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PRESCHOOL MUSIC IN THE  
CHURCH SCHOOL

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of  
the Department of Christian Education  
of Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Religious Education

by

Kathleen Elizabeth Bear

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"The soul of music slumbers in the shell,  
Till waked and kindled by the master's spell;  
And feeling hearts—touch them but rightly—pour  
A thousand melodies unheard before."

Samuel Rogers (1763-1855)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCHOOL MUSIC IN THE	
CHURCH SCHOOL . . . . .	1
The need for music in the preschool years . .	3
The place of music in the religious develop-	
ment of the preschool child . . . . .	5
II. THE MUSICAL ABILITY OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD. . .	10
That musical ability which is inherited	
and that which is acquired. . . . .	10
The preschool child's response to music . . .	15
Rhythm. . . . .	15
Singing . . . . .	17
The preschool child's creative ability in	
music . . . . .	19
III. RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD . . .	22
Language development and comprehension of	
the preschool child . . . . .	23
Religious concepts and their meaning to the	
preschool child . . . . .	27
God . . . . .	28
Jesus . . . . .	31
The Bible . . . . .	34
Prayer. . . . .	35



CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. CHOOSING SONGS FOR USE WITH THE PRESCHOOL CHILD . . . . .	39
Words and ideas in preschool songs . . . . .	40
Music in preschool songs . . . . .	48
V. USING MUSIC WITH THE PRESCHOOL CHILD . . . . .	53
Various uses of songs. . . . .	55
Using songs with a group of children . . . . .	55
Using songs in informal situations . . . . .	58
Using worship songs. . . . .	61
Various uses of instrumental music . . . . .	62
Music for appreciation . . . . .	62
Rhythms. . . . .	65
Rhythm instruments . . . . .	68
VI. SUMMARY. . . . .	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	77

## CHAPTER I

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCHOOL MUSIC IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL

In recent years there has been a growing interest in children of preschool age. The development of nursery schools and their addition to our educational system, the recent investigations in the field of child psychology, and the studies of modern educators into the interests of child life, have brought before us more forcibly than ever the fact that it is legitimate to be a child. "At least in theory grown people no longer regard the baby as a fascinating toy, or a twig to be bent, or merely a soul to be saved by a prescribed method."<sup>1</sup> We now think of the child as a developing individual, a person in his own right, and not merely a miniature adult.

In educational work the term preschool includes those years of childhood occurring between two years and six, included in this age group are children in nursery school and kindergarten. There is no specific day or month when a child advances from the nursery level to the kindergarten level; the transition is gradual, depending upon the individual child. But there are certain characteristics which mark the advance and these are definite enough to make separation necessary.

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1. Ilse Forest, "Being a Child in the Modern World," The Elementary Teacher, 7:483, November, 1934.

The church school, in its proper interpretation, means more than the usual Sunday-school hour. Included in it can be an extended session on Sunday or on a weekday, and a vacation church school of several weeks in the summer.

Preschool music as used in the church school means more than the songs which are taught to the children. It includes the songs that the children sing, the songs that the teacher sings to the children, the quiet music that is played by the phonograph, the line of song that some child creates, the rhythms that are shared by the teacher and children, besides numerous other uses for music that can be found in the preschool departments. Some of these will be discussed in Chapter V.

To be in keeping with the interests of the children, the music should not include just any piece or just any song. Music has been used in the nursery and the kindergarten since the days when they first became a part of the church school, but because the teachers have not always had a knowledge of child psychology nor an understanding of child life the music used has not always been such as was appropriate for children of that age. "To the church school falls the chief responsibility for using music in the religious development of children."<sup>2</sup> If that religious development is to be normal, meaningful, and continual, the

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2. Elizabeth McEwen Shields, Music in the Religious Growth of Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 27.

music used to help in its development must be music which has been written for the preschool child, or that which can be adapted for use with children of this age. Such factors as the child's abilities, experiences, and understanding must serve as guides for each piece of music used with the child.

### The Need for Music in the Preschool Years

"Music is undoubtedly a language and like speech should belong to everyone."<sup>3</sup> Music belongs to life from babyhood onward De Rusette goes on to say; it is inseparable from life. Music is a natural heritage.

Music as the natural heritage of every child should enter naturally into the life of the child. It will be recognized that not every child is destined to be a concert artist. Yet each is entitled to opportunities for musical experiences which will enable him to appreciate great music. The musical development of the child enters naturally into his life and should be regarded as the result of growth rather than of formal training. Later on the child may enter of his own accord into the life of music.

Music is an emotional outlet, a wholesome means of expression for those feelings which demand expression of some kind.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Louie E. de Rusette, Music Under Eight (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1936), p. 9.

4. Satis N. Coleman, Your Child's Music (New York: The John Day Company, 1939), p. 3.

"The wholesome development of the emotional natures of our youth is ... vital to their happiness."<sup>5</sup> One aim of education is to produce stable, integrated personalities through proper emotional development. Thus it would seem that each child is entitled to that natural expression of emotion which comes through music; "and we can give direction and health to the emotional life of the child by selecting only the best music."<sup>6</sup>

The child "will need the physical coordination, the rhythmic control, and the freedom in movement which music should develop in him."<sup>7</sup> Rhythm is a part of life. There is rhythm in walking, rhythm in running, rhythm in breathing. So also, there is rhythm in music, and this rhythm calls to the child to respond in activity. In the preschool child this response is not always graceful or coordinated because of immature muscular development; but repeated response brings continual development, and development results in coordination, freedom, and control of movement.

Music helps to develop the group spirit in a child.

"The child starts as an individualist and in his early years he is distinctly anti-social."<sup>8</sup> Possessing rather than sharing seems to be his wish, and everything revolves around himself.<sup>9</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 19

6. Rosemary Roorbach, Teaching Children in the Small Church (Nashville, Tenn.: The Methodist Publishing House, 1946), p. 48.

7. Coleman, op. cit., p. 4.

8. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 14.

9. Loc. cit.

In the nursery class or the kindergarten class of the church school the child will find that the music is not for him alone; it is for the others as well and for all to share. Even though the sharing takes place in both age groups one does not find it as apparent at the nursery age level as at the kindergarten age level.

The child "will need the spiritual influences which the love of good music will exert on him."<sup>10</sup> Children "pick up" that music which they hear. If they are constantly exposed to the modern "jazz" melodies those will be the tunes that become the music of the child. The preschool departments of the church school afford an excellent opportunity for awakening within the child an appreciation for music that is worshipful and uplifting.

#### The Place of Music in the Religious Development of the Preschool Child

Throughout the ages music and religion have been interwoven. Each fills an instinctive need of man. They both hold an important place in the development of the other and in the spiritual growth of man. There are several reasons why the two are so closely related. Both religion and music speak a universal language that transcends racial and national barriers, and religion can express itself in music that appeals to young as well as old, rich as well as poor. As has been mentioned

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<sup>10</sup>. Coleman, op. cit., p. 4.

before, music is a socializing medium of expression, and there is certainly a need in religion for an art that has not only the power to draw one nearer to God but, at the same time, the power to draw people nearer to each other.<sup>11</sup>

"The most important enterprise in which any generation is called to engage is the religious nurture of the young,"<sup>12</sup> says Mary Alice Jones. In teaching children, she goes on to say, we are dealing not only with growing persons, but with the eternal purposes of God as well. A child with his innocence and desire to learn has a plastic nature that needs to be guided, moulded, and nurtured in the things of God before we can expect him to enter consciously into the Christian life. Any experiences, therefore, which we can provide in the pre-school departments of the church school that will contribute to the normal development of the religious nature of the child have a valid reason for their existence.

Christianity is the worship of one God. It should be the desire of church-school teachers and religious educators that children learn to worship Him. Through lack of training or wrong training a child may have in his heart a strong fear of or anger for God instead of the love which can have as its results fellowship with God and a well balanced Christian life.

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11. Shields, op. cit., pp. 21, 22.

12. Mary Alice Jones, "Guide Posts for Learning, "Child Guidance, in Christian Living, 6:441, October, 1942.

One way for instilling love for God into the child's heart is through experiences of worship which have meaning for the child.

Worship of God can be aroused within a child by music as well as by stories, pictures, or prayers. Perhaps music more than any other medium can bring about an atmosphere of worship and can express more adequately the desire of a worshipful heart, because music seems to be the language of worship. Adults find this to be true of their worship experiences. The organ prelude as one enters the church sanctuary lifts the heart to thoughts of God, and the worship and adoration of the heart expresses itself in the great hymns of the church. The worship experience of a child is much less formal than that of an adult, but it can be induced and expressed just as adequately through music.

The religious concepts of children may be enriched and developed through music. The songs used serve as a means of expression for ideas of God, Jesus, the church, standards of conduct, and relationships with others.<sup>13</sup> Both right and wrong religious concepts can be expressed through the music, and it is the teacher's responsibility to decide which concepts should be presented to the children. What the Christian life means to the teacher will influence her choice of music to be used with the children, but it is hoped that teachers in the preschool

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13. Shields, op. cit., p. 26.



departments of the church school will want to guide the children into situations that will help them develop a love for God, Christian attitudes, and a desire to practice Christian ways of living.

A teacher who is earnestly striving to lead children into right ideas of God and into worshipful experiences with Him will be alert to the many opportunities which present themselves as she works with children of preschool age. She may develop seconds of worship with individual groups of children and help them begin to sense that they can reach out toward God. Many of these experiences of worship will find expression in music. It will be important at such times that the teacher be familiar with the kind of music appropriate for each experience.

"Music holds a unique place in the development of the religious life. If the church would make full use of this finest of the fine arts in guiding the religious life of its children, it must give careful attention to the children's early musical development."<sup>14</sup> This leads to the need of a better understanding of music in its relation to the child. In this thesis an attempt will be made to discover just what the musical abilities of the preschool child are, those religious concepts that are within his understanding, and some of the uses that can be made of music in the preschool departments of the church

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14. Shields, loc. cit.

school. It is hoped that the information received as a result of this study can be applied in such a way that preschool music in the church school will contribute as much as possible to the religious development of the child.

The child of preschool age needs music because of the experiences which it contributes to his life. These experiences are valuable because they help in the normal development of his emotional life and in his growing appreciation of music. The child needs music not only in his home environment but in his church-school environment as well. Music has something to contribute to his religious life. There are many opportunities in the preschool departments of the church school for using music to guide the child in his worship and help him in the development of his religious concepts. It is important that the teacher know how to choose the music and know how to use it in such a way that it will contribute the most to the child's religious development.

