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Childhood religion, its essence and appropriate manifestations

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S E N I O R T H E S I S

"CHILDHOOD RELIGION, ITS ESSENCE

AND APPROPRIATE MANIFESTATIONS"

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

(Consulted)

Wright, "The Moral Condition and Development of the Child"
(Completely read)

Hodges, "The Training of Children in Religion" Completely read

Forbush, "The Boy Problem in the Home"

King, "The Psychology of Child Development".

Religious Education, Articles relating to Childhood religion.

McKinley, "Educational Evangelism"

Dawson, "The Child and His Religion"

Danielson, "Lessons for Teachers of Beginners"

Berean International Graded Lessons, Teacher's Text Books
for Beginners and Primary.

Weigle, "The Pupil and the Teacher"

Dix, "Child Study"

Kirkpatrick, "The Individual in the Making".

American Institute of Child Life Monographs

The First Year in a Baby's Life

The Second and Third Years

The Religion of a Little Child

The Government of Children Between Six and Twelve

The Education of the Child from One to Three.

Coe, "The Origin and Nature of Children's Faith in God"
in Am. Journal of Theology, Apr. 1914

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Numerous and exhaustive studies of childhood, from the psychological and religious standpoint, have been made, which are enlightening not alone for their information concerning childhood, but for their revelation of the types of mind, scientific and theological that made them. No science has reached its zenith as yet, and we have no criticism to make of earnest students of childhood, who have contributed to our sum total of knowledge without reaching what seems to the psychologist of to-day, correct conclusions. The theological mind has studied childhood, with preconceived ideas which have frequently prevented the drawing of fair conclusions. Some of the best minds of our time are giving their attention to this important study of the child with results which must show forth in the next generation. It is the purpose of this paper to gather from studies which have been made, facts and conclusions concerning the child, his religion, its manifestations and nurture through the first eight years of his life. We shall seek to discover what elements of child nature are religious or conduce to religious nurture, and to study how these elements show themselves.

Regarding children and religion, two general attitudes have been assumed, which in the past have been thought to be mutually exclusive. On the one hand, it has been said

that the child is naturally religious or religious instinctively. So great an educator as Comenius, identified religion with the natural qualities of a child's life. Another, Pestalozzi, "likewise makes religion a primary constituent of the child's nature. He not only believed in the child's intuitive perception of religious things, but he would have this quality of his mind cultivated along with other qualities, throughout the entire educational process." Froebel gave the most complete expression to the belief that the child's nature is essentially religious and embodied it in his educational system. George E. Dawson is one of the present exponents of this natural religion of childhood as instinctive and intuitional. George A. Coe, who is recognized as an authority in the field of religious psychology, says that "Dawson uses 'instinct' incautiously. The naturalness of child religion seems to mean for him that religion is preformed, even to specific beliefs, whereas the growth of mind is not primarily from one set of ideas to another, but from the indefinite toward the definite." Coe further says that "recent psychology, when it is listened to, will disturb such assumptions as that 'man is incurably religious', that our mental structure includes a 'vital spark' of divinity; that there is a universal yearning for God or a universal sense of sin; that

infants, 'trailing clouds of glory', have a gift of spiritual perception that mature mental occupations cover up and obscure." He in no sense denies a religious nature to children but criticises the approach to the problem and the conclusions drawn. "The religious nature presents itself to some psychologists as no unanalyzable endowment or preparedness to function in a certain way, but as an attitude or complex of attitudes acquired in the course of individual experience. Here as everywhere, our mental life has a background of instinct." Here is where much superficial work has been done, in classifying some things as instincts which rightly are not. Coe goes on to ask the question, do children have a really vital experience of faith in God or are their religious expressions merely incidental, imitative accommodations to social conventions? It is apparent that he regards religion and faith in God as going together, if not synonymous and we agree with him. He concludes that a vital faith is possible for children because there is an instinct functioning in childhood, a particular application of which constitutes a religious reaction. The motivation of religion as a whole, he says, can be traced to one or more of the generic tendencies of human nature and these function early, in childhood. These generic tendencies of which he speaks are social instincts

so as to whether children are capable of a truly religious experience, and hence of faith, becomes almost identical with the question, what are their capacities of social appreciation and response. Concluding from his study, that certain social instincts such as gregariousness, response to approval and disapproval, jealousy, desire to master others and supremely, the parental instinct, are present in children, it follows that children are in a clear sense capable of religion.

