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THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
OF HOLY BAPTISM

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Franklin Carl Walter Ritthemel

May 1957

Approved by:

George W. Hoyer
Advisor

H. J. Bowman
Reader

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this thesis is to look at the educational implications of Holy Baptism in order to show different manners of implementing and bringing to fruition these educational implications in the life of the individual child.

Serious concern has been expressed in several quarters of Christianity that Holy Baptism has become in many instances merely a formality. It is this concern that prompts this study. Several examples can be cited to point up this concern. The first is a quotation from the Anglican Church Times as quoted in Time, the weekly news magazine:

It is common knowledge, that in the present state of England, many parents bring their children to the font to be "done" with scant knowledge of what is really involved . . . Statistics show that roughly two-thirds of the children baptized in infancy are never brought to confirmation¹

Another is a statistical report which is taken from the Statistical Yearbook of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

In 1955 34,681 children were confirmed in North America. But in 1941, fourteen years earlier, 38,320 infants were baptized. In other words, 3,639 children baptized by our pastors in 1941, or 9 per cent of the total, were not confirmed last year. This is an annual situation. In a period of 20 years, from 1920 to 1939, 105,978 children baptized were not confirmed.²

¹"Refusing the Font," Time, LXVI(September 5, 1955), 34.

²Statistical Yearbook, compiled by Armin Schroder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 262.

These statistics of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod will vary with the different districts of that church body. As an example, the Western District published the figures that in 1940 2,065 infants were baptized by pastors in that district; however, in 1953 only 1,535 children were confirmed.³ It is apparent that the difference here is greater than for the entire body. The percentage of difference is better than twenty-five percent. These percentages and figures show that there must be some mis-understanding or lack of understanding concerning the educational implications of Holy Baptism.

The over-all picture of the statistics of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod does not show anywhere near the percentage of loss from Baptism to Confirmation at the present time as reported for the Anglican Church of England. These statistics do show, however, that a goodly amount of concern could and should be expressed concerning the educational implications in Holy Baptism.

This study will concern itself chiefly with the subject of infant baptism and the educational implications for the child so baptized, though some reference will be made to adult baptism and the educational implications present in such a baptism.

³Baptizing and Teaching Them, Report published by the Western District of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1954.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY BAPTISM

In dealing with Baptism it is necessary to bear in mind that Baptism is not merely a church custom, but a divine ordinance, explicitly commanded by Jesus in His charge to His disciples as recorded in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.¹

There are problems which are raised in connection with this Matthaean passage. However, a detailed study of these problems will not be made in this paper. For completeness, they are given with a short evaluation:

1. The citations of the verse in a shorter form by Eusebius have suggested that his shortened form represents an earlier and better text.
2. The absence of Synoptic parallels is said to make the authenticity of the command uncertain.
3. The Trinitarian theology of verse 20 is held to be too advanced to be possible on the lips of our Lord at this stage.
4. 1 Corinthians 1:17 is thought to be inconsistent with such a commission.
5. The early Church baptized "into the Name of Jesus" rather than into the Triune Name.
6. The universality of the Commission (all nations) may be an indication of a later development.²

This paper accepts the command of Christ as recorded in the

¹St. Matthew 28:19,20.

²p. W. Evans, Sacraments in the New Testament (London: The Tyndale Press, 1947), p. 11.

28th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel as correct and authentic. Nor does it find the trinitarian theology out of harmony with the Lord's teachings at any stage. In the 1 Corinthians 1:17 passage the purpose of St. Paul is not to belittle the doctrine of Baptism, nor to make this an exclusion clause, but to show the prime purpose of his ministry. Baptizing into the "name of Jesus" does not do violence to the command in St. Matthew, for as Dr. Peiper brings out

The Apostles' Baptism, according to Christ's instructions, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" was eo ipso baptizing in the name (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι), upon the name (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι), and also into connection with the name (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of Christ. Since Christ has commanded Baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this Baptism is a Baptism "in [ἐν] the name of Christ." . . . we must remember that confessing the name of Christ always includes confessing the Holy Trinity, as Scripture clearly teaches.³

The universality of the command (all nations) is not out of harmony with other commands and revelations of Christ. This universality can be seen in the passage from Luke: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."⁴ Another passage which shows the universality of Christ's commands to His disciples is in His charge to them at His Ascension:

But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in Judaea, and in

³Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 259.

⁴St. Luke 24:47.

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.⁵

The objections which are raised to this passage which gives the command to baptize, can be answered on the basis of the other parts of Scripture as has been indicated.

The divine institution of Baptism can also be seen from the practice and writings of the Apostles. At Pentecost Baptism was enjoined by the Apostles, when Peter spoke and said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."⁶

The Lutheran Church holds and teaches that Holy Baptism is a Sacrament. The Lutheran definition of a Sacrament is important for an understanding of its teaching in regard to Holy Baptism. This might be stated as follows:

By a Sacrament we mean (1) a sacred act, instituted by God Himself; (2) in which there are certain external means (3) connected with His Word; (4) and by which God offers, gives, and seals unto us the forgiveness of sins which Christ has merited.⁷

In conformity with this doctrinal statement, the Lutheran Church believes and teaches that through Baptism the infant (and older person) becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. To use the term "invisible" and/or "visible" in connection with the concept of the Kingdom of God is only to cloud the issue. Through this means of grace, the forgiveness of God

⁵Acts 1:8.

⁶Acts 2:38.

⁷Oswald Riess, What Does the Bible Say? (Detroit: Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1956), p. 64.

in Christ is brought to the individual baptized. Through Baptism that infant is brought into fellowship with Christ and made a member of His Church.

The scriptural basis for this teaching is found in all of the passages which speak of Baptism bringing forgiveness to the individual. The passage from Acts brings this out, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ."⁸ Another passage is, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."⁹ Among other passages which could be marshalled is Paul's statement to Titus,

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."¹⁰

Peter also makes a beautiful comparison of being saved by the water of Baptism as Noah was saved by water in the Old Testament,

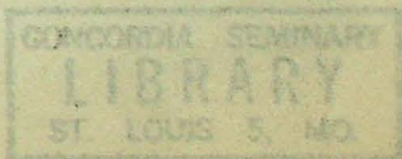
. . . when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . .¹¹

⁸Acts 2:38-39.

⁹Acts 22:16.

¹⁰Titus 3:5-7.

¹¹1 Peter 3:20-21.



Dr. Francis Pieper brings this out very clearly when

he writes:

Above all, we must clearly recognize and maintain that Baptism is a means of grace. Baptism is no more and no less than a divinely ordained means whereby God in a special manner conveys and imparts to the person baptized the remission of sins provided for him by Christ's satisfactio vicaris. In other words, Baptism is a means of justification, medium justificationis sive remissionis peccatorum. Baptism is not a work we offer to God, but one that God does to us and by which "God offers and presents the remission of sins." (Trigl. 309, Apol., XXIV, 18).¹²

The difference between Baptism and the Word of Christ as a means of grace is pointed out by the foregoing writer in the following way:

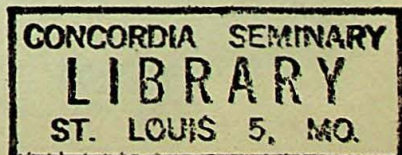
Wherein does Baptism as a means of grace differ from the Word of Christ? Not in an individual bestowal and assurance of the remission of sins; such a bestowal we have also in private absolution. The distinctive characteristic of Baptism is rather that the promise of grace given to a single person becomes a "visible Word," verbum visibile. As the Apology says: "And God, at the same time, by the Word and by the rite, moves hearts to believe and conceive faith, just as Paul says, Rom. 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing." But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our heart, so the rite itself strikes the eye (incurrit in oculos) in order to move the heart." (Trigl. 309, XIII, 5.).¹³

Faith is wrought by Baptism, a faith which clings to and is implanted by the Word and promises of God. Or as the previous writer states it:

When Scripture says: "Being born again . . . by

¹²Pieper, op. cit., p. 263.

¹³Ibid., p. 264.



The Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23); "Which shall believe on Me through their Word" (John 17:20); "faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17), it declares the Word to be not "an attending circumstance," but the instrumentality through which regeneration is wrought or faith worked. Besides these Scripture texts speak not of things preceding or following regeneration, but of regeneration itself.¹⁴

The Lutheran Church believes that the Scripturalness of Infant Baptism is well established. The command to baptize given in Matthew 28 and quoted earlier in no way excludes children from the concept "all nations." The words of Christ to Nicodemus surely do not exclude children who are then in need of Baptism:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.¹⁵

Dr. Pieper gives two passages in showing the Scripturalness of Infant Baptism:

The Scripturalness of Infant Baptism is established by Scripture passages such as Mark 10:13-16 and Col. 2:11,12. In the first text two things are evident: (1) Also little children (Luke calls them *βρέφη*, infants, 18:15) are to be brought to Christ; (2) infants, too, are able to receive spiritual blessings and actually are members of the Kingdom of God. . . . Col. 2:11,12 states that Baptism has supplanted the Old Testament Sacrament of Circumcision. It is therefore the means of grace for children. Calov comments: "Sacramentum baptismi Christus surrogatum voluit circumcisioni."¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁵St. John 3:5-6.

¹⁶Pieper, op. cit., p. 277.

This same thing is stated another way in the Apology of The Augsburg Confession:

. . . it is necessary to baptize little children, that the promise of salvation may be applied to them, according to Christ's command, Matthew 28:19 Baptize all nations. Just as here salvation is offered to all, so Baptism is offered to all, to men, women, children, infants.¹⁷

This paper does not intend to go into a discussion of the mode of Baptism, except to say that the Lutheran Church believes that a valid Baptism consists in the application of water in any manner, by washing, pouring, sprinkling or immersing in connection with the trinitarian formula given in St. Matthew 28:19.

Though the term "initiatory rite" is a common expression used within church groups with a Reformed background, it is not used generally within Lutheran circles. The term could be used to show that the person baptized has been received into fellowship with Christ by this sacrament. Dr. Mayer gives a similar term when he states:

Some Lutherans have designated Baptism as sacramentum initiationis and the Last Supper as sacramentum confirmationis.¹⁸

In order to distinguish between the two terms, this paper will speak of the Lutheran concept as an "initiatory

¹⁷"Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p.245.