Because a right understanding of certain characteristics and capacities of the preschool child will help in the selection of music to be used with children of that age, attention will now be directed to the musical abilities of the preschool child.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MUSICAL ABILITY OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

#### That Musical Ability Which Is Inherited

#### And That Which Is Acquired

The musical ability of any person consists of that which is inherited and that which is acquired. Investigations have been made by Seashore and others in an attempt to discover the part heredity and environment play in the development of musical ability. Not enough investigations or studies of children of preschool age have been made to enable one to say with authority that heredity contributes a specific amount and environment a specific amount to the child's musical ability. But the results obtained from the investigations that have been made deserve consideration.

Scheinfeld says, "Some unusual hereditary endowment is essential for great musical achievement."<sup>1</sup> It is recognized that opportunity and training are essential, but the talent must be there before it can be cultivated. The person with average musical ability, although he often thinks otherwise, may not become a great artist without the right opportunities. And yet the naturally-endowed person in an unfavorable environment may have his talent suppressed. In order to become an artist, it

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1. Scheinfeld, Amram, assisted by Morton D. Schweitzer illustrated by the author, You and Heredity, Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc. 1945. 434 pp.

would seem then that both an unusual inherited musical aptitude and a favorable environment are needed.

But there are many people with musical ability who are not artists and perhaps have no unusual hereditary endowment. "Music ability exists in some degree in every so-called normal child,"<sup>2</sup> says Satis Coleman. The capacity for the enjoyment of music seems to be evident in the child from babyhood onward. Even the smallest baby finds contentment in his mother's lullabies, and when older, though still a baby, he enjoys the rhythm experience of shaking his rattle. As the child advances in age and as his muscular control becomes coordinated he shows increased evidences of musical aptitude. A small child enjoys beating on a drum, or "stomping on the piano," as one child expressed it, or ringing the bell of his tricycle. Very few children are without the opportunity of expressing themselves musically in some way. But even if each child does possess some musical ability the environment in which that child is reared will have its influence upon the degree to which that ability is developed.

Gates in Human Genetics reminds us that there are basic qualities in connection with musical ability which are affected very little by practice, age, musical training, sex, or general intelligence--such qualities as sense of pitch, sense of in-

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2. Satis N. Coleman, Your Child's Music (New York: The John Day Company, 1939), p. 23.

tensity, sense of time, and tonal memory.<sup>3</sup> The Seashore studies confirm the belief that "the senses of harmony and of rhythm can be developed only to the extent made possible by the individual's inherent capacities."<sup>4</sup> Coleman writes, "I have never dealt with a child who had not the capacity for some kind of musical experience that was vital to him."<sup>5</sup> Morgan says that it seems to have been refuted that rhythmic ability is an innate capacity which is independent of training.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the final decision of the psychologists will be, whether the child has an inherited capacity for rhythm and music or not, it seems evident that an environment in which opportunity is given for musical experiences is necessary for the development of musical ability.

The musical experiences in the environment of the child play an important part in his musical development and in his acquisition of musical ability. As these experiences are provided for the child the teacher should be familiar with some factors upon which learning is dependent.

"Learning is dependent on maturation."<sup>7</sup> The music ability of the preschool child will naturally not be as far developed as that of a mature person, but even though he is immature the

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3. Reginald Ruggles Gates, Human Genetics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 1157.

4. Scheinfeld & Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 257.

5. Coleman, loc. cit.

6. John J. B. Morgan, Child Psychology (third edition; New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 154.

7. Your Child from One to Six, Revised, Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, U.S. Childrens Bureau, Publication 30, 1945. p. 36.

child is capable of many musical experiences. If the child is to learn from these experiences and acquire greater musical ability his level of maturity must be kept in mind as musical experiences are provided.

"In the beginning imitation is the only way music can be taught."<sup>8</sup> A child learns to sing by imitating those about him who sing. He learns to skip and hop to music by imitating those who show him how. A child who comes to the church school from a home where he has had experiences with many types of music will respond more quickly to the music which he hears. If a child of preschool age seems to be utterly lacking in musical ability it is not wise to force him into musical experiences. After he has had opportunity to become familiar with the various types of music used in the preschool departments the teacher can gradually encourage him to take part. He needs that time of listening and watching before he can imitate that which he has seen and heard.

"Learning depends also upon the ability to remember."<sup>9</sup> A person tends to remember those things that hold his attention at the time, or in other words those things in which he is interested. This applies to a child as well as to an adult. The range of a child's experiences are much more limited than those of an adult, and if the child's interest is to be aroused the

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8. Coleman, op. cit., p. 79.

9. Josephine Foster and Marion L. Mattson, Nursery School Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), p. 43.

stimulus must come from something within his experience or something that will be understandable to him. E. Mildred Nevill brings out the fact that interest can be increased by introducing the play element into the learning situation.<sup>10</sup> Anything that will increase interest will help the child to remember, and those things which a child remembers he also learns.

Another factor which is involved in the process of learning is the element of repetition. "A child, like everyone else, has to do a thing over and over again to learn to do it well."<sup>11</sup> Children like to hear stories repeated time after time and it is the same with their musical experiences, that is, if the musical experiences are enjoyable. Those experiences, therefore, which are desirable for a child to repeat and learn must be made enjoyable to him. In working with preschool children it is important to remember this principle of learning by doing that which one likes. Jennie Lou Milton feels that acting and learning seem somehow to be a part of the same general process of full learning or living.<sup>12</sup>

"In the young child much of the learning that takes place is incidental to his activity rather than an assignment set off by itself."<sup>13</sup> In the preschool departments of the church school

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10. E. Mildred Nevill in Foreword to de Rusette, op. cit., p. x.

11. Your Child from One to Six, p. 37.

12. Jennie Lou Milton, "November in the Beginners' Department," Child Guidance in Christian Living, 2:594-96, November, 1943.

13. Foster and Mattson, op. cit., p. 43.

the music experiences can be made such a natural part of the program that the child will not be subject to the attitude of a teacher who says, "Now we are going to learn our music." In providing for the child an environment which is natural and homelike and filled with musical experiences geared to the learning process, the workers in the preschool departments can contribute much to the child's musical development and ability.

### The Preschool Child's Response To Music

Rhythm. "Music is composed of both sound and movement."<sup>14</sup> A child hears the sound and feels the movement, "but the cooperation is mainly through movement. Rhythm assuredly has first place in the musical life of the child."<sup>15</sup> De Rusette says songs undoubtedly make an appeal, but the child's first desire is to be active and not to sing. Music to the young child is something rhythmical which calls forth movement.<sup>16</sup>

Rhythm is basic to life. One finds it in all the arts; it is the "central element in music, distinct from tone and harmony, pitch and meter."<sup>17</sup> Very early in a child's life this feeling of rhythm is developed and it is this rhythm in music which calls to the child to respond.

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14. Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker, The Child-Centered School, An Appraisal of the New Education (New York: World Book Company, 1928), p. 168.

15. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 22.

16. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 13.

17. Rugg and Shumaker, op. cit., p. 162.



A child may respond in several ways to this call of the music for movement. He may clap his hands, run, hop, or try to skip. At first young children will be able to give a more coordinated rhythm response with their hands because the arm muscles develop more quickly than the leg muscles. The two-year-old is not very sure-footed and his physical response to the rhythm in the music will be very limited. The three-year-old can "run and jump and do things with his arms and legs."<sup>18</sup> The four-year-old "runs and jumps fairly well, though he skips poorly if at all."<sup>19</sup> The five-year-old can skip and hop and leap. The child who is learning to skip is likely to hop with one foot and run with the other. He may become very much irritated if an adult tries to force him to do the regulation step when he is not capable of performing it. A little later when he is ready for it he can master it very quickly.<sup>20</sup> "It is better to let the legs gradually gain control of their own accord. Some children are very quick in their response, whereas others gain a sense of balance and musical coordination by degrees."<sup>21</sup>

Children of preschool age should not be forced to give a set rhythmic response to a piece of music. They respond to the rhythm in the music because they enjoy expressing themselves in

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18. Your Child from One to Six, p. 5.

19. Foster and Mattson, op. cit., p. 22.

20. Arthur T. Jersild, Child Development and the Curriculum (New York: Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946), p. 73.

21. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 23.

that way. If they are made to conform to a certain rhythmic pattern the experience will not be enjoyed and if repeated may hinder the child in his future response. Neither will the experience be enjoyed if the music does not call forth that particular type of response. It is best for him to respond with those movements that he feels the music is calling to him to give. So that a child may learn what type of music says skip and what says walk, suggestions may be made by the teacher and usually the child will carry out those suggestions. If the rhythm of the music is made very definite children can learn which rhythm calls for which response.

Morgan says, "The slow, controlled type of movement does not yield easily to rhythmic patterns."<sup>22</sup> A small child needs music with movement that is light and free, but it does not always need to be fast music. Children can become over stimulated by responding to one fast piece right after another.

Singing. As we have noticed, the child first responds to the rhythm of the music and that response is one of physical activity. Later he responds to the tone of the music and enjoys the activity of singing. He also enjoys having songs sung to him, and for the nursery child most of his singing experiences will be ones in which the teacher does most of the singing. The kindergarten child enjoys learning and singing the songs himself.

Before children are encouraged to sing they should be

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22. Morgan, op. cit., p. 155.

sung to. This helps them to become familiar with the melody. Otherwise their whole attention is devoted to the words and they do not listen to the music. As they hear more music and especially singing, they unconsciously assimilate melody. Soon they sing themselves, but without realizing at first the rise and fall of the melody.<sup>23</sup> At about the age of five children begin to share in the singing, but it is still because of the opportunity for activity which it brings to them. It is not until they are around six that they sing just from the sense of pleasure and well-being that comes as they sing.<sup>24</sup>

Because singing is a means of joyous expression preschool children should be encouraged to find pleasure in this exercise. In the preschool departments of the church school there can be a definite time for singing when the children sing their favorites. There will be other times when a little song is composed by the teacher to use in a particular situation. The children may also share this song with her. But whenever the singing is done it should be an enjoyable experience for the children if they are to continue to find pleasure in this means of expression.

"Practically every individual, unless he suffers from some organic difficulty, can be taught to sing satisfactorily and to enjoy music."<sup>25</sup> A child who does not sing and seems un-

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23. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 45.