On the other hand, there have been those, and doubtless are those, who affirm that a child can have no religious experience before it has the ability to choose clearly between right and wrong; God and the world. These people believe primarily in conversion, and this means to not a few, that the children "must go to the altar, and in one way, their way, the narrow way, the only way, must tell God what great sinners they have been." Little need be said concerning these persons who have not thought very far on the subject and can at least be declared ignorant of real child life. Conversion is a necessity only for those who have fallen away and how can we in this day affirm that of children. Children are in an acceptable relation to God when they come into the world. That relation they cannot annul until they

have come to years of moral accountability and rebel against God. What we should speak of, with children is, I believe, the birth from above. This is no mere naturalistic development of something in the personality of the child but rather is the work of the Holy Spirit in the normal development of the spirit of the child. "Children may from birth, be the children of the heavenly Father. The manner of the birth from above is not that of an instantaneous change, which does not fit the childhood condition, but rather, a spiritual incoming from a pressure as continuous as the atmosphere about us." The idea then of religion as a natural element of childhood, at least in essence prevails among students of the child.

In many of the studies which have been made, an unintentional bias may be found because the facts have not been clearly or fully observed. Some of the phases of the child's life were regarded as religious by nature which were not. As Professor Coe points out concerning Dawson's interesting examples, "an analysis of Dawson's cases will show that, though the children in question received little or no formal religious instruction, they were nevertheless under the influence of the religious ideas of their elders." Then again, only one side of the child's nature has been taken into account

and we only get half truths. One psychologist, Irving King, in his studies in the Psychology of Child Development, emphasizes that always it is the whole child that thinks and feels and acts, and this is particularly significant religiously. Then again, in a great many studies, sentiment has taken the place of keen reasoning. A beautiful child nature is posited and religion is read into it. The ideas of what ought to be, obscure what is. Now, of course there are an infinite variety of children and we cannot be expected to be true to every type, but there are general characteristics. A woman looking upon a baby girl at play remarked, "She is a typical baby," and she voiced a truth, viz that all children are on a par, barring unfortunate accidents or inherited physical or mental weakness, when they come into the world. We must view the child as a child normally, and we may at the outset affirm that no child will ever be religious as a child without a religious environment or religious instruction. Some would not accept the statement that all children were on a par at birth for a great many hold to various inherited elements. From some careful studies of others, I should conclude that physical heredity is about all that is given to us at birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh". Instincts, we have of course, but mentally and mor-

ally, the child is an empty vessel, with cavities here and branches there, to be filled, capable of holding certain amounts. "The child's boundaries are set by human nature but inside this, we may put in the moral qualities that we choose, provided we will work according to the law of his being."

Wright says that God allows all human beings to start on the same level morally. "There are no heathen children in the world." Lyman Abbott says, "No man ever inherited sin. Men inherit appetites and passions, they inherit temptations, they inherit weaknesses and frailties and infirmities, but they do not inherit sin and they do not inherit virtue."