¹⁸F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 164.

sacrament" to distinguish this from the idea prevalent in Reformed circles, where Baptism is looked upon as merely a rite whereby a person comes into fellowship with the visible congregation in a certain place.

With the above in mind Baptism can truthfully be called an initiatory Sacrament, and the child who has been baptized has been received into the blessed communion with Christ, has been made a part of the "communion of saints," has received faith from God. Dr. Pieper states it in this way:

Theirs is not a potential, but an actual faith, that is, one they have now as children (Matthew 18:6; 1 John 2:13), and they not merely expect to be members in the Church, but are members (Mark 10:14).¹⁹

Baptism is an act complete in itself, and therefore it is performed only once in the life of an individual. Through Baptism a person is brought into a covenant relationship with God. On the part of God that covenant will stand for all time. Even though man in his sinfulness will leave the covenant, he needs only to return to it to have its benefits anew, namely, the assurance of sins forgiven. Thus we can see that Baptism has meaning for the individual throughout his life. Dr. Pieper shows this continuing meaning of Baptism when he writes:

Though administered only once, Baptism is to be used by Christians throughout their whole life. Nowhere do the Apostles call on Christians to repeat Baptism; however, they frequently recall to

¹⁹Pieper, op. cit., p. 277.

their minds the Baptism once received. This reminder is intended both for consolation and admonition. In Gal. 3:26-27 Paul reminds the Christians that by their Baptism they put on Christ, that is, become God's children, without the Law, by faith in Christ. In Rom. 6:3ff. Paul employs Baptism for admonition, instructing Christians that by their Baptism they have become dead unto sin, but alive unto righteousness. Peter strikingly sets forth the consolation of Baptism. He says (1 Pet. 3:21) that as Noah and his family were saved by the water of the Flood, even so the water of Baptism now saves us, and the reason he gives is that Baptism is "not the putting away of the flesh, but the covenant of a good conscience toward God." Baptism, then, involves the establishment of a covenant of grace between God and the person baptized. With good reason, therefore, the daily repentance of Christians (poenitentia stantium) is called a daily return to Baptism, or to the covenant of Baptism, inasmuch as the believers daily confess their transgressions, by faith seize the remission of sins guaranteed by Baptism, and thus consoled, strive for fruits worthy of repentance in a new life.

Also the repentance of backsliders (poenitentia lapsorum) does not consist in seizing the "second plank" (secunda tabula), the Roman Sacrament of Penance, but in a return to the grace of which Baptism assures us.²⁰

In view of the fact that Baptism has meaning for the individual throughout his life, it follows that he should learn something about his Baptism, about what came to him in Baptism, about the meaning of Baptism for his life, about the things expected of him as a baptized child of God. These expectations show the necessity of Christian education that flows from Baptism itself. In the case of an adult a certain amount of Christian education or instruction will be received

²⁰Pieper, op. cit., p. 275.

before his Baptism, however, this educative process should continue after his Baptism and throughout his life. In fact, he himself should have a part in this educative process by seeking to grow in the grace of God, the knowledge of his Lord Jesus Christ, and in the grace of Christian living. In the case of the infant or child the education or instruction will be received after the individual has been baptized and will also continue throughout his life. Luther in his Large Catechism brings this out with the terse statement:

. . . every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to practice all of his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Ghost with His gifts.²¹

That baptized children, no less than adults, are to be educated as Christians is also inherent in the very command which Christ gave to His disciples when He told them to baptize. Stolz, though he does not recognize the sacramental character of Baptism, presents a picture of educational implications in these words of command.

Jesus' final commission to the apostles is an educational challenge: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them . . ." Matt. 28:19,20. . . . The charge of Jesus to His disciples implies that teaching is a primary method of promoting His cause; that the Christian religion is mediated in the teaching process; and that the spirit of Christ

²¹ Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 743.

is present with all who sincerely, devotedly, and intelligently accept Christ's teaching commission. . . . An unbroken succession of teachers in church and home has mediated the Christian faith from its inception to this very hour.²²

A more detailed presentation of the areas of education and the responsibilities for this education will be dealt with in section III of this paper. Here, suffice it to say, Christian education is inherent in Baptism itself.

²²Karl R. Stolz, The Church and Psychotherapy (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1943), p. 204.

CHAPTER III

THE TEACHINGS OF NON-LUTHERAN CHURCHES

Though every Christian denomination is ready to admit that the "miracle of birth" is a manifestation of the love of God in the lives of Christian parents, the attitudes and beliefs of the different denominations vary in their proposals and teachings as to how the parents should proceed in dealing with the little baby in the realm of spiritual life.

There are some groups which reject Baptism in its entirety in the historical Christian sense. Among these are groups like the Quakers, who

consider the Christian Sacraments to be mere rituals without any real significance. Any event in life is considered sacramental if it is truly an outward sign of an inward grace. Water Baptism is said to be at best but a symbol of the Baptism with fire and the Holy Ghost.¹

Another group in this classification is the Salvation Army whose attitude toward the sacraments, including Baptism, is summarized as follows by Dr. Mayer:

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are placed on a par with the abrogated Jewish ceremonies, are said to be unnecessary for salvation or the development of spiritual life and evidently not intended to be perpetually observed. The all-important Baptism is said to be the Baptism with the Holy Spirit,

¹ F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1954), p. 412.

which "results in the purifying of the heart and in power for service." The dedication of children, testimony, wearing uniforms, pledging total abstinence, being sworn in, and regulations are said to accomplish the same ends which advocates of "water Baptism" claim for Baptism.²

Dr. Mayer's evaluation of these positions, given in a footnote with the preceding quotation, is pointedly clear: "The allegedly 'neutral position' toward the Sacraments is tantamount to a rejection of the Sacraments."³ When looking for educational implications in Holy Baptism, it is unnecessary to consider these groups.

In order to treat this subject, the educational implications in Holy Baptism, the denominations of Christendom have been divided into three groups. The groupings are based upon their different attitudes toward Holy Baptism, or more specifically, infant or pedo-baptism. These groupings are: first, those who do not believe that the infant should be baptized at all; secondly, those who believe that the infant should be baptized, but that baptism is merely an outward symbolical act; and, thirdly, those who believe that an infant should be baptized because through Baptism the infant receives something which is important for his spiritual life. It must be remembered that the denominational names which are given, especially in the first two groupings, actually cover a large number of groups. It is felt to be unnecessary to

²Ibid., p. 344.

³Ibid., Note 3.

give all the individual denominational names of these different groups. For the purposes of this study, the names which are used will be sufficiently clear.

The first group consists of those who do not believe that infants should be baptized. Included in this grouping are the Baptist denominations and the Christian churches. The basis of their contention that infants should not be baptized rests upon their understanding that there must be faith before a person can be baptized. When dealing with the baptismal command of Christ in St. Matthew 28:19 they believe that the person must first be made a disciple by being taught and then baptized. The attitude of the group is that since an infant cannot be taught the Christian religion, it cannot have faith, and therefore, should not be baptized. Baptism, for them, becomes merely an outward symbol whereby a person shows the inner condition of his or her heart. The individual in fulfilling the command to be baptized expresses his faith.

In the words of a leading Baptist theologian, this could be stated as follows:

Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, in token of his previous entrance into the communion of Christ's death and resurrection, or, in other words, in token of his regeneration through union with Christ.⁴

This same writer in speaking of the proper subjects of

⁴Augustus Hopkins Strong, Systematic Theology (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, c.1907), p. 931.

Baptism has this to say:

The proper subjects of Baptism are those only who give credible evidence that they have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit - or in other words, have entered by faith into the communion of Christ's death and resurrection.⁵

The position of this group, its opposition to infant Baptism, prompts these statements. The group does not look upon Baptism as a Sacrament in the Lutheran sense of a means of grace. When this group deals with the Bible passages which speak of Baptism giving the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of salvation, they show that this has merely a symbolical significance. This is attested by the following quotation:

St. Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance." Mark 1:4 "the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." John 3:5 "Except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." . . . are to be explained as particular instances "of the general fact that, in Scripture language, a single part of a complete action and even that part which is most obvious to the senses, is often mentioned for the whole of it, and thus, in this case, the whole of the solemn transaction is designated by the external symbol." In other words the entire change, internal and external, spiritual and ritual, is referred to in language belonging strictly only to the outward aspect of it.⁶

Though these anti-pedo-baptists do not look upon Baptism as a means of grace in the Lutheran sense of the term,

⁵Ibid., p. 945.

⁶Ibid., p. 946.

nor do they find any ground for Christian education inherent in Baptism itself, they still have a highly developed program of education. There is an association of Baptism and teaching in their midst which can be readily seen from a presentation of what they call "the relative order of baptism - the third command in this chain of obedience."⁷ The writer speaks of the great commission given by Christ and says:

By the examination of this commission, as given by Matthew and Mark, the items stand thus: "First - Teaching or preaching. Second - Belief or faith on the part of the taught. Third - The Baptism of the believer in Christ. Fourth - The teaching or instructing of the disciples in all the commandments of Christ. And, lastly, the promise of the Savior is, to be with those who execute his commission to the end of the world."⁸

From this quotation it can be seen that these groups believe that Christian education should precede Baptism as well as follow it. The purpose of this Christian education is to bring a person to faith in Christ so that he will be baptized. After Baptism a person is expected to grow in the teachings of Christ.

The second group consists of those denominations which accept infant Baptism merely as a symbol of a covenant between God and the parents of the infant. Included among these are the different Methodist groups, the Presbyterians and the Reformed bodies.

⁷D. B. Ray, Baptist Succession (Rosemead, California: The King's Press, c.1949), p. 219.

⁸Ibid.

The Methodist Book of Discipline has this to say about children and Baptism:

We hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the Kingdom of God, and therefore graciously entitled to Baptism. The minister shall earnestly exhort all persons to dedicate their children to the Lord in Baptism as early as convenient and, before Baptism is administered, shall diligently instruct the parents regarding the vows which they assume in this Sacrament. It is expected of parents or guardians who present their children for Baptism that they use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God; and they shall be admonished of this obligation and earnestly exhorted to faithfulness therein.⁹

The Methodist Church also assumes a responsibility toward the baptized child as can be seen from the same source:

We regard all children who have been baptized as being in visible covenant relation to God and under the special care and supervision of the Church. All children who are baptized by a Methodist minister and other baptized children under the care of a Methodist Church shall be enrolled as preparatory members in the Methodist Church until this status is terminated by their reception, after a proper course of training, into full membership, or by death, withdrawal, or transfer to another evangelical denomination. . . . when, as a baptized, instructed child in the church, he gives evidence of understanding his Christian privileges and obligations of his Christian faith and purpose, he may be admitted into full membership in the church.¹⁰

Though these quotations indicate that the child does not receive anything in Baptism, it should be noted that the

⁹Doctrines and Disciplines of the Methodist Church, Edited by Nolan B. Harmon (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1944), p. 40.

