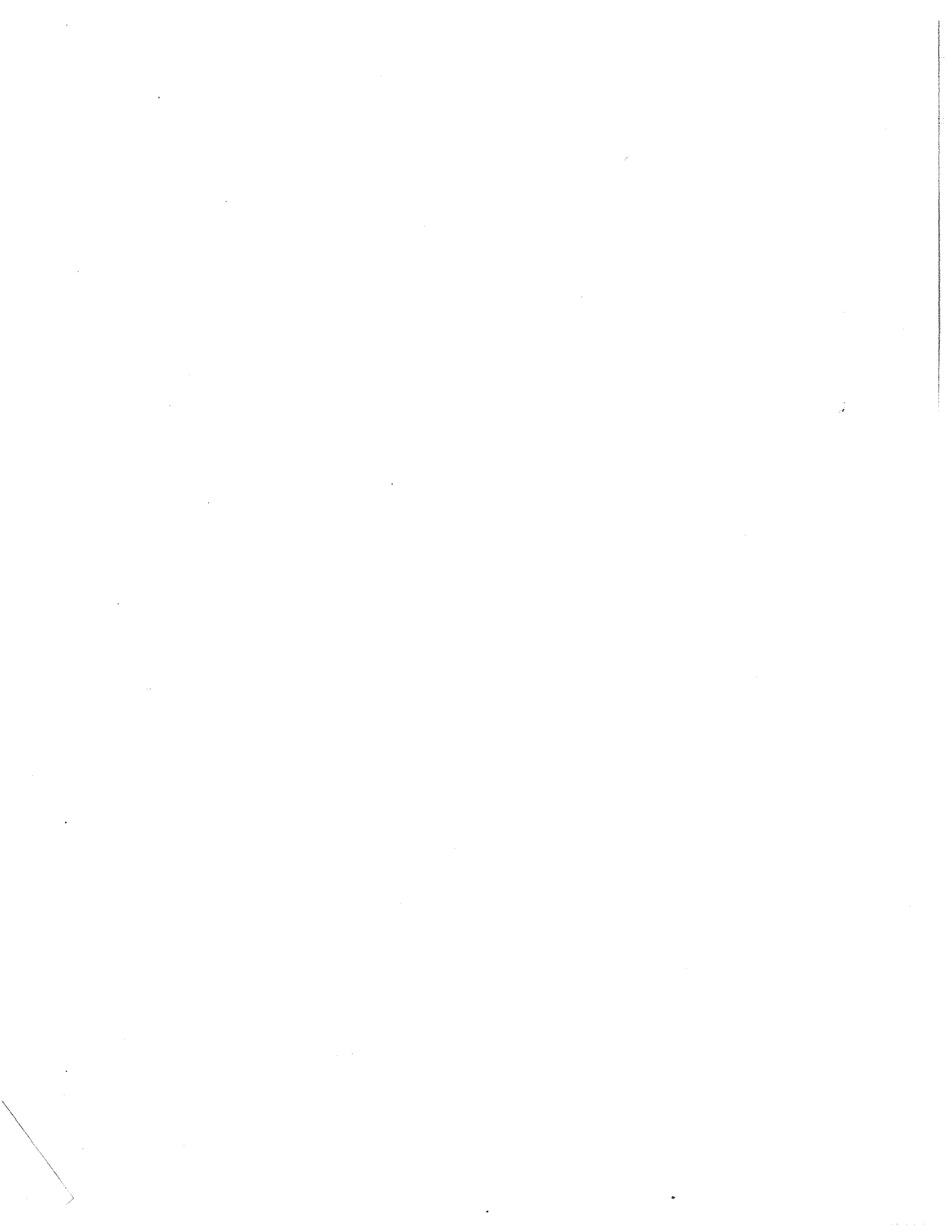


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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem Stated and the Study Justified

The problem of this study is to examine the writings of some representative religious educators with the purpose of discovering their viewpoints on a child's concept of God and the relation of this concept to the child's religious nurture. A comparison of the findings will be made in order to determine the variety and range of the views.

In the world of today children are continually faced by changing conditions. Their greatest needs are security and stability to steady them amid the complex forces of our modern civilization. Physical security and strength have been made possible for them, but these are not enough. Robbie Trent aptly expresses this further need in the words:

If a child is to face successfully the world in which he lives, he needs strong, healthy standards of thinking and living. He needs certain understandings and experiences that will cultivate healthy emotions and lead him to express and control those emotions in a way that is helpful and creative rather than hurtful and destructive, both to himself and to others. Above all else, he needs a sense of security, a security whose ultimate is God. 1

The child's concept of God should be considered by all those who endeavor to teach children religious truths and lead them into meaningful religious experiences. Many religious educators have written with the purpose of helping teachers and parents in this most important

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1. Robbie Trent: Your Child and God, Second Edition, p. 3.

task. It is the intent of this study, therefore, to examine and compare the representative educators' views of a child's concept of God as related to their views of the religious nurture.

B. The Subject Delimited

The main consideration of this study is the child's concept of God. Therefore, other phases of religious education, such as Jesus, prayer, and the Bible, are not considered except as reference is made to them in the discussions of the concepts of God.

The age group discussed by the educators chosen ranges from birth to twelve years of age. Manwell and Fahs are the only authors that concentrate on one age group. Their book, Consider the Children-- How They Grow, is written for the nursery age, but it does include ideas regarding the previous and following years of childhood.

In determining the views of the representative educators only one of the writings by each author or group of authors was studied. The study is limited to their work which deals primarily with a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture.

C. Sources of Data

Since the consideration of this study is the examination of the views of representative religious educators on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture, it was necessary to determine what educators would be included in the presentation. This was done by compiling a list of outstanding authors in this field and examining their writings. The selection of the particular authors studied was

determined by several factors. These are: the point of view of the author, the motive for writing the book, the age group considered, and the frequency of the appearance of the work in religious education bibliographies.

The selected authors and their works are as follows:

1. Frank and Mildred Moody Eakin: Your Child's Religion
2. Henry W. Fox: The Child's Approach to Religion
3. Mary Alice Jones: The Faith of Our Children
4. Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs: Consider the Children--How They Grow
5. Herman J. Sweet: Opening the Door for God
6. Robbie Trent: Your Child and God

These authors cover a wide range of viewpoints on the subject under consideration. They have written primarily for the purpose of aiding parents and teachers in the task of the religious education of children. All of the books are among those used most extensively in their field of religious education as was shown by their frequent appearance in bibliographies.

D. Definition of Terms

1. Concept of God Defined

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A concept may be defined as an opinion. In turn, an opinion may be defined as belief stronger than impression. Thus in this study a concept will be regarded as belief stronger than impression.

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1. Websters - Collegiate Dictionary, 1946.

2. Religious Nurture Defined

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Nurture may be defined as education or training. In the relation of nurture to religion, religion may be regarded as a conviction of the existence of God which arouses reverence, love, gratitude, the will to obey and serve, and the like. Thus in this study religious nurture will be the education or training of children which will lead them to a conviction of the existence of God and give them the experiences that this conviction arouses.

The religious educator proceeds on the theory that a child is born with a capacity for religious nurture. The child indicates tendencies to do good and evil. It is through religious nurture that the parents and teachers are able to direct the development of the child's capacity for religion, and inhibit wrong characteristics and encourage good ones.

E. Method of Procedure

The purpose of chapter I will be to state the views of the representative religious educators on a child's concept of God. These views will be presented in several main groupings organized in terms of the characteristics of God. The particular views of each author or groups of authors will be presented under each characteristic.

The second chapter will deal with the views of the religious educators regarding the child's concept of God in relation to religious

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1. Websters - Collegiate Dictionary, 1946.

nurture. This chapter will also be arranged in terms of the characteristics of God.

The final chapter will be devoted to the comparison of the views presented in the previous chapters on the child's concept of God and the relation of this concept to religious nurture.

A summary and conclusion derived from the study will conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER I

VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS
ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF GOD

CHAPTER I

VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF GOD

A. Introduction

This chapter will be limited to the educators' views of a child's concept of God. In order to have a systematic presentation of these views, it is first necessary to determine the ideas of God considered most primary by the selected religious educators.

The greater part of the chapter will be taken up with the compilation of the educators' viewpoints on each idea. The authors' emphases of these will be the basis for the organization of the material presented.

B. Specific Ideas of God to be Presented to a Child

It was found that each educator treated the ideas of God as Creator, as a Person, as One who is good and just, and as One who loves us. In addition to these, there are other more secondary ideas discussed. In this chapter they will be included under the primary ideas to which they are related.

It was also found that the emphases on these various aspects differed with the educator studied. An attempt has been made to present the views under each idea in order, according to the amount of emphasis given by the author. Thus the author who presents the most information on the characteristic of God as Creator will be considered

first under this idea.

1. God is Creator

The need for teaching the idea of God as Creator is recognized by all the authors. However, the nature of the idea and the method of teaching it vary with each presentation.

Herman Sweet gives this teaching predominance in his study. In his opinion, God the Creator can be known by the young child as he begins to investigate the mysteries of the world and seek their meaning.¹ He points out the need of not only teaching the child of God's acts in the past, but states that "the child should begin early to identify God with an ever-present, ever-acting life force seen every day in the wonders of God's universe."²

This is illustrated by an incident in which six-year-old Jackie asks his mother if God makes everything. In the discussion that follows Jackie learns that God makes the materials which are the starting point for man's production, and that "God has made men with minds so that they can plan and he has given them hands so that they can use these things."³

In her chapter on "The Greatness of God" Mary Alice Jones expresses the thought that the child's contact with God's creative power will impress upon him the greatness of the Creator.⁴ Since

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1. Cf., Herman J. Sweet: Opening the Door for God, p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 43.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Cf., Mary Alice Jones: The Faith of Our Children, pp. 45-46.

earliest recorded time men have shown sensitiveness to the beauty and grandeur of God's creation. This is the rightful heritage of every child. However, Jones cautions against an overemphasis on teaching the greatness of God in terms of his provision for a beautiful world for his children. The result may be a neglect of the proper emphasis on the power, might, majesty and the holiness of God. She says: "The 'Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth', may not be the object of¹ careless worship or casual affection."

Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs criticize that system of religious education of nursery children which is lacking in objective reality and dwells on abstract teachings. The solution they present to this method of instruction involves giving the child a close relationship with nature. The introduction of living things and the occasional session out of doors would lead the child to a sense of² "cosmic happiness". They feel that these experiences in themselves are important in the religious development of the child. They state: "Whether God be named to these small children or not may probably be of minor significance."³ Harmful effects may result from telling a child that God makes everything. This is illustrated by five-year-old Byron who reasoned that God must have made a hurricane. He said, "Next time I meet God, I'm going to punch him on the nose for sending⁴ the hurricane."

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1. Ibid., p. 45.
2. Cf. Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs: Consider the Children--How They Grow, pp. 29-37.
3. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Ibid., p. 177.

In their discussion of the interpretation of God to children Mildred and Frank Eakin advise the avoidance of teaching these ideas objectively to children. In their opinion, young children have no concept of God, and it is not until they are in the first, second, or third grades that they can see God in a sunset or a flower. The older child is able to think of God as the Maker, not just a Creator of long ago, but One who controls and sustains his creation today.¹

In the book, "Your Child and God", Robbie Trent expresses the belief that little children can grasp the idea of God the Creator. She says: "For them God has made the trees and the flowers, the birds and the clouds."² They are able to understand that God is the Heavenly Father who sends babies, and made all the people in the world.³

In his consideration of the child's concept of God, Henry W. Fox does not treat the idea of God as Creator in detail. He does indicate in his discussion of the book of Genesis that the story of the creation is understandable to children if properly interpreted to them.⁴

2. God is a Person

The child's idea of God as a Person is recognized by all the authors studied; however, they do not all consider this idea of equal value. The fact that a small child tends to think of God first in

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1. Cf. Frank and Mildred Moody Eakin: Your Child's Religion, pp. 13-14.
2. Trent, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
3. Cf. ibid., p. 8.
4. Cf. Henry W. Fox: The Child's Approach to Religion, pp. 71-73.

terms of his own father or some other person is believed by some educators to be harmful.

Contrary to this opinion, Robbie Trent says: "First of all we want him to think of God as Somebody, as a personality." "Little children think largely in terms of what a person or thing does." It will probably be in terms of his own father that the child first thinks of God. In relation to this idea has come the idea of God as a bearded old man. Miss Trent feels that this should not be cause for great worry. She states:

At least it interprets God as a definite personality, benign, wise--the best the child knows, and who shall say that a concept which envisions God in terms of the highest that an individual knows in power, in wisdom and in love, is not a legitimate step to a richer and broader concept? 2

Children can think of God intimately. He is an Unseen Friend whose love and nearness offer them a steadying influence in this unstable world.³

Herman Sweet says that it is quite natural for children to think of God in concrete ideas. They envision him as "a great giant, infinitely strong", as a "kind old man with a long white beard", or as a "king on a throne up in the sky." God is a person to them even though their concepts are limited. The fact that they think of God with human characteristics should not bring concern. The important concern should be what kind of person God is to the child. As Sweet

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1. Trent, op. cit., p. 17.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Cf., ibid., pp. 4-5.
4. Sweet, op. cit., p. 47.

emphatically says:

What sort of person? That is the vital question. Is God fear-
some, cruel, vindictive? Is he ruthless, unfeeling, and a ghostly
intruder? Is he a spy, policeman, and recorder of evil deeds? Or
is he the best kind of person the child can imagine? A kind, loving
person, who understands and cares? A just person who uses his power
for good purposes? A person who gathers up within himself all the
goodness and power and love we can know? 1

The first crude pictures of God later become spiritualized
in the child's thinking, but he still thinks of God as a Person and
personal.