John A. Robbins says, quoted by Wright, "We maintain that the best families religiously, transmit better qualities to their children than irreligious families; religious communities, more than irreligious communities; and a religious nation, more spiritual worth to its citizens than irreligious nations. These are some of the practical results of heredity." That he announces practical sequences in the above statement, is too apparent to need iteration, but that heredity is the law that accounts for it, is a too swift and too unscientific conclusion to announce. The cases mentioned cover heredity and environment working together which produce the results. But scientific observation is against the conclusion that

heredity alone will account for the transmission of religious qualities". " In our nature there are certain powers capable of receiving and dealing with that which comes to us from without. This is the gift of heredity. But this power is innate, does not of itself furnish itself with any material to work with or build into character. That must all come from the outside world. The soul is at first an empty chamber with no secret inhabitants hidden in secret closets, which after a while present themselves to it." If the child is such an empty vessel, what an appalling responsibility rests upon those who shall fill it. This responsibility is given to the parents first of all, for it is they who normally control the sights and sounds which come to the child. What the child lacks they should supply. "If the infant has not a rational spirit, the parent must discharge the functions of the spiritual life for the child. If the child of six years has not come to moral responsibility, the parent must assume, before God and the community, that responsibility for the child, and so on up in diminishing measure until the youth has come to the place in life where he may bear his moral burdens on his own shoulders."

Before passing to a consideration of the details of the child's nature, I want to refer to that rite, baptism, which

is given such a significant place in the religious life of the child among some people. In and of itself it cannot avail a thing directly for the child, but there are powerful benefits therein, working through the parents. "The baptism of the child is an act of the parents, by which they acknowledge the divine relation of the child to God, already established; the divine origin of the child; the divine ownership of the child and the obligation laid upon them, of securing to him a divine destiny. The benefits which come to the child are from the vividness and vitality of these impressions upon the minds of the parents. It is but the first act of a program of spiritual education and influence, that, through a wonderful and divine arrangement, enables the parents in very deed, to be the father and mother of the spiritual form of the child and not merely the cause of its physical structure."

Wright

The first years of a baby's life have often been disregarded from a religious standpoint, but wrongly, I believe, since even in the first year, foundations of habits are being formed. It is an age of activity. "The most undeniable characteristic of the baby is its tendency to certain activities." These are called forth by stimuli, reflexive, impulsive, organic and extra organic, but the fact of importance

is that the infant is able to respond to stimuli and not merely to be affected by them. From inexact, unmeaning movements, the baby has come, perhaps by the end of the first year, to define and co-ordinate various large muscle groups, repeating those actions that attain good results and eliminating others that are not good. In this we have the beginnings of voluntary action, the commencement of the play of the will. The child is now receiving the elements of life, real character stuff through eye and ear and nothing capable of making an impression upon him is unimportant. He begins to walk and talk, his social life grows, his emotional life finds its basis in his idea of pleasure or its opposite. By the child's play with his mother, his emotional and mental life is being developed and the love and sympathy found in her finds its echo in the little one. In the first two years are being arranged the conditions upon which future conquests may be secured. Gentleness and thoughtfulness in handling, sympathetic and loving attention, are supplying just what the baby needs for future expression. Furthermore, these early years see the dawn of imitation in the child, that power which is of so great importance through all the years of parental guidance. "It is the spiritual hand which the child outstretches, and with which he takes to himself all within sight and

hearing." At first it is the simple imitation of sound or movement, but when about three years of age it is a mental imitation as well. Later it becomes more dramatic. This imitative instinct gets the child into trouble too for we think him naughty and selfish when he takes toys away from other children, whereas it is probably just an intense desire to do what the others were doing, that prompted him. We cannot ascribe sin to the little child. Spiller said, "Your child may be doing what is wrong; but you should remember that he is not doing it because it is wrong." Sully seems to think there is a moral instinct from the beginning. He finds it in the wish to conform to law. If the young child is a 'reverer of custom', the sufferings of naughty children are not wholly the result of external discipline nor is it merely the sense of loneliness and lovelessness, but it contains the germ of something nearer a true remorse. The facts point to an innate disposition to follow precedent and rule, which precedes education and is one of the forces to which education can appeal. We are told that there is in the child a desire of approbation which arises from an innate desire to do what mother does, to be what mother is or what pleases mother. Here imitation shows itself clearly. "In this beautiful mixture of dependence, imitation and affection, we find some of the earliest germs of moral feeling. Even before a