¹⁰Ibid.

subject of Christian education is closely associated with the act. The children are enrolled as "preparatory members" who will at a future date receive a "proper course of training." When speaking of the instruction that he is to receive the expression occurs: "to instruct him in the use of the means of grace in living the Christian life."¹¹ This terminology refers to the use of the Word of God and prayer, but does not refer to the Sacraments in the Lutheran sense of means of grace. Another interesting and important item is the exhortation that is given concerning parents; they are to "use all diligence in bringing them up in conformity to the Word of God."¹²

Though these church bodies do not look upon Baptism as a Sacrament in the Lutheran sense that it actually brings the grace of God into the heart and life of the little one, they do recognize that Baptism should be followed by Christian training and education.

The position of the Presbyterian groups is quite similar. One of the writers of these denominations, Dr. C. W. Richards, recognizes Baptism as the most sacred and significant of all of the ordinances observed by Christians. He maintains that there is no "thus saith the Lord" for the Baptism of infants, but that the practice is based upon

¹¹Ibid., p. 41.

¹²Ibid., p. 40.

inferences.

The fact that the Master commissioned His apostles to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; the fact that Peter in his great Pentecostal sermon, called on men to be baptized and added, for the promise is to you and to your children; and the additional fact that, among those persons baptized by the apostles, at least three of them are spoken of as having been baptized with their households all point in the same direction. Almost certainly in some of these groups were included children, which fact would yield an inference that the infant children of believers have a right to baptism. But when we add to that the fact that the New Testament clearly recognized that the covenant with Abraham was identical with what we call the covenant of grace and that the infant child of Abraham received the seal of the covenant, then the inference that children of believers should be baptized becomes so strong as to merit a place in that creedal statement of our Church.¹³

This same writer gives a definition of a sacrament, which is worthy of note because it develops the idea of a covenant relationship.

Now in this sacrament there are three principal parts; the covenant itself, the sign and seal of the covenant, and faith

. . . the sign of the covenant . . . does not create the covenant . . . but is a visible sign of the covenant already existent, just as the rainbow is a sensible sign of the covenant with Noah. It is also the seal of the covenant and answers the purpose of a seal. When the sacrament is administered properly according to the command of God on the one side and received by man on his side, it may be said that the covenant is made under the hand and seal of both contracting parties that it may be binding and sure.¹⁴

¹³C. M. Richards, "The Baptism of Infants," Bulletin of Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, Georgia, March, 1948), n.p.

¹⁴Ibid.

The use of the term sacrament by this writer is best understood under the term "covenant". He says:

The covenant when once established may encourage and confirm faith but the covenant does not create faith. The covenant was made with Abraham as a reward to the faith of God's servant. Faith is the antecedent occasional cause of the covenant.¹⁵

That Baptism is not a sacrament in the Lutheran sense of a means of grace can be seen from the effects which this writer lists:

First of all is its effect on the parents. And among these may be mentioned that it should produce in parents a wondering sense of worship that God should have entered into a covenant of salvation with them - a covenant that includes their children. And a second effect should be that of driving parents to an earnest consideration of the reality of their faith - a faith what accepts the blessings of the covenant not only for themselves but for their children with them. And the third effect should be to produce in parents a confident assurance of the ultimate salvation of their baptized children.¹⁶

The effect upon the child is that it

marks him as a member of the visible church It does not make him a member of the visible church - he is that by birth to his believing parents.¹⁷

This same writer draws the comparison between the American citizenship which comes to the child who is born of American parents, even when born in a foreign country, and this membership which comes to the child because his father and

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

mother are members of the Christian church.

Though the Presbyterians do not recognize Baptism as a sacrament in the sense that the Lutheran Church holds and teaches, they do recognize the necessity of Christian training following Baptism in the case of children. A very apt presentation of this is taken from a publication intended for parents:

A high point along the course of a child's life between birth and entrance into the church school is baptism. It is interesting to review how John Calvin felt about this sacrament: "Calvin looks upon the child in the covenant as God's child, forgiven of sin and regenerated, with the new life as a latent seed, already at work in its heart. The child then opens its eyes redeemed on a world in which by careful nurture it is expected to grow and develop in the Christian ideal of life and character. The important point is that this child is presumptively a Christian. . . . The grace of adoption is sealed by baptism.

Too frequently in discussing baptism we lay stress only on bringing up a child "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" and fail to recognize the basic meaning of the sacrament, that God has laid his hand upon this child and placed him within the Church. The sacrament of baptism is, above all, God's act. Of course parents should be reminded of their responsibility to bring up their child to be what God would have him be. Recognizing how great an influence the receiving of this sacrament can have on the life of the child and his parents, ministers are increasingly using prebaptismal counseling to make sure that parents understand clearly the obligation they are undertaking. Also, baptism must be followed by guidance in ways in which parents can discharge their holy duties in the child's Christian nurture.

The congregations too assume responsibility by promising to do their part. The church should keep in close touch with its baptized children and their parents and should provide the best possible teachers and facilities for the program

of Christian education.¹⁸

Reformed writers have done much to develop the covenant ideas associated with Holy Baptism and have produced some wonderful materials showing the necessity of following Holy Baptism with Christian education. It must be remembered in reading any of the writings that these bodies do not subscribe to regeneration by Baptism. A recent publication from the ranks of this group says:

Baptism signified not only the covenant of grace which God has made with people and the washing away of our sins in Christ and union with Him, but also the application of redemption to our lives by the Holy Spirit. It signified regeneration, the new birth from above, which God gives His people, and the daily renewing of their lives. Although the Scriptures do not teach regeneration by baptism, they do teach that the latter symbolizes the former and thus the two are closely related.¹⁹

This same writer develops the idea that there is not baptismal grace, but that children are covenant children. In view of this covenant relationship Christian parents have the duty laid on them that next to their own love for God they are diligently and prayerfully to nurture their children in the Christian faith.²⁰

A European writer who holds the fundamental Reformed

¹⁸Jean A. Thompson, Sara G. Klein, and Elizabeth C. Gardner, Before They Are Three: Infants and Two-year-olds in the Home and Church (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, c.1954), pp. 85 f.

¹⁹M. Eugene Osterhaven, What is Christian Baptism? (Grand Rapids: Society for Reformed Publications, c.1956), p. 48.

²⁰Ibid., p. 55.

view shows that natural birth into the church is to be regarded as the sign of the divine will to salvation and consequently as claim to reception into the fellowship of Christ. His statement of the relation between faith and Baptism shows that he does not regard the sacrament as a means of grace:

We therefore come to the following conclusion about the relation between faith and Baptism:

- 1) after Baptism, faith is demanded of all those baptized;
- 2) before Baptism, the declaration of faith is a sign of the divine will that Baptism take place, demanded from adults who individually come over from Judaism or heathenism, but in other cases lacking;
- 3) during the baptismal act, faith is demanded of the praying congregation.²¹

Note should be taken that he does not mention anything of faith coming to the individual in Baptism.

Though this writer does not explicitly mention that Christian education is to follow Baptism, he does give indication that there is to be a human response after Baptism. This response would not only include the faith mentioned above, but would also include instruction which would lead to a practicing Christian life.

Thus it is confirmed that Baptism, so far as it is essentially a sacrament of reception, points to the future and demands from the future a human response. This holds good for all persons baptized, whether as adults or children, and whether they had faith previous to Baptism or not. My baptismal faith is not simply faith in Christ's work in general but on the quite specific deed which he performed upon me at the moment of

²¹Oscar Cullman, Baptism in the New Testament, translated by J. K. S. Reid (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1950), p. 55.

my Baptism in my being received into the inner circle of his Kingdom, that is, into his earthly body. . . .

It runs contrary to the meaning that it has pleased God to give to Baptism if the Church undertakes the Baptism of a man indiscriminately, that is, without any divine sign suggesting the prospect of his perseverance in Baptism within the community. Such a Baptism would be just as contrary to reason as the so-called emergency Baptism of a child mortally sick. If he is not expected to belong to the earthly Body of Christ, then this necessary second act of the Baptismal event cannot follow.²²

The last group is made up of denominations which hold and profess that Baptism is a means whereby the grace of God comes to the person baptized. Actually there are four denominations in this group though one of them, the Lutheran Church, has been dealt with earlier in this paper. The remaining groups are the Holy Oriental Catholic and Apostolic Church (Orthodox Church), The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church (Roman Catholic), and The Anglican and Episcopal Church. Though these groups all state that through Baptism the grace of God is brought to the individual, there are differences evident as the groups are compared.

The Orthodox Church believes that Baptism is an actual means of grace. A concise summary of the teaching of this group is the following:

Baptism is performed by trine - triple - immersion. It is said to convey the forgiveness of sins not only negatively by the removal of sin and its guilt and punishment but also positively by effecting the

²²Ibid., p. 50.

regeneration and justification of the soul. Baptism restores man to his original righteousness. Orthodoxy maintains that the lust or concupiscence, which remains in the baptized, is not sinful and remains without spiritual damage, even as pain and death remain in the baptized. The sacrament of Chrism, or Holy Anointing, or Confirmation, is said to complete Baptism and is administered immediately after Baptism.²³

Roman Catholicism also teaches that the grace of God is given the individual in Holy Baptism. In any consideration of the Roman view, special note must be taken of the manner in which the word "grace" is used. Rome speaks of "sanctifying grace" or "habitual grace" and an "actual grace."