24. Ibid., p. 73.

25. Josephine C. Foster and Neith E. Headley, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Company, 1936), p. 195.

responsive to the songs should not be forced to sing. Some children sing more quickly than others, but "a child who is apparently an onlooker usually shows real understanding when at last he becomes articulate. A child cannot be forced into expression, it comes naturally."<sup>26</sup>

It is now accepted that most children's natural singing voices are lower in pitch than was previously thought. "It has been found that children if left to themselves actually use middle C to C an octave above as their natural range."<sup>27</sup> If the teacher uses a song written too high for the children's natural voices their response will be inadequate. Those songs that are written within their voice range and are easy for them to sing are the ones they learn most quickly and find most enjoyable.

#### The Preschool Child's Creative Ability In Music

Preschool children enjoy experimenting with sound and enjoy making music of their own. The child's first attempts at creating music are not dominantly rhythmical. Their interest is concerned mainly with producing sound, whether by the voice or by musical instruments.

"To produce his own music a young child's first need is freedom--freedom to move about in pursuit of his own interests and purposes, and freedom to make the sounds appropriate to

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26. De Rusette, op. cit., p. 74.

27. Foster and Mattson, op. cit., p. 212.

them."<sup>28</sup> Freedom in physical activity calls forth spontaneous music among children. They sing or hum or chant as they run or walk around the room. Inasmuch as music is essentially a means of joyous expression, they will be more likely to create music of their own when playing happily and freely than when subjected to experiences that are not enjoyable to them.

"Heightened emotional feeling from any cause may evoke musical expression."<sup>29</sup> The Christmas festival, play in the snow, a sudden shower may each call forth musical expression from the child. A satisfying experience of quiet happiness may also find means of expression in music.

In the songs which the children create they often use intervals and notes which are not in our diatonic scale. They tend to use small intervals, but sometimes large intervals are used for dramatic purpose. They usually sing their own songs quietly and rather slowly.<sup>30</sup>

"Song is essentially produced by the child for himself."<sup>31</sup> It is for his own pleasure and satisfaction that he expresses himself in music. Much of that expression will not be of future value to anyone except an experimenter, but it is valuable to the child because of the feelings of satisfaction and happiness

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28. Gladys Evelyn Moorhead and Donald Pond, Music of Young Children, II. General Observations (Santa Barbara, California: Pillsbury Foundation for Advancement of Music Education, 1942), p. 5.

29. Ibid., p. 7.

30. Ibid., p. 7.

31. Ibid., p. 13.

which it brings him. In the preschool departments of the church school we can provide a happy, pleasant environment which, with freedom and opportunity for musical expression, will bring these satisfying experiences.

In summary, it may be said that musical ability is both inherited and acquired. Not enough experiments have been made to permit one to say definitely that this particular ability is inherited and that one acquired, but the experiments that have been made show us how important a musical environment is in the development of musical ability. The child's response to the music in his environment is first shown in his love of rhythm. It is the movement in the music which appeals to him first and calls to him for active response. As the child begins to sing he does so first because of the activity which it gives him, but later because of his consciousness of the tone of the music and his desire to reproduce it. Children enjoy creating music. They experiment with sounds and rhythms in various arrangements and make music for their own enjoyment. Heightened emotional feeling or physical activity often calls forth spontaneous musical expression from the child.

In an attempt to find a standard by which we can judge the music which is to be used with the preschool child in the church school we have considered his musical ability. We now turn to a study of his powers of comprehension and his ability to understand religious concepts.

### CHAPTER III

#### RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS OF THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

Before one can adequately understand the religious concepts of the preschool child it is important that one know something of the language development and comprehension of children of that age. Those words which a child uses in his everyday conversation are only a partial indication of the extent of his language development; there are many words which he understands but does not use. But although a child understands some words which he never uses it must not be thought that he understands generally the adult vocabulary. The child's comprehension, which is dependent on such factors as maturation and training, determines those words and concepts which will be understandable to him.

Religious concepts are formed and expressed through the use of language. Words are symbols which one uses in talking about God, prayer, and other realities of religion. It is upon the words used by adults to express these realities that children's religious concepts are formed. It is important, therefore, that the Christian teacher know as much as possible concerning the child's understanding of language. If the child is to form correct religious concepts they must be presented to him, not necessarily in the words he uses, but in words which he can understand.

## Language Development and Comprehension of the Preschool Child

Most of the first words which a child uses are nouns. By the time he is two years old 50 to 60 per cent of the words he uses are nouns or are used as though they were nouns. By different inflections of his voice he makes these nouns into one-word sentences.<sup>1</sup> At the longest his sentences are only two or three words in length. He is able to name pictures of objects that are familiar to him. The experiences of the two-year-old are centered mainly around the home, and objects and animals closely associated with the home are those which are the most familiar to him.

The vocabulary of the three-year-old consists of approximately one thousand words. His sentences are longer than those used by the two-year-old. There is a decrease in the number of nouns used by the three-year-old with an increase in use of the other parts of speech. Verbs and pronouns occur more frequently although most of his pronouns are I, me, or mine, for the child talks most often of himself and of what he is doing.

By the time a child is four years old the number of words he uses has increased, as well as the length of his sentences and the number of questions he asks. The many questions which children ask at about this age serve to improve their language ability. Questions asking what and where tend to precede those asking how,

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1. John J. B. Morgan, Child Psychology (third edition; New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 314.



when, and why.<sup>2</sup> Children are continually broadening their experiences by their inquiries concerning almost everything with which they are familiar. It has been estimated that a child in this period asks more than three hundred questions a day.<sup>3</sup> "The four-year-old can usually recite the numbers up to ten and can count four objects accurately. He is beginning to think things through for himself and will sometimes generalize."<sup>4</sup> The child of four, though, is still very concrete in his thinking and his generalizations are few.

By the time a child has reached the age of five his vocabulary has increased to approximately two thousand words. He is still "experimenting with language, trying out new words, inventing words by combining other words or by adding endings which he has used at other times."<sup>5</sup> He asks as many questions if not more than when he was four years old, and these questions are less concerned with the names of things and more concerned with causal and social relationships. When he asks, "How does this work?" or, "What is this for?" he deserves a thoughtful, honest answer which is undetailed and understandable to him.<sup>6</sup> Most five-year-

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2. Ruth Strang, An Introduction to Child Study (revised edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 164.

3. Your Child from One to Six (revised; Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, U. S. Children's Bureau, Publication 30, 1945), p. 7.

4. Josephine C. Foster, and Marion L. Mattson, Nursery School Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), p. 23.

5. Josephine C. Foster, and Neith E. Headley, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Company, 1936), p. 4.

6. Your Child from One to Six, p. 6.

olds can speak clearly and use complete sentences of from eight to ten words. By this time they will have acquired practically all the language patterns which an adult ordinarily uses.

The vocabulary of the preschool child increases as he is introduced to new objects and experiences. Children of this age are interested in everything around them because for them the world is still new. They become acquainted with it through experience and must touch or taste or squeeze a thing as well as look at it. Naming and distinguishing colors is interesting to a child of preschool age. He is familiar with the primary colors but not with many of the tints or shades of color. As the child advances from two to five he learns to recognize whether an event is in the past, present, or future. To a three-year-old, tomorrow or yesterday or last week are only words without much meaning, but by the time the child is five years old he is beginning to place events in time. "Most kindergarten children know the meaning of such words as: over, big, crooked, under, high, long, tall, thin, on top, behind, bumpy, deep, pointed, shallow, few, forwards, backwards, tiny, and smooth; but they do not understand rough, narrow, broad, far, or near."<sup>7</sup> "Concepts of alike and different are achieved long before the child can think opposite."<sup>8</sup> The teacher who is working with preschool children should use the

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7. Foster and Headley, op. cit., p. 5.

8. Ruth G. Strickland, "The Language and Mental Development of Children," Bulletin of the School of Education, Indiana University, 23:8, March, 1947.

correct words for the objects in the child's environment and the correct words for those experiences which he has. If she talks down to the child or deliberately uses only those words which he uses in his conversation she is overlooking the fact that the vocabulary we are capable of understanding is much greater than the vocabulary we actually use. Calling things by their correct names will avoid many confused ideas later on.

As the vocabulary of the child increases and his expression improves there is also an increase in comprehension. The five-year-old can understand verbal explanations much better than the four-year-old.<sup>9</sup> But even yet his thinking is in terms of the concrete things and activities in his experiences. "Words that have color, action, sound, and experience in them are words that are best understood and most frequently used by children."<sup>10</sup> Words that refer to experiences the child has not had or words that are abstract will prevent the child from understanding and learning. Unless new words, and especially symbolic words, are explained to the child he may develop some very queer ideas as to what they mean. "New experiences are interpreted in terms of what is known,"<sup>11</sup> and because of the limited experiences of the preschool child his reasoning is faulty and he is unable to

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9. Foster and Headley, loc. cit.

10. Lucy V. Bickel, Teaching Four and Five Year Old Children (Nashville, Tenn.: The Methodist Publishing House, n.d.), p. 25.

11. A. J. William Myers, Teaching Religion (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1930) p. 59.

generalize or see relationships as does an adult. But the fact must not be overlooked that the preschool child does have limited ability to reason and explain his actions. One must keep in mind that his range of knowledge and experience is not as broad as that of an adult.

"The educational program should be designed to help the child at any stage in his career to reach his potential level of maturity."<sup>12</sup> Even though it is a temptation to talk down to the preschool child to help him understand, to do so is a hindrance to his language development and comprehension. To talk beyond the child in abstract words and symbolic terms is just as much a hindrance to his understanding. When the emphasis is placed upon experiences which are familiar to the child, ideas which are understandable to him, and language which relates to his experiences, then he will learn easily and retain well.

#### Religious Concepts and Their Meaning to the Preschool Child

What is a concept? Webster defines it as "an idea that includes all that is characteristically associated with, or suggested by a term."<sup>13</sup> Sherrill says a concept is "a general idea which we have of a class of things."<sup>14</sup> Religious concepts are

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12. Arthur T. Jersild, Child Development and the Curriculum (New York: Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946), p. 11.

13. Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (second edition, unabridged; Springfield, Mass: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1943), p. 552.

14. Lewis Joseph Sherrill, Understanding Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1939), p. 137.

the ideas one has concerning the realities of religion. One's concept of God would be the ideas that come to one's mind when the term God is mentioned. The child's concept of God will be different to the adult's concept because of the child's limited understanding. The concepts one has of God, Jesus, prayer, and the Bible are the result of one's early training modified by later training and experience. There are correct religious concepts and incorrect religious concepts that a child may receive in his preschool years, depending on the way in which these realities are presented to him and the ideas he forms about them. There are different opinions as to what is a correct religious concept and what is not. The concepts set forth here will be those which are accepted in general by Protestant evangelical Christendom.