child can talk, he often so reflects the emotional signs and feelings of others that he shares in the pleasure or disgust of the one observing him. So he adopts such pleasure as the goal of his efforts and accepts it as the test of his own goodness. The psychologists tell us that the child is at first neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral. All his acts are of the same moral character. "Experience soon shows him that one kind of act brings pleasant approbation, while the other brings disapprobation and perhaps punishment.--Approbation is pleasant to a child at least partly because it strengthens the sense of oneness with his mother which he enjoys. When the little child does what his mother tells him is 'naughty', he learns from her demeanor a painful sense of estrangement and something deeper than mere outward approval leads him to try to retrieve himself. Kirkpatrick, therefore, calls this 'the preparatory stage of moral development', but he declares that it is none the less important, because the foundations of a moral future are being built now upon the basis of experience and training. Regulated actions now start moral habits and these formulate themselves later into moral ideas." This is also giving a foundation for obedience which is spoken of as a fundamental social instinct and G. Stanley Hall says "it should be an instinct if not a religion"

Previous to about the third year, obedience has been merely reacting to the social stimuli but then it becomes more conscious as the child feels his own self and asserts it and yet submits to another self. It is highly important for the child's safety as well as future well being, that he learn obedience to father, mother, nurse, teacher, the laws. The habit of obedience to lower authority at this age will assure more fully the obedience of a higher authority in conscience and God later. Little: we realize the far reaching effects of obedience. If we did, we should start inculcating the habit earlier and would pursue it more diligently than is generally done. We have seen some germs of morality that appear in the first few years of a child's life. Is it not clear that these are religious germs as well? To be more specific however, let us see the grounds for positing a capacity for religion in children. William Byron Forbush sees three features of child nature suggesting this capacity, that we shall note. The first is physical: the child's desire for regularity: he respects it, responds to it as it relates to his life physical and mental; It is not morality, but is favorable to it because it grips the inclinations and acts as a check on impulse. Regularity and orderliness give a background for 'law-abidingness'. The child becomes accustomed

PARA.

to having certain things done at a certain time and in a certain way and he falls in with the program. He is not too young to learn that bedtime is prayertime with mother; to express himself in prayer in words which as yet are but words to him. The first step is "to get the words into the mind, then the meanings will grow out of them according to the mysterious providence which brings the oak out of the acorn." Furthermore, the practice of family devotions, of grace at table, of a regular church attendance and Sabbath observance, becomes fixed as law in the childish mind, to be deepened in impression as he grows and develops. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on the influence of the parent from the very first in religious matters. "In order to secure for religion a place of importance in the lives of our children, we must somehow assure them that we care a great deal about it ourselves." One writer emphasizes the importance of making conversation on religious topics, natural and frequent, adding the caution that if the children are to be led to a respect for the institutions of religion as the church, the parents or elders should never indulge in gratuitous criticism of the church in which so often irreverence mixes with poor taste. The instinct to imitate is largely working in this connection as elsewhere. No child can have a religion with-

out cultivating it, any more than he can evolve a knowledge of his letters. Sorry indeed is the religious lot of the child whose parents are irreligious.