Baptism brings to the soul of man the Sanctifying Grace that would have come to it in generation had Adam not sinned. . . . It admits the soul into Heaven and enables it to see and know God as He sees and knows Himself. But it is merely what is required for seeing and knowing Him. The soul that has only this grace will be, humanly speaking, far away from God . . . The Grace of Baptism . . . might be compared to the life of an infant. All its powers are there, but their capacity and activity is very small. Proper development will increase its possibilities.²⁴

The chief effects of sanctifying grace are given as:

first, it makes us holy and pleasing to God; second it makes us adopted children of God; third, it makes us temples of the Holy Ghost; fourth, it gives us the right to heaven.²⁵

This sanctifying or habitual grace must be supplemented by

²³Mayer, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁴Joseph Jacobs, The Sacramentary Teachings of the Church (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, c.1936), p. 58 f.

²⁵Francis J. Connell, Baltimore Catechism, Revised Confraternity Edition No. 3 (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1949), p. 66.

actual grace, which is called:

supernatural help of God which enlightens our mind and strengthens our will to do good and to avoid evil.²⁶

In any study of the doctrine of Baptism as taught by Rome, the entire sacramental system of The Roman Church must be kept in mind. A brief summary of the teachings of Rome on the sacraments is:

Fra Di Bruno defines the sacrament as an outward sign of a corresponding invisible grace ordained by Jesus Christ as a permanent means in the Church and which, by virtue of Christ's infinite merits, has power to convey to the worthy receiver the grace which it signifies. The object of the sacraments is to apply the fruit of our Savior's redemption to men by conveying, through their means, to our souls either the "habitual grace" of justification or an increase of the same and a pouring in of other graces or the recovery of justification when lost.

The sacraments contain and confer "the grace which they signify." In other words, they impart the sanctifying grace and all its concomitants, viz., the divine virtues of faith and the infused moral virtues. In addition, each sacrament confers its own specific sacramental grace. Justification is therefore obtainable only through the sacraments appointed by the Church. . . . Rome's view of faith as a mere intellectual assent and its definition of grace as an infused quality in man becomes evident in a twofold manner in its sacramental theology. In the first place, only the sacraments are means of "grace." The Word is not. . . . In the second place, Rome vigorously defends the ex opere operato efficacy of the sacraments.²⁷

Rome's teaching of the Sacraments, including that of Baptism,

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Mayer, op. cit., p. 56 f.

is bound up in the sacramental system which Rome has instituted. This sacramental system makes it well nigh impossible to find salvation outside of the Roman church. If Rome's program is followed through, it amounts to this, that man is given the power by God to work out his own salvation.

Rome recognizes the importance of Christian education. This can be seen from the wonderful educational system that has been built by this Church throughout the world. The relationship of Baptism to this educational system can be seen in part from the Papal Encyclical, Christian Education of Youth, issued December 31, 1929. We quote in part from this document:

. . . there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.

. . . we see the supreme importance of Christian education, not merely for each individual, but for families and for the whole of human society

Education is essentially a social and not a mere individual activity. Now there are three necessary societies, distinct from one another and yet harmoniously combined by God, into which man is born: two, namely the family and civil society, belong to the natural order; the third, the Church, to the super-natural order. . . .

The third society, into which man is born when through Baptism he reaches the divine life of grace, is the Church; a society of the super-natural order and of universal extent; a perfect society, because it has in itself all the means required for its own end, which is the eternal salvation of mankind; hence it is supreme in its own domain. . . .

And first of all education belongs pre-eminently to the Church, by reason of a double title in the supernatural order, conferred exclusively upon

her by God Himself; absolutely superior therefore to any other title in the natural order.²⁸

Though Roman Catholicism does not believe in Baptismal regeneration in the sense that the Lutheran Church accepts and subscribes to this, it still recognizes in Baptism educational implications. This is specifically stated in the Encyclical Letter quoted earlier:

The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is, to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by baptism²⁹

The Anglican and Episcopal Churches' positions are complicated by the fact that there are tendencies within these bodies to try to reconcile the extreme Roman view held by many within these communions with the extreme Reformed views held by others within the same communions.

Again the summary of Dr. Meyer might be used as a succinct presentation of the teachings of this group of Christians with reference to the sacraments, and especially with reference to Baptism:

The Episcopalians are agreed neither as to the place nor as to the significance of the Sacraments. . . . The Thirty-Nine Articles (XXV) stated that the Sacraments are not only badges of Christian men's profession, but also "sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace . . . by which He doth work invisibly in us." But

²⁸Pius XI, "Christian Education of Youth," Encyclical Letter of December 31, 1929 (New York: The Paulist Press, n.d.), pp. 5 ff.

²⁹Ibid., p. 35.

since the days of Hooker many Anglicans consider the Sacraments "the social and corporate rites of the Church in which by means of divinely appointed signs the spiritual life flows from God." As to the manner in which Sacramental grace is bestowed, some hold that it is given directly, others that the Sacraments "convey opportunity for grace," and still others, that the Sacraments express a state of mind and will which prepares men to receive the gift of God with profit. The Thirty-Nine Articles (XXVII) allow for teaching baptismal regeneration. However, most Episcopalians seem to view Baptism as the Sacrament of initiation, whereby a person is grafted into the corporate, visible Church.³⁰

Though there are widely divergent positions held by parts of the Episcopal communions, some excellent materials have come from this group dealing with Baptism and education. A notable writer in this respect is J. R. Lumb, who shows the close relationship of Baptism and education:

The first of the means of grace through which a soul may grow is that of Holy Baptism, which is bound to be the starting point of all Christian religious education. To that gift the soul looks back as the time of its regeneration, when forgiven and made alive by the gift of the Spirit, it put on Christ and was taken into the Body . . . so at the font is begun a pastorate of the soul from which there can be no discharge. This is the commitment of ecclesie docens.³¹

A sampling might also be given from another work which is a Catechism to be used in the instruction of children. This particular little booklet deals with Baptism, showing:

In Baptism you were made a living part of Jesus Christ. One day he said that he is like a vine, and that we are some of its branches The

³⁰Mayer, op. cit., pp. 287 f.

³¹J. R. Lumb, The Education of Souls (London: The Faith Press, Ltd., 1952), pp. 25 f.

life that Christ gives all his members (like sap in a plant or blood in your veins) is called Grace.

At your new birth in baptism . . . you became God's child . . . by adoption

Every baptized Christian is now an inheritor of God's kingdom; heaven is now his or her eternal home.³²

From the writings of J. R. Lumb it appears that he accepts the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as an actual means of grace, as a means of regeneration. The quotation given above as a sample of catechetical materials which have been produced in the Episcopal Church takes an Anglo-Catholic view of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

As one studies the teachings of the individual church groups concerning Holy Baptism, there are a number of things which stand out. One of these is that regardless of the attitude of the church group concerning the baptism of an infant, whether for it or against such infant Baptism, all agree that the little child should receive a Christian training. Those who do not accept pedo-baptism still want the child led to know the Lord Jesus Christ as its personal Savior from the curse of sin. They want the little ones to receive this training and guidance that they might be brought to faith, own Christ and accept Baptism. On the other hand all of the groups which practice infant Baptism, whether or not they recognize it as a means of regeneration, hold that

³²H. A. Wilson, Hazgerston Catechism (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1945), pp. 37 ff.

the children should be given Christian training also. They believe that the children deserve to receive the nurture of the Lord. They believe that the children should be led to know what the Lord Jesus did for them. In the communions which hold Baptism to be an actual means of God's grace to the individual, there is the desire that the child will be led to know, understand, appreciate, and have an appropriate response to that grace which came to him in Baptism. Thus it can be seen that every group holds that children should receive Christian training. Those who hold pedo-baptism to be a command of God make this the starting point of such training; yes, it might be said, the first reason or ground for such training.

It is lead to an intellectual knowledge which would never see a connection with the faith that was given to the individual in Baptism, let alone see a relationship between that faith and every day life.

All of religious education must have a purpose, that purpose is to teach the little one not only to learn by rote religious knowledge, but to learn to use that religious knowledge in action. This is not to be "going" for "points" sake, but a going which flows out of the love which the individual has for Christ. It could very well be placed that the language of Scripture with those well chosen words of the Apostle James, "faith without works is dead." ¹ James

CHAPTER IV

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

There is a danger in speaking of Christian education which is demanded by Baptism. The danger lies in the fact that people might be prone to limit such education to that which takes place in a formal teaching situation, as in a classroom; or someone may get the idea that this education means merely imparting a certain body of knowledge, consisting purely of facts, figures and dates; or that Christian education involves the study of things from the dead past, which have little if any meaning for the present life. All of these things could lead to an intellectual knowledge which would never see a connection with the faith that has come to the individual in Baptism, let alone see a relationship between that faith and every day life.

All of religious education must have a purpose, that purpose is to teach the little one not only to learn by gathering religious knowledge, but to learn to use that religious knowledge in doing. This is not to be "doing" for "doing's" sake, but a doing which flows out of the love which the individual has for Christ. It could very well be placed into the language of Scripture with those well known words of the Apostle James, "faith without works is dead."¹ Faith

¹James 2:26.

has been brought to the child in Holy Baptism, but the child must be shown how to make that faith a vital force in his life. Lumb has this to say about the purpose of Christian religious education:

Knowledge, by itself, is useless, or worse than useless, unless it leads to doing things. So we want knowledge with a purpose. The purpose of Christian religious education is to help us to love God in worship and prayer, and to love our neighbour by self-sacrificing service.²

When the question is asked as to what a child should be taught, the answer is found first of all in the Baptismal service itself. The infant who has been baptized should be brought up in the knowledge of his baptismal covenant with God. There should be a building upon the things given to the child in Holy Baptism. He should be led to do the things which were promised at his Baptism. In the Baptismal service God acted first by giving the child faith, now there should be a building upon God's foundation. The child who has been dedicated to God should now be educated for God.

In the Lutheran Baptismal service the areas of instruction are shown in the Exhortation to the Sponsors.³ These areas in which he should be instructed might be indicated as follows:

²Reginald Lumb, The First Three Years (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1944), p. 19.

³The Lutheran Agenda, authorized by the Synods constituting The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 4 f.

1. That he obtained and possesses the saving faith in the one true God. In other words, that he has been received into the family of a loving Father in heaven.
2. That he renounced the devil and his wicked works. In other words, that he is to learn to fight against sin and worldliness.
3. That he should be taught the Ten Commandments, the Christian Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. He should be taught the Christian faith as outlined in the Catechism.
4. He should be brought to God's house. To teach him to love that place and to worship faithfully and knowingly.
5. He should be brought up to lead a godly life. Everything taught him should have this as its objective, that he may continue in the faith until the day of Jesus Christ.