Some religious concepts are beyond the understanding of the preschool child and attempts to instruct him at these points only lead to confusion and misunderstanding. It is better to wait until he is older and has more experiences and broader understanding before these concepts are presented to him. But even the child of preschool age is capable of grasping ideas of some of the basic realities of the Christian religion, if they are presented to him in a concrete way. We shall now consider several religious concepts and their meaning for the child.

God. The concept of God is one that no one completely understands, and yet there are very few people who do not have some notion of God when they hear the word mentioned. When a

small child hears the word God for the first time he can have no idea as to what it means. It is just a word to him like many of the other words he hears but does not understand. If the word God is to have meaning for the child, that meaning must come through experiences to which he attaches the word God. A child cannot develop a sense of the reality of God through direct teaching only, but must have experiences relating to God which will put meaning into the concept. Then when the word God is used "the ideas which arise in his thinking are based on the experiences which he has had."<sup>15</sup>

As Colson writes, "The religious need of very young children is to know God as a loving, protecting heavenly Father."<sup>16</sup> The concept of God, the Father, can be developed in the mind of the child by presenting God to him in terms of what He does. God loves and takes care of us, God sends the sunshine and the rain, God makes the trees and flowers, God gives us our mothers and fathers. All this means more to the child than merely saying "God is good." There is always the possibility that to some child the concept of father does not bring memories of things that are good and it will be hard for that child to think of God the Father as being good and loving. "The child can but read into divine parenthood the characteristics of human parent-

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15. Ibid, p. 133.

16. Elizabeth Colson, A Second Primary Book in Religion (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1922), p. 13.

hood as he knows it."<sup>17</sup> If such a situation does exist with one of the children the teacher must find terms which to the child have connotations of love and use these in referring to the Heavenly Father.

Perhaps at first the child will have difficulty in understanding that God exists even though he cannot see Him. If there are grandparents or other relatives of the family who are mentioned frequently but are never seen it will be easier for the child to understand his relationship to God. "If God is real to the adults in the child's world, references to God will come naturally into conversation and will help the child gradually to build a concept of God."<sup>18</sup>

It seems natural for children to think of God as anthropomorphic, or as having all the characteristics of man. It is better for a child to think of God in terms of a human being who is good and wise rather than to be told that God is a spirit, a word hard for him to grasp. It will be one of the opportunities of the teacher in the church school to lead the child from his fragmentary concepts of God in physical form to concepts of the love and purposes of God. One way to help the child form a concept of God apart from His supposed physical characteristics

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17. Frances W. Danielson and Jessie E. Moore, Three Years Old: for the nursery class of the church school (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1936), p. 6.

18. Mary Alice Jones, The Faith of Our Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 18.

is to avoid any children's books which have pictures of God. In some books God is drawn as an old man with a long white beard and if the child sees God represented in this form it will be natural that whenever he thinks of God the picture of a man with a long white beard will come to his mind.

It is unfortunate when God is presented to a child in such a way that the child learns to think of Him not as a loving Heavenly Father but as an arbitrary judge or a harsh taskmaster. A false concept of God is likely to be formed if a child does something wrong and hears the words "Don't do that or God won't love you." Children are very trusting and accept without much question what is told them by an adult. It will be quite difficult for any child to form a concept of God as Love when he thinks of all the evil in the world as God's punishment to men because they have done wrong. If the child is to form a concept of God as a loving Heavenly Father who does not like the wrong the child does but always loves the child, as one who takes care of him, and listens when he prays, then it is important that the child's parents and his teachers in the church school watch the words they use when speaking of God in the presence of the child.

Jesus. Just as the preschool child needs to hear of God and have a growing concept of Him, so he needs to hear of Jesus, and learn to think of Him as the Son of God. It is not necessary to subject the preschool child to any teaching on the



Trinity, for this concept would be beyond his understanding. However, the experiences that come from hearing stories and singing songs of Jesus and His love for little children are too meaningful to the child to deprive him of them. If the child can be taught that Jesus was a unique individual and different from ordinary men, then he can be taught just as easily that Jesus is the Son of God.

Children should learn to think of Jesus as a strong, friendly, lovable person so that they will feel drawn to Him in admiration and devotion.<sup>19</sup> They need to think of Jesus not only as someone who lived long ago and went about doing good but as someone who lives today to show us the love of God and to help us in our everyday problems. Children can learn to love Jesus and think of Him as their friend by hearing stories and singing songs of Him as a baby or as of their own age. Some of the incidents in Jesus' later life can be presented to children in such a way that they will be understandable and meaningful to them. Stories and songs of Jesus healing the sick, helping the blind, and blessing the children can be put into language which is within the child's ability to comprehend and which therefore makes these events interesting to the child.

Stories and songs of Jesus will be used all year in the preschool departments of the church school, but at Christmas

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19. Jones, op. cit., p. 59.

and Easter they will receive special emphasis. The story of Jesus' birthday is quite easily adapted to the understanding of preschool children, but the story of His death and resurrection presents many problems. The story of the crucifixion has no place in the Easter story for children in the nursery class. The emphasis for them should be on the fact that Jesus is alive and we should be glad. The kindergarten teacher may mention in passing that Jesus was killed by some mean men who didn't like Him, but she should soon pass on to the story of the living Christ.

Children often have many questions concerning life and death and these questions should be answered sincerely and without undue emotion. To tell a child that dying is just like going to sleep or that the person is buried in the ground often fills a child with horror at the thought of waking up under the ground in a box from which there is no escape. From the attitude of adults, children sometimes receive the idea that when someone dies God is arbitrarily taking that person from them. The child then feels resentment toward God and this feeling will grow until the misunderstanding is cleared up. The attitudes of adults toward death greatly influence the attitudes the child will have. If the adult thinks of death as a release from pain, weariness, and weakness and a birth into a richer, fuller life with God then the child will learn to think of death in that way also.

What is said of salvation and forgiveness of sins to preschool children will be reserved for the kindergarten level. Children of this age are old enough to comprehend some of the elementary concepts of salvation if they are presented to them in non-theological language which is simple enough. Expressions such as "washed in the blood of the lamb" or "under the blood" will lead only to confusing ideas that will be a hindrance to the child in the teacher's later attempts to help him understand what it means to be forgiven for sin and saved. Some children in the kindergarten have come to the point in their lives where they have consciously done something that they have known to be wrong. It is then that they need to know that their Heavenly Father will hear them when they ask for forgiveness and will help them in future times of temptation.

The Bible. There are parts of the Bible that can be adapted for use with preschool children and parts that cannot. The teachers in the preschool departments of the church school need to be very selective in the portions of the Bible they choose to use with the children. The selections made will not all be from the New Testament and the life of Jesus, for stories of the baby Samuel and the little boy David can also be made interesting to children of preschool age. As the children see the teacher reverently handle the Bible and hear her tell stories from it they will learn to think of it as a special book and one in which they will find their favorite stories of God and Jesus.

The fact that the Bible is God's word and true will never be doubted by the children if the teacher feels that way about it and treats it as such in her relationship with the children.

Prayer. To a small child prayer can be something that is very confusing or something that is very meaningful, depending upon the way prayer has been introduced into his life. Dr. Jersild says, "From an early age the child is able to encompass experiences reaching far beyond conditions with which he has physical contact. His mind can traverse distances never covered by his legs."<sup>20</sup> Prayer need not be difficult for the child because he cannot see God, if the right interpretation is given so the child understands that God is near even though He cannot be seen. Perhaps no interpretation will need to be given at all if the child has a grandmother or some other relative who is mentioned often and who the child knows exists even though she cannot be seen.

A child can be taught to say words or "say prayers," and in some instances there is a place for a learned prayer, which, of course, is not prayer in the real meaning of the word. "The fundamental thing which makes an experience prayer for a child is not the language expression, but the relationship which the child senses as existing between God and himself."<sup>21</sup> It is the

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<sup>20</sup>. Jersild, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>21</sup>. Jennie Lou Milton, Teaching a Little Child to Pray (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1943), p. 4.

privilege of the teachers in the preschool departments of the church school to provide experiences in which the child will feel the presence of God and in which he will make a prayer of his own because of that experience. It may not sound like a prayer as an adult thinks of prayer but if it is the child's expression of thankfulness or praise it is prayer for him.

Children sometimes become confused in their praying because they hear an adult while praying mention first God, then Jesus, and maybe Lord. They do not understand that it is the same person. As has been mentioned there is no need for teaching preschool children about the Trinity, for there are very few adults who completely understand it, and it is only confusing to a child of preschool age. Therefore in helping the child learn to pray it is wiser to choose one term for God and one for Jesus. Some would say that only God should be addressed in prayer with children so young; but if the child is learning to think of Jesus as his best friend it is natural that he will want to talk to Him. The terms "thee" and "thou" in addressing God or Jesus are also confusing to some children, and although in an adult's prayer these pronouns are preferable, for a child of preschool age the pronoun "you" is more familiar, easier for him to understand, and less of a stumbling block as he prays. The use of terms such as "bless" should be avoided also because of their vague meaning.

Preschool children will have experiences in which they

pray different types of prayers. In connection with something he enjoys the child may offer a prayer of thankfulness. If some member of the family is ill or if some other child has been hurt he may want to offer a prayer of petition. When a little lunch is served in an extended church-school session some child may volunteer to offer a prayer for the food. If the child has done something which he knows is wrong he may offer a prayer in which he asks for God's forgiveness and help. Whatever the need and the prayer the child offers, the teacher should be very careful that the child does not come to think of God as a deified Santa Claus or one that grants us our every wish and whim. The child can be taught that God answers all our prayers but sometimes that answer is "no" if the prayer we offer is not for our very highest good.