The second element in the child's capacity for religion is intellectual; his complete credulity. He believes what is told him and mother is his chief source of knowledge. In fact she is his God, the representative of all love and care and tenderness. He understands the One he cannot see, only in terms of the one he sees. "The child's credulity, by which it has to take so many things in its environment on trust, helps it to span the distance between the seen and the unseen quite easily." This is an age of fact for the child, mysterious but true. The love of God is a fact interpreted to the child through the mother as the representative of warmth, comfort, love and everything he wants. It is no far jump for the mother to give her child the idea of God as one like her and the child's father, in love and care, in goodness, in desire to see the child good and happy. Not only does credulity help the child to humanize God, but it helps him to personalize nature and to put God into it. Some call this animism in children. Dix, in his Child Study, says, "Love, beauty and joy are the three words that best express the governing principles of the religion of a little child as it begins to find

its way through the world of nature to the world of spirit. Love, it learns in the fostering care of the home and transfers that love to God; Beauty, it learns in the things of nature and looking through nature up to nature's God, finds Him, the source of all created beauties; Joy it knows from the human love which gives and the earthly beauty which pleases and its thoughts of God's love are all transfigured with a heavenly joy. Little children are en rapport with the spiritual world: they only require to hear of its mysteries, that so they may enter in to possess them. Their credulity and trustfulness are keys to unlock secrets 'that are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed unto babes' by their converse with the mysteries of life."

The third element in the child nature showing capacity for religion, is emotional, the general wish to please the one upon whom he is dependent, and we call it his good will. Notice the developing child and see how he loves approval, and how disapproval will cause him real sorrow. This fact leads to the consideration of how easy it may be to lead the child in the right direction by approving only what is best in his conduct. This element will have a higher significance when the idea of God is more established. Coe says that the child not only has a well meaning spirit toward us, his adult com-

panions, but also a friendly, though elemental relation to morals, so that "both the little child and the adult who teaches him about God are working at a problem that is real for both, and the faith that they have in common, though on different levels, expresses the fundamental traits of their common human nature." These then are the three elements of the child's nature which are said to show a capacity for religion.

We have spoken of the child's credulity as a background for a knowledge of God. Coe thinks that it is not so much the sense of dependence which responds to the idea of God as father, as the parental instinct in the child. "When God is presented as Father, it is in my opinion, the parental instinct that chiefly responds. In order to teach four year olds to trust the Heavenly Father, the Sunday School teacher is likely to use as materials, among other things, the care of father and mother bird for their offspring. This leads to the desired result through that process of his mind by which he instinctively assumes a parental attitude toward the helpless birdlings that have been brought to his attention. He learns to love the Father by nascently performing Fatherly functions." "The Christian religion, the religion of Divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood, is the ideal flowering of a particular instinct that functions from infancy onward. In this sense the child is naturally Christian. To the Christian.

idea of the ALL FATHER, the response is positive, free, vital. Children love and trust Him; they struggle to obey Him; they desire to help Him in His work; they are grateful for His gifts. This is Christian experience."

Much that has been said applies as well to other years of childhood as to the earliest and we may so apply it. No decisive lines can be drawn in a child's life, separating the activities of one age from those of another, especially in the period which we are studying, and yet we may in general divide the years from four to eight into two parts, ages four and five, and six, seven and eight, the latter period being known as middle childhood. We may examine these periods to discover what elements in the child's life are significant for or ^{to} express the religious life.

The most noticeable thing about the child of four and five is his activity. The sensory powers are still very active but now the motor powers are dominant, the muscles long for something to do. This natural activity may be put to work to express the parental instinct perhaps, to put into effect the desire for approbation, by giving the child something to do which will please it and yet be purposeful, thus combining play and work and learning thru it all. Froebel taught learning thru doing and it is surely important. The

child wants to help, but perhaps at this early time, not so much from a real impulse to service as from a desire to do something the mother likes or perhaps even more clearly, to do something like the mother or teacher or elder. This desire for self activity is taken advantage of in our up-to-date Sunday Schools, in the motion songs and marches which give physical expression to religious ideas, and in hand work which enables many a child to fix in mind and to express with his hands what he could not with his lips. What could suggest to the child the Father's care in a better way than is done in the Graded Lessons by the study of the parent birds' care. Songs about the birds expressing bird movements, pictures of birds to attract the eye and stimulate the imagination, as also a bird's nest and its materials and the food of the bird. Such objective teaching in the matter of religious subjects leaves room for the child's imitation, his imagination, his activity, and for expressing the instincts of the child which but want an avenue of expression. Moreover much curiosity is aroused and satisfied. In the home during the week is where religious ideas may be fostered through the play life of the child. The play with dolls, which gives expression to the parental instinct, pictures, and the story all are useful to this end and many more ways of developing the religious element might