Lest someone raise the question of how a person can teach such things to little ones, the answer of Lumb is quoted:

Can we translate these great things of the baptismal promises into a few words, or ideas, that a baby can begin to learn from the start? I suggest that they are the following: "Sorry" (to teach repentance); "Father" and "Jesus" (to introduce him to the Faith); "Ought" (to introduce the life of obedience); "Prayer" (to lead him towards worship); "Church" (to introduce him to his Father's house). From the time that he is two, and perhaps before, Baby is learning many words, the vocabulary of the

world. At the same time, and never any later, he should be learning the heavenly vocabulary, and it contains these six words - sorry, Father, Jesus, ought, prayer, Church. Around these six simple words the baby-teaching of thinking and doing, all told in baby-language, is to revolve.⁴

Lumb goes into detail to show that the Church has a syllabus of religious education in the Catechism. He shows that its outline provides the church with a "blue print" of Christian life. He also points out that the four great groups in the West: the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics, developed Catechisms for the instruction of children. He brings out that the words cannot be used in teaching a little one, but the outline of the Catechism presents a plan which can be wisely followed.⁵

According to that plan the following are the paths along which a learning child is to be led: his membership of Christ's Church, the truth about God, the life of obedience, the life of prayer, and the life of the Lord's Table. Our plan is to lead Baby, by baby-steps, just a little way up each of these great roads - roads which, all his life, he will never leave, and to the end of which he will never come.⁶

A Lutheran will readily recognize that these observations are equally applicable from the Lutheran point of view. The summary from one of the sections of Lumb's little treatise, dealing with baby's first lessons gives some pointed directions which could be used effectively in Lutheran circles:

⁴Lumb, op. cit., pp. 36 ff.

⁵Ibid., pp. 37 ff.

⁶Ibid., p. 43.

1. We are not so much concerned with "knowledge" as with awakening a religious disposition or "angle on life." We want Baby to make friends with the things of God.
2. Our "ground plan" teaches us to introduce him to all the fundamental aspects of the religious life, because the whole of Baby is reaching out towards life, just as the whole of him is reaching out to the whole of the world that he meets in daily contacts.
3. The Life in Grace. Let us take him to church for week-day visits, and explain. Let him share some of our Sunday worship.
4. The Life of Faith. Let us tell him what we know about God in our own words, using good pictures. Let us use the Christian Year as the basis for our first Bible stories about Jesus. Let them be "five minute" stories.
5. The Life of Obedience. God's gift of conscience. The fact of sin in early years. The learning of the "oughts."
6. The Life of Prayer. Prayers at the cot. The limitations of Baby's prayers. The fundamental speaking to God. The teaching of the Lord's Prayer.
7. The Life of Communion. The first teaching about the altar and the Bread of Heaven.
8. "Doing comes first, and understanding after." We are to teach Baby to do religious things, and to understand them later. The sharing of our own religion.⁷

When Lumb speaks of this ground plan of learning, he makes the observation that it "is just the same at two as it will be at twelve or sixty."⁸ He then brings an interesting illustration which beautifully portrays the differences which exist from one age to another:

The fundamentals never change. This has been put so well by a great Roman Catholic teacher, Father Drinkwater, the author of the Sower scheme of religious teaching, that I ask for your attention

⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁸Ibid., p. 47.

to his illustration before we embark on the actual methods of teaching Baby. He asks us to imagine that we are climbing the stone steps inside a high tower, and all the way up there are windows. Through these windows you can look out on the countryside and admire the view. Round and round you go, and up and up you go. The view that you get at the bottom is of the same countryside that you see at the top. There are the same trees, houses, churches, shops, and rivers. In one sense you might say that the view never alters. But, of course, it does in another way, because you see things from a different angle as you go higher; and you see more of them. Religious education, in Father Drinkwater's metaphor, is like that. The child at the bottom of the tower is Baby. He sees just the same countryside as the person at the top, except that he does not see so much of it, and he sees it from a different angle. So we must not think of "baby subjects," to be followed later by "junior subjects," and then by "senior" and "adult subjects." They are the same subjects all the time, but seen from different heights and with widening perspective, as the baby's vision and intelligence ascend the ladder of the years.⁹

These are areas of religious life in which the child should be trained. It is quite understandable that the child will grow in his love for God and love for his fellow men if guided along the lines which have been outlined.

There can be no doubt that the Christian training of the child is to begin at birth. In the secular world, those interested in the infant, whether it is the doctor, who is interested in the proper physical development of the child, or the educator, who is interested in the proper development of the child mentally, all want to bring their guidance to the parents immediately after birth. The host of materials

⁹Ibid., pp. 43 f.

which have come from the press offering guidance and direction to parents in the physical and mental development of their child attest to this interest. Surely the most important training of the child for time and for eternity in Christian development and nurture should receive as much, if not more, consideration.

Though everyone may not agree with the educators and psychologists who assert that a child's personality is fixed in the first few years of life, all must admit that the first years of life are important years in the training of that child physically, mentally and spiritually. Horace Bushnell brings this out forcefully when he writes:

Let every Christian father and mother understand when their child is three years old, that they have done more than half of all they will ever do for his character.¹⁰

The same line of thought is developed by the psychologist Alfred Adler, when he writes:

By the end of the fifth year of life a child has reached a unified and crystallized pattern of behavior, its own style of approach to problems and tasks. . . . By the age of five years a child's psyche is a unit . . . the threads of his personality have been drawn together.¹¹

If this Christian training of the child is to begin at the earliest possible moment after birth, it follows that the

¹⁰Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1889, reprinted 1953), p. 212.

¹¹Alfred Adler, What Life Should Mean to You, edited by Alan Porter (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1931), pp. 12 and 220.

home must be involved in it. Religious education begins at the font of Baptism, and it must be carried on in the home immediately thereafter. The home is the most important agency in religious education. Parents are the most important teachers that the child will have. The whole life of the parents in their relationship to their child must be one that recognizes that God wants them to bring up that child in His nurture. This is how one writer puts it:

. . . when they are brought to baptism, their parents promise to provide such an education for them . . . they (children) become conscious partakers of the covenant life only by a saving faith in Jesus Christ that is wrought in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, a faith by which they merit nothing, but simply appropriate Christ as the fountain of all spiritual blessings. And they obtain the full inheritance only by faith and sanctification, by separation from the world in consecration to God, and by a life of childlike and loving obedience. In the case of Christian parents this naturally involves the duty that they be diligent in training their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, in order that these children, when they come to maturity, may willingly enjoy the rich covenant blessings.¹²

It could be said that the religious training of children begins before their birth in the religious life of the parents. If the parents foster a love for God in their lives, if they show a desire for service to Him and a willingness to worship Him regularly in their own lives, this is

¹²Louis Berkhof, "The Covenant of Grace and Its Significance for Christian Education," Fundamentals in Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), pp. 21 and 29.

good preparation for the later training of their children. If they have a common religious life which they share with each other, they will be more ready to share it with the child whom God permits to come into their home. Lumb brings out the importance of the home when he writes:

Home is the first word that counts in the religious education of a child. We cannot be content with giving him what the world calls a "good home." Our duty is to give him a Christian home, a home that is beyond any doubt a house of God.¹³

The home is the most natural place to teach a child the meaning of the things which were listed earlier in the areas of Christian training. What is more normal than to teach a child to pray by having the parents kneel beside the bed of the little one to pray? A normal way to teach a child to love to worship and love the things of God's house is to see and experience the love which the parents have for these things. Every one of the areas of Christian training finds a normal communication from parent to child in the home.

Closely associated with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the Church custom of having sponsors stand with and for the child at his Baptism. The subject of sponsorship is considered in this connection because there are educational implications connected with it. Historically, it appears that the terms "sponsor" and "godparent" were synonymous. How the whole custom of sponsorship developed is lost in

¹³Lumb, op. cit., pp. 21 f.

antiquity. An exhaustive treatment is given this subject in the book Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation from which we quote:

Even the most careful examination of the evidence leaves several questions connected with sponsorship unanswered. Apart from the impossibility of determining exactly how it first came into being, and what precisely were the functions of sponsors in, say, the third century, there are several intriguing problems to the solution of which the sources make no contribution. For example, we know that in the seventh century it was customary for one sponsor to act for the candidate at the catechumenate, another at the baptism, and a third at the confirmation, and we may reasonably infer that in the course of time these three sponsors came to act together at the baptism, thus originating the practice enjoined in the Prayer Book. But how ancient was the custom by which there were three successive godparents for a candidate during the whole initiation? Have we here evidence that at the baptism of an adult the sponsor was not the one who presented the candidate for enrolment; or that originally also there, were three sponsors, one who testified to the candidate's fitness for admission to the catechumenate, one who bore witness to his conduct during the period of instruction (and may actually in some cases have taught him), and one who assisted at the baptism? It will be remembered that the Church Orders give no definite indication as to whether the same person or different persons fulfilled the sponsorial duties they enjoin, so that the cautious historian must naturally suppose a single person is mentioned throughout. But it is not impossible that the custom described by Archbishop Theodore and given legal force by Leo IV had its origin in a practice to which the sources make no reference. If this were so, we should have yet another instance of the transference of usages from adult initiation to infant baptism, since it seems clear that in the case of the latter there was at first generally one sponsor (the parent - normally the father) and not more. Impossible though it is to settle this and other questions, we can nevertheless trace with some accuracy the growth and development of sponsorship, and there can be no doubt that the most important determining factor in

its evolution were the supersession of adult baptism by infant baptism, the shifting of emphasis from sponsorship to godparenthood, and the emergence of the idea of spiritual relationship.¹⁴

This same writer brings out that originally the sponsors were required to see that the child was taught the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. After the Reformation the Decalogue was added to the former.

The Roman Church insists upon sponsors, who are called godparents. The term sponsor is used in connection with the person who stands for the child at confirmation. The Catholic Catechism in giving the duties of a godparent has this to say:

The duty of a godparent after Baptism is to see that the child is brought up a good Catholic, if this is not done by the parents. (a) Godparents contract a spiritual relationship, not with each other, but with their godchildren. Godparents cannot marry their godchildren without a dispensation. . . . Only Catholics who know their faith and live up to the duties of their religion should be chosen as godparents for Baptism. (a) Godparents should be at least thirteen years of age. (b) Non-Catholics cannot be godparents, nor can the father, the mother, the husband, or the wife of the person to be baptized.¹⁵

The godparent holds the child at Baptism, answers the questions which are addressed to the child in Holy Baptism,

¹⁴Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation: And Historical Introduction to Anglican Practice (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 130 f.

