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AN APPRAISAL OF THE METHODIST CATECHISM FOR JUNIORS
AS AN INSTRUMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

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

by
Freda May Dayhoff
June 1950
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The average church member too often knows very little of the doctrines of his denomination. Many Sunday School curricula fail to present adequately these basic truths, and only infrequently are doctrinal sermons preached. As a consequence, laymen are often "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,\textsuperscript{1} unable to recognize error through lack of knowledge of the truth. Modernism, Unity, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other false schools of thought win converts from among those who are not grounded in the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Since seventy five per cent of church members and an even higher percentage of church workers come up through the Sunday School,\textsuperscript{2} it can easily be seen that the proper doctrinal training of church school pupils is of utmost importance.

The church finds itself faced also with another urgent situation. Men are living today under a sense of foreboding and uncertainty. While a skeptical philosophy

\textsuperscript{1} Ephesians 4:14.

\textsuperscript{2} Cf. post, p. 41.
may have sufficed for days of peace and prosperity, in these times of stress and insecurity men are seeking for something in which to anchor their faith, something to reassure and guide them. One answer to this problem may be found in the reinstatement of the content of the Bible as of primary importance in religious education.  

The use of the catechism has long been one method of meeting the need for doctrinal instruction. In recent years, however, its use has steadily declined, and it is not favorably regarded by religious educators in general. The Methodist Church publishes, at present, a catechism for children of the Junior Department of the church school. In view of the need for a comprehensive presentation of important Christian beliefs, it seemed advisable to study the Junior Catechism to ascertain its value in religious education today.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this thesis to appraise the Junior Catechism of the Methodist Church, (1) through a study of the development and use of the catechism in the history of Christian education; (2) through an evaluation of it in the light

---

of modern educational theories and practice; and (3) by an
analysis of its doctrinal content as compared with John
Wesley's original Methodist teaching. The appraisal was
made from the viewpoint of the Wesleyan tradition of
Asbury Theological Seminary.

**Limitations of the study.** It was impossible in
this study to consider the entire curriculum for Junior
boys and girls or to give an exhaustive analysis of the
present-day philosophy and psychology of education. Neither
could there be a complete discussion of the methods of
using the catechism, for these aspects of the problem are
beyond its scope.

**II. THE PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH**

**The areas analyzed.** An historical study was made
of the use of the catechism in religious education,
beginning with the Hebrew people and the early Christian
church until the present time. Modern theories of education
and psychology were next considered. Contemporary
children's catechisms of several other denominations were
examined, and comparisons made. Following this, a study
was made of the relation of the teachings of the Junior
Catechism to the original doctrines of the Methodist Church
as set forth by John Wesley. Certain modifications are
suggested as to its content and use for today.

The proposed conclusions. As the thought is clearly expressed by Frost,

There can be no education in mechanics except through teaching mechanics, no education in the arts and sciences except through teaching the arts and sciences, and no education in Christian truth except through teaching Christian truth.4

Thus, the opinion is reached that after certain revisions are made, the Junior Catechism can very profitably be used as an answer to the need for theological knowledge among laymen.

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Catechetical teaching has been a method used in Christian education from its earliest beginnings. The catechism has had its times both of popularity and of disapproval. A brief history of its use will be given.

I. EARLY HEBREW EDUCATION

Catechetical teaching. The Hebrew people used a catechetical method of teaching. In the family the head of the home conducted the catechizing. Both the teachers in the schools and the priests and Levites in the temple instructed the children in this manner also. Each child was to know the law, and this meant primarily to be able to repeat it accurately. The memory was therefore cultivated carefully. The children had free use of the Scriptures and were given small parchment rolls from which to study. The subjects were discussed by the question and answer method.

The Jewish point of view. While many sources stated that the early Hebrew synagogues used a catechetical method of teaching, it was noted that this was not corroborated in the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia. There it was stated that this form of instruction was not adopted by Judaism until the sixteenth century although both born Jews and converts were given a long period of instruction in the Bible, the Talmud, and the codes. From the sixteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century the teachers did employ a catechetical method of religious education.4

II. EDUCATION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The earliest catechetical instruction. The teachers in the primitive Christian church were called catechisers and the pupils, catechumens. The Greek verb means the dinning of something into a person's ears by incessant iteration.5 Schools using this means of instruction appeared about 160 A. D. in Rome under Justin Martyr. There were other famous catechetical schools at Alexandria, Caesarea, Antioch, and Edessa.6

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4 Rosenfeld, Moritz, "Jewish Catechisms," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, III, 66-67.