be mentioned. This is pronouncedly an age of curiosity. Questioning is a characteristic which no one will deny to the child and it is the way he is to build his intellectual life. His is an aggressive curiosity and extends to a desire to know of the origins of life itself. The little child is most easily led at this period to know God as the One who made all things, Who gives life and Who takes it away. Never is there a better time to make God really known. This curiosity is a sacred characteristic of the child which should be regarded and answers given which shall never have to be unlearned. With the child's credulity and suggestibility, a spiritual trend may be given in answers to many childish questions which will act as a leaven in the child's brain and produce beneficent religious results. Another characteristic of childhood which does not stop with this period, is an intense love for stories. It stimulates and satisfies an active imagination and every story should carry its truth clearly. Stories are a powerful instrument for developing the religious life of the child and their telling should be much more general in the home. Every story should meet several requirements, if it is to have moral and religious effect. It must teach a truth that meets a child's religious need. It must do this simply, directly and truthfully. It must deal with situations within the child's

experience or readily imagined. It must have sufficient action in it to arouse interest and it must have power to live thru repetition, to endure thru familiarity, for a child loves a repeated story. There are then, the play instinct, the desire for self-expressive activity, curiosity, imagination, imitation, spontaneous interest of the child which are significant for religion at this early stage. Other elements have been carried over from the earlier years and some are just emerging to flower later.. The little child of four and five can be taught orderliness which is akin to helpfulness and is a support if not a foundation for religion. Then the little one's will has been developing and it has come against another's will, the parent's. Obedience in the first three years perhaps, naturally has to be implicit and unquestioning and such obedience is establishing a habit of tremendous value in all later life, for the heeding of the parents will may be transferred to the transcendent divine will. At this age of four or five the child's reason is developing and he should be given a reason for what is asked of him. In other words his will is showing and that means the power of choice. Now it is that the habit of right choices should be cultivated. This is a great step in character building and when it is underlaid and supported by proper religious ideas is a guide and a guard of great power. More will be said of this later.

During these years the child should come to a clearer idea of what prayer means and should develop from a mere repeated prayer to one expressing petition and gratitude. This may sound as though we would throw over the beautiful little prayers for children which are in quite common use, but not so for in many of them are to be found the elements mentioned. The child's idea of God has developed and now he understands more fully to whom he is praying and for what purpose. He will begin to go beyond his repeated prayer and we will find him taking his simple wants to God which merely shows an enlarged faith. As a summary of what careful students of the child regard as possible for him to know at this age, along religious lines and what things may best utilize the characteristic elements of this period of childhood, I quote from the aim of the Berean Graded Lessons for Beginners:--

"To lead the little child to the Father by helping him:--

- (1) To know God, the Heavenly Father, who loves him, provides for him and protects him,
- (2) To know Jesus, the Son of God, who became a little child, who went about doing good and who is the friend and Saviour of little children,
- (3) To know about the heavenly home,
- (4) To distinguish between right and wrong.
- (5) To show his love for God by working with Him and for others.