Mary Alice Jones recognizes that many educators advise
against mentioning the name of God to little children as a safeguard
against producing a merely verbal religion. The children will be able
to talk about God, but they will not have had an experience with him.
In addition, she realizes that it is almost impossible and also un-
desirable to keep children from hearing the name of God mentioned.
They hear their parents speak of absent relatives and friends. From
what is said and the way in which it is said the child forms concepts
of these people that he has never seen. In the same way, the conversa-
tion of the adults in relation to God will be a factor determining the
concept formed by the child.²

The harm of a child considering God as a person is pointed
out by the Bakins. In their opinion children, from the expressions
that they hear, are most likely to form an image of God that is "a
sort of glorified policeman in the sky, working his will mightily and
arbitrarily", or he is "an invisible but powerful personal bodyguard

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1. Ibid., p. 48.
2. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 17-19.

who sees to it that no harm comes to them or those dear to them."¹
These ideas do not withstand the trouble that is likely to come to the child and his faith will probably be shattered. Such was the case with five-year-old Teddy who struggled to get to the top of a pole so he could reach God up in the sky and thus be where his mother and father had gone. A God up in the sky was no comfort to him when he needed human companionship to take the place of the parents that he had lost.²

The idea of an invisible God who is constantly with us, which is sometimes hard for an adult to grasp, is not so unusual to a little child. Fox supports this thought with the following expression:

Some children have a definite experience of an 'invisible playmate' who is very real to them, to whom they can give a name and whom they can describe, but whom they never see and of whom they are very shy of talking.³

Because we are human personalities, we tend to think of God in terms of personality. We invariably think of the personalities of others as connected with their physical bodies, so it is not surprising that we should connect the personality of God with the image of a physical person. As Fox points out, this tendency must be carefully considered in studying a child's concept of God.⁴

Manwell and Fahs express the idea that "one's thought of God and one's attitude toward God are usually regarded as the center and heart of one's religion."⁵ Thus a child's first religious thoughts

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1. Eakin and Eakin, op. cit., p. 7.
2. Cf. ibid., pp. 1-2.
3. Fox, op. cit., p. 18.
4. Cf. ibid., pp. 19,20.
5. Manwell and Fahs, op. cit., p. 175.

are usually centered in God. A child cannot learn to pray until he is able to conceive of the One to whom he is praying. However, the authors feel that objective teaching about God is psychologically unsound, because it does not take into consideration the limitations and experience of the young child.

A three-year-old child who has been told that God makes everything, accepts without question this expression of an adult. He compares God to his father and others whom he has seen making things,¹ and forms the concept of an unseen Person who can do anything.

Ill effects are produced again when God's attributes of invisibility and omnipresence are impressed upon a young child. Because of his limited experience, "the best he can do is to imagine a fairy-like person that can move quickly and easily from place to place² without being seen."

3. God is just and good

The idea of God's goodness is strongly emphasized by Mildred and Frank Eakin. Most of the other authors attribute the child with ability to grasp these ideas. The goodness and justice of God are discussed as closely related attributes.

In the opinion of the Eakins, "the thought of God as good³ is probably more fundamental than any other thought of him." Although other ideas of God may change as the child grows older, this one idea

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 175-177.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
3. Eakin and Eakin, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

should remain unchanged.

Related to the conception of God as good are the ideas of God's invisibility and power. In speaking of the invisibility of God the Eakins state that "he cannot be the good except as he is the un-¹seen.." In regard to his power they say: "To have a good God is to have a powerful God if we know from experience that the good has power."²

These ideas of God as unseen and powerful can be readily understood by children who have had contact with the good since infancy. The goodness which has been in the child's experience will become personified in a God who is unseen and powerful.

These authors do not directly mention the justice of God but they indicate their opinion by an illustration. A group of boys ended a discussion with the statement: "At first we said God punished us when we did wrong. Now we say it was accident or our own fault."³ It was the conclusion of the authors that these boys had reached a valid conception of the cause of punishment.

The conception of God as just is discussed at length by Herman Sweet. He begins with the thought that "the child must begin early to learn that in an ordered universe the breaking of natural laws brings pain."⁴ It is God's plan that we should be happy when we do the right thing and think the right thoughts. The child should also

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1. Ibid., p. 10.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 5.
4. Sweet, op. cit., p. 50.

know he will experience sorrow when he does wrong. In addition, the child should realize that God always knows what is best because he is good. One mother used the following words to explain an unexpected death to her daughter:

In the first place, we have to say that we do not know everything about God and we cannot always know why he allows things to happen as he does. But we do know that people have learned over a long, long time that what we think is not good often turns out to be the best after all. And so some people simply say that God knows best because he knows everything, and that whatever happens we should accept it as the best. ¹

In one of his three basic ideas of God, Fox states, "that in His personality He must be better than the best which anyone, or at any rate which I myself, can conceive. If this were not so, then I and not He should be God." ² This must as a result be the ever-growing response of a child to God. God has a quality of "beyondness" ³ which the child cannot understand, but by which he is not disturbed.

Mary Alice Jones has included in her book a chapter on "The Righteousness of God." ⁴ In this chapter she shows the relationship between the goodness and justice of God. Her discussion does not include direct teaching on the child's concept of God. However, she does state the ideal view that should be held regarding God's righteousness. This is stated as follows:

God is 'in' the world, seeking to redeem men, all men of all races and all nations, to turn them from their evil ways. God is the

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1. Ibid., p. 16.
2. Fox, op. cit., p. 21.
3. Cf. ibid., pp. 21,22.
4. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 49-56.

righteous Judge, but the righteousness of God includes more than judgment upon men and nations. It includes a seeking after his children. The judgments of God are not primarily for punishment. They are primarily for redemption. By the terrible results of sin which catastrophe reveals, God is calling man to fellowship with himself through responsive righteousness. 1

In her chapter, "What Is God Like?", Robbie Trent makes the statement: "If we are to teach little children of God, if we are to interpret his personality to them in terms they can understand, we must show them Jesus." 2 As they learn of Jesus' goodness and justice they will come to understand that God in his likeness to Jesus has the same traits.

Manwell and Fahs include a discussion on these ideas of God in a portion dealing with the discipline of children. They warn against using Jesus or God as means of control of the child. This, they feel, will lead the child to a distorted view of a God who always punishes them when they do wrong and likes them when they are good. 3

4. God loves us

Love plays an important part in the lives of little children. Their idea of God's love is greatly emphasized by some of the religious educators, and while the others do not treat it objectively, they indicate the role it plays in a child's life.

Mary Alice Jones devotes the greater part of her discussion on God to the expression of her views on the love of God. 4 She gives

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1. Ibid., pp. 55,56.
2. Trent, op. cit., p. 28.
3. Cf. Manwell and Fahs, op. cit., pp. 51,52.
4. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 27-40.

the idea that a little child associates the love of his parents with the provisions they make for his physical needs. Consequently, he also associates the love of God for him with the provision for his food and clothing.

Further on in her discussion, Miss Jones points out that this concept of a little child should change with growth. The idea of a God who provides all physical comforts should develop into an enlarged idea of God who desires our fellowship.¹ In a measure, they should know the experience of Jesus' fellowship with God. Jones describes this fellowship in the following words:

His confidence in God and in God's love, even when all external evidences of it were removed from him, came from his experience of God. He 'knew' God. And because he knew him, he knew that the love of God was real and abiding and active, making for goodness and joy though suffering and evil were about him. 2

The little child can know that the suffering of God's children does not indicate his lack of love for them. The child can come to an abundant knowledge of the love of God, as he learns that God does care in all situations.³

In the opinion of Sweet, "For the very youngest, the first impressions should be of the God of loving care and protection."⁴ If the child is to be expected to obey a God of order and justice he must also be aware of the God who loves and is loved. This love should be the basis for obedience.⁵ As one parent explained to his child:

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 31,32.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 38-40.
4. Sweet, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 49,50.

When we do wrong we feel that perhaps God is angry and does not love us. But when we are sorry and we try to do right we find that God loves us all the time and only wanted us to find out how to do right and how to feel right inside. 1

That God always wants the best for all his children is a
2
thought which brings comfort to children.

Robbie Trent dwells upon the security children gain from the experience of knowing God's love. She says: "In God they find one who always understands, one who never makes mistakes, one whose love is unfailing." 3 They have a sense of fellowship with God as one who is real and working in their lives. God's fellowship eliminates the fear of loneliness, of strange situations, and of the unknown. So the child has security in God's love as he faces this world of tragedy and destruction. 4

The child's idea of God's love is not emphasized in Fox's book. He implies this idea when he speaks of the kindness of Jesus. There was Someone in Jesus that made it possible for him to always be kind to people. This same Someone enables people to do kind things to others. The child will come to associate God with this expression of
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love and kindness he sees in Jesus and others.

Manwell and Fahs do not believe it is generally wise objectively to teach a young child about God. In line with this thought, they discuss the evil effects of the expression of gratitude to God

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1. Ibid., p. 14.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 17.
3. Trent, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 4,5.
5. Cf. Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 26,27.

by a young child. They feel that requiring a nursery child to thank God for material bounties will only lead to confusion, nor is it natural for a child spontaneously to offer thanks for universal things in life. How can they thank a spiritual God for material benefits? The expression of thanks to God is preferably put off until the child is mature enough to understand the concept of God. The little child need only experience the love of humans around him. To support this thought, the authors say: "If the child pictures himself as already the center of loving attention and special privileges, what will he make of an ever greater loving heavenly Father?"¹ The introduction of this thought may cause more harm than good to the child.²

As stated above, Mildred and Frank Eakin stress the goodness of God as the primary idea of children regarding God.³ However, they indicate vaguely the idea of God's love.

Approval is given to the conclusion of a group of boys that God would not be mean.⁴ Another boy was commended for his conception of God which included the "Spirit of Love".⁵

They caution against too much direct teaching of God's love which might result in misconception in the mind of the child, causing him to question God's love in a time of crisis.⁶

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1. Manwell and Fahs, op. cit., p. 181.
2. Cf. ibid., pp. 63, 64, 181, 202.
3. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, op. cit., pp. 8-14.
4. Cf. ibid., p. 5.
5. Ibid., p. 6.
6. Cf. ibid., pp. 5-8.

C. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to the presentation of the views of representative religious educators on a child's concepts of God. These views have been those presented in the outstanding work of each educator which deals primarily with the child's concept of God and its relation to religious nurture.

The religious educators and their works are as follows:

1. Frank and Mildred Moody Eakin: Your Child's Religion.
2. Henry W. Fox: The Child's Approach to Religion.
3. Mary Alice Jones: The Faith of Our Children.
4. Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs: Consider the Children--How They Grow.
5. Herman J. Sweet: Opening the Door for God.
6. Robbie Trent: Your Child and God.

At the beginning of this chapter it was determined what primary ideas of God were considered by all the representative religious educators. These were found to be:

1. God is Creator.
2. God is a Person.
3. God is just and good.
4. God loves us.

These ideas formed the basis for the organization of the chapter. The secondary ideas were included under the discussion of the primary ideas to which they were related.

This was followed by an explanation of the order of presenting the views of the educators under each primary idea. The educator giving

the greatest emphasis to the idea was presented first in its discussion. The others followed in descending order according to the amount of emphasis they gave the particular idea.

The major part of the chapter dealt with the statements of the views in the manner previously stated. No effort was made at this time to compare the views of the educators. This will be done in a later chapter.

This chapter has been a preparation for the following discussion of the relation of a child's concept of God to his religious nurture.

CHAPTER II

VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS
ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF GOD
IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS NURTURE

CHAPTER II

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A. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis was limited to the views of the representative religious educators on a child's concept of God. On the basis of that information, a study will now be made of the educators' views of the relation of the child's concept of God to his religious nurture.

As stated before, a concept may be defined as belief stronger¹ than impression, and nurture may be defined as education or training. Thus the relating of a child's concept of God to religious nurture will involve a consideration of the education or training of the child which will lead him to religious beliefs and experiences.

B. The Relation of Specific Ideas of God to a Child's Religious Nurture

This study will be organized around the ideas of God as Creator, as a Person, as One who is just and good, and as One who loves us. Secondary ideas will be included under the primary ideas to which they are related.

The material will be organized similarly to Chapter I. The views under each idea will be arranged according to the amount of

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1. Ante, pp. vi, vii.

emphasis given by the authors, the author emphasizing the idea most will be presented first and followed by the others in order of their emphasis.

1. God is Creator

Each of the religious educators studied touches on some phase of the idea of God as Creator in the religious nurture of a child. The manner of teaching this idea, however, differs radically, as seen in the presentation of each viewpoint.

a. As Presented by Herman Sweet in Opening the Door for God

Herman Sweet emphasizes that from a very early age the child may begin to form the idea of God as Creator. It requires only the helpful guidance of those around him in order for him to find an explanation to the mysteries of his world. To do this properly, consideration must be given to the child's mental and emotional needs as well as his biological and physical well-being. The child should be made aware of the fact that God is the source and end of our existence in this universe, a universe in which the child will search with his mind and struggle with his spirit.¹

Sweet continues by pointing out the problems involved in expressing these ideas of God to children. He states:

We must be very simple, careful of our words, and especially careful of the emotional content we put into the words by voice or expression. A real sin against children is to talk to God with an habitual emotional stress that does not represent the adult's true attitude.²

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1. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 43.