At first the instructors were the bishops, priests, and deacons of the church. Later on other clerics and laymen performed the task. As the church grew and made more contacts with educated pagans, the catechisers were chosen from among the converted philosophers and scholars.

Education during the time of persecutions. When active opposition to Christianity manifested itself in persecution, the church had to be very cautious in admitting new members. Careful doctrinal and moral training was given to guard against falling away or betrayal. The catechetical teaching was graded according to the status of the learner. He was classified as an inquirer when he had learned the fundamental doctrines, as a catechumenate when he was ready for further instruction, and as a competente when he was ready for baptism. Until the person had proved his reliability, the teaching was more guarded and less explicit. At times the truths were so worded that only the initiated could understand the whole.

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7 Cassidy, op. cit., p. 34.
9 Scannell, op. cit., p. 76.
10 Ibid., p. 77.
These classes of instruction were often conducted in the baptistry or the vestry of the church, although sometimes a separate building was provided.\textsuperscript{11} As the church grew and new buildings were constructed, they were built with the catechetical plan of teaching in mind. Rather than having large auditoriums, smaller rooms were made since they were better suited for this interlocutory method of instruction.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{St. Augustine's treatise on catechisms.} About the year 400 A.D. Augustine wrote a treatise dealing with both the theory and the practice of catechizing. It was written because a deacon named Deogratias had complained to Augustine of the difficulty of making the instructions fresh and of how wearisome it was to go over the same material time after time.\textsuperscript{13}

III. THE CATECHISM DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

The first regular catechisms. It was not until the eighth and ninth centuries that the first regular catechisms were compiled. Two of the most noted catechisms

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Benson, \textit{A Popular History of Christian Education}, p. 43.
\item[13] Scannell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 77.
\end{footnotes}
of that time were written by Kero, a monk of Saint Gall, and Otfried of Weissenburg. The first catechism written in the modern question and answer form was the Disputatio Puerorum Per Interrogationes Et Responsiones, written in the ninth century.

The educational requirements of the Medieval Church. Charlemagne was influenced by his Anglo-Saxon adviser Alcuin in his awakening realization of the importance of knowledge among his people. He decreed that every baptized person should know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer by heart.

It was the belief of the church leaders at that time that the people should not reason about Christian truths but accept them as full authority through memoriter methods. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109 said, "The Christian ought to advance to knowledge through faith, not come to faith through knowledge." Among those who realized that a reform was needed

17 Knight, Edgar W., Twenty Centuries of Education (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1940), pp. 94-95.
in the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages was John Gerson (1363-1429). Although his duties as chancellor of the University of Paris kept him busy, he took a great interest in the instruction of children and composed a child's catechism entitled The A B C of Simple Folk. He also wrote a work to help the clergy to catechize, which was a forerunner of the catechism of the Council of Trent.\textsuperscript{18}

The method of catechetical instruction. During the Middle Ages the instruction in religion was usually given in the parish church. This was generally done on Sundays and feast-days.\textsuperscript{19} The truths were sometimes taught in rhymes and songs.\textsuperscript{20} The formulas of the catechism were also illustrated by pictures. A visual presentation of the third commandment, for example, consisted of two pictures. One was of a preacher in his pulpit before the congregation. The other was of two men seated at a card table with wine and dice while the devil was disguised as a waiter.\textsuperscript{21} Thus it can be seen that some attempts were made to make religious instruction more interesting.