To summarize: The language development and comprehension of the preschool child are determining factors in one's choice of the religious concepts which are to be presented to the child in songs. The experiences of children of preschool age are limited and center mainly around the home; their thinking is concrete. If abstract ideas and symbolical terms are introduced into the songs it will be a hindrance to them in their development of religious concepts. The words and ideas which should be used in presenting religious concepts to the preschool child are those that are in the child's vocabulary or within his range of understanding. The words God, Jesus, Bible, and prayer need

to become a part of the child's vocabulary and need to be used in the preschool departments of the church school in such a way that the child will form the correct concepts of them. The ideas which the child receives concerning each of these vital elements of our Christian faith are determined by the teaching he receives about them and the experiences he has with them. These ideas can be presented to him in such a way that they will have meaning for him, or they can be presented in such a way that the wrong concepts are formed. Many songs have been written for preschool children telling of God, Jesus, the Bible, and prayer. But not all such songs treat these concepts in a desirable way. The teacher needs to look over each song she considers using to see if these realities of religion are presented in a manner that will be understandable and meaningful to the preschool child.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHOOSING SONGS FOR USE WITH THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

When choosing songs to be used with preschool children in the church school one must keep in mind the child's musical ability, his language development and comprehension, the average range of his experiences, and those religious concepts that are within his understanding. "The hymnology of the church, great and inspiring as it is, has not served well the needs of children."<sup>1</sup> Neither the words nor the music were written for children and therefore very few of the songs have real meaning for the child. Many of the song books used with children in the church school are filled with hymns which are good enough in themselves but are not adapted for use with children. Much progress has been made since the first Sunday-school song books were published, but much remains to be done.

The purpose of using music in the preschool departments of the church school is that the music may contribute as much as possible to the religious development of the child. "Singing helps in the development of a child's religious life. The worship of a child finds its best expression through joyous music."<sup>2</sup> If the songs that are used with the child are to

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1. Edith Thomas, A First Book in Hymns and Worship (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1922), p. xi.

2. Rosemary K. Roorback, "Musical Experiences in the Nursery Class," Child Guidance in Christian Living, 4:160, April, 1945.



make a contribution to his religious life, both the words and the music of these songs must measure up to certain standards. "Even though a song is very brief and simple, it should be good, with a melody that fits the words, and with words that express in his own natural language, an idea that a child can understand."<sup>3</sup> Both the words and music of the song must be evaluated before the song is used with the children, but the words should be evaluated first. The song may have a pleasing melody, but if the words and ideas it presents are not within the possible understanding of the child it will not accomplish much.

#### Words and Ideas in Preschool Songs

Songs to be used with preschool children should be written in language the child will understand. In Chapter III it was learned that children do not understand abstract or symbolic ideas or words. Children define words in terms of their use; they themselves are children, not "sunbeams" or "precious jewels." In one beginners' song book published in 1902 the children (in each of twelve songs) were likened to different things. They were called jewels, shining fishes, little pearls, sweet lambs, tiny flowers, Jesus' little flock, burning candles, sunbeams, the Master's blossoms, the Master's song-birds, Jesus' stars,

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3. Eva B. McCallum, The Nursery Class of the Church School: stories, rhymes, and songs (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1925), p. 20.

and the Lord's little band. Some of these expressions are found even today in the songs used with preschool children. If the teacher should choose to sing three of these songs on one Sunday morning the child could not help feeling a little confused and mixed-up as to just what Jesus did want him to be.

The songs which the preschool teacher chooses to use should be based on the religious experiences of the children. God would be presented to them as one who loves them and is always near. Some songs picture God as "above the blue," or "on high," while others bring the child a sense of God's nearness, such as "God Watches,"<sup>4</sup> "God is Ever Near Me,"<sup>5</sup> "God's Care,"<sup>6</sup> and "God is Very Near."<sup>7</sup> Beginning a song "Do not fear, God is near,"<sup>8</sup> states a positive concept in a negative way. The same idea finds better expression in the song which begins "God is ever near me."<sup>9</sup> Songs such as "The Little Children

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4. Agnes Kennedy Holmes, editor, Story Hour Songs for children from three to eight years of age (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943), p. 33.

5. Dorothy F. Poulton, compiler, Songs for Preschool Children (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1946), p. 23.

6. Mary E. LeBar, Patty Goes to the Nursery Class (Chicago: Scripture Press, 1945), p. 294.

7. Mattie C. Leatherwood, editor, Songs We Sing from Three to Six, silhouettes by Marjorie Morris (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939), p. 8.

8. Maurice Clarke, Little Children's Praises: services of worship for kindergarten and primary children (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1946), p. 27.

9. Ibid., Poulton, p. 23.

Know,"<sup>10</sup> "God is Love,"<sup>11</sup> "God Loves Me,"<sup>12</sup> and "God is My Helper,"<sup>13</sup> help the child in his growing concept of the love of God. How much more meaningful it is for a small child to sing "God is love, God is love--so the Bible tells,"<sup>14</sup> than "Lakes and seas with joy reveal it, suns proclaim it from above, in our hearts today we feel it, God is goodness, God is love."<sup>15</sup> Other songs can help the child in his understanding of the creatorship of God: "Who Made the Stars?"<sup>16</sup> "Who Made the Rainbow?"<sup>17</sup> "God Made Them All,"<sup>18</sup> and "Roses Bloom in my Garden."<sup>19</sup> The concept of God as Creator is better expressed in the words "Pitter pat the rain-drops fall; God our Father made them all,"<sup>20</sup> than it is in "Summer's bright blossoms will ever-more bear, tidings of mercy and tenderest care; God giveth sunshine and dewdrops and air."<sup>21</sup>

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10. Ibid., Poulton, p. 20.

11. Aurora Medford Shumate, editor, Songs for the Pre-School Age, for use in the Sunday school, home, and kindergarten (Nashville: Broadman Press, n.d.), p. 20.

12. When the Little Child Wants to Sing, for use with four-and five-year-olds in home, school, and church school (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1935), p. 12.

13. Frances Weld Danielson and Grace Wilbur Conant, Song and Play for Children, for Sunday and weekday use (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1925), p. 67.

14. Shumate, op. cit., p. 20.

15. Charlie D. Tillman, compiler and editor, Church Hymnal and Sunday School Songs, combined (Atlanta, Georgia: Charlie Tillman Song Book Co., n.d.), p. 385.

16. When the Little Child Wants to Sing, p. 10.

17. Holmes, op. cit., p. 8.

18. LeBar, op. cit., p. 297.

19. Leatherwood, op. cit., p. 39.

20. LeBar, Loc. cit.

21. Tillman, op. cit., p. 384.

The preschool child's songs of Jesus should present Him as the children's friend. The child can begin to understand the concept of Jesus as the Son of God, but songs in which Jesus is called "the Good Shepherd," "the Redeemer," and "the Lamb," will have little meaning for the child. These terms may have rich associations for an adult, but they are not within the young child's religious experience. Jesus' love for little children will be better understood if the child sings "Jesus loves the little children, loves us every day,"<sup>22</sup> rather than "for the loving Savior for His children cares."<sup>23</sup> Little folks like to sing songs about Jesus, their best Friend; and songs such as "I Must Remember,"<sup>24</sup> "Jesus Loves the Little Children,"<sup>25</sup> and "My Best Friend is Jesus,"<sup>26</sup> are helpful to children in learning to think of Jesus as their best friend. They like to hear stories, see pictures, and sing songs of Jesus when He was a little baby. The words "Jesus, our brother, strong and good, was humbly born in a stable rude,"<sup>27</sup> will not mean as much to the child at Christmas time as "Little Baby Jesus slept on His bed of hay."<sup>28</sup> Some songs that the children will enjoy at

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22. Leatherwood, op. cit., p. 14

23. Marguerite Cook, editor, Beginners Songs, a collection of choicest songs for youngest singers: for the beginners and primary departments, also for home and kindergarten (Chicago: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1902), p. 35.

24. Holmes, op. cit., p. 36.

25. Leatherwood, loc. cit.

26. LeBar, op. cit., p. 292.

27. Danielson and Conant, op. cit., p. 31.

28. When the Little Child Wants to Sing, p. 24.

Christmas time or any other time are "In a Tiny Manger,"<sup>29</sup>

"Oh, Little Children, Do You Know,"<sup>30</sup> and "Little Baby Jesus."<sup>31</sup>

The meaning of Easter to a preschool child is better presented in the words "Jesus is alive, be glad this Easter day,"<sup>32</sup> than in the words "Jesus is the Resurrection and the life of spring,"<sup>33</sup> the thought of one children's song. "Easter Day,"<sup>34</sup> "Each Flow'r Lifts Up Its Face,"<sup>35</sup> and "Oh, Sing, Sing, Sing,"<sup>36</sup> can be used with the preschool child at Easter. The song "Something Kind"<sup>37</sup> will be enjoyed by the children as the teacher tells of Jesus helping the sick and blind.

The child in the kindergarten can begin to know that Jesus will forgive him for his sins and mistakes but such expressions as "Jesus wash my guilt away,"<sup>38</sup> or "help me to obey thy wise and holy will,"<sup>39</sup> have no place in the songs for the preschool child. Yet these were found in a song designated for the infant class. Such phrases as "Dear God, please help me to say only happy words today."<sup>40</sup> or "help me to always do and say

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29. Holmes, op. cit., p. 38.

30. Poulton, op. cit., p. 53.

31. When the Little Child Wants to Sing, loc. cit.

32. LeBar, op. cit., p. 293.

33. Cook, op. cit., p. 83.

34. LeBar, op. cit., p. 293.

35. Poulton, op. cit., p. 40.

36. Danielson and Conant, op. cit., p. 82.

37. Holmes, op. cit., p. 24.

38. Robert Lowry and W. Howard Doane, Pure Gold for the Sunday School: a new collection of songs prepared and adapted for Sunday school exercises (New York: Biglow & Main, n.d.), p. 11.

39. Ibid., p. 11.

40. Holmes, op. cit., p. 26.

the things you'd have me,"<sup>41</sup> will mean much more to the child as he tries to live to please Jesus.

There are a few songs for children of preschool age that use phrases and verses from the Bible that are understandable to them. Examples of these are: "Give Thanks Unto the Lord,"<sup>42</sup> "I Open My Bible Book and Read,"<sup>43</sup> "In God's Dear Book,"<sup>44</sup> and "Be Ye Kind."<sup>45</sup> Although the phrase "suffer the little children to come unto Me,"<sup>46</sup> is from the Bible, it is not as meaningful in a song for the small child as some other Bible words would be.

Many prayer songs have been written for children but some of them use words that are a hindrance to the child as he learns to pray rather than a help. For example, the thought in "I will pray, night and morning, every day, fold my hands, and lift my eyes, to my Jesus in the skies,"<sup>47</sup> would be much more meaningful to the child if expressed "Dear Jesus, I love you, I do, dear Jesus, I'm praying to you."<sup>48</sup> Little prayer songs which the preschool child can learn to sing or learn to enjoy as they are sung to him are "We Thank you, God in Heaven,"<sup>49</sup> "We Thank You for the Sunshine,"<sup>50</sup> "Praise Song,"<sup>51</sup> "Dear Father Whom We

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41. Shumate, op. cit., p. 15.