The adult must convey an honest impression of God as the Creator and Sustainer as he speaks of him to the child.

Sweet relates the child's idea of God as Creator to his reverence for life. He says that a sense of awe and wonder is basic to the religious nurture of a child. Therefore, in order to produce a spiritual approach to life in children one must foster this sense of awe and wonder in the presence of the beauty of nature. As the child sees and feels this reverence for life in adults, he will share in this experience for himself.¹

The author recounts his own childhood experiences on a farm where he was constantly surrounded by evidences of God's creation. He learned from his parents the love of growing things and the desire to see them well cared for. From a very early age he was taught to be kind to animals, treating them as creatures with feelings and rights. He experienced working with nature and with God as they expectantly prepared the seed and soil and waited for the earth to burst into life. He expresses his father's attitude in these words:

If one would receive, he must give. Nature cannot be cheated; she demands full co-operation and devotion. When we had done our best we had our reward, even though the crop failed. If we had not done our best, our gain was undeserved. Here was a religious attitude toward labor. . . Hail and frost, wind, rain, and drought took their toll. It was hard to understand sometimes. But we were helped to understand that beyond our finite reckoning God has a plan, and he is just. 2

Herman Sweet also tells of the experiences of the city child with the beauties of nature. Although the city child may grow up in

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1. Cf. *ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

dirty and bare streets, he need not be robbed of the chance of seeing the beauty God has made. As one mother said, "I always try to keep some growing things in the house and try to help the children to love and understand them."¹

Occasional trips to the country or frequent walks in the park give the parents opportunities to show their child growing things and talk about them. Any effort on the part of the public school to bring an awareness of creation to the child can be used by the parents as a chance to give religious meaning to these experiences.

In the words of Sweet, the child's experience should be:

The sense of seeing, each fresh new day, the Creator at work in a world of wonders past all our understanding, but increasingly revealed to those who approach in reverence! This is the rightful heritage of every child. To stand in awe and wonder before the mystery of life, hand in hand with adults whom he loves and trusts and who are helping him to see and appreciate--this is one of his greatest heritages. 2

b. As Presented by Mary Alice Jones in The Faith of Our Children

Mary Alice Jones expresses the opinion that a child can first understand the greatness of God through the world of nature.³ He becomes aware of God's creation as he sees the plant grow from a seed, watches the stars in the sky, and delights in the beauty of a rainbow. The sense of awe and wonder which these experiences call forth should be encouraged and directed by adults into spiritual responses to God.

A different aspect of God's creation should be presented to older children. They need contact with grander and sterner evidences

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1. Ibid., p. 46.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 41-48.

of God's creative power. Jones furnishes the following as illustrations of these: "The vast movements of the planets, towering mountain peaks, the surging sea, the roar of cataracts pouring over sheer cliffs age after age, the raging force of a tempest. . ." ¹ All these indicate to children the power of the Creator, which is really incomprehensible to them and which impresses them with their own littleness.

Jones relates the transcendent sovereignty of God to the preceding ideas of God as Creator. Children must know that God is and will remain the same regardless of man's actions. Adults must be careful not to lead children into wrong conceptions by their casual attitudes toward God and religion. They should not follow the tendency of interpreting God in terms of human ideals, and thus teach children that our ways are God's ways. In contrast to these misinterpretations, Jones makes the following statements regarding the responsibility of adults:

To help our children to recognize that God is 'great beyond our knowing' is as important a part of our responsibility as to teach them that God is near to each one of them. To help them to recognize, and stand in awe before, his sovereign power is as important as to help them to know that they may go to him in confidence as a child approaches his father. 2

- c. As Presented by Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs in Consider the Children-- How They Grow

Manwell and Fahs hold the viewpoint that a child should not be taught absolute religious beliefs. He should be permitted to profit from various points of view and learn that no one person is the final

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- 1. Ibid., p. 46.
- 2. Ibid., p. 47.

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authority.

As explained by Manwell and Fahs, religious teaching based on this philosophy would begin with the child's un verbalized philosophy of life. The parent or teacher should have informal conversations with the child over the little things in an ordinary day and share in his enthusiasm. They can also encourage thought by telling the child of similar experiences of other children. As the child begins to ask questions the adult should share in the investigation and not end it by giving a brief answer. The following step in the child's learning comes when he is able to give an answer based on the understanding he has gained. Then the adult can express his belief in God as his own personal faith, rather than authoritative fact.

Manwell and Fahs apply this philosophy to teaching the child about God as Creator. They caution against telling the child that God made the kittens and the snow, and against attempting to explain the Creator. The child accepts such statements without refute because of his lack of experience and knowledge. The authors add further:

All he can do is to compare this Creator with people whom he has seen making things--perhaps his father. The child begins a habit of regarding the natural phenomena of the world around him as the products of the personal labours of some unseen person who can do anything at any time, as he may feel inclined. 2

Harmful effects are the result as the children think of God as an "arbitrary worker of magic. . . acting from motives which even the children could not respect, or doing things that seemed to them bad." 3

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1. Cf. Manwell and Fahs, op. cit., pp. 185-191.
2. Ibid., p. 177.
3. Ibid., p. 178.

Thus the good intentions of the parents and teachers in teaching the child of God's creative power have done more harm than good.

As positive teaching Manwell and Fahs suggest giving the children many opportunities in which to enjoy nature and experience the sense of wonder and awe as they become aware of the mystery of life.

The outcome of this is expressed in the following words of the authors:

When children have felt even vaguely a bit of 'cosmic happiness', when they have glimpsed the world of order and beauty in so small a world as a spider's web or an ant hill, when they have humbly faced the greatness and blessing of wind and rain and sunshine, when they have sensed a bit of the 'wonder-part' in a few life forms, then and not till then are they mature enough to conceive worthily of a Creator of all. 1

These experiences in themselves are important and essential to the religious growth of the children. They will not need objective teaching about the Creator.

The experiences in the out-of-doors may be made more meaningful by helping the children to re-live them in-doors. Rhythmic play with songs and music will help the children interpret the playful cat, the bowing trees, the gliding birds, and the falling leaves. Pictures and stories give additional help. Painting and modeling provide an opportunity for the children to express their impressions of the world of nature.²

God as Creator can be found everywhere, and children given the opportunity to search for indications of this will discover God for themselves. It is the opinion of Manwell and Fahs that this "individual

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1. Ibid., p. 37.
2. Cf. ibid., pp. 37-39.

creation" based on the child's actual experiences will lead to a satisfying religion.¹

d. As Presented by Mildred and Frank Eakin in Your Child's Religion

Mildred and Frank Eakin set the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades as the time when a child may begin to raise questions about further ideas of God in addition to his goodness, which has been emphasized previous to this time.² In reply to the questions, the Eakins suggest an indefinite answer, so that the child may be led to form his own opinions and not accept the arbitrary statement of an adult. One question the child may ask is whether God makes everything. The adult would say that people have usually thought so. Enlarging on this they could add:

'And now that science has shown us how wonderful the making process is, it doesn't seem surprising that God the good should be thought of as God the Maker, the Creator. Not just a long-ago creator, of course. An all-the-time creator'.³

If the child should continue to inquire about whether God is the "boss" of everything, the adult again answers indefinitely by saying that most people have thought he is. Perhaps the terms "supreme" and "omnipotent" as descriptive of God could be introduced to the child at this point.

In a consideration of the creation story in Genesis, the Eakins suggest a means of teaching the idea of creation in the light of the modern evolution theory.⁴ Often the Genesis versus evolution con-

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 189-191.
2. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 55-58.

flict arouses doubts in the mind of a child, particularly when he has been taught only one side or the other. The child whose father is a scientist might be able to explain the evolutionary hypothesis and feel that science has the final answer to this question. On the other hand, a child whose parents have emphasized the Genesis story of creation might accept as fact that God created the world in six days because it has been read to him from the Bible, and what the Bible says is true. To the authors, these two viewpoints are different ways of expressing the same idea. Whether it is called evolution or God is the choice of the individual, but the idea is the same. The suggestion is made to teach creation stories from numerous sources, such as: Babylonian, Greek, Norse, and Esquimau. Thus it is hoped to give the children perspective for understanding the Old Testaments accounts. Eventually the child will come to the realization "that the value of the Bible by no means depended on all its material being strictly factual."¹

e. As Presented by Robbie Trent in Your Child and God

Robbie Trent refutes the pedagogical idea that a child should have experiences with God first and then have these experiences interpreted to him.² She states that a child is constantly having experiences with God as he lives in an orderly universe, as his body operates according to God's principles, as he breathes the air and looks upon the beauty God has made. Trent concludes: "He needs only a suggestion to enable him to connect God with his experiences."³

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1. Ibid., p. 58.
2. Cf. Trent, op. cit., pp. 13, 18-20.
3. Ibid., p. 13.

Trent indicates that a child can be taught the nature of God by discovering and recognizing what he does. The child's everyday experiences are his building materials for his concept of God. He sees the trees and flowers, the sun and moon; he delights in the rain and snow; and he learns of God. The little child finds meaning in the fact that God has done something "for him". He has made the trees and flowers, the moon and rain. Trent quotes a seven-year-old as saying, "God has made lots of beautiful things. He has fixed it so we can make lots of beautiful things, too."¹

In her chapter entitled "I Think about God", Trent emphasizes the importance of real religious conversation with children if they are to have a living awareness of God.² She states: "If children--and adults--are to become aware of his presence, someone must lead them to think and to speak of him in connection with his handiwork."³ Four basic principles consisting of conviction and right living, naturalness, sincerity, and honesty on the part of adults will help to make this conversation natural and sincere instead of self-conscious and forced. An illustration is given of the mother who often took her hands out of dough or stopped writing a letter to go when her little child called her to look at a rainbow. She considered it "a chance to speak of God who made so much beauty."⁴

When Robbie Trent discusses the use of the Bible with chil-

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1. Ibid., p. 20.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 39-50.
3. Ibid., p. 40.
4. Ibid., p. 47.

dren, she presents the creation story as a portion of the scriptures¹ children can enjoy. She feels that it is possible to read it to them in the language of the Bible, perhaps dividing the segment into seven parts and using it as a continued story. Although some of the terms would need to be explained, the child can gain much from the stately reading.

f. As Presented by Henry Fox in The Child's Approach to Religion

As mentioned previously, Fox does not devote much time to a discussion of the idea of God as Creator.² His only reference to this idea is in his treatment of the Genesis story of creation.³ In his opinion, this story must be treated as a legend when it is taught to a child. Care must be taken to insure the child's understanding that this account is neither scientific nor historical. Its value above other legends lies in the fact that it "conceives of a world which centers around the personality of a good God."⁴ The moral values the creation story contains have remained for men of today. Therefore, in teaching this and other early Bible stories to a child, Fox concludes that we must "try to get him to understand the truths which lie behind them and which it was the only purpose of the writer to convey."⁵

2. God is a Person

Although the idea of God as a Person is treated by each of

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
2. *Ante*, p. 5.
3. Cf. Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-73.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

the educators studied, the opinions of what this idea should be and how it should be taught cover a wide range of viewpoints. Some educators include a discussion on the idea of God as Father. These views will be presented under this subject.

a. As Presented by Robbie Trent in Your Child and God

According to Robbie Trent, the reason for teaching young children about God and the result of such teaching should be a sense of fellowship with God which releases the child from fear.¹ Children who have experienced the reality of God as a Person are less likely to be afraid. Trent explains this in the following words:

For they feel the love and nearness of an Unseen Friend. The steadying sense of his presence comforts them and gives them stability just as such realization has helped men and women to face danger bravely through the long years of history.²

Trent repeatedly presents the idea that the young child tends to think of God as a Person. The basis for this opinion rests on what Trent calls a "functional concept."³ It is seen that a child's concept of God is formed primarily on the basis of his knowledge of God's actions. What God does--makes birds and flowers, sends babies, cares for people and gives mother and daddy--tells what he is like. This functional, concrete concept is the foundation for the child's understanding of generalities and abstractions about God, which he will acquire when he is older.

The young child's first thought of God will probably be

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1. Cf. Trent, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. Ibid., pp. 17-19.

associated with his own father.¹ As he hears the expression "Heavenly Father", he will be led to consider the words and actions of God as similar to those of his earthly father. This fact places a grave responsibility on the parents. Trent quotes Dr. Luther A. Weigle as saying:

'The central root of religious faith in a child rises from awakening in him a filial response of trust. We must afford the child in his home an environment where filial trust is justified and can be transferred to the universe.'²

As a result of the child's thinking of God in terms of a person, there has been a tendency for him to conceive of God as a bearded old man. Trent recognizes that some have been greatly concerned about this, but she points out that the child has envisioned God as the best he knows. One little boy wondered if God had a mustache. His mother immediately realized that he was thinking of his kind grandfather whom he loved so much. As Trent says:

The mustache was a minor matter concerning which it was not hard to disabuse the child's mind. But he will carry through life a sense of the goodness of God which he caught from a grandfather who in some way clarified his picture of the Heavenly Father.³

This concept of God is a good foundation for further growth.