\textsuperscript{18} Scannell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 48.
IV. THE REFORMATION PERIOD

The Bohemian Brethren and the Waldenses. Among the early groups to break with the Roman Catholic Church were the Bohemian Brethren and the Waldenses. They felt that the religious instruction of children was of great importance. About the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century the Waldenses used a catechetical form of teaching, the Interrogaciones Menors, modeled after the Kinderfragen of the Bohemian Brethren.²²

The importance of doctrinal teaching. Since the leaders of the Reformation had separated from the Catholic Church because they recognized the errors in its doctrines, they felt that the people should be taught the truth. From both the Protestant and Catholic point of view heresy was the supreme sin, and salvation depended upon belief in the correct doctrine.²³ Immediate steps to inculcate such belief were taken, therefore, in both centers where the Reformation movement originated. Johann Agricola was appointed catechist at Wittenberg in 1521. In Zurich in 1522 systematic instruction of youth replaced the Roman

²² Cohrs, op. cit., p. 443.
Another important reason for doctrinal teaching was the religious ignorance and low moral condition of both the common people and many of the clergy. The elector of the Lutheran Church appointed Melanchthon to draw up articles for the guidance of church officers and ministers in the needed reform. Published in 1528, this document was the first official form for teaching the fundamentals of the Protestant faith and a pioneer to Luther's catechism and to the Augsburg Confession.25

Luther's catechism. In 1529 Luther published a catechism in two grades. The larger was for the ministers and teachers, while the shorter was for the children and laymen. These books exerted a great influence in the religious training of that day.26 Under Luther's guidance religious education took on a more important role. The sextons of the churches drilled the children on the catechism each Saturday as well as teaching them to sing the church hymns. Exercises in the catechism often replaced the vespers sermon on Sunday afternoons. Each

24 Cohrs, op. cit., p. 443.


26 Haslett, op. cit., p. 35.
person had to know the significance of the Lord's Supper and be examined as to his preparation before he was permitted to partake of the communion.27

Luther's Small Catechism was of great importance in this religious instruction, and it has continued so throughout the years. It was claimed to be the most widely circulated and translated book ever published, with the exception of the Bible, at the time of its four hundredth anniversary.28

The flood of catechisms. In rapid succession the various branches of Protestantism turned out catechisms during the Reformation era. There soon appeared to be danger of too much and too advanced religious instruction. Calvin's catechism appeared in 1536, the Heidelberg in 1563, the Bellarmin in 1603, and the catechism of the English Church in 1604.29 The smaller form of the Westminster Catechism was published in 1646, the larger form following in 1647. Bunyan's Instruction for the Ignorant appeared in 1672.30

29 Haslett, op. cit., p. 35.
30 Ibid., p. 36.
The Roman Catholic Church published a manual of instruction for the clergy in 1563 which was designed to improve the catechetical methods of religious educators. This was the Catechismus ad Parochos, the famous Catechism of the Council of Trent. Further rules for catechizing were set forth by St. Charles Borromeo in 1579. All penitents were to be examined by their confessors as to their knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments.

The first catechism to appear in English was A Catechism or Christian Doctrine necessary for Children and Ignorant People, written by Laurence Vaux, a Bachelor of Divinity, in 1567.

The great fault of almost all of the catechisms of the Reformation Period was that they were compendiums of systematic theology and entirely unsuited for teaching children.

V. EARLY CATECHISMS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE

The major catechisms of different countries. About the middle of the eighteenth century the catechism was the

31 Scannell, op. cit., p. 79.
32 Ibid., p. 82.
33 Ibid., p. 79.
34 Haslett, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
core of religious instruction. The Shorter Catechism of Luther was in use in all the Protestant German lands along with the later Heidelberg Catechism. Calvin's catechism was used in Calvinistic lands, while the Westminster Catechism predominated in England and the American Colonies.35

The Heidelberg Catechism. The Heidelberg Catechism and Luther's catechism have been the only two that have survived as world-wide catechisms. Since the appearance of the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563 only the shorter catechism of the Presbyterian Church can claim any world-wide significance.36 One reason for its importance and its popularity is the fact that it is more than mere theological statements. The questions are often addressed directly to the pupil and require answers worded in the first person, thus serving as warm, personal confessions of faith.37 It is very thoroughly developed and was taught to the children in the schools as a catechism and was expounded from the pulpit as the church creed on


37 Ibid., pp. 295-96.
Sunday afternoons.38

The Westminster Catechism. The five years spent in the preparation of the Westminster Catechism resulted in its being recognized as the ablest work of them all. The sovereignty of God and the authority of the Bible are its great central theme. It is severely logical and theological and does not possess the personal warmth of the Heidelberg and Anglican catechisms.39