42. Holmes, op. cit., p. 45.

43. Poulton, op. cit., p. 13.

44. Loc. cit.

45. Shumate, op. cit., p. 14.

46. Shumate, op. cit., p. 24.

47. Lowry and Doane, op. cit., p. 11.

48. LeBar, op. cit., p. 295.

49. Poulton, op. cit., p. 17.

50. Loc. cit.

51. Danielson and Conant, op. cit., p. 69

Cannot See,"<sup>52</sup> "Thank You for the World so Sweet,"<sup>53</sup> and "Thank You Father."<sup>54</sup> Some prayer songs ask for God's help in experiences in the life of the child. The words "in my work and in my play, help me to be kind, I pray,"<sup>55</sup> in a prayer song would have more religious value for the child than "Jesus, loving Savior, hear me now, I pray; look upon thy loving child, and bless me all the day."<sup>56</sup> "A child cannot worship through a prayer unless it expresses his own thoughts and feelings in language which he understands."<sup>57</sup> It is important that such songs be chosen, since the existence of the church school is that little children may learn to worship God. Songs can become a natural means of expression for moments of worship if the songs the child has learned are understandable to him. In a situation when the child wants to thank God for His help how much better it will be if the child has learned the song "Dear Father whom we cannot see, thank you for always helping me,"<sup>58</sup> rather than one with phrases such as "thank Thee for Thy many blessings," or "for Thy guidance now we thank Thee."

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52. Jeanette Perkins Brown, collector, A Little Book of Bedtime Songs, pictures by Decie Merwin (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 24.

53. Jeanette Perkins Brown, collector, A Little Book of Singing Graces, pictures by Lloyd Dotterer (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 7.

54. When the Little Child Wants to Sing, p. 48.

55. Holmes, op. cit., p. 41.

56. Cook, op. cit., p. 49.

57. Jennie Lou Milton, Teaching a Little Child to Pray (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1943), p. 25.

58. Brown, A Little Book of Bedtime Songs, p. 24.

Adults assume many positions when they pray and it is not right to teach a child that he must take a certain position before he can pray. Most people pray with their heads bowed and their eyes closed as an attitude of reverence, but one does not have to fold one's hands or kneel in order to pray. When choosing prayer songs the teacher should be careful to choose none that emphasize any particular position to be assumed while praying, such as "I will pray, fold my hands, and lift my eyes,"<sup>59</sup> or "we will close our eyes just now, fold our hands this way."<sup>60</sup>

The teacher in the preschool departments of the church school will use some songs that are not worship or prayer songs but ones which help the child in his appreciation of home and church. The song that begins "This is God's house and He is here today,"<sup>61</sup> will be more helpful to the child than one which begins "The Lord is in His holy temple, keep silence, keep silence."<sup>62</sup> A song such as "Happy Sunday morning, happy Sunday morning,"<sup>63</sup> will help the child think of Sunday as a happy day instead of a day when he must come to church and speak in a whisper. The experiences of the preschool child, and especially of the two-, three-, and four-year-old are centered mainly

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59. Lowry and Doane, op. cit., p. 11.

60. Shumate, op. cit., p. 16.

61. Poulton, op. cit., p. 9.

62. Ibid., p. 10.

63. Leatherwood, op. cit., p. 6.



around the home. At various times in the church-school program the teacher will want to use songs about parents and home. "A Happy Song,"<sup>64</sup> and "My Father and My Mother,"<sup>65</sup> are two that the child will enjoy.

There are many more songs which could be suggested for use with preschool children, but perhaps what has already been said will be a help to the teacher in choosing other songs.

### Music in Preschool Songs

The words and ideas expressed in the songs to be used with preschool children demand first consideration from the teacher as she chooses songs for the church school. But the music of the songs is also important. The songs that are used with the child must be enjoyable to him if he is to receive any benefit from them. Even though the words of the songs are understandable to the child, if the music is outside his voice range or if the songs are too long to hold his attention they will not be as enjoyable to the child nor accomplish as much as they could if the music were arranged especially for the child. Children cannot give forced attention, so if the teacher wants to use the songs effectively they must be interesting to the child both as to words and music.

The length of the musical composition to be used with

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64. Ibid., p. 24.

65. Poulton, op. cit., p. 30.

preschool children will be determined by the length of the child's attention span and the length of the sentences he uses. Children's attention spans are very short compared with those of adults, but a child will pay attention longer to a stimulus that is interesting than to one that is uninteresting. Yet even with material that is enjoyable to them, beyond a certain length of time they will lose interest. "Children of preschool age cannot be expected to pay attention for more than eight to twelve minutes at a time."<sup>66</sup> Children in the nursery department will not be expected to pay attention as long as those in the kindergarten. As a child advances in age from two years to five the length of his sentences increases. "His sentences lengthen from an average of three or four words at two years to nine or ten at five years."<sup>67</sup> Songs to be used with preschool children should consist of only two or three short sentences and should be about three or four lines in length. Many of the songs used in the nursery department are only one line in length. Short songs hold the child's attention better than do long ones and fit more naturally into his normal way of speaking.

It was mentioned in Chapter II that children's voices are pitched high and that their voice range is from Middle C to C an octave higher. It is hard on the children's

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<sup>66</sup>. Josephine C. Foster and Marion L. Mattson, Nursery School Education (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939) p. 42.

<sup>67</sup>. Ibid., p. 23.

voices to sing songs in which the notes go below or above the octave. If the songs are written so the child can sing them in his natural voice range without strain they will be more enjoyable and meaningful to him.

The melody of the songs should be relatively simple. It is best to have conjunct movement in the melody rather than long skips between the notes. A smooth succession of notes makes the songs easier for the children to sing. Few minor tones, if any, should be used in children's songs. The melody should be happy and joyous and almost sing itself. If the teacher plays the songs on an instrument she should be careful to keep the harmony simple also. The use of heavy chords and accidentals will overshadow the melody until it will be hard for the children to hear it.

From the study of rhythm in Chapter II it was learned that the child's first response to music is to the rhythm of the music. To be appealing to the child the rhythm of the songs should be good. Even though it is best for children's songs to be happy and joyous the rhythm need not be "jazzy" or "jingly." Some of the songs will be stately and dignified and yet they will be happy in their tone. Children hear enough "Swingy" tunes outside the church school. The music they hear in church should be different. To say a song should have good rhythm does not mean that it has to be "jumpy."

Many of the songs which will be used by the teacher in

the preschool departments of the church school will be worship songs. Some worship songs are written to induce moments of worship while others are written to express worship experiences. The music of the worship songs should be joyous rather than sad, and dignified rather than "swingy." A number of the works of the great composers have been adapted for use in children's songs because of the good music that is in them. If music is to be used in the preschool departments of the church school to help in the religious development of the child it should be the best music available. A child needs and deserves good music in his songs just as any adult does.

In summary it can be said that many of the songs being used today in the preschool departments of the church school are not songs that have been written for the child. They have been written for adults and use words and ideas for an adult's understanding. If the songs that are used with the preschool child in the church school are to be influential in the development of the child's religious life they must have words and music that are suitable for the child. The words and ideas expressed in the songs must be written in language the child can understand and must come within the range of his religious experiences. The music must be good with a simple melody that is well written and within the child's voice range. The harmony should be kept simple and the rhythm of the song should be joyous and happy, but not "jazzy" or "jingly." If the preschool teacher

keeps these principles in mind as she chooses the songs to be used with the children she will be doing much to help them in the development of their religious lives.

## CHAPTER V

### USING MUSIC WITH THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

In recent years an attempt has been made to provide in the preschool departments of the church school a natural living situation in which the child can associate religious ideas with everyday experiences. In this type of environment with its emphasis upon spontaneity and freedom in children's activities one finds an ideal setting for using music in the religious development of the child. Music can be introduced into the various experiences that a child will have in the church school until he comes to think of it as a natural means of expression which can be enjoyed by everyone. "Music may be woven into the life fabric of children in all their church-school activities,"<sup>1</sup> says Elizabeth Shields, and it will not only help them in their enjoyment of music but will serve a definite purpose in the molding of their religious lives. "Music can permeate the very atmosphere to suggest joy, sadness, quiet reverence, wonder, or a desire to be about our Father's business."<sup>2</sup> Shields goes on to say that "the room in which children work and worship may, through music, be charged with an atmosphere that is stimulating and wholesome."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Elizabeth McEwen Shields, Music in the Religious Growth of Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 27.

2. Ibid., p. 24.

3. Loc. cit.

The skillful teacher will weave music into the activities of the children by using a variety of methods and by discovering natural opportunities through which music can be used most effectively in the religious education of the children. If a teacher is familiar with the objects and experiences which are interesting to the children these will help her plan a program that is meaningful to the child because it puts the child and his needs in the center and molds the program around those needs. Meaningless activity or activity for activity's sake has no place in the church-school program, and the same principle can be applied to the songs used with the activities. Unless the song makes a definite contribution and fits in with the total aim of the program there is no place for it. It is the responsibility of the teacher to plan the program so that all the elements of it work toward one goal, the religious education of the child. Each part of the program must have a contribution to make or it is a hindrance rather than a help.

There are numerous ways in which music can be used in the preschool departments of the church school, depending on the ingenuity and interest of the teacher. In an informal environment like that which we find in a preschool department of the church school, music "is used like conversation, sometimes with the whole group, sometimes with one or two."<sup>4</sup> Often

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4. Dorothy D. Smith, "Informal Use of Music," Child Guidance in Christian Living, 6:546, December, 1947.

it is used with individual children or perhaps with two or three of them rather than with the group as a whole. There are also times when music is used with the entire class. Coming together for pleasant experiences helps in the socialization of the group and is an important experience for the young child.

### Various Uses of Songs

Using songs with a group of children. There are occasions in the church-school program when several children in the group or perhaps all of them will come together for a singing time. Inasmuch as in the nursery department there will seldom be a time when the teacher is able to bring together all the children, she will have to use the songs with a part of the group. In the kindergarten more children will want to take part in the activity, and in a small class it may be that all of them will enter in. If a piano is used the children will gather around it, sitting either on little chairs or on the rug. If the teacher can sing true to the key of the song without using the piano it is much better for the children. It is also better if the teacher can face them while she sings; this will help them hear the melody and understand the words more clearly. As the teacher sings to the children she should feel that she is giving them a message and not merely a melody. If she catches the spirit and feeling of the song the children will find meaning in what she sings.