In leading the child to a right concept of God, Trent reminds parents that, "much of his idea of God the child acquires from association with people who love God, or who forget him, or who mis-⁴interpret him." The child will be aware of the parent's attitude toward God and form his attitude accordingly. If the parent shows

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

reverence by the tone of his voice as he reads the Bible and by his attitude toward God's house and God's day, the child will experience a similar reverence and feel the holiness of God. He learns of God's kindness when he sees his parents helping others, as Jesus taught. Whether the parents' ideas of God be good or bad the child will absorb them.

In one chapter of her book, Trent treats the subject, "What is God Like?"¹ She makes the statement: "If we are to teach little children of God, if we are to interpret his personality to them in terms they can understand, we must show them Jesus."² They can understand God in terms of the things they have learned about his Son. Trent continues her discussion by showing how the parents can help their children have a growing picture of Jesus. However, since this discussion is not the main point of this study, it will not be included here.

Related to teaching the child ideas of God as his Heavenly Father and Jesus' Father is the shepherd concept. This is made particularly clear in the twenty-third Psalm. Although the child may not understand the symbolism, he can feel with the adult the rythmn and emotional tone of this beautiful poem and share in the joy of its thought.³

b. As Presented by Herman Sweet in Opening the Door for God

Herman Sweet advocates that a child should know God as

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 27-37.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 22,23.

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personal. He dispels the fear of those adults who become concerned about the child's thinking of God in terms of concrete personalities, such as the bearded old man or the enthroned king in the sky. Because of his limited and concrete thinking, the child conceives of God as a Person in the form of the human mold. Therefore, the primary concern of adults should be what kind of a person God is to the child. Is he One with bad and fearful characteristics, or is he the embodiment of the best that is known? The answer to this will be dependent upon the experiences the child has had with persons and upon the way he has been led to associate these experiences with God.

This concept of God as a Person can be developed with proper training as the child grows. It should be refined and spiritualized, but the personal element should remain.

Sweet emphasizes the important responsibility of the parents in this phase of the religious nurture of the child.² He states:
"The child's response of filial trust to the love and patience, understanding and care of parents lays the earliest foundations for his response to God."³ The child's first impression of personality in this universe is obtained from his parents. He experiences their love for him and is able to see that God as a Person loves him too. As the child begins to ask the question why, he finds that his parents' answers reveal their ideas on the meaning of life. Although the child

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1. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 27-30.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

may not understand the meaning of the words dependable, loving, inconsistent, and selfish, he will unconsciously know if such characteristics are evident in his parents' lives. If the parents consider themselves as the children of God, the child will also sense this. Sweet continues by saying:

He will know soon that this protection and love, wisdom and authority which he has learned to trust is not ultimate, but that it, in turn, rests back on something beyond. He begins to look beyond with his parents to Someone who loves and sustains them. 1

In his discussion of the place of Jesus in religious training, Sweet indicates that children can learn what God is like as they find meaning in his Son.²

Sweet also treats the idea of God as a Spirit in relation to the child's religious nurture. In his opinion, it may be harmful to talk of this to a young child, since the child will likely consider God unreal and make-believe.³

Guiding the child into a knowledge of God which has meaning for him requires careful thought on the part of the parents. They cannot reason or persuade a child into a meaningful belief. They must guide his formation of beliefs based on his experiences and the experiences of others. Sweet recommends that parents talk to God with their children and talk about him in the family life. This would involve answering their questions, awakening a sense of awe, and always

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1. Ibid., p. 29.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 62.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

creating the feeling of the meaning and purpose of all that is around them. Sweet concludes:

Parents who help their children thus will be continually amazed at the capacity of the child to form an exalted idea of God and to practice his presence. 1

c. As Presented by Mary Alice Jones in The Faith of Our Children

Children want to know what and where God is, says Mary Alice
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Jones. She points out the problem of answering these questions with the recognition that there is no simple, concrete answer which can be given with confidence and finality. God is great beyond men's understanding, but the child must receive the best answers if he is to have a meaningful faith.

The exact time in a child's life when he begins to think of God as a real person cannot be determined. The word "God" may have been heard by him many times, but it is not until he associates the word with the actual, though invisible, God that this concept has significant meaning. Some educators advocate not mentioning the name
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of God to little children. Jones, however, sees the need to "refer to God by name whenever the occasion arises and to try with each
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reference to help the little child to grow in understanding." Because of his limited understanding, the child may get wrong impressions of God's character, but this should not be a cause of great concern.

A comparison may be made to the child's impression of rel-

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1. Ibid., p. 49.
2. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 15-26.
3. Cf. ibid., pp. 17-18.
4. Ibid., p. 18.

atives whom he had not seen. His concept of them is founded on what he has heard adults say about them and the way it has been said. In relation to this, Jones says:

In similar fashion, if God is real to the adults in his world, references to God will come naturally into conversation and will help the child gradually to build a concept of God. 1

This statement emphasizes the importance of the parents' own experience with God. The parental influence begins to effect the child long before he can speak or understand words. It will have "prepared him to share a satisfying faith in God, or will have built barriers in his way to knowing God." 2 Thus it is seen that the young child gets more of the sense of God's reality from sharing experiences than from direct teaching. The parents' responsibility is pointed out in the following statement:

If his parents are aware of God and responsive to God, the child will expect to experience God for himself, and so will be more likely to be sensitive to God's presence and God's guidance. 3

In discussing what the young child thinks of God as a Person, Jones states that the concept of a physical being is not harmful if the character of the being is good, wise, and loving. She adds that the emphasis of the parental teaching should be on God's purposes and not on his physical form. Recognizing that children are interested in his form, Jones suggests the following answer to their inquiries: "God does not need a body like ours. But he loves people. And we know something about how God works and what he does." 4

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Ibid., p. 17.
4. Ibid., p. 18.

As the child grows older he will find help in the experiences of others to increase his knowledge of God. Those who live close to him will continue to show God in their lives. In addition, the Bible will show the work of God and his revelation to men of all ages. The history of the Christian church, great poetry and liturgy, the sacraments and ceremonies of religion reveal the experiences of many who have had real faith. These resources can be used with and by children¹ to help them develop a faith in a personal God.

Jones states, "supremely in Jesus Christ may our children² come to know God." She goes on to show how teaching the child that God is like Jesus will provide concrete detail for his understanding of God. Because of this specific personality, the child will not tend toward the worship of false gods.

d. As Presented by Mildred and Frank Eakin in Your Child's Religion

Mildred and Frank Eakin begin their book with the story of a little boy whose mother and father had died. In an effort to help him adjust to this new situation and feel secure in the world again, the boy's teachers rejected the idea of teaching him of God as an "invisible companion."³ They decided that "his present need for God was a need for the good in human embodiment. It was their responsibility to be God to him."⁴ This illustrates the opinion of the Eakins

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
3. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*

who believe that children should not be led to think of God as a concrete personality.

The authors enlarge on this thought when they show disapproval of the child's ideas of God as a "sort of glorified policeman in the sky" or as "an invisible but powerful personal bodyguard."¹ The child forms these ideas from what he hears from the lips of adults. Neither these nor other ideas of God in concrete terms will bring the child comfort in times of trouble. Then the child's faith will be shattered,² or he will ignore the facts and make a mental adjustment.²

As a remedy for these conditions, the Eakins suggest helping the child to know God in terms of the highest and best that there is. This involves thinking of God as the personification of good. The fourth, fifth, and sixth grade child may be told that God personifies for us the abundance of good that is in the world. Children of primary age may be told that "God is the good", and younger children should have much contact with the good.³ In none of these concepts is God considered a real personality.

e. As Presented by Henry Fox in The Child's Approach to Religion

Henry Fox tells parents that their child gains his first ideas of God from his impression of them.⁴ In a sense, the parents will be a "human representation" of God to the child from the moment of his birth.⁵ For this reason Fox emphasizes the responsibility of the

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1. Ibid., p. 7.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 12-14.
4. Cf. Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

parents in conveying the right ideas of God to their child.

Because of the difficulty in explaining God correctly and the impossibility of fully understanding him, Fox feels that it is best to start with the facts known about Jesus when teaching the child about God. However, it should be remembered that children have an apprehension "of the invisible which has been lost by the sophisticated adult mind."¹ Often children have an invisible playmate who is a reality to them. In the same manner, they are able to comprehend the idea of an invisible God who is constantly present with them.

It is evident that one tends to think of a personality as inseparably connected with a physical body. Thus the idea of God is often connected with the image of a physical person. In relation to this thought, Fox emphatically warns against ever showing the child a picture of God. Nothing could be more dangerous to the religious nurture of a child as he is gaining a concept of God as a Person.²

Fox devotes one chapter of his book to the discussion of God as Father.³ He feels that Jesus' use of the term "Father" must never be interpreted as meaning a physical relation, but rather as a "moral relationship ideally existing between a human son and a human father."⁴ This is the idea parents should keep in mind as they endeavor to interpret the idea of God as Father to their children. They should associate the term "Father" in relation to God with the moral

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1. Ibid., p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 20.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 29-32.
4. Ibid., p. 31.

characteristics of the child's own father and lead the child to think of God as his own Father in the way Jesus did.

f. As Presented by Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs in Consider the Children--How They Grow

Manwell and Fahs discuss the theory that the child's first religious thoughts should be of God.¹ This, in their opinion, overlooks the sound psychology of first considering the child's experiences and limitations before presenting a new idea to him.

The three-year-old child's vocabulary is limited primarily to concrete terms related to what he has experienced. He cannot distinguish between animate and inanimate objects. He does not know why or how things work. He has a vivid imagination. His actions are guided by biological and emotional factors. On the basis of these facts, these authors ask the question:

Does he need God as yet? And if a parent does attempt to explain the idea and nature of God to him, what if anything, is accomplished?"²

The ideas of God as invisible and omnipotent cannot be understood by young children. According to Manwell and Fahs, the child can only imagine a fairy-like person in his efforts to understand these intangibles. One little boy cried when he thought God was under the bathtub; a little girl questioned how God could be in her house and that of her friend at the same time.³

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1. Cf. Manwell and Fahs, op. cit., pp. 175-191.
2. Ibid., p. 177.
3. Cf. ibid., pp. 178-179.

The authors also warn against the parents' attempts to explain God to the child as a spirit within his heart, who helps him to think and know what is good. This idea confuses the child when he tries to think of a God who is as big as the whole world, living inside him. Since the child is accustomed to thinking of food and drink as things entering his body and of the stomach as the place to which they go, he naturally infers that God is similar to these. Another tendency of the child when he hears God described as a spirit might be to think of God as a "pigmy-like creature."¹

In contrast to the child's limitations and lack of experience,² there is the fact that the young child has formed a "philosophy of life." This attitude toward life will "necessarily be sketchy, inadequate, childish, and very narrow in its scope", but it will be the predominate influence in the child's further development. As the child receives from his parents words of instruction about God's character, these previous ideas will determine what parts of the concept of God the child will retain and what he will forget. The child may cling determinedly to one idea which meets his emotional needs and turn its truth into falsehood as the rest of God's character is forgotten.³

3. God is just and good.

The ideas of God as just and good are usually treated together in the discussions of the educators. However, some of them

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 179.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 180.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 180-185.

emphasize one of these ideas more than the other. The Eakins present the idea of God as good as the primary thought children should have of God. The implications of these ideas for religious nurture are included in the educators' presentations.

a. As Presented by Mildred and Frank Eakin in Your Child's Religion

Mildred and Frank Eakin stress "knowing God in the highest and best sense of that supreme religious term" as the goal of religious nurture.¹ In their opinion, a grasp of the idea of God as good is primary in the attainment of this goal. This idea should remain unchanged and permanent as the child matures.

In accomplishing this task, the Eakins state that: "to help a child to know God we must help him to learn what is good, learn it in the only way it can be learned, through expanding experience."² The child may associate God with the good of his experience in a selfish way, as the child who prayed for clear weather for a picnic, forgetting the great loss to others caused by a drought. This kind of association necessitates unlearning, or the child will have a harmful idea of God. The authors state what the child's experience should be in the following words:

Except as the child learns to see good not only in what gives him pleasure and makes him feel safe but also in what helps others to be happy and safe, and not only in obedience to rules but in beauty and harmony and consistency, except as this sort of learning is taking place in his experience he does not know God in any worthwhile sense, no matter what he may have been taught religiously.³

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1. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, op. cit., p. 8.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 9.

A consideration is made of how the idea of God as good can be interpreted to children at various age levels.¹ The very young child of one to three years of age can see the goodness of God reflected in the goodness of his parents and will later identify this with God. When the child reaches the ages of four and five he has more experiences involving the good in people and nature and his concept of good develops. However, the concept of good is not yet related to God unless the child questions his character. The child in the first three grades of school is having guided experiences leading him to a broader idea of good. This idea of good, including kindness, helpfulness, beauty, fairness, courage, and wisdom, may now help the child to form a meaningful concept of God. Parents and teachers should tell the child that God is good. They may say: "Where people are kind and helpful and fair to one another, where they are brave and wise, there God is at work."²

The older child in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades should be led to believe that God is the "unseen good in everything."³ Good is in all of life, but it is also accompanied by the bad. The child's grasp of this thought should encourage "a growing sensitiveness to unseen values and a growing appreciation of the good as it reveals itself in the concern of more privileged people for those who are less privileged. . ."⁴ As the child learns of God's supremacy and omnipotence

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 12-14.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

he may question why everything is not good. The authors supply an answer to this by suggesting that perhaps "everything is good in some way too big for us to understand."¹ War does not look good to us, but good may come as a result of it. However, in spite of this apparent contradiction, there is an abundance of good and God is a personification of this good. This should be made clear to the child.