¹⁵Francis J. Connell, Baltimore Catechism, revised Confraternity Edition No. 3 (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1940), p. 190.

but there is no exhortation addressed to the sponsor in the Baptismal service given in The National Liturgical Week publication of 1955.¹⁶

The Anglican Church retains the number of three sponsors or godparents. For a male child the church asks that there be two male sponsors and one female sponsor. For a female child the order is reversed.¹⁷ The writer quoted earlier speaks of "the traditional three, but in certain circumstances two are allowed or even one."¹⁸

In the Baptismal service, the questions addressed to the godparents indicate clearly the responsibilities which they accept. The answers expected are in the affirmative.

Having now, in the name of this Child, made these promises, wilt thou also on thy part take heed that this Child shall be instructed in the Christian Faith and the commandments of God, and encouraged to resist all evil, and to love and serve his Saviour Jesus Christ in his holy Church? . . .

Minister. Wilt thou undertake to set him an example by the faithful exercise of the duties of a Christian, as this Church doth understand the same? . . .

Minister. Wilt thou take heed to urge this Child, so soon as sufficiently instructed, to come to the Bishop to be confirmed by him? . . .¹⁹

¹⁶"Administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism," "The New Ritual and Social Order," National Liturgical Week (Elsberry, Missouri: The Liturgical Conference, 1956), pp. 30 ff.

¹⁷H. A. Wilson, Haggerston Catechism (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1945), p. 34.

¹⁸Bailey, op. cit., p. 130.

¹⁹Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., The Living Liturgy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 131.

The Lutheran Church teaching on the subject of sponsors has been taken from Pastoral Theology:

Sponsors at baptism are non-essential, but to have sponsors is an old custom in the Church and serves a good purpose, and therefore it ought to be retained.²⁰

The purpose which sponsors serve is also given by this same writer as follows:

The purpose of having sponsors is threefold: They are to be witnesses, attesting to the fact of a child's baptism; they are to promise to give the child a Christian training in the true faith in case the parents die before the child is confirmed, and also to suggest such training if the parents neglect it; and they are to pray for the child.²¹

In the Baptismal service an exhortation is addressed to the sponsors which brings out the three points listed above. In the Lutheran Agenda there are two manners of giving the exhortation concerning the training to be given the child.

. . . as much as in you lies, lend your counsel and aid (especially if he should lose his parents), that he may be brought up in the true knowledge and fear of God,

Either:

According to the teachings of the Lutheran Church and faithfully keep the baptismal covenant unto the end.

Or:

And be taught the holy Ten Commandments, the Christian Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; and that, as he grows in years, you place in his hands the Holy Scriptures, bring him to the services of

²⁰John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 114.

²¹Ibid.

God's house, and provide for his further instruction in the Christian faith, that, abiding in the covenant of his Baptism and in communion with the Church, he may be brought up to lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ.²²

It should go without saying that every sponsor or godparent will pray for his godchild. The sponsor will be anxious to take the cause of his god-child to the throne of God's mercy, asking that God's blessings will rest upon the god-child and the sponsor. His prayers will also reflect the prayer spoken in the Lutheran Agenda:

May God enable you both to will and to do this charitable work and with His grace fulfill what we are unable to do.²³

When it comes to having a part in the Christian training of the child for whom the person is a sponsor, limitations are readily apparent. The opportunities for actual training of the child in the items referred to will be few. Every opportunity should be taken by the sponsor to inquire into the spiritual development of his godchild. He should also encourage the parents to give their child a sound and thorough Christian training. No doubt much can be done to encourage the child in his religious training as he grows in years. Every sponsor should be led to understand the seriousness of the responsibilities which he has accepted, and every parent should recognize the weight of responsibility

²²The Lutheran Agenda, op. cit., pp. 4 f.

²³Ibid., p. 5.

which they have asked the sponsor to share with them. The educational implications of sponsorship are apparent, though they are difficult to put into practice.

The premise that the font is the place where the initiatory Sacrament is administered brings into focus that this Sacrament involved the entire communion of believers. The child has become a part of the communion of believers in a given place, and as such, this communion has a responsibility toward this newly acquired member. It must be remembered that this child is not received into a conditional, prospective or potential membership, but into an actual membership. Dr. Pieper's comment again applies: ". . . they not merely expect to be members in the Church, but are members."²⁴ In view of this relationship, the responsibility devolves upon the whole membership to be interested and have a part in the Christian training of this new member.

All of the different elements of the local communion of believers, the local congregation, must become involved in the training of the child who has been received into its communion through Baptism. It should be remembered that the development of this section must of necessity be limited to broad aspects of this responsibility. The conditions of organization from one congregation to another and from one church body to another will make any program of religious

²⁴Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, p. 277.

education vary.

The congregational life which is pictured here is drawn mainly from this author's fifteen years' experience in the Lutheran parish ministry.

The two elements in the organizational make-up of a Lutheran congregation which are most vitally concerned with this training of the infant and child are the Board of Elders and the Board for Parish Education. These boards may be known by various names. The first mentioned, the Board of Elders, is that group which is charged with the spiritual oversight of the entire congregation. The board's concern for the infant received into the church through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism should begin even before the child is brought to the font. This concern would center in whether parents have been directed and are being directed to the importance of the Sacrament as a means of bringing the grace of God to the child or children with which He has blessed them. When the child is brought to the font and thus received into the communion of believers, the elders should accept a spiritual responsibility toward that newly received member just as they have a responsibility toward the parents. Some congregations endeavor to make this interest tangible at the font by asking an elder to be present at the Baptism of the child and to assume a definite responsibility toward that child. Of course, one of the obvious intents of such an interest is to impress upon the parents that the church

does care and is interested in this child who has been brought into church membership through Baptism. This responsibility, after the initiatory act, could include directing the parents to seek the aid of the church in the training of the child from earliest infancy. Actually this would be the field of Christian family life education. This field of endeavor would be shared by the Board for Parish Education which has been mentioned. The details of implementing such a program is beyond the scope of this study, but it is quite obvious that it would vary from one congregation to another and from one church body to another because of the different conditions which could and would obtain.

The other board referred to may be known variously as the Board for Parish Education or the Board for Christian Education or perhaps by some other name. This board's responsibility can be more direct and more easily followed. Even before the child is born, this board could begin discharging its responsibility toward the infant through training the expectant parents. This might be done in prenatal classes which would strive to lead the parents to a fuller appreciation of God's blessings which will come to them in the birth of an infant. If the parents have a more vivid understanding and appreciation of their child as a gift from God, there is bound to be a more wholesome response on the part of the parents in rearing that child as a Christian from birth. There will be a greater willingness to work

at this Christian training of their child. This kind of training would surely have as one of its objectives the strengthening of the worship life of the parents. It would strive to lead the parents to recognize their need for God's blessings and guidance as the little one is brought into their lives. They surely should begin to ask God specifically to make them good Christian parents. No doubt some preliminary training could be given to help them in the later training of their child in the areas which were indicated earlier.

After the child has come into the home, and no doubt in most cases has been baptized, another group could be formed, a class for parents. In some instances, where the number of parents involved is small, the two groups, prenatal and parent classes, might be together. The purpose of such a group would be to teach the parents how they might teach their little one the great truths of the Christian faith. This would be a concrete manner of helping parents meet the varying situations and problems which confront them in the growing spiritual life of their child. It is in a group such as this that the opportunity would be afforded to become very specific about the manner of teaching the different areas of information which were outlined earlier. This would be the place where questions such as these could be answered and help given: How do you explain the concept "Church" to a little child? How do you foster a

worship life in a little child? How do you explain the doctrine of Baptism to a little one? What should a Christian parent do about discipline? There are a host of different subjects and questions that could be dealt with in such a group.

Another group that could be used to foster such training is a Parent Teacher League. The program should be one of training for Christian parenthood rather than a program which is primarily concerned with fellowship or raising of funds.

After Baptism the child should be enrolled in a Nursery Program in the Church. The purpose of this program should also be to help the parents in the Christian training of their child. The ideal program would include regular visits from teachers in the Nursery Department (usually this is a department of the Sunday School). The purpose of such visits must center in the spiritual development of the child in that home. Assistance can be given the parents through consultation, through printed materials, through encouragement to enroll in a parents' class and, perhaps, through other means at the disposal of the local congregation. All of these helps must center in the Christian training of the child in the home. The extent of this contact may vary with the individual congregation. In some instances it may only amount to a mail contact at stated intervals. The extent of such a Nursery Program will depend upon local circumstances

and interest.

As the baptized child grows older it will come under the direct teaching agencies of the church. These agencies may include the Sunday School, the Christian Day School, week-day classes, released-time classes, Vacation Bible School, Bible Classes, and others. Each of these agencies must be vitally concerned in the Christian training of the children who are baptized members of the congregation, for Baptism has placed an obligation upon each of them. The purpose which all of them have is to teach the child the Christian faith. The objective of such teaching is the same as that stressed earlier: to lead the child to do something about God in its daily life. This is well stated by Lumb when he writes:

The Christian religion is . . . what a man, woman or child does about God through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . It isn't "being good"; it isn't just "believing in God." He says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first great commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love Thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets" (St. Matt. 22: 37-40). . . . For many, religious education seems to be aiming at something which they call "an attitude towards life." But there is nothing of this in the teaching of Christ. There His religion is shown to be a commandment-religion. . . . It means doing things that proceed from the whole-hearted love of God and our neighbour, through the power of Christ.²⁵

The Christian pastor, by virtue of his call as shepherd

²⁵Lumb, op. cit., pp. 12 f.

of the flock, must be in the midst of all of this training. He must show a vital concern for all of the areas which have been indicated. He especially, of all people, will be aware of the difficulties involved in this entire subject of Christian training of the young. If he has been engaged in Christian education for even a short while, he will readily recognize that bringing children up to the implications of their discipleship is a complex operation. Lumb in one of his books brings this out clearly:

. . . experienced pastors . . . are well aware of the great gap between "knowledge" and discipleship . . . week by week they teach them (children of knowledge) the Bible (or Catechism) in the day school; but very little happens about it on Sundays. Their knowledge remains what that great Nonconformist educator and hymnwriter, Dr. Watts, called, "notional." They know quite well their Sunday duty, but they lack the environment and inward impulse to do what their minds assure them to be right. . . . (they have) a "belief" in God, for whom and about whom they are prepared to do nothing at all - that is the terminus of the "children of knowledge."²⁶

It can be seen from this presentation that the opportunities for the different elements of the Christian congregation to have a part in the fulfilling of the educational implications of Holy Baptism are almost unlimited. In fact, the only limiting factor will be the willingness and ability of the local congregation to implement a forceful and vital program as the responsibility is recognized and the opportunities are accepted.