The Anglican Catechism. Simplicity is the outstanding characteristic of the Anglican catechism. Beginning with the child it moves outward, contrasting with Luther's catechism which begins with the Decalogue.40

VI. ADAPTATIONS FOR CHILDREN

Attempts to improve the teaching methods. While little attention was paid to preparing the child for practical Christian living, still there were efforts made to avoid mechanical memorization of the religious truths. The school edition of the Heidelberg Catechism (1610) instructed the teachers to employ four methods of

38 Good, op. cit., p. 290.
40 Ibid., p. 86.
presenting the catechism. Explanations were to be made of all difficult passages. The pupils were to condense long paragraphs into their own words. The teacher was to analyze the text of the catechism and ask questions which the pupils were to answer from the text. Bible references and stories were to be used to confirm and prove the catechism. These methods were in use until late in the eighteenth century by both orthodox and pietistic catechists. Because the pietists stressed the importance of the cultivation of the heart the questions and answers of their catechisms dealt more with the practical side of life.41

John Wesley's catechism for children. Wesley was interested in the religious instruction of children and could see that many of the theological concepts of the catechisms of his day were too difficult for children. In 1745, therefore, he published a small book entitled Instructions for Children to meet the need.42

Isaac Watts' catechism for children. Isaac Watts prepared a First Catechism for children as young as three

41 Cohrs, cp. cit., p. 444.

or four years of age. This was to be learned by heart before the child could even read. Thus, while efforts were made to write catechisms especially for younger children, memoriter methods and poor teaching still prevailed.

Rationalistic catechisms of the eighteenth century. The rationalistic beliefs of the eighteenth century theologians had their influence on the instruction of the children. Johann Bernhard Basedow can be considered as a spokesman for the age. He insisted that the children should acquire new knowledge through their own thinking with only some instructive questions made for their help. They were not to memorize anything but the things they already understood. The new teaching manuals, therefore, either omitted the former catechisms based on the articles of faith or placed them in an appendix.

VII. THE CATECHISM IN AMERICA

Education during the Colonial Period. The education of the Colonial Period was marked by the strong religious purpose behind it. The chief reading material

43 Lankard, op. cit., p. 74.
44 Ibid., p. 75.
45 Cohrs, op. cit., p. 444.
was the Bible and the catechism.46

Two catechisms were printed interchangeably in the various editions of the New England Primer: The Shorter Catechism agreed upon by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster and John Cotton's catechism for children, Spiritual Milk for American Babes, Drawn out of the Breasts of Both Testaments for their Souls' Nourishment.47 In these readers some attempts were made to adapt the material through simplification of the words and phrases, but the concepts were generally too advanced and by nature outside the comprehension of the children. Memoriter methods predominated in teaching.48

The period of great popularity. The catechism continued as the backbone of the curriculum of the American Sunday School from 1790 to 1815. Its popularity was based on its double purpose: imparting knowledge of the Bible and grounding the children in the essentials of Christian doctrine. It was the sole course of Bible study available in print at that time.49 The teachers

47 Lankard, op. cit., p. 25.
48 Ibid., p. 50.
favored its use because it was easy to divide it into sections and lessons.\textsuperscript{50}

The catechism was used to so great an extent that one denomination favored its division into three doctrinal studies according to the age level of the students. The first catechism explained such subjects as the nature of God, the creation and fall of man, redemption, and heaven and hell, and was written for children under seven years of age. For older children up to the early teens the catechism included a more thorough treatment of the same topics as well as the subjects concerning the inspiration of the Bible, prayer, the sacraments, and the Holy Spirit. Catechism No. 3 was designed for older young people and analyzed the more advanced Christian evidences.\textsuperscript{51}

The decline in popularity. A serious decline in popularity set in during the years following 1815. The new interest was in the Bible, and the hours formerly spent in learning the catechism were now spent in memorizing Scripture passages.\textsuperscript{52} Despite this decline in usage attempts were made to produce joint catechisms to

\textsuperscript{50} Benson, \textit{The Sunday School in Action}, p. 139.