The Eakins have related all other concepts of God to that of his goodness.² They feel that the goodness of God is inseparably related to his invisibility or spiritual nature. Thus in the child's religious nurture it is important that his consciousness of God be accompanied with sensitiveness to the intangibles of God's character. This should lead the child to follow all that he has learned to be good.³

God's goodness is also inseparably related to his power. Suggestions for teaching this idea of a powerful God were given previously in the discussion of how to present the idea of God to children in the fourth to sixth grades.⁴

The Eakins do not discuss the idea of the justice of God in its relation to the child's religious nurture. They do intimate in one place that a child should not be taught that God punishes him when he does wrong.⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 14.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 9-12.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.
4. *Ante*, p. 43.
5. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

b. As Presented by Herman Sweet in Opening the Door for God

Herman Sweet emphasizes the idea of the justice of God in the religious nurture of the child. He does not treat the goodness of God as a separate unit, but this idea is intimately related to God's justice and love.

It is Sweet's opinion that the very youngest child should learn of the justice of God as it is seen in an ordered universe.¹ He should learn that doing and thinking wrong things will make him unhappy, and that happiness will result only when he follows the laws of right conduct. One little boy wondered if taking something without being discovered would be considered stealing. His mother answered that God would know. The child learned the lesson "that one cannot escape from his conscience."²

At this point it is important to include the idea of the goodness of God to prevent the child from thinking that God is just trying to catch him in a wrong act. He should understand that God is giving him a choice and hopes he will become strong by repeatedly making the right choice. If he makes the wrong choice God is sorry and suffers with him. One father instructed his child with the words: ". . .if God is present to see you do wrong, he is also present to help you to do right, and that is what he really wants to do."³

It is imperative that the parents understand this attitude toward God. They must evidence the same attitude in their dealings

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1. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 50-53.
2. Ibid., p. 51.
3. Ibid., p. 15.

with the child, if the child is to understand God's attitude toward him. The parent is bound by love to the child, but he must be willing to let the child make his own choices, and be able to share his failures. The wrong choice must be punished, although with sorrow. However, in contrast to God's attitude, the parent must recognize his own unworthiness to judge and punish. The child will sense these feelings and probably seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Sweet concludes:

Here is something which touches the deep principles of living and the laws of life, something which has significance in the sight of God. The element of justice in dealing with children is highly important in building their trust and faith in God. 1

Discipline is an important part of religious nurture, since wrong discipline may often lead to wrong ideas of God. Of this Sweet says: "Only the fairest and most just discipline can safely be associated with the idea of God."² A boy was severely reprimanded for using swear words by the threat that God would make him burn eternally in hell. His parents' wrong interpretation of God led them to overlook the importance of the child's spirit and be more concerned with taboos.³ This wrong interpretation may be a result of wrong emphasis on the Old Testament concept of God and a neglect of the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ.⁴

Sweet states that: "A child must be taught that God 'knows'

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1. Ibid., pp. 51-52.
2. Ibid., p. 52.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 38.

our thoughts and deeds." ¹ Therefore, the opinions and discipline of the parents must correspond to God's ideas. They must not lead the child to think that God sanctions what is really their own opinions. A reminder that the judgment of their child is in reality a judgment upon themselves should promote caution. ² As an answer to the problem of discipline Sweet presents the following statement:

Children must come to see why wrong is wrong. They must be helped to see the inwardness of sin. We must help them to overcome evil with good and to have the positive goodness of one who loves the right, rather than the negative goodness of one who only fears the consequence of evil. ³

c. As Presented by Henry Fox in The Child's Approach to Religion

Fox points out the supreme perfection of God. Because his own standards are not the highest possible, the author feels the need for "beyondness" in the character of God. ⁴ He describes this "beyondness" as "something more than is in my own character, or than what I can conceive my character ought to be at its highest and best." ⁵ Thus God must be better than the best which man can conceive or be.

Fox recognizes the difficulty of teaching this idea to children. As a beginning he suggests working with what the child knows of the goodness and kindness of Jesus Christ. ⁶ Emphasis should be made of the point that

. . . Jesus did not take any credit to himself for the powers he

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1. Ibid., p. 52.
2. Cf. ibid., pp. 52-53.
3. Ibid., p. 53.
4. Cf. Fox, op. cit., pp. 21-22.
5. Ibid., p. 21.
6. Cf. ibid., pp. 24-25.

possessed of doing good and kind things. . .The power was in him, it is true, but it came to him from outside. . .He referred this power to an outside Agency, of whom he most often spoke as his 'Father'. 1

However, Fox cautions against the use of the term, "Father", and perhaps the term "God" in speaking to the young child.

The suggestion is made to use illustrations in helping the child to understand this relation between Jesus Christ and his Father. An analogy may be made to the power of the steam in a railway engine, or the electric current in a radio. In both instances the objects themselves are of little value without the presence of a separate power which makes the engine run and the radio play. Along with such illustrations, the author suggests promoting a sense of wonder in the child's mind as he is shown that these are things that no one can fully understand.²

Once the child has accepted this fact of "beyondness", the parents may go on to point out that the "outside 'impulse' always led Jesus to do kind and never unkind things, to help people and never to hurt them; therefore, the 'impulse' itself was good."³ The next step will be to show the child that this "impulse" was in Jesus everywhere at all times. In addition, Fox states:

. . .other people did the same kind things, and they did them by the same 'impulse' at the same time as Jesus, but in different places at the same time. That is part of the wonderfulness of this 'impulse', that it can be active everywhere at once.⁴

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1. Ibid., p. 25.
2. Cf. ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 27.
4. Ibid.

When all these ideas have been faintly grasped by the child,¹ the "impulse" may be called "God". In this procedure the ideas of God are first presented to the child until he grasps them, and then the name is fixed to the ideas. In describing it to parents Fox says:

". . .you will have discovered the phenomena, you will have established the reality, and then you will be quite safe in crystallising them in a name."²

d. As Presented by Mary Alice Jones in The Faith of Our Children

Mary Alice Jones discusses the righteousness of God in her book.³ She indicates that in the history of the Old Testament and the message of the prophets one can see the repeated cycle of man's rejection of God followed by God's judgment upon those who forget him. This is one evidence that a moral law is operating in the universe, and those who violate this law of God will encounter disaster. The truth of this statement must be impressed upon children.

In the process of this phase of religious nurture, children will probably question the teaching of God's righteousness when they see the suffering of those who obey God and the prosperity of those who reject him. In answer to this problem, Mary Alice Jones suggests not telling the children "that righteousness will always be triumphant" but encouraging them to trust that God will ultimately give victory to his own.⁴ The apparent defeat of the Crucifixion turning to glorious

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1. Cf. *ibid.*
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
3. Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-56.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.

victory in the Resurrection is the outstanding evidence of this thought.

The author discusses what children should be taught about this future triumph of God in the world.¹ As they see the present world conditions they cannot feel that God intended such sin and sorrow to be in the world. They might wonder if God has deserted the world, or if he is going to bring judgment. In the author's opinion:

There can be no doubt that current history has given impetus to the view that the Kingdom of God is to be established by catastrophic divine intervention, which will destroy the old world order and replace it with a new heaven and a new earth.²

This eliminates the recent view presented to children, "which describes the Kingdom of God in terms of a gradual establishment of human social and economic welfare largely through man's own efforts."³ Human progress has not succeeded in building the Kingdom of God. Instead, it has brought terrible devastation to the land. A consideration of Jesus' teachings will show wherein men have fallen into error on this subject.

Jesus used the phrase "Kingdom of God" in three distinct senses. Jones points out that these are enumerated by Dean Weigle in the following statement:

. . . as referring to the present rule of God in the universe; as referring to the sovereign will of God becoming effective in the lives of believers; and as referring to the final consummation in the earth of God's will.⁴

In regard to the first sense children should be led to understand that God's rule is eternal and that his kingship does not depend

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 54-56.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

on man's response to it. In the second sense, Jesus teaches that God as King is in the world seeking to bring men to himself. His righteous judgment is a means of showing men their need of him. Those who choose to do God's will become members of his Kingdom and workers toward the realization of his purposes. When teaching about the Kingdom in the last sense, one must remember that Jesus shared with his disciples the thought that the consummation of God's rule in the earth would come according to his plan and purposes. He taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Jones concludes:

And it is in this faith that we may teach our children to pray today, not presuming that men will build this kingdom of themselves but recognizing it as the 'response' of men to the love and the goodness, the righteousness and the mercy, the sovereignty and the kingship of God. 2

e. As Presented by Robbie Trent in Your Child and God

Robbie Trent emphasizes the idea that one of man's basic needs is a sense of security.³ This is particularly true of the young child facing the world of today. In Trent's opinion, the answer to this need is found in God. She says, "In God they find one who always understands, one who never makes mistakes, one whose love is unfailing."⁴

Therefore, the religious nurture of the child should be aimed toward guiding him into a trust in God. This trust should be active and growing as the child goes forward to face each new problem. The child

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1. Holy Bible, King James, Matthew 6:10.
2. Jones, op. cit., p. 56.
3. Cf. Trent, op. cit., pp. 2-14.
4. Ibid., p. 3.

should know "God is interested in the problem because he is interested in the individual. And God is good. He has active good will toward all people."¹

The most effective way to teach this idea of God to the child is by showing him the same traits in Jesus. He will understand Jesus' kindness and goodness as he learns of Jesus' feelings and actions toward the poor and needy and the little children. Then he learns that God is like Jesus. Trent adds:

And the child will understand that God is concerned for the hungry, that he yearns over the underprivileged, that he forgives people when they are sorry for the wrong they do, that he loves people, including little children.²

The child will also learn of God's justice as he hears of Jesus' attitude and action toward those who unrepentingly did wrong.³ These facts should be remembered by the parents as they seek to teach their child about the goodness and justice of God.

f. As Presented by Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs in Consider the Children--How They Grow

Manwell and Fahs do not extensively treat the ideas of God's goodness and justice. Their discussion of the discipline of children is related to these ideas.⁴

In their opinion, teachers and parents should not use the names of God and Jesus to control the child's action. The child should not be told that God or Jesus will love him if he does some things and

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1. Ibid., p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 28.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
4. Manwell and Fahs, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-54.

hate him if he does others. The authors' viewpoint is summarized in the following statements:

Children can scarcely be helped by imagining Jesus or God in some unseen heaven approving and disapproving of their conduct. What is more, such a childhood picture of Jesus may lead to so distorted a conception of his spirit and teachings as seriously to hinder a later appreciation of the nobility of that great life. 1

4. God loves us

The idea of God's love is the primary idea discussed the least by the selected educators. Jones devotes a chapter to its discussion, but some of the other educators say very little about the relation of a child's idea of God's love to religious nurture.

a. As Presented by Mary Alice Jones in The Faith of Our Children

Mary Alice Jones discusses the various phases of God's love² and relates each of them to the child's religious nurture.

The child's first idea of God's love will probably come from an association of the word "love" with God's provision for physical needs, just as he earlier associated his parents' love with their provision for him. With this as a beginning, the parents may help the child to become more aware of God's love by opening his eyes to the many things God has provided for him in this world. As the child matures, his idea of God's love should contain more than these elements of personal provision and protection. Jones says that the parents must explain to the child the following idea:

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1. Ibid., p. 52.
2. Cf. Jones, op. cit., pp. 27-40.

. . .how God's love operates in the world when the interest of one man or nation collides with the interest of another, or when the beneficence of nature is turned into destruction, or when the accumulation of power and possessions, rather than the nurture of persons, comes to be regarded as the mark of human greatness. 1

This mature understanding will enable the child's theology to survive
2
future disasters.

In teaching the love of God to children the problem will arise concerning the relation between God's love and man's sin and suffering. 3 Jesus taught that God's love is bestowed on all men regardless of their sinful condition. The parable of the prodigal son beautifully illustrates the forgiving love of God reaching out toward his repentant children. Teaching these positive ideas of God's love to children would safeguard against the false teaching that God does not love those who disobey. Making an analogy to the parents' love for the child in spite of his sin should reveal the even greater love of God for his wayward children. 4

The fact that much of the suffering in the world is a result of man's sin and is contrary to God's loving purposes is not hard for children to understand. An explanation is not so easy when mankind suffers from natural disasters. In this case, it is best for adults to acknowledge to the child man's limited knowledge and then show him how natural forces which were formerly considered harmful have been controlled by man and used for his benefit. Thus the child may join the adults

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1. Ibid., p. 28.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 28-30, 35-40.
4. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30.

in a faith which sees the love of God in the ultimate destiny of the
universe.¹

In relation to this, the child may wonder why the universe was planned so that men have to suffer before they gain control of natural forces. The author suggests telling the child:

. . .that probably man needed to make strenuous efforts to discover and control natural forces in order that he might become the sort of person who could enjoy and appreciate, and look forward to, larger achievements.²

The child finds this true in his own experiences when he enjoys most things for which he has worked and sacrificed.

Preparation should thus be made for the suffering a child will experience, but above it a sense of security and happiness should be provided by showing him God's love in all situations.

Children should develop the high concept that Jesus had of God's love when he interpreted it in terms of fellowship.³ The sense of fellowship is very real to the child. With it as a firm basis adults may lead the child "to experience the love of God even in the midst of conditions and situations which ignore it."⁴

In addition to receiving love, the child must experience out-⁵going love if he is to have a complete knowledge of the love of God. As soon as the little child turns from self-centeredness to interest in others he should be given pleasant opportunities to plan for others.

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 35-37.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 30-33.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

As he grows older, he will have to choose between pleasing himself and pleasing others. The love of God's people through the ages will provide evidence that God's love is best seen in those who love others unselfishly.

b. As Presented by Herman Sweet in Opening the Door for God

Regarding the religious nurture of children, Herman Sweet makes the statement: ". . .that what they experience of love and care in their parents is sustained by what their parents experience of the love and care of God." ¹ Sweet points out that parents who desire this experience to become a living reality for their children should talk about God and identify him with the everyday joys and sorrows of childhood. He tells of the impression of God's love he received from his parents in the following words:

. . .the love of my parents could never fail under any circumstances and that if God's love were like that, only much greater, then he could always understand and forgive. ²

The home built on love and trust is the basis for the child's formation of a concept of God's love. ³ Here the child can conceive of a loving God who is even "nicer" than his mother. Here the child will not be punished by the threat that his parents or God will not love him if he does wrong. However, the child should learn that doing wrong breaks the perfect fellowship with his parents and with God. The child's punishment is also borne by the parents who want their child to do good. God, in the same manner, longs to help his child and will never forsake

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1. Sweet, op. cit., p. 32.
2. Ibid., p. 21.
3. Cf. ibid., pp. 40-42.

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c. As Presented by Robbie Trent in Your Child and God

Robbie Trent makes the statement: "A little child needs love."¹

It is a basic need which should be met, not only by human love, but also by the ultimate of love--God's love. "God is made of love", one mother explained to her little girl.² So no matter how many people there are in the world, he loves them all very much.

A child can feel God's love through the love of his father and mother.³ He may not understand why they do things, but he will still trust their love. Trent says: "That is why teachers of little children seek chiefly to share attitudes and appreciations, with knowledge as a by-product."⁴ They can arouse the emotion of love before the child understands why he loves.

d. As Presented by Henry Fox in The Child's Approach to Religion

Henry Fox discusses the formation of the child's first ideas from his impressions of his parents.⁵ He tells parents that the way they first look at and talk to the child will give him an impression of love. Both they and the child are unconscious of the impression being formed. Throughout the child's training the spontaneous and natural actions will form the lasting impressions. Also what the parents are will be more effective than what they say in influencing the child. He will learn of love through their love for each other and for him. Long

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1. Trent, op. cit., p. 10.
2. Ibid., p. 43.
3. Cf. ibid., p. 20.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Cf. Fox, op. cit., pp. 5-8.

before they can talk to him he will have formed his idea of God on the basis of what his parents are.

In the process of associating these ideas with the name and character of God, Fox recommends first teaching the child the reality and kindness of Jesus.¹ On the basis of this knowledge, the parents may begin to explain the character of God by saying:

. . . that there was a force, an agency, an impulse, a something, a Someone that was not Jesus, yet was in Jesus, that enabled him to heal and help other people and to be kind to them.²

When the child has grasped this idea he may be led to see that God is this "Someone" whose love he has seen in Jesus and others.³

- e. As Presented by Elizabeth Manwell and Sophia Fahs in Consider the Children--How they Grow

Manwell and Fahs express the opinion that it is harmful to teach young children about the loving heavenly Father.⁴ They feel that a child cannot appropriate this idea until he has the desire and need for it. Thus the child who is in the center of his parents' affection has no need for teaching about God's love, and the child in conflict with his parents would reject the idea of a loving heavenly Father.

The authors question the practice of children formally expressing thanks to God for the material evidences of his love.⁵ Teaching a child that God is a spirit in all men and also One whom he should thank for material gifts will confuse the child. The spontaneous and simple

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 9-16.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26-28.
4. Cf. Manwell and Fahs, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-185.
5. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

appreciation of little things should be encouraged.

As a solution to this practice, the authors suggest holding for the children "a short but natural conversation around their memories of happy times."¹ A hymn or psalm expressing thanksgiving may be included by the parent or teacher. Direct expressions of thanks may be made if the person or group giving the gift is present.² If the source is larger, the mere expression of thanks should be encouraged. The authors conclude: ". . .the directing of thanks directly to God is reserved until a larger thought of the Great Unity is possible."³

f. As Presented by Mildred and Frank Eakin in Your Child's Religion

Mildred and Frank Eakin say very little about God's love. They do discuss the harmful effects that may result if God's love is over-emphasized in the religious nurture of children.⁴ They state:

. . .if the children have heard a good deal about God's love and protective care they may think of him as an invisible but powerful bodyguard who sees to it that no harm comes to them or to those dear to them.⁵

When inevitable misfortune comes, the child may lose his faith in a loving God who did not protect him. The result is still harmful if the child clings to his distorted faith and attempts to ignore what has happened.

C. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to the presentation of the

.

1. Ibid., p. 65.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 202.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. Eakin and Eakin, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.
5. Ibid., p. 7.

views of representative religious educators on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture. These views have been those presented in the outstanding work of each educator which deals primarily with the child's concept of God and its relation to religious nurture.

The four primary ideas of God considered by the educators in this study formed the basis of organization for this chapter. These are:

1. God is Creator.
2. God is a Person.
3. God is just and good.
4. God loves us.

The secondary ideas were included under the discussion of the primary ideas to which they were related.

The views of the educators stated in this chapter have been those which consider the education or training of the child which will lead him to religious beliefs and experiences. It has been indicated at the beginning of the discussion of each primary idea that the views of the educators differ in regard to content and emphasis. An examination of the viewpoints on each idea makes this fact evident. However, no effort has been made in this chapter to compare these views.

The following chapter will be concerned with a comparison of these viewpoints along with those presented in chapter I.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE
RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF
GOD AND THE RELATION OF THIS CONCEPT TO
RELIGIOUS NURTURE

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COMPARISON OF THE VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS ON A CHILD'S CONCEPT OF GOD AND THE RELATION OF THIS CONCEPT TO RELIGIOUS NURTURE

A. Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis the views of representative religious educators of a child's concept of God were presented. The second chapter was a presentation of the views of these educators of the relation of a child's concept of God to religious nurture. This chapter will contain a comparison of the educators' viewpoints on these two topics. This comparison will reveal the variety and range of the views held by the selected educators.

B. Comparison of the Child's Specific Ideas of God and their Relation to Religious Nurture

The comparison in this chapter will be organized around the four primary ideas of God: God is Creator, God is a Person, God is just and good, and God loves us. Related ideas will be compared under these primary ideas.

The viewpoints of the selected religious educators will be compared on the basis of four points. These are:

1. Why the ideas should or should not be presented to a child.
2. What age levels are regarded as best for teaching the ideas to a child.
3. What ideas of God should or should not be taught to a

child.

4. How the ideas of God can be most effectively taught to a child.

An indication will be made of the emphasis given by the educators to each primary idea of God.

1. God as Creator

An examination of the viewpoints of what idea of God as Creator should be presented to a child and how this idea should be presented reveals a wide variation of opinion among the six educators included in this study.

All of the educators include some phase of the teaching of the idea of God as Creator to a child. Sweet gives the greatest emphasis to this idea. Fox, however, discusses only the interpretation of the Creation story to a child.

The first point examined will be the educators' viewpoints of why the idea of God as Creator should or should not be taught to a child. Sweet feels that a child should know of God as Creator in order to find an explanation for the mysteries of his world.¹ Trent presents a different approach when she indicates that a child is constantly having experiences with God as he lives in the universe. His experiences with God's handiwork must be connected to God as Creator in order for the child to have a living awareness of God.²

Jones holds the opinion that a child should know of God as

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1. Ante, p. 20.
2. Ante, p. 27.

Creator in order to understand the greatness of God. The child's experiences with the greatness of creation can be directed into spir-¹itual responses to God.

In contrast to these viewpoints, Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins advise against directly teaching the idea of God as Creator to a little child. Telling him that God makes everything will give him distorted ideas which may lead to mental conflicts at a later age. These educators say that a little child has no concept of God, and² that the child's experiences themselves are most important.

In relation to the question of why teach a child of God as the Creator is the question of when the child should be taught this idea. Trent and Sweet both express the viewpoint that from a very³ early age a child may learn of God as Creator. Jones says that as a young child becomes aware of the world of nature, he can begin to understand the greatness of the Creator. The older child can see God's⁴ creative power in grander and sterner aspects of nature. The Eakins set the fourth through sixth grades as the period during which children⁵ begin to inquire about the Creator, and teaching can begin. Manwell and Fahs do not set a definite age as the time when a child will come to the realization that God is Creator. However, they suggest giving the nursery child experiences with God's creation, but delaying direct

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1. Ante, p. 22.
2. Ante, pp. 4-5.
3. Ante, pp. 3,5.
4. Ante, pp. 22-23.
5. Ante, p. 26.

teaching of God as Creator until the time when the child has formed his
own opinions.¹

There is also in the educators' presentations a difference of opinion regarding what should be taught the child about God as Creator. Some of the authors state that a child should be led to believe that God makes everything. Trent is of the opinion that even a little child can understand that the heavenly Father makes all things and has made the birds and flowers for him.² Sweet expresses the opinion that a child should not simply be taught that God makes everything, but he should also be taught that God creates the materials for man to make things, and forms man with the ability to make things from these materials.³

Jones presents a slightly different viewpoint. She feels that a child should be impressed with God's greatness through teaching him that God is Creator. In fact, she cautions against an overemphasis on teaching the fact that God has made a beautiful world for his children, fearing that it may result in a neglect of teaching of God's attributes of power, might, majesty and holiness. In her opinion, these attributes should be included when teaching the idea of God as Creator.⁴

Because of their philosophy of education, Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins say that much harm will be done by teaching the young child that God makes everything. According to Manwell and Fahs it is

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1. Ante, pp. 24-26.
2. Ante, p. 5.
3. Ante, p. 3.
4. Ante, pp. 3-4.

sufficient if the child has experiences with nature that will lead to a sense of "cosmic happiness."¹ The Eakins are concerned that the young child should have a feeling of the goodness of the world. When he is of primary age, he should be able to see God in nature and the older child is able to think of God as the Maker.²

In addition to teaching the idea of God as the Maker of all things, several authors included the need for teaching a child that God is the Sustainer. Sweet states that a child should identify God with a force acting in the universe every day.³ The Eakins also include this idea among those which they feel the older child can grasp.⁴

Jones relates the ideas of God's transcendency and sovereignty to the teaching of God as Creator.⁵

The final point of comparison is how the idea of God as Creator can most effectively be taught to a child. All of the educators who discuss this idea agree that a child must have contacts with nature. Sweet is the only one who gives ideas of how these contacts may be made for children of various environments.⁶ Jones presents the need for giving the child contacts with different aspects of nature as he grows older.⁷

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1. Ante, p. 4.
2. Ante, p. 5.
3. Ante, p. 3.
4. Ante, p. 5.
5. Ante, p. 23.
6. Ante, pp. 21-22.
7. Ante, pp. 22-23.

There is a great difference of opinion among the educators regarding how these experiences with nature are to be treated by parents and teachers. Trent says that adults should lead the child to think and speak of God in connection with these everyday experiences.¹ Sweet, however, encourages the explanation of these experiences in the language and with emotions that will give an honest impression of God.² Jones feels that these experiences should be directed into the child's spiritual response to God.³

In contrast to these opinions, Manwell and Fahs consider the nursery child's experiences with nature to be complete in themselves, and they encourage helping the child to relive them through in-door activities. They feel that gradually the child will form his own ideas of God as Creator on the basis of his own knowledge and without the need of direct instruction.⁴

Some of the educators stress the need to arouse in the child a sense of awe and wonder in the presence of nature. Sweet states that this is basic to the religious nurture of the child and essential to the production of a spiritual approach to life.⁵ It is through this sense of awe and wonder that Jones feels a child can have spiritual responses to God.⁶ In the opinion of Manwell and Fahs, a child must have many opportunities to experience this sense before he will be

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1. Ante, p. 28.
2. Ante, pp. 20-21.
3. Ante, p. 22.
4. Ante, pp. 25-26.
5. Ante, p. 21.
6. Ante, p. 22.

mature enough to conceive of a Creator.¹

The creation story found in the Bible has been given a place in the writing of several of the educators. Trent suggests reading it from the Bible as a story to a child with the idea of impressing him with its stately reading.² In teaching this story to a child, Fox advises treating it as a legend whose value lies in the truth it contains.³ The Eakins, however, are more concerned with teaching the idea of creation in the light of the modern evolution theory, and believe that the Genesis account should only be one among many which are presented to the child.⁴

2. God is a Person

All of the educators included in this study hold definite viewpoints of what idea of God as a Person should be presented to a child and how this idea is related to a child's religious nurture.