²⁶J. R. Lumb, The Education of Souls (London: The Faith Press, Ltd., 1952), pp. 6 f.

CHAPTER V

SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS

In view of the responsibilities which devolve upon the parents and the local congregation because of the educational implications in Holy Baptism, there are several aspects which should be given some special consideration in any treatment of this subject.

One of these aspects might be stated as follows: should children be baptized in every instance where parents or guardians bring them? Before glibly giving an answer in the affirmative, it might be well to look at some of the things which are involved in such a question. It is a difficult question because of the educational implications of Holy Baptism as outlined earlier. No one wants to deny any child the blessings of Baptism. However, the responsibilities for Christian education, inherent in Baptism, give pause for concern. It was this concern which led to this study. An Anglican writer has presented the problem in a light vein in verse. However, the deep concern which is involved cannot be hidden by the ecclesiastical humor of the verse. The poem is entitled: Not Done:

The Vicar won't christen our baby;
It's really a terrible shame;

1S. J. Forrest, What's The Use? (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1956), p. 12.

For children get on so much better
When christened and given a name.

He asked some disquieting questions
Of babies he'd christened before
Who go to the Salvation Army
Along with the children next door.

But if they are sent to the Chapel
While father is taking his nap;
So long as they all attend SOMEWHERE,
I don't see that it matters a scrap.

Such narrowness, in a free country,
Ought never, in Church, to prevail;
The State should COMPEL all the clergy
To take every child, without fail.

When Baby required vaccination,
The doctor came here at the run;
But parsons, who call themselves Christians,
Refuse to let infants be DONE.

It's true that the godparents' children
Were reared at the old Gospel Hall;
I don't think it very much matters,
For now they go nowhere at all.

The R.C.'s, of course, willy-nilly,
Are made to keep promise and vow;
But C. of E. godparents' duties
Are merely formalities now.

The vows that we make in the Prayer Book
Are nominal ones that suffice
To render the service impressive,
And make it all solemn and nice.

So, if he won't christen our Baby,
We're not going to make ourselves ill;
There's still quite a number of churches,
and plenty of chapels that will.

The concern of this writer is that Baptism has become, in many instances, merely a formality through which the child is taken, without any thought of its significance, its purpose, its expectations. To what extent this attitude is prevalent in the various church groups would be difficult,

if not impossible, to ascertain. That such an attitude is present among some people of every church group, no doubt, is true, as indicated by the evidences which were cited at the very beginning of this thesis.

This same concern has been evidenced by missionaries working in foreign fields. The concern in the mission field is that children may be contacted, enrolled in some formal educational agency such as a Sunday School, Vacation School, or some other form of Christian education, and through this contact express a desire for Holy Baptism. The parents may signify a willingness to permit such a Baptism, but not have any serious intention of permitting the child to grow up a Christian. The question is a knotty one, to say the least. What should be the missionary's attitude and policy in such a case? Should the missionary refuse to baptize the child unless he can be reasonably sure that the child so baptized will be reared as a Christian? Should the missionary be satisfied to seek the assurance of the parents that they will permit the little one to continue his Christian training and place no hindrance in the child's path as he seeks to express his Christian convictions?

Some evidence of this concern and its results can be seen from the communication which is cited below:

In confirmation of our conversation relative to the performance of baptism in our Asiatic fields, I want to assure you that our Missionaries are very cautious in performing baptisms of children whose families are not related to the church. Perhaps statistics can best indicate this. The

1956 record shows these figures for the specific fields under our care:

<u>Country</u>	<u>Children from Christian homes</u>	<u>Children from non-Christian homes</u>	<u>Adults</u>
Formosa:	61	27	53
Hong Kong:	445	154	421
India:	1,204	271	464
Japan:	24	7	102
Philippines:	119	38	25
Totals	<u>1,853</u>	<u>497</u>	<u>1,065</u>

On a percentage basis it would appear that of all baptisms 54% concern children from Christian homes and 15% represent other children and 31% represent the adults. Incidentally the division line between children and adults in our statistics is set at 16.

In the case of Formosa, Hong Kong, and the Philippines there were larger baptism ceremonies that concerned whole families and thus the percentage of children from non-Christian background is high. Of the 38 children in this classification in the Philippines, 28 were baptized in one place when a larger group of adults was also received into membership. Of the 27 such children baptized in Formosa, 18 were received at one place at a large Easter baptism in 1956. This also concerned a good number of families. Had the baptism of the children taken place a day later, it would have been registered as that of children from Christian homes.²

This same correspondent asks the question whether men working in these fields have so little contact with non-Christian homes and therefore have so few Baptisms from such homes. In answer to this he quotes the statistics of children

²Herman H. Koppelman, "Letter to Franklin W. Ritthamel," dated May 2, 1957. In author's possession.

from such non-Christian homes that are enrolled in educational agencies:

In Formosa there are 316 children from such homes in Sunday School, 120 in Vacation Bible School. In Hong Kong there are 613 such children in the schools, 2,671 in Sunday School, 80 in Vacation Bible School.

In India we have 6,780 such in our schools, 1,929 in Sunday School.

In Japan there are 1,154 in Sunday School, 467 in Vacation Bible School, 345 in Kindergarten, 249 in the schools.

In the Philippines there are 414 in Sunday School and 24 in Vacation Bible School. Here there are very many baptized in the Roman Catholic Church but otherwise unconnected with any church.³

The concern can be seen in the caution which the missionaries exercise in dealing with this problem as indicated by this correspondent in his letter. This caution, no doubt, is founded upon long experience in dealing with this situation in foreign heathen countries.

A similar aspect is involved in the case where a child may be brought for Baptism without the consent of its parents. Perhaps the consent cannot be obtained for one reason or another. It may be that a relative brings the child to be baptized, or it may be that one of the parents brings the child to be baptized without the consent of the other parent or perhaps in direct opposition to the other parent's wishes. The direction of one writer is as follows:

Children should be baptized when their baptism is requested by those who have parental authority over them: the parents (also at the request of the

³Ibid.

mother if the father objects, 1 Cor.7:14; 2 Tim. 1:5), foster parents, step-parents, guardians who have been entrusted with the child's training, masters of children in slavery, and also such parents or guardians as have fallen away from the faith or have been excommunicated or adhere to false teachings, provided they do not declare that they will bring up their children in the errors of their false religion. It is not necessary, however, that the pastor ask them to promise to bring up their children in the true religion, which promise, on account of their ignorance of the true religion, they might not even be able to give. "As long as children of unbelievers remain with their parents, the children should not be baptized if the parents object; . . . for Baptism is the reception into, and the seal of, the evangelical covenant which God through Christ the Mediator has made with us who believe in Christ, and therefore only such should be baptized concerning whom we may hope that they will be brought up in true godliness and in all things pertaining to the evangelical covenant. . . . Certainly God did not intend that the Christian religion should be spread and the Sacraments administered by violating parental rights; for He knew that, if that be done, much confusion would result and that the Gospel and the Sacraments would become odious to unbelievers. . . . If, however, Baptism has been administered to a child contrary to the will of its parents, such baptism is valid, provided that all things essential to Baptism have been observed; for the things essential to Baptism are not determined by the will of the parents."⁴

The directions and guidance given in this paragraph offer solutions to the concerns which have been voiced. If it is at all possible to baptize the child, this should be done. Assurance that the child will be reared as a Christian is preferable, however, this should not be made

⁴John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 109.

an impediment to Baptism.

Another aspect is that represented by mass baptisms. If this is done for the sole purpose of being able to flaunt large numbers, without any serious consideration being given to accepting the responsibilities that are inherent in the Sacrament of Baptism itself toward the children so baptized, it would be better not to strive for such mass baptisms. Where the congregation is willing to accept a responsibility toward such children baptized en masse, the objections could not be maintained. This writer knows of an instance where such a program is followed and has been followed for a number of years with good results. The Baptism is arranged for Easter Sunday every year. Some weeks before the parents of the children to be baptized are asked to attend a number of sessions in which Baptism is explained. If there are children who should receive instruction before they are baptized, this is also done in class sessions. The results of this program can be seen in the steady growth of the congregation.⁵

⁵Our Savior Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

There are several areas which were originally treated as peripheral questions. However, it was felt that they belong to the evaluation and conclusions and are so treated. These areas include the arrangements which are made with the parents for the Baptism of their child; the order of the Baptismal Service as a means of bringing home the educational implications in Holy Baptism; and the importance of training parents to a fuller understanding of everything involved in Baptism.

Too often when arrangements are made by the parents for the Baptism of their child, they are made over the telephone. They can even be made without direct contact with the pastor, the arrangements being handled by the church or pastor's secretary. The first inkling the pastor may have is when he sees the notice on his desk that parents have made arrangements to have their child baptized on Sunday morning, and this may be as late as Thursday or Friday morning.

It would be much better if the parents were to come into the pastor's study for a consultation when making arrangements for the Baptism. This would give the pastor an opportunity to show the parents the importance, the meaning, the expectations and other aspects of Baptism. An outline of such a program might look something like this:

1. God's love to the parents in giving them this child.
2. God's loving concern for the little one shown in instituting Baptism.
3. The love and grace of God coming to the child in Holy Baptism brings the child the assurance of forgiveness.
4. The expectations of Christian training which flow from Baptism itself.
5. What the Church is ready to do to help the parents in the Christian training of their child.
6. The entire subject of sponsors and their responsibilities.