The preschool teacher in the church school never sets out to teach the children a song by merely drilling them in it until they have learned it. Using this method takes all the joy out of the experience of singing and the children learn the song with little enthusiasm. "There is really no such thing as 'teaching' a new song. It is simply giving the children something and letting them share it with you until it becomes their own."<sup>5</sup> The teacher sings the song, and lets the children sing or not sing, whichever they choose. When she sings the songs to the children she will use a light voice and try to sing the entire song without accompaniment. As the children hear the melody again and again, unconsciously assimilating it, they will soon be singing the song with the teacher. In group singing the teacher should never encourage the children to sing loudly. There is no religious value in seeing who can sing the loudest. When the teacher sings a song for the first time she should sing it at its regular tempo and never slow it down in order that the children may learn it more easily. This necessitates two learnings instead of one. If the children like a song they will want to sing it again and again. "In order to build material to the level of easy recall it is necessary for children to repeat a performance many more times than is

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5. Louie E. deRusette, Music Under Eight (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1936), p. 75.

required in adult learning."<sup>6</sup> As the song is repeated the teacher should be sure that such repetition is meaningful to the children. Since rhythm facilitates the learning process the teacher will emphasize the rhythmic movement of the piece.

When introducing a new song to the group the teacher should be sure to relate it in some way to the children's environment. The best time to introduce the song is when it will have the most meaning for the group. A greater part of the time the stage will be set naturally for the introduction of a new song, as when the song relates to the teaching unit the department is using or when some play situation invites it. At other times the stage can be set artificially by conversation or by a story or picture. New songs should not always be introduced in the same way. The story offers many opportunities for using songs with a group of children. Stories about home, Jesus and the children, the sunshine and rain, the children's pets, or special days call for appropriate songs. Sometimes the children will want to act out the parts of the song and be trees, raindrops, or birds. Stories may be told in song, and although these will not be sung for the children to learn, they will enjoy listening and the variation will add new interest to both the story and the song. Pictures can also be used as a means of introducing a song. A special picture will call for

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6. Ada Hart Arlitt, Psychology of Infancy and Early Childhood, (third edition; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1946), p. 313.

a special song and the pictures can be made available so that the children may choose the picture and corresponding song that they want. It is also possible for different lines of a song to be illustrated with different pictures. A teacher with initiative and originality will be able to think of many new ways in which to introduce songs to the children. In the preschool department a song will need to be used several times before it becomes the children's own. It is best that the teacher introduce only a few songs during the year and that they be used repeatedly as occasion arises. If a teacher introduces new songs too frequently the children will not have time to make them their own.

Using songs in informal situations. Just as there are times when the teacher will want to use songs with a group there are also occasions when she will use them in an informal way with two or three of the children. Songs are sometimes very useful in motivating the conduct of the children. If two of the children decide to play "swing" at the same time a song such as "You take your turn, then I'll take mine,"<sup>7</sup> might be used to help bring about the action desired. Or if there is discussion as to who should play with the blocks the teacher, to help solve the problem, may sing "We like our blocks, we

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7. Ann Sterling Boesel, Singing with Peter and Patsy, illustrated by Pelagie Doane (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 13.

share our blocks; now we can play together."<sup>8</sup> Songs can also be used to help motivate the children to put away their toys when it is time to go home. In one nursery department when the teacher, picking up the toys, sings "I'm helping in God's house, helping, helping,"<sup>9</sup> the children respond by picking up the toys also and singing the song along with the teacher. Children seem to respond more quickly to suggestions made in song than they do to suggestions that are merely spoken. Elizabeth Shields says, "Music can be of aid in influencing the attitudes and conduct of children toward their work and toward each other as they work,"<sup>10</sup> Attitudes of sharing and helping are important elements in one's religious development.

Songs may also be coupled in various ways with the children's play activities. As the teacher in the kindergarten department sees one of the children drawing a picture of a church she may sing, "When to Church I Go."<sup>11</sup> Another child may be drawing flowers and a song such as "God Makes the Pretty Flowers Grow"<sup>12</sup> will add new meaning to the experience. There

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8. Agnes Kennedy Holmes, editor, Story Hour Songs, for children from three to eight years of age (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1943), p. 37.

9. Mary E. LeBar, Patty goes to the Nursery Class (Chicago: Scripture Press, 1945), p. 292.

10. Shields, op. cit., p. 53.

11. Frances W. Danielson and Jessie E. Moore, Three Years Old, for the nursery class of the church school (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1936), p. 5.

12. Mattie C. Leatherwood, editor, Songs We Sing from Three to Six, silhouettes by Marjorie Morris (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939), p. 18.

are many opportunities during the children's play when the teacher may make up songs that are appropriate for the activity. "A song just at the moment when it fits into a satisfying activity adds the charm of melody, rhythm, and words to the situation."<sup>13</sup> Perhaps a little girl is putting her doll to sleep, or a little boy is examining the bird's nest which has just been brought into the room. Whatever the occasion the teacher can create a song that will add more enjoyment to the experience. There are many instances when the seasons and the weather will give opportunity for using songs with the children. The resourceful teacher will make up a song to fit the experience at hand and through this medium add deeper significance to the teaching situation. In so many different ways a teacher can help make music a part of the child's life if she is interested enough to try it. If the children hear their teacher singing or humming as she goes about her activities of cleaning the fish bowl or putting the dishes away they will likely be singing or humming at their activities before long. The first music of little children is imitative and the way music is used in their environment is the way in which it will become a part of their lives. The teacher will have to use discretion, of course, as to what situations lend themselves readily to the use of a song. If everything the teacher says is put to music the music will soon lose its effectiveness and meaning. But if proper

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<sup>13</sup>. Helen Christianson, compiler, Music and the Young Child (Washington, D.C.: Association for Childhood Education, 1936), p. 9.

use is made of informal music it can contribute much to the child's enjoyment of music and to the development of his religious life.

Using worship songs. Worship songs for children are songs "through which they express a genuine feeling of nearness to God and through which they express themselves in prayer to a loving heavenly Father."<sup>14</sup> An effective preschool teacher in the church school is one who sees the religious significance of the normal experiences of the children. She can take these experiences and use them to bring about moments of worship which find expression in song. There are many instances when nature stories or objects of nature can lead to times of worship which find expression in a song thanking God for the beautiful things He has put in our world. If a little lunch is served in an extended church-school session the children all participate in a moment of worship as a thank-you prayer to God is said for the food. This is a definite place where prayer can be used with the children, but more often there will be no formal times for prayer. Prayer with preschool children should be spontaneous and can occur whenever a situation develops in which prayer seems natural. The teacher will be watching for moments of worship in which she can have prayer and in this way make prayer a normal part of many different situations. The experience of giving may provide a moment of worship for the child.

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14. Shields, op. cit., p. 61.

As each child contributes the money he has brought the teacher may sing the song "I'm giving, because I love Jesus," and in this way put meaning into the act of giving. This method can be used if each child contributes his money as he comes in, or if the money is collected later from the group as a whole.

"By making the early relations of giving a happy, satisfying one we may increase the likelihood that it will be strengthened."<sup>15</sup>

If the teacher attaches some significance to the experience of giving instead of passing over it as a mere routine she will be taking advantage of another opportunity to help the child in his religious development. Experiences of worship play a vital part in the child's spiritual development. "Music is, for childhood at least, the most effective stimulus to worship as well as its most natural mode of expression."<sup>16</sup>

#### Various Uses of Instrumental Music

In the preschool departments of the church school there are opportunities for using instrumental music as well as for using songs. Music for appreciation, rhythms, and rhythm instruments all have something to contribute to the life of the child which makes their inclusion in the church-school program valid.

Music for appreciation. Children need to hear good music

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15. Mary Alice Jones, The Faith of Our Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 35.

16. Edith Lovell Thomas, A First Book in Hymns and Worship (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1932), p. xi.

and become familiar with it because one's taste for music is determined largely by what is familiar. The more music of the best type that a child hears in his early years the more likely he will be to choose that music when he is older. A period of listening to good music in the church-school session will help the child develop an appreciation of the best music. "The music which the very young child hears should be of the quality that will quiet him and at the same time, without overstimulation, make him feel the greatness of the art."<sup>17</sup> There is a spiritual beauty in good music that needs to become a part of the child's environment. As the child listens to the right kind of music the right kind of emotions will be aroused and he will be stimulated to wholesome means of expression. If the pieces selected are to become familiar to the children they should be short and repeated often. A phonograph is the best instrument to use for playing the music and in many cases the most convenient. The many good records available today make it possible for even the smallest church school to have advantages that would not be possible if they had to depend on their own pianist. It is sometimes nice to have a good pianist play a piece for the children's listening time, or it may be that a good violinist is available who will come once in a while to play a few selections. There are numerous possibilities for music appreciation that the preschool teacher can use if she

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<sup>17</sup>. Satis N. Coleman, Your Child's Music (New York: The John Day Company, 1939), p. 94.



is honestly trying to give the children an opportunity for enjoying the best that there is in music.

There are different times during the session when music for appreciation can be used with the children. The teacher may have a music appreciation time and gather all the children around the phonograph to listen to a selection that she has chosen. She may want to prepare the children for the experience by telling them what to listen for in the piece, or by telling them what the music is supposed to represent. She may also let the children tell her what they hear in the music. Preschool children should not be expected to listen for a long period of time or the value of the experience will be lost. The more experiences they have in listening the more their listening ability will increase. The music for appreciation should be simple in character and it should have a strong, well-marked rhythm. "While it is desirable that the music should arouse childlike emotions, yet the teacher must guard against overstimulating the child."<sup>18</sup> Instrumental music can also be used with the children as they have their rest period. Soft, quiet music such as Brahms' Lullaby or Sweet and Low will help the children relax and it is important for children to acquire the habit of relaxing when awake. The music would not have to be played continuously throughout the entire rest period, but if

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<sup>18</sup>. Josephine C. Foster and Neith E. Headley, Education in the Kindergarten (New York: American Book Company, 1936), p. 220.

played at the beginning of the time it will be a help in getting the children into a mood for rest. Occasionally the children may enjoy making a trip into the church sanctuary, when it is not being used, to listen to the organist play a short piece that they can appreciate.