\textsuperscript{52} Benson, \textit{The Sunday School in Action}, p. 139.
serve combined Christian groups. The Evangelical Free Church Catechism, published in 1898 by the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in England and Wales, represented directly or indirectly the beliefs of sixty or seventy million Christians throughout the world. In 1907 the Reformed Churches in Scotland held a conference which resulted in the School Catechism. Representatives of the Episcopal Church in Scotland also assisted in its preparation. It was to be used in schools where children from various churches were taught together but was not intended to supersede the official catechisms of the different churches.53

VIII. THE CATECHISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Modern use of the catechism. While the catechism no longer occupies a place of prominence in modern religious instruction, it is still used in various denominations. As late as 1924 teachers in the Presbyterian Sunday Schools were urged to teach selections from the catechism to all children and young people. The Episcopalian catechism still serves as the official statement of the church's teaching and practice. The Lutheran Church requires a course in the catechism before

confirmation, and the catechism is still the foundation of religious instruction for the Roman Catholic Church. 54

There is no official Catholic catechism, although many want a universal catechism. Catholic doctrine is so carefully safeguarded in other ways that the church has never adopted any one catechism to be the official one for all its members. 55 Religious educators in the Catholic Church suggest the use of three catechisms: one for the little children, one for those preparing for first Communion, and one for those who have participated in their first Communion. The answers throughout each of these catechisms are worded in the same way to avoid confusing the children. New questions are introduced in order to present further information. 56

54 Betts, The Curriculum of Religious Education, p. 94.


56 Scannell, op. cit., p. 96.
CHAPTER III

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CATECHISM

IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN EDUCATIONAL THEORY

As has been observed in the history of the catechism in religious education, the catechetical method of instruction is not used extensively at present. The underlying causes for the decline in its use are in part due to prevailing views in the philosophy and psychology of education. In this chapter the Junior Catechism will be evaluated with these modern theories of education in mind.

I. THE AIM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Aim controls content and method in education. It is a fundamental fact in education that the aim of the teacher controls both what he teaches and his method of instruction. If the aim of religious education is to bring the child into right relationship with God, the type of teaching will be different from what it would be if the aim were the mere learning of facts.

The purpose of Christian teaching. It is the accepted evangelical belief that the salvation of the individual is of the utmost importance. All Methodist religious instruction, therefore, should be with this
fact in mind. In the words of Eavey, "all of Christian teaching is directed to the one final and only aim of the upbuilding of those taught in perfection of godly character."¹ All the knowledge acquired in a Christian church school should lead to a deepening spiritual life based on high ideals, correct doctrine, and personal communion with God.

II. THE PROCESS OF LEARNING

The laws of learning. There are certain laws of the mind that govern the learning process. First of all, there is the Law of Readiness. The performance of a certain activity is satisfying only when the mind or organism is ready for it. A six year old child, for example, is not mentally ready for "activity" on the problem of the Trinity or the Atonement.² This readiness does not consist merely in the degree of intellectual capacity. It also includes the attitude of mind. The memorizing of a poem will require more energy and more time if it has been assigned as a punishment than if the


A student has the desire to learn it. Learning is also governed by the Law of Effect. A child will tend to remember and repeat the experiences that bring satisfaction and tend to forget more rapidly those that bring annoyance. He will put forth real, purposeful effort in learning in relation to the amount of his natural interest in it. This important fact is clearly stated by Fickes:

The emotional status of the pupil at the end of the teaching period is as important as the material the pupil has learned. If the student at the end of a course of instruction in religion throws his text-book aside, glad that it is finished, we have reason to fear for the results, and to question the value of the course to him.

The third important law is the Law of Exercise or Use and Disuse. Religious truths and concepts will not be a part of a child's thinking or a guiding factor in his decisions unless they are brought into use frequently enough. The impressions must be well grounded and repeated if he is not to forget them quickly.


6 Fickes, op. cit., p. 91.

Memorization. There are several governing factors in the process of memorization. Many things are making impressions on the child's mind, but some are not retained. Those forgotten either have not appealed deeply enough to the child or are beyond his comprehension.  

There are two types of memory: auditory and visual. In most people usually one type or the other predominates. In teaching children one should appeal to both types, especially when dealing with ideas.  

With children there is always a danger of memorizing sounds or words only without comprehension of meanings. Being able to parrot statements does not insure real learning. Many times the child may seem to be speaking with understanding of his