The value of such a consultation would be heightened if the sponsors could be present for the counseling session. This would offer a wonderful opportunity to show all directly concerned the heritage which belongs to that child who is to be baptized. It would also afford an opportunity to show them their part in bringing the heritage of Christian education to the child.

The second area referred to is the order of the Baptismal service as a means of bringing home the educational implications in Holy Baptism. These implications in the Lutheran Order of the Baptismal service are contained in the exhortation and question addressed to the sponsors which

have been referred to a number of times.¹ There is no doubt that this emphasis could be heightened, perhaps by following the suggestion of the writer who asks:

In what way, then, can sponsorship be made a more effective and significant institution than it is at present?²

His answer in part is:

The liturgical functions associated with sponsorship need to be given fresh consideration. The baptism service certainly gives the godparents adequate recognition, but the part actually allotted to them in its ceremonies is neither large nor impressive, and for that very reason is often discharged in a perfunctory manner. Some enrichment of the rite of baptism by an elaboration of the sponsors' part would therefore seem desirable, in order to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion and the importance of the sponsorial office. . . . It is also worth considering whether the baptism service ought not to include a formal dedication and commissioning of sponsors. A brief office for this purpose could well stand at the beginning of the service. After the minister had inquired which persons among those present, being baptized, confirmed, and communicating members of the Church, proposed to come forward and assume the duties of sponsorship, the Exhortation . . . could be read. The sponsors could then be asked whether they understood their obligations and responsibilities, and whether they were willing to assume and, with God's help, discharge them. Their assent being given, a prayer of dedication and commissioning could follow, and the baptism could then commence.³

Another thing which could be done would be to ask an

¹Supra, pp. 35 f. and 46 f.

²Derrick Sherwin Bailey, Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation: An Historical Introduction to Anglican Practice (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), p. 135.

³Ibid., pp. 135 f.

Elder to stand as a sponsor, representing the congregation. He could be asked to assume the responsibility in the name of the congregation to provide help to the parents in the Christian training of their child. He could also be asked to call at the home of the newly baptized to explain to the parents the congregational program designed to help them in the Christian training of their little one.

A question, perhaps, could be addressed to the assembled congregation, asking them to assume an educational responsibility toward this newly baptized member. Of course, there is the danger that this would become perfunctory, too.

The Roman Catholic Church has done much to foster through the liturgy of Baptism a greater appreciation of the infused grace that has come to the child in Holy Baptism. Rome's prime interest is to direct its people to a fuller use of the sacramentalism of the Church.⁴

Several items, some liturgical, others not, whose use is suggested to heighten the consciousness of the wonder and blessings of Baptism might be listed. The first of these is the chrism, a white robe that is placed upon the child after he has been baptized, to symbolize the innocence of Christ with which he has been clothed in Baptism.⁵ The second is

⁴Bernard A. Sause, "Family Life and the Sacraments," National Liturgical Week (Elsberry, Missouri: The Liturgical Conference, Inc., 1947), pp. 74 f.

⁵"Waters of Life," Life in Christ Series - No. 1 (Brooklyn: Christ the King Press, 1949), pp. 15 f.

a lighted candle which is given to the child after Baptism with the chrisom, symbolizing the light of faith.⁶ The third is to encourage the parents to observe the baptismal date of their children as their spiritual birthdate. Some suggest that this be observed in preference to the child's birthdate. In this celebration the robe, the candle, and whatever is a memento of the Baptism, is to be brought out and shown the child.⁷ The fourth is the manner in which an announcement is made of the birth. Instead of announcing the birth in the usual way by giving the vital statistics of the child, the christening hour is announced with an invitation to attend.⁸ The fifth is the manner of announcing the Baptism in the Sunday bulletin. This sample announcement was taken from the National Liturgical Week:

The bulletin announces each Sunday under a symbol of Baptism: "Born again in Holy Baptism into Divine Life and become our fellow-member in the Mystical Body of Christ in Holy Family Parish: 'James Jones, son of Henry and Mary Jones; Mary Smith, Convert . . . ' We welcome them to our family, and embrace them in Christian love."⁹

No doubt such an announcement could be used to bring home the educational implications in Holy Baptism by rewording

⁶Ibid. p. 16.

⁷"The New Man in Christ," National Liturgical Week, August 2-6, 1943 (Conception, Missouri: The Liturgical Conference, Inc., 1949), p. 68.

⁸Ibid.

⁹National Liturgical Week, October 21-25, 1940 (Newark: Benedictine Liturgical Conference, 1941), p. 131.

it. The one other item in this list which could be used in this manner is the observance of the Baptismal date.

There can be no doubt that the child who is baptized has the best opportunity for a Christian education and training in a Christian home atmosphere. Everything possible should be done to assure such an atmosphere in the homes of children who have been baptized. This subject has actually been touched on earlier in this thesis, but it surely bears repeated emphasis. It is true that it is the Holy Spirit who makes the infant and child a Christian. However, the Holy Spirit has given many means of helping that child remain a Christian. The entire history of the Christian Church, which has been continued from one generation to another by the Christian parents and teachers who have trained each new generation of children, bears testimony that the lives of these people have been used for the transmission of the Gospel in its most complete sense. It has not been merely an intellectual knowledge which has been passed on, but it has been a living Gospel in the hearts of these faithful parents and teachers. The child who becomes a Christian through Holy Baptism should feel the impact of the entire Christian community in its life. Everything in the Christian community, the Church, the Sunday School, the Church School, and any other program that might prove helpful should be marshalled to help that home achieve the high and lofty goal

which God has set for it, "the perfecting of the saints."¹⁰

This relationship of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the family is brought out very effectively by Dr. Caemmerer:

Traditionally the Baptism of infants has a strong family interest. That interest should be for more than a day. As the children advance through the years, as they renew their baptismal vow at confirmation, as they become equipped for taking up the burdens of their own households, the powerful meaning of Baptism can become stronger and stronger. For Baptism means that the Spirit of God moves into the individual, controls and guides him, and becomes his true life. As that fact is made clearer through the years and as the presence of the Spirit of God is reinforced continually through the other means of grace, the Baptism of the individual assumes ever more precious significance. All of the religious thinking and activity of the entire family can contribute to that significance. It does so not merely as the family talks about Baptism or comments on new information about Baptism or commemorates the baptismal vows of the children at the time of confirmation, but as the advancing years bring with them new opportunities for the Christian life to move into action and new obstacles which that life must conquer.¹¹

The subject of the Christian education of the souls of those whom God in His grace has received to be His own through Holy Baptism covers the entire span of human life. This study has been directed primarily toward the infant and small child, but what has been said, in many instances, would have a ready application to the areas of later life. In any

¹⁰Ephesians 4:12.

¹¹Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Christian Family--A Living Force in the Modern World," Fifth Yearbook of The Lutheran Education Association (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1948), pp. 60 f.

age bracket of Christian training, the question could be asked:

Is the best religious education we can give our children, no matter how comprehensive and how thorough, really commensurate with the high dignity to which our children are called? . . . Let us ever be mindful of the fact that the King's children must have a royal education.¹²

The education of the older child and the adult could be evaluated in much the same manner in which this study has attempted an evaluation of the religious education of the small child on the basis of the educational implications in Holy Baptism. However, such an evaluation would lead beyond the limits which have been set for this study. Perhaps such a study could be made at a later date.

The result of this study is that the author is more firmly convinced that there are educational implications in Holy Baptism. He feels that it can truthfully be stated that our Lord expects a response of those who are baptized. Before such a response can be expected of the child that has been baptized, he must receive training and guidance in the meaning of Baptism, the blessings of Baptism, the expectations of Baptism, that he might be trained to appreciate the love of God that has come to him and have a response of love excited within his heart. Then that desire will be present to

Louis Berkhof, "The Covenant of Grace and Its Significance for Christian Education," Fundamentals in Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 32.

show forth in life the faith which has been implanted in Baptism.

The concern which was expressed in the statement of this thesis, concerning the losses from Baptism to Confirmation, are surely a problem which should give grave concern to every person who baptizes a child, to every person who accepts responsibility for a child as a sponsor, to every father and mother who brings a child to the font, to every part of the Christian community that in any way has a responsibility or interest in that child. This concern should not consist in the wringing of hands over a deplorable situation, but should call forth some of the best efforts of persons and groups to do all within their power that every child who is baptized is given a Christian training and is led to profess his faith and live a faithful Christian life. From personal experience, this writer knows that some of the statistics are bound to be in error, because they are merely statistics. As an example: those statistics do not reflect the situation where a person baptized as an infant, though not confirmed at the usual time, does take that step later in life, perhaps in the age bracket of high school or adulthood. There is also the possibility that a child baptized in the Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, or some other church may in adulthood become a member of some other Christian denomination. No one would ever say that no concern should be shown for the losses

suffered of those baptized as infants or children, because the above is merely conjecture based upon some isolated instances in the author's own experience. There is no doubt that examples of persons baptized as infants, but not coming into the church until adulthood could be multiplied from the experience of every pastor. All of these concerns should only heighten the realization of everyone concerned with the Baptism of any infant that there is an impelling and urgent necessity to follow through on that Baptism with a good program of Christian education or nurture in the home and church.

No doubt much could be done to encourage a re-evaluation of the doctrine of Holy Baptism in the light of its educational implications on the part of everyone who has any contact or interest in the rearing or training of children in the Christian church. There has been a wholesome concern shown in some quarters, and this should be a widening circle.

There will always be knotty problems connected with the doctrine of Baptism because of the educational implications which are involved with the doctrine. Every pastor, at some time in his life, is going to be filled with a need to re-evaluate the practices which he has been following in baptizing children brought to him. There will be questions whether this Baptism should be performed because it appears, humanly speaking, that the child will not receive a Christian training. It may be problematical whether the child

will be reared in a Christian atmosphere and home. All of these different circumstances in which the pastor lives and works for his Lord Jesus Christ should only strengthen his resolve to do all within his power to fulfill the charge which God has given to him, namely, to have a part in the "perfecting of the saints."¹³ In striving to fulfill this charge he will be minded to train and direct all parents to bring their children to Baptism early; he will instruct the parents in the meaning, the importance, and the expectations of Holy Baptism as far as their children are concerned. He will also want to portray vividly for them the educational implications of Holy Baptism that they do not neglect to train their children in the faith. This same training must be the responsibility of every pastor with reference to his entire congregation.

¹³Ephesians 4:12.

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