These few suggestions do not include all the possibilities for music appreciation that are open to the preschool teacher, but are only a few examples of what can be done by a teacher who is interested in having her children hear and learn to appreciate good music.

Rhythms. There are several advantages in using rhythmic responses in the preschool department of the church school. Two of these advantages are: "First, the development of motor controls through carefully planned and appropriate exercises. Second, the development of social values through participation in group activity."<sup>19</sup> There may not be much time in the church-school program for experiments with rhythms, but a certain amount of time used for this purpose will have its value for the children.

One way for the teacher to emphasize rhythm in the preschool program is the incidental method. There are many activities in which the children participate that have definite rhythm patterns, and a teacher who is a capable pianist can

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19. Alice G. Thorn, Music for Young Children, cited by Anna Freelove Betts, The Nursery Child in the Church School (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930), p. 94.

catch the rhythm of those activities and put it to music. There is music with a rhythm that matches that of the swing as the child goes up and down. Another child may be walking or running around the room and the teacher can emphasize that rhythm by singing or playing an accompaniment to his movements. By thus emphasizing the rhythm of their various activities the teacher can help them become aware of the contrast of movement in various types of music. But this method of acquainting the child with different forms of rhythm must not become something artificial or imposed. It must bear some relation to the activity of the moment if it is to be enjoyed by the children.

Another method the teacher can use to emphasize rhythm is to plan for a rhythm time when all the children participate if they will. As a preparation for the period the chairs and toys should be cleared out of the path the children will be taking. Then the teacher can go to the piano and play some piece of music that has a marked rhythm pattern. Some of the children will gather around the piano and the teacher will ask them how the music makes them feel. Perhaps none of them will volunteer a response and the teacher can suggest that it sounds like a galloping horse or a tip-toeing fairy. If the children are going to learn to recognize that a certain rhythm calls for a certain response, they must learn through experience. If the teacher introduces the music by saying "now we are going to hop" the children will hop merely because they were told to

without realizing that the rhythm of the music is telling them to hop. When the teacher first begins to use rhythm responses in her church-school department she may have to play the music and then offer definite suggestions as to how the music makes her feel before the children will give any response at all. But after the experience becomes more familiar she can play a piece and ask the children what it is telling them to do. Or she may play two pieces and ask them which one sounds like a horse trotting, or a bunny hopping. The children may want to clap out the music with their hands instead of responding with their feet. Perhaps they will even use some rhythm instruments that will be mentioned later in the chapter. The rhythm activity period need not always be the same from one church-school session to another, for variety will help the children in their development of motor control and ability to participate in group activity.

The best rhythms to use with the children in the preschool department are the march, the run, the gallop, the swing or skate, and the skip. Skipping rhythms will not be used with the children in the nursery department because the act of skipping is too complicated a response for children much under five. But the children in the kindergarten department will enjoy skipping to music. Morgan brings out the fact that both "Negro and white children do better in fast rhythms than in slow ones. The slow, controlled type of movement does not yield easily

to rhythmic patterns."<sup>20</sup>

As the teacher begins to use rhythms with the children she should make it clear that all are to go in the same direction and that when the music starts they start, and when it stops they stop. It will avoid much confusion later if this is made definite at the beginning. In the rhythm period the teacher should be careful to follow an active rhythm with one that is quiet and less strenuous. After a period of running or marching the children may stand still while the teacher plays a piece that will make them want to respond as trees swaying in the wind or a mother rocking her baby to sleep. The teacher should gauge the length of the period by the previous rhythm experiences of the children and by the length of time during which the children find enjoyment in the activities. The period should not last until they are overstimulated or overtired.

Rhythm instruments. In the preschool departments of the church school there is not the use for rhythm instruments and rhythm bands that there seems to be in public nursery schools and kindergartens. But rhythm instruments offer variety for rhythmic expression and can be used to a limited degree. Because there are usually other classes near-by, the instruments that are chosen by the teacher to be used with the children should be those that make as little noise as possible. Small

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20. John J. B. Morgan, Child Psychology, third edition (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 155.

sleigh bells, rattles, and rhythm sticks lend themselves to a variety of uses and would be much more acceptable than metal gongs or loud-sounding drums. The children like to experiment with making rhythms of their own and they also enjoy interpreting with the instruments a rhythm which is played on the piano or phonograph. The teacher should keep a close watch on the period when the instruments are being used to see that the children are using them to accomplish the purpose for which they are intended and not merely turning the period into a time for making noise. Correct guidance on the part of the teacher will make this period one which is looked forward to and enjoyed by the children.

To summarize, one can say that there are many different uses for music in the preschool departments of the church school. The one principle to keep in mind when using music with the children is its relatedness to the situation in which the group finds itself. Using music with a group or with individuals can have much meaning for the children and can make a distinct contribution to their religious development if that music is appropriate for the occasion and used at the right moment. There are a variety of ways in which songs can be used with the children's activities if the teacher is alert and looking for opportunities to introduce music into the curriculum of the department. There are also values in using instrumental music, and its inclusion in the preschool program will add variety and interest for the

children. Using music with preschool children in the church school offers many advantages for the children, and the efficient teacher will use it because of the rich contribution it can make to the development of the religious lives of the children.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

Throughout this thesis an attempt has been made to show that music has much to contribute to the religious development of the preschool child if the music meets certain standards which are set up in accordance with the needs and capacities of young children. "To the church school falls the chief responsibility for using music in the religious development of the child,"<sup>1</sup> and because this responsibility falls to them the workers in the church school should make an attempt to understand the preschool child so that they may use this medium most effectively. "Only as we know the situation in which the child finds himself, know his possibilities and his hopes, can we expect to direct his life to worth while ends."<sup>2</sup>

Music is the child's natural heritage and he needs it in his church-school environment as well as his home environment. It provides him with a wholesome means of expression for his emotions, it gives him an opportunity to develop physical coordination, it helps him in social adjustment as he shares it with the other children, and it exerts a spiritual influence upon him which helps to satisfy one of his basic needs. Children

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1. Elizabeth McEwen Shields, Music in the Religious Growth of Children (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 27.

2. Rosemary K. Roorbach, Teaching Children in the Small Church (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1946), p. 11.



need to learn how to worship God, and music is not only one of the best mediums for bringing about an atmosphere of worship, but it is also one of the best means for expressing the love and praise of a worshipful heart. Through music a child's religious concepts may be enriched and developed. It is the responsibility of the preschool teacher to choose those songs and musical selections that will be most helpful in the religious development of her children. The fact that "The child is wax to receive and granite to retain"<sup>3</sup> should challenge the teacher to do her best in attempting to understand and meet his needs in the most effective way possible.

The musical ability of the preschool child is a result of both inheritance and environment. Even the small baby seems to have some capacity for the enjoyment of music, and he expresses himself musically in many different ways. But as he grows older he needs to hear music and have opportunity for musical expression within his environment if he is to develop that capacity to its fullest degree. The teacher in the church-school environment should be familiar with the factors upon which learning is dependent as she provides musical experiences. Maturation, imitation, memory, and repetition are all elements in the process of learning which play a vital part in the lasting effect of the experiences. "Material which has been well

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3. Shields, op. cit., p. 31.

learned in early childhood, which has pleasant associations, and against which there have been directed no attempts at repression may be retained with accuracy for long periods of time."<sup>4</sup>

The musical ability of the child shows itself in the way in which the child responds to the music. The rhythm of the music has the most appeal, and the first response of the child is to this movement in the music. Later he responds to the tone of the music and enjoys the activity of singing. The singing experience should be one in which the child finds enjoyment and those songs which he sings should be written for his natural voice range, which is from middle C to C an octave above. Children often experiment with sounds and create little musical pieces of their own. Freedom in physical activity and heightened emotional feeling frequently call forth spontaneous music among children.

If the preschool teacher is to choose intelligently those songs which will have the most meaning for the child she should be familiar with his language development, comprehension, and those religious concepts which are within his ability to understand. The vocabulary of the preschool child consists of those words which he uses in his every day conversation and those words which he understands but does not use. His vocabulary increases

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4. John J. B. Morgan, Child Psychology (third edition, New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1946), p. 367.

as he is introduced to new objects and experiences. Children of this age are very concrete in their thinking and do not understand generalizations or words that are symbolical. In the light of this fact teachers should notice how religious concepts are expressed in the music they use with the children. The concept of God can have much meaning for the preschool child if the child is led to think of God as a loving heavenly Father who loves and cares for him. Children should hear stories and sing songs of Jesus, their best Friend, and should be introduced to the concept of Jesus as the Son of God. The preschool child should see the Bible used in such a way that he will come to think of it as a special book in which he will find his favorite stories of God and Jesus. The concept of prayer can be meaningful to him if he is led to understand that God exists and hears him when he prays although God cannot be seen.

Many of the songs in use in the preschool departments of the church school today are not songs which have been written for the child or songs which are within his ability to understand. They use words and phrases which are symbolical or outside the range of his experiences. "What we try to accomplish through education at any growth level should be in keeping with the individual's capacities and potentialities at that level."<sup>5</sup>

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5. Arthur T. Jersild, Child Development and the Curriculum (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946), p. 8.

In recent years as a result of the new interest in the preschool child many songs have been written especially for use with children of that age. In choosing a song for use with preschool children one should ask these questions about it--"Are the words good, are they meaningful to the child, is the music simple, is it melodious, and is it in good form?"<sup>6</sup> If it measures up to these qualifications for both words and music the teacher will find that it offers meaning and enjoyment for the child.

Music can be used in the preschool departments of the church school in many different ways. Songs can be used with groups of children or with individuals. A singing time provides an enjoyable group experience for the children, and as the songs are repeated again and again the children absorb the words and melody and make them their own. Songs can also be used to help motivate conduct. Often their use leads to experiences of worship and through them the child finds a means of expression for those moments of worship. Other forms of music such as pieces for appreciation, rhythms, and rhythm instruments also have their use in the preschool departments.

As a result of the investigation that has been made in this thesis it can be concluded that music does have a contribution to make to the religious development of the preschool child. But the music cannot be just any type of music. It must

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6. Dorothy D. Smith, "Informal Use of Music," Child Guidance in Christian Living, 6:546, December, 1947.

meet specific qualifications if its use with children of this age is to be effective. These qualifications apply both to the words and the music of the songs, and to the instrumental selections. If the teacher keeps before her these standards for preschool music and tries to choose that music which will have the most meaning for the child and which will provide the right spiritual influences, she will be making a deep and vital contribution to his present and future religious development.

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