The child's idea of God as a Person is treated most thoroughly by Trent. Manwell and Fahs speak of this idea briefly and from a negative viewpoint.

The educators' opinions of why the child should or should not be taught about God as a Person will be the first point of comparison. In the opinion of Trent, the child needs to know of God as a Person in order to have a sense of fellowship with him which will give the child a release from fear and a steadying influence in this unstable world.⁵

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1. Ante, p. 25.
2. Ante, pp. 28-29.
3. Ante, p. 29.
4. Ante, pp. 26-27.
5. Ante, p. 30.

Sweet also feels that the child should know God as personal, but he does not specifically state why. However, he implies reasons similar¹ to those of Trent. If the child is to have a meaningful faith, Jones² thinks he should be taught about God as a Person.

A different viewpoint is presented by the Eakins who advise against teaching the child of God as an "invisible companion." They feel that the child will form wrong ideas of God which will not withstand trouble, and his faith will be shattered.³ Manwell and Fahs agree with this viewpoint. As further emphasis, they say that because of his limitations the little child does not need God, and teaching about God in terms of his personality will do much harm.⁴

Fox points out the child's tendency to think of God in terms of personality, but he does not indicate his opinion of why the idea of God as a Person should be taught to a child.⁵

The six educators present different ideas of when the child has reached the place of his development when he can begin to understand the idea of God as a Person. Fox thinks that from the moment of his birth the child begins to form impressions of God from his impressions of his parents.⁶ Trent says that a little child can think of God as a Person.⁷ Jones states that it cannot be determined when a child first thinks of God as a real Person, but she feels that it is

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1. Ante, p. 7.
2. Ante, p. 35.
3. Ante, pp. 37-38.
4. Ante, pp. 40-41.
5. Ante, p. 39.
6. Ante, pp. 38-39.
7. Ante, p. 30.

best to teach a young child about God whenever the chance is given.¹
Sweet recognizes the limitations of a young child's concept of God,
but he feels that the first crude ideas of God as a Person should be
refined and spiritualized as the child grows.²

Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins do not think that a young
child should be taught about God as a Person when he is young. The
Eakins suggest teaching the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children
that God personifies the good.³ A different approach is presented by
Manwell and Fahs who believe that a child can develop his own concept
of God on the basis of his "philosophy of life".⁴

The difference of opinion among the educators as to why and
when the child should be taught the idea of God as a Person carries
over into the consideration of what should be taught in relation to
this idea.

All of the educators recognize the tendency of a child to
think of God in terms of a concrete Person. Trent, Sweet, Jones, and
Fox hold the opinion that these concrete ideas of the child should not
cause concern if the right sort of Person is envisioned. Trent, Sweet,
and Jones feel that he should be an embodiment of the best that the
child knows of power, wisdom, goodness and love.⁵ Fox feels that the
child is able to think of God as a real person, just as he experiences
the reality of an "invisible playmate".⁶

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1. Ante, p. 35.
2. Ante, p. 33.
3. Ante, p. 38.
4. Ante, p. 41.
5. Ante, p. 6-7.
6. Ante, p. 8.

This tendency of the child to think of God as an actual Person is considered harmful by the Eakins and Manwell and Fahs.¹

Several of the educators include the idea of God as Father in their presentations of what ideas should be taught to a child about God as a Person. Fox explains the term "Father", as used by Jesus, as a moral relationship rather than a physical one. A child should be led to think of God as his own Father in the way Jesus did.² As the child hears the expression "Heavenly Father", Trent says he will consider the words and actions of God similar to those of his own father.³

Manwell and Fahs and also Sweet present reasons for not teaching the idea of God as a Spirit. Sweet feels that the child will likely consider God unreal and make-believe.⁴ Manwell and Fahs say that he will imagine a fair-like creature.⁵

Trent adds an additional idea to those that have already been presented. She includes the shepherd concept of God in the child's religious nurture.⁶

The final point of comparison is how these ideas of God as a Person are related to a child's religious nurture.

Most educators included in this study are concerned about the parental influence in the child's religious nurture. This is particularly evident in relation to the child's idea of God as a Person.

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1. Ante, pp. 7,9.
2. Ante, p. 39.
3. Ante, p. 31.
4. Ante, p. 34.
5. Ante, p. 9.
6. Ante, p. 32.

Fox goes so far as to state that the parents are in a sense a "human representation" of God to the child, and that the child's first impressions of God are based on his impressions of his parents.¹ Trent presents a similar view when she says that the child's first thought of God will probably be associated with his own father.² This thought is also expressed by Sweet as he speaks of the child's response to the parental love and patience as the earliest foundation of his response to God.³ Jones feels that a child senses God's reality from sharing his parents' own experience with God.⁴

Fox and Trent suggest utilizing the parental influence in teaching the child the idea of God as Father.⁵

When teaching the child of God as a Person, the child's tendency will be to think of God in terms of concrete ideas. The educators who consider this to be all right as long as the ideas are of a worthy person, have included additional means of accomplishing this aim. Trent says that a child forms his concept of God on the basis of what he hears and sees of the things God does.⁶ Sweet states that the child must be led to associate his experiences and the experiences of others with God. To do this, he recommends talking to God with the child and talking about him to the child, in order to help the child form an exalted idea of God.⁷ Jones also recommends talking

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1. Ante, p. 38.
2. Ante, pp. 31-32.
3. Ante, p. 33.
4. Ante, p. 36.
5. Ante, pp. 39-40, 31.
6. Ante, p. 30.
7. Ante, pp. 34-35.

about God to a child whenever the occasion arises, in order to help¹
the child gradually form a concept of God as a Person.

Fox adds a note of caution when he warns against ever showing²
the child a picture of God in teaching him of God as a Person.

These four educators, Trent, Sweet, Jones, and Fox relate the
teaching of God's personality to teaching about Jesus. Trent emphasizes³
the need to show the child Jesus if he is to understand God. Sweet⁴
agrees with this thought; Jones adds the thought that this specific⁵
personality will keep the child from worshiping false gods. Fox feels⁶
that the facts known about Jesus should be the starting point when
teaching the child about God.

3. God is just and good

A comparison of the selected educators' viewpoints of what
ideas of God's justice and goodness should or should not be taught to
a child and how they are related to religious nurture reveals many
opinions in regard to content and emphasis.

The Eakins emphasize the idea of God's goodness and exclude
the idea of justice. Sweet includes both ideas but strongly emphasizes
God's justice. Manwell and Fahs say little about either idea.

As an explanation to why the idea of God's goodness should
be presented to children, the Eakins state that it is the fundamental

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1. Ante, pp. 35-36.
2. Ante, p. 39.
3. Ante, p. 33.
4. Ante, p. 34.
5. Ante, p. 37.
6. Ante, p. 39.

thought in the child's process of coming to know God in the best sense.¹
Fox carries this thought further when he says that the child must know
that God is inconceivably better than himself if he is to be truly God.²
Trent speaks of the child's need of a sense of security which is met
by his knowledge of God's goodness.³

A different thought is presented by Jones when she says that
a child should know of God's justice and goodness in order to keep him
from sinning.⁴ Related to this, Sweet thinks a child should know that
pain is the result of breaking God's laws.⁵

In contrast to these viewpoints, Manwell and Fahs and the
Eakins believe that it is harmful to teach children that God punishes
them when they do wrong.⁶

Most of the educators present views of when the child can
begin to learn of God's justice and goodness. In the opinion of the
Eakins, the child should have contact with good from infancy. This
idea is easily associated with God as the child matures.⁷ Fox presents
a similar opinion in his idea that the small child should evidence a
growing response to God's goodness.⁸ Trent says that a little child
should be taught of God's justice and goodness.⁹ According to Sweet,
a child must begin early to learn of God's justice.¹⁰

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1. Ante, p. 42.
2. Ante, p. 47.
3. Ante, pp. 51-52.
4. Ante, p. 49.
5. Ante, p. 45.
6. Ante, pp. 52-53, 44.
7. Ante, p. 43.
8. Ante, p. 11.
9. Ante, p. 51.
10. Ante, p. 45.

No definite age level is given by Jones for presenting these ideas; however, the content of her teaching implies that the child who is taught about God's justice and goodness is able to understand more ¹ mature ideas.

A comparison of the opinions of what ideas should be taught to a child of God's justice and goodness shows that each of the educators presents a different point of emphasis.

The Eakins emphasize the idea of God's goodness which they feel is inseparably related to the ideas of God's power and invisibility. ² Fox stresses the quality of "beyondness" in his interpretation of God's goodness to a child. ³ Jones places an emphasis on God's righteousness in which she includes teaching about the Kingdom of God. ⁴

In his emphasis of God's justice, Sweet also includes the teaching of the idea that God always knows what is best because he is good. ⁵

Trent says that the child should be taught that God is just and good, as they have learned Jesus to be. ⁶

There is also a difference of viewpoint among the selected educators as to how a child's ideas of God's justice and goodness are related to religious nurture. Most of the educators are primarily concerned about how the point that they emphasize can be presented to the child.

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1. Ante, pp. 49-51.
2. Ante, p. 10.
3. Ante, p. 11.
4. Ante, pp. 11-12.
5. Ante, pp. 10-11.
6. Ante, p. 12.

The Eakins are most interested in the child's expanding experience as a means to learning that God is good. The youngest child can first see the goodness of his parents. As he grows he will have experiences involving the good in people and nature and his concept of good will develop. Gradually he can be led to understand that God is good, and then that God is the unseen good in everything.¹

A different method is presented by Fox in his opinion of how to teach God's goodness to a child. He begins with what the child has learned about the goodness and kindness of Jesus. On the basis of this, the child is helped to the realization that there was a good "impulse" that led Jesus and others to do kind things. When this idea has been grasped, then the name of God may be fixed to the "impulse."² Trent also uses the child's knowledge of Jesus' character as a basis for teaching him about God's goodness and justice. However, in contrast to Fox, she suggests using the name of God and saying directly that God is like Jesus.³

Jones is primarily concerned about showing children that God's righteousness will ultimately triumph in spite of the sin and suffering in this world. She includes in this thought, Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God. She feels that children must be led to believe that God's Kingdom does not come largely through man's effort, but through man's response to God's goodness and righteousness.⁴

Along with the Eakins, Sweet also stresses parental influence.

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1. Ante, pp. 42-44.
2. Ante, pp. 47-49.
3. Ante, p. 52.
4. Ante, pp. 49-51.

However, in contrast to the Eakins, he stresses the need for the parent to exercise right judgment over the child, rather than merely showing him goodness. The child must be shown that the wrong choice is punished and the right rewarded, and that God wants him to do right and will help him to do it. The parents must evidence the same attitude¹ in their training of the child if he is to form correct ideas of God.

In contrast to this viewpoint, Manwell and Fahs believe that a child should not be told that God or Jesus love him when he does some things and hate him when he does others. In their opinion, this teaching² will lead to distorted and harmful ideas of God and Jesus.

4. God loves us

An examination of the views of what ideas of God's love should be presented to a child and how these ideas are related to religious nurture reveals a variety of opinions among the selected religious educators. It is also seen that most of the educators present less material related to the idea of God's love than to the other primary ideas of God. Because of these two factors, comparison of the views on this idea will in some points be limited to only a few of the educators, and some of the views are presented by only one of the educators.

A great emphasis is given by Jones to the child's idea of God's love. In fact, this is the primary emphasis of her discussion of the child's concept of God. The Eakins refer to it only a few times

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1. Ante, pp. 45-47.
2. Ante, pp. 14-15.

and usually negative.

Some definite reasons are given as to why this idea of God should be taught to children. Trent emphatically says that a child needs love if he is to have security in this world of tragedy. This love should be the ultimate which is God's unfailing love.¹ Jones presents a similar idea when she says that a child needs to know that the suffering in the world does not indicate a lack of God's love.² Sweet also speaks of the comfort brought to children by the thought that God loves them.³

Sweet presents another reason for leading the child into a knowledge of God's love. He feels that this knowledge should be the basis for obedience on the part of the child.⁴

In contrast to these viewpoints, the Eakins express the opinion that it is harmful to overemphasize God's love in the religious nurture of a child. It may result in misconceptions of God's character.⁵ Manwell and Fahs do not believe it is wise to teach a young child about God's love. In relation to this, they discuss the harmful effects of the expression of thanks to God by a young child.⁶

Fox does not indicate why he feels that the idea of God's love should be taught to a child.

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1. Ante, p. 57.
2. Ante, pp. 54-55.
3. Ante, p. 56.
4. Ante, p. 13.
5. Ante, p. 59.
6. Ante, p. 58.

According to some of the educators, the idea of God's love can be grasped by the child at a very early age. In Fox's opinion, the child is beginning to get an impression of love from the time of his birth. This impression is later related to God's love.¹ Sweet feels that the first impressions of God of the very youngest child should be of his loving care.² Both Jones and Trent say that the little child can know God's love.³

A different opinion is held by Manwell and Fahs who believe that the child cannot appropriate the idea of God's love until he is older.⁴

Each of the educators presents a different opinion of what ideas of God's love should be presented to a child. Jones feels that a child's first idea of God's love should be related to his provisions for physical needs. As the child grows this idea should be enlarged to include the idea of God's fellowship. The surety of God's love in the face of sin and suffering should also be impressed upon a child.⁵ Sweet also includes the thought that a child should realize that God loves him in spite of his sin.⁶ In addition, Sweet includes God's loving care and protection.⁷

Along with Jones, Trent also thinks that a child should

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1. Ante, pp. 57-58.
2. Ante, p. 13.
3. Ante, pp. 13,57.
4. Ante, p. 58.
5. Ante, p. 13.
6. Ante, p. 14.
7. Ante, p. 13.

experience God's love in a sense of fellowship with him.¹ In addition, Trent suggests telling the child that God is made of love and helping him to understand his ability to love everyone at all times.²

Fox emphasizes the kindness of Jesus and God in relation to teaching the idea of God's love to a child.³ However, Manwell and Fahs feel that the little child only needs to know of human love.⁴

The Eakins emphasize God's goodness rather than his love. They fear that an overemphasis of teaching God's love will lead a child to think of God as a bodyguard who keeps them from all harm.⁵

Most of the educators in this study stress the parental influence in relating the child's idea of God's love to religious nurture. Fox particularly emphasizes this as he tells parents that the way they first look at and talk to the child gives him an impression of love that is the basis for his future understanding of God's love.⁶ Sweet stresses the importance of the parents' experience of God's love and care in leading the child to the same experience.⁷ Trent says that a child can feel God's love through the love of his father and mother.⁸

Jones presents a different idea in the thought that the child's association of his parents' love with their provisions for him will probably be carried over to the association of God's love with his

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1. Ante, p. 14.
2. Ante, p. 57.
3. Ante, p. 14.
4. Ante, p. 15.
5. Ante, p. 15.
6. Ante, pp. 57-58.
7. Ante, p. 56.
8. Ante, p. 57.

provisions. She adds another means of teaching this idea in the analogy between the parents' love for the sinful child and God's love for his ¹ sinful children.

In contrast to these opinions, Manwell and Fahs feel that the young child does not need to know of God's love because he is in the center of his parents' affection, or because his conflict with his ² parents would cause him to reject the idea of a loving heavenly Father.

Two of the educators also include Jesus in the teaching of God's love. Fox recommends first teaching the child about Jesus' kindness, and then telling him that "Someone" in Jesus made him kind. When this idea is grasped, the child may be led to see that this "Some-³ one" is God. Jones suggests using Jesus' teachings when telling a child of God's love. The parable of the prodigal son shows that God's ⁴ love is bestowed on all men regardless of their sinful condition.

Jones presents a unique idea when she discusses the child's need to experience outgoing love if he is to fully understand God's love. This is accomplished by giving the child opportunities to show ⁵ his love for others.

C. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to a comparison of the views of representative religious educators on a child's concept of God and

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1. Ante, pp. 53-54.
2. Ante, p. 58.
3. Ante, p. 58.
4. Ante, p. 54.
5. Ante, pp. 55-56.

the relation of this concept to religious nurture. The comparison of these two topics was organized around the four primary ideas of God. These are: God is Creator, God is a Person, God is just and good, and God loves us. The comparison was based on the four points of why the ideas of God should or should not be presented to a child, what age levels are regarded as best for teaching the ideas of God to a child, what ideas of God should or should not be presented to a child, and how these ideas of God can be taught most effectively to a child.

An indication was made of the amount of emphasis given by the selected educators to each primary idea. In the instances where some educators said little about one of the primary ideas or considered it harmful, it was not possible to include them in all of the points of comparison.

This comparison has revealed the variety and range of the views held by the six selected educators on the subject under consideration. Trent and Sweet were found to hold similar viewpoints regarding what ideas of God should be presented to a child and how these ideas are related to religious nurture. They advocated direct teaching to a child from a very early age, relating this teaching to the child's everyday experiences. It was seen that Jones agreed with these two educators in their views on religious nurture. However, she usually presented a slightly different or more inclusive view of what ideas of God should be presented to a child.

Most of Fox's viewpoints were found to be unique. He regarded the everyday experiences of primary importance in giving the young child a foundation for his concept of God. He advocated direct

teaching about Jesus as the child grows older, and suggested the use of this knowledge to lead the child to a correct concept of God.

It was evident that the Bakins and Manwell and Fahs held views contrasting with those of the other selected educators. They objected to the direct teaching of God's character to small children, and considered the child's experiences complete in themselves.

Thus it was seen that Trent and Sweet held viewpoints in opposition to those of the Bakins and Manwell and Fahs, with Jones and Fox taking positions between these two points.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this study to consider and compare the views of representative religious educators on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture in order to discover the view of each educator and the variety and range of views presented. These views have been those presented in the outstanding work of each educator which deals primarily with the child's concept of God and its relation to religious nurture. The religious educators and their works were as follows:

1. Frank and Mildred Moody Eakin: Your Child's Religion
2. Henry W. Fox: The Child's Approach to Religion
3. Mary Alice Jones: The Faith of Our Children
4. Elizabeth M. Manwell and Sophia L. Fahs: Consider the Children--How They Grow
5. Herman J. Sweet: Opening the Door for God
6. Robbie Trent: Your Child and God

The first chapter was devoted to the presentation of the views of the selected educators on a child's concept of God. This chapter began with a determination of the primary ideas of God considered by the educators. These were found to be:

1. God is Creator
2. God is a Person
3. God is just and good
4. God loves us

These ideas formed the basis of organization of that chapter and the succeeding chapters. The secondary ideas of God were included under the discussion of the primary ideas to which they were related.

The second chapter was devoted to the presentation of the views of representative religious educators on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture. The viewpoints of each of the educators were presented under the ideas of God previously stated.

In helping the child to form the idea of God as Creator most of the educators were found to emphasize giving the child experiences with various aspects of God's creation. These experiences should be encouraged and guided by the teachers and parents. Recognition is given to the need for providing different experiences for the child according to his age and environment. The use of the creation story in religious education was also treated by some of the educators.

In considering the teaching of God as a Person all of the educators realize the child's tendency to think of God in terms of a concrete personality such as a bearded old man or king in the sky. The educators particularly emphasize the parental influence in relation to the idea of God as a Person. The parents' own experience with God and attitude toward him will be a large factor in determining the child's idea of God as a Person. Some of the educators recommend teaching about Jesus as a means of leading the child to this idea of God.

The ideas of God's justice and goodness, it was discovered, are usually treated together by the selected educators. The educators present the means of teaching the particular phase of these ideas that they feel is most important. The need for including Jesus' teachings

and character in leading a child to an understanding of God's justice and goodness is considered important by several educators. Some include discipline as related to the teaching of this idea.

The idea of God's love and its relation to the child's religious nurture are treated briefly by all the educators except Jones who emphasizes it more than the other ideas of God. Some of the educators again include the parental influence and the character of Jesus as important elements in this teaching. Other educators feel that it is harmful to teach this idea of God to children.

The third chapter was a comparison of the educators' viewpoints which were presented in chapters I and II. This comparison revealed the variety and range of the views of the six selected religious educators on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture. It was based on the four points of why the ideas of God should or should not be presented to a child, what age levels are regarded as best for teaching the ideas of God to a child, what ideas of God should or should not be presented to a child, and how these ideas of God can be taught most effectively to a child. An indication was made of the emphasis given by the educators to each primary idea of God.

The comparison revealed that each selected educator particularly emphasizes one of the specific ideas of God or ideas related to them. Sweet gives the greatest emphasis to the idea of God as Creator. A great emphasis is given by Jones to the child's idea of God's love. The Eakins stress the idea of God's goodness as most fundamental in the child's religious nurture. The idea of God as a Person is treated most thoroughly by Trent. In relation to God's goodness Fox discusses

the "beyondness" of God as most essential in teaching the character of God. Manwell and Fahs emphasize the child's experience with nature and people as most important in the religious nurture of the child.

The comparison of why the ideas of God as Creator, God as a Person, God's justice and goodness, and God's love should be taught to a child revealed a distinct division among the educators selected. In all instances Trent, Jones, Fox, and Sweet feel that the teaching of these ideas are necessary in order to meet the child's needs and to lead him into a meaningful faith in God. In contrast to these viewpoints, Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins advise against directly teaching these ideas of God to a child. They feel that the child will form wrong ideas of God which may have harmful effects. One exception is made in this division by the Eakins who believe that the idea of God's goodness is the fundamental thought in the child's process of coming to know God in the best sense.

This same division among the selected religious educators carried over into their viewpoints of when a child should be taught these ideas of God. In most instances Trent, Jones, Fox, and Sweet feel that a young child can begin to acquire these ideas. The ideas of God's love and goodness are usually suggested as the child's first impressions of God. These educators believe that the ideas of God as a Person and his justice can be grasped by the little child. God as Creator can be taught when the child becomes aware of the world of nature. Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins present a different opinion. They believe that the child cannot appropriate these ideas of God until

he is older. The Eakins suggest the fourth through sixth grades as the period when the child can best understand some of these ideas. They again make an exception in the teaching of God's goodness which they feel can be begun in infancy by giving the child contact with good. Manwell and Fahs suggest delaying direct teaching about God until the time when the child has formed his own opinions.

The comparison of the selected religious educators' viewpoints on what a child should be taught about God again disclosed the same distinct division among the educators. Since Manwell and Fahs and the Eakins generally feel it is harmful to teach directly ideas of God to a child, it was not usually possible to include them in the comparison of the educators' viewpoints on what ideas should be taught.

In teaching about God as Creator Trent, Sweet, and Jones feel that the child should be led to believe that God makes everything. Related to this idea Jones included secondary ideas of God's greatness, transcendency, sovereignty and sustaining power.

The child's tendency to think of God in terms of a concrete person as he is taught about God as a Person is not considered a matter of concern by Jones, Fox, Trent, and Sweet. However, they feel that the sort of Person envisioned should be the best that the child knows. Fox and Trent include the idea of God as Father in their presentations of what ideas should be taught to a child about God as a Person.

Each of the selected educators presents a different point of emphasis in their opinions of what ideas should be taught to a child of God's justice and goodness. The Eakins emphasize his goodness; Sweet, his justice. Fox stresses the quality of "beyondness". Jones

emphasizes God's righteousness. Trent is concerned that the child understand that God is just and good like Jesus.

In teaching the child that God loves him Jones, Sweet, and Trent feel that this should be done so that the child will know that God loves him at all times and in all circumstances. Fox emphasizes the kindness of Jesus and God.

The last point of comparison was how the ideas of God as Creator, God as a Person, God's justice and goodness, and God's love can be taught most effectively to a child. Here it was seen that all the selected religious educators agree on the necessity of giving the child experiences that would be meaningful in the formation of these ideas. However, there was an evident difference of opinion as to how these experiences are to be treated by the parents and teachers. Manwell and Fahs feel that these experiences are complete in themselves and the child will form his ideas of God gradually on the basis of his own knowledge and without the need of direct instruction. The Bakins are most interested in the child's expanding experiences which lead to his ability to ask questions and form his own opinions. In contrast to these opinions, Trent, Sweet, Jones, and Fox believe that it is necessary to accompany the child's experiences with careful verbalized teaching which includes talking to God with the child and talking about him to the child.

Some of the selected educators suggest using what the child has learned about Jesus as a foundation for teaching him about God. Trent, Sweet, Jones, and Fox generally use this as a basis for teaching

about God as a Person, his justice and goodness, and his love.

The utilization of the parental influence in teaching the child about God is also recommended by some of the selected religious educators. Fox, Trent, Sweet, and Jones all consider it important as the child first forms his impressions of God as a Person and of his love. The Bakins are most interested in the child's first seeing the goodness of his parents in the process of learning that God is good.

The conclusion of the comparison was that Trent and Sweet generally hold the same viewpoints regarding what ideas of God should be presented to a child and how these ideas are related to religious nurture. They suggest direct teaching of a child from a very early age with the relating of this teaching to the child's everyday experiences. Jones agrees with these viewpoints, but she places more emphasis on theology. Fox usually agrees with Trent and Sweet; however, his primary emphasis is the process he feels the child should be led through to the formation of a correct concept of God. It was seen that Manwell and Fahs and the Bakins hold views contrasting to those of the other selected educators. They object to the direct teaching of God's character to small children and consider the child's experiences complete in themselves.

The conclusion of this study is based on the comparison made in the third chapter. In view of that study it may be concluded that the selected religious educators present a variety of viewpoints on a child's concept of God in relation to religious nurture, and that these viewpoints vary according to the educators' philosophy of religious

education. Those who feel that a child can be taught religious concepts directly suggest leading the child to think and speak of God in connection with everyday experiences. Others, who object to this philosophy, suggest giving the child experiences which are worthwhile in themselves. They feel that the child will gradually form his own concept of God without the aid of direct teaching which may give him harmful ideas of God.

In relation to this conclusion the study indicated that the theological beliefs of each of the educators is a determining factor in what he believes should be taught about God and how it should be taught. Although these beliefs are not usually stated directly by the educators, they are partially implied in their discussion on the topic under consideration. It was seen that those who would be considered conservative in theology generally suggest a more direct teaching of a concept of God, while those who would be considered liberal in theology suggest a more indirect method of giving the child experiences which are worthwhile in themselves and delaying direct teaching until the child is old enough to form his own opinions.

Therefore, it should be remembered that the important factors in religious nurture are the educator's philosophy of religious education and his theological beliefs. The educator's understanding of the child and the child's means of learning along with the educator's theology largely determine what ideas of God he believes should be presented to the child and how they should be related to the child's religious nurture.

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