The period of middle childhood, from six through eight shows most of the characteristics of early childhood with some notable additions along mental lines, which make the period very important religiously and morally. Still growing rapidly, the child is active, always seeking some way to express his energy and the way is normally through play. Now it is the smaller muscles that are calling for action so something which requires a simple skill, something to construct pleases the child. Still too young to do anything much, yet a purpose in what he does is essential. Heretofore the play has been free, unregulated and alone; now the child finds in what he can accomplish with eyes and hands and feet, and he plays with other children, meeting their natures and wills and entering into competition with them. Now is the time to objectify religious instruction and make it stand in real relation to matters of the daily life and associations with others so that it finds avenues of direct expression. "The child of six years is dependent upon the loving care of others. Because he knows what it means to receive this care, he may be led to realize the loving care of the Heavenly Father and to respond to it with love. Because his sense perceptive powers are keen and in the day school he receives instruction largely through objects, pictures, hand work, games and stories, he may be led to observe nature, handle natural objects, look at pictures

and listen to Bible stories. Leading him through the teaching given in the Sunday School to observe nature as the work of God, showing him pictures and telling him Bible stories, will help him to come to a consciousness of the power of God, and understand in part how God provides for him and what it is that he should do. Out of such a consciousness and understanding, he will respond with trust and obedience." The child's senses are eager and he uses them more thoughtfully to obtain real knowledge. Now it is the m e a n i n g of sights and sounds that is important and not merely the sense impression. If the imagination was active in early childhood it is more active now but more coherent and better controlled. The stories which are told will serve to stimulate this imagination and therein lies the importance of giving the right kind of stories. "Here is opportunity to fill the mind with a stock of images that shall represent life in its truth. The stories should not be goody goody, nor should they contain any effort to reveal spiritual ideas and motives that are beyond the child's spontaneous interest. What is needed is the truth of life embodied in simple, sensuous forms, especially of outward action." This is especially important in the matter of training the will, which is developing quite rapidly at this time. When a child is able to restrain his own acts, he is beginning to show will power and the more regular-

ly he does so, the more adept he becomes in self mastery. Parents can fill the child's mind and heart, with a stock of good ideas that would come up in time to help his will when it needed support. Such is one function of the story. If a child has a remembrance of a story in which a boy has done this or has not done that, his little mind works an analogy at the proper time and he is the boy of the story. McKinley, in "Educational Evangelism", says of the story, "No story, however fascinating, has any value for purposes of religious education, unless it exhibits or illustrates in some way, the workings of the divine in the human, God in the world and in man." We said something about choices in early childhood, but this period is more significant even, for this foundation of character. Obedience as a religious support is unequalled but not that obedience which is blind. A child who is often called an obedient child is just as likely to be obedient to the person who counsels wrongly as to the person who counsels the right, if he has learnt to render obedience to the person instead of to the principle behind the person. If a child obeys because he chooses, after knowing the reason or after having thought the matter out on the ground of what he has learned, then his mind and reason have been touched and he has begun to look through the rule to the reason of the rule. Training

the child's will is simply training the power to make right choices. This also involves the question of conscience. Someone has said that the entire moral task of a child is to grow a conscience. It may be said that the religious nature is neutral until the sense of ought, or right and wrong dawns. Up to this time the child's sense of having done wrong, is only his realization that he has done something that is forbidden. Someday there must come from within, a feeling that it is wrong to do wrong. This may come from direct teaching but more probably from the acquisition of the sense of the conventional which is the idea of a proper or conventional standard. "As religionists", Wright says, "we love to think of conscience as the voice of God and man's voice, God's voice in man's voice". However mysterious its origin, or inexplicable its nature, the conscience never speaks more authoritatively than in the first years after its manifestation. Some see in conscience, the expression of the imitative faculty, the imitation of an obedient self, something in the child representing his father, his mother, or in general the lawgiving Personality, which if religiously taught to the child, is God. What particular actions are wrong will be determined for the child by the commandments from his parents, until the time when he may have an understanding of the Higher Parent. Then His commandments will also be regarded as the content of

moral conduct. McKinley says, "The Christian conceptions of right, duty and law are based on the fatherly relation of God to men. The law which is now to lead our children to Christ is the law that He came not to destroy but to fulfil, namely, not the law given in commandments and ordinances, but the eternal law of the fatherly and filial relation of God to man. The most effective way of developing the conscience of the child is that which presents concrete cases of good and evil deeds, the struggle of righteousness with sin, divine sonship with human selfishness. The stories of the Ideal Man, the Perfect Son, are peerless for the culture of the moral nature." The choice which a child makes in answer to conscience, is the religious relation for the child for the moment. If that choice is confirmed ever afterwards, the child is an acceptable child of God; if a contrary choice is subsequently made, it will need to seek forgiveness, just as an adult does when he falls from grace. It is plain that during this period the child has advanced in his religious understanding, to an acquaintance with Jesus the Saviour, the Son of God and One who loves boys and girls and wants them to be good. As yet the child is too young to have anything like a reasoned Christology although it would surprise some of us to learn some of the children's ideas of Jesus. Forbush says in his "Boy Problem in the Home", that Jesus must be

left for the present in the children's thought, as the good carpenter saving the world, rather than as a deity. The children will love Jesus because of the way he is made to appeal to them and their attitude will be one of loyalty which will make them try not to do anything that would displease Him. "The child", says McKinley, "cannot understand the atonement and should not be asked to try. But children can, and do, very early, catch the meaning of the fact that Christ died for the sin of the world; children can and do, very early bring their moral natures to the cross of Christ, and there begin to gain the Christian insight into the great realities of right and wrong, suffering and sacrifice, sin and salvation."

The child of nine and older, has more ability in memorizing than at this age but this is a good time to begin on Bible verses and stories which the child will often repeat, showing that he has or has not caught the spirit of the story. The Golden Memory period is just arriving and the way should be prepared. Another important consideration at this period is the establishment of the churchgoing habit. This should be strenuously sought after, as once established, a foundation is secured which is not easily broken down. Considerable might be said for the Children's church, with its special

services by and for the children, but in the family church, I believe that the regular service should in part make its appeal to the child as well as the adult and the solidarity of the institution be furthered. There is enough of the grading possible in the graded Sunday School where religious instruction is given. Most children find considerable pleasure in the regular services of the church.

It must have been seen in this altogether too brief study of the early years of the child, that the parents are the ones most responsible for the manifestation and development of his religious nature. Such a statement would be foolish were it not for the fact that many parents are leaving this to the Church and Sunday School. The child imitates first the deed and then the doer, and for the normal child, the parent is the one seen most and imitated most frequently. This is a heavy responsibility for the parent but one that should be more clearly and generally felt. It is a sorry condition indeed, where the religious nurture of the child is left to a religious institution, without the background of the home, religious in its atmosphere and cultivating that which is religious. Nevertheless it is a condition which is largely to be met with in this land as in other lands. Thousands of children will not get any religious instruction in the home

and therefore there devolves upon the Sunday School the task of religious development and nurture. It is no easy task to be sure and it means that the child is handicapped in his early religious life. Unless the child comes in contact with the Sunday School at a very early age, religious nurture must almost be preceded by conversion, which we must regard as abnormal after a study of the child's nature. We have seen that there are certain elements in the child's nature that support religion, and form a background for its manifestation and nurture. Such are his natural activity; the play instinct; love of regularity; credulity; the parental instinct; the imitative faculty; imagination; the desire to please parents; the developing reason and will, not to mention many others which careful students of the child have discovered. Christian nurture is preparatory, never final, but as a foundation, is the preparation for the building which is to rest upon it, so Christian nurture is for the character which later years will bring forth. If this is of such paramount importance, then parents, as the ones on whom the development of the child naturally falls, should hold themselves responsible for the spiritual, as well as for the physical welfare of the child. When these natural guardians of the child fail, then there is the great church as the earthly arm of the great Shepherd

of the Sheep, who said, "Suffer little children and forbid them not, to come unto me, for to such belongeth the Kingdom of Heaven." When the church consistently takes up the saving of the child, in the home and in the church, there will no longer be such a colossal problem of saving the adult, for in very truth, "a little child shall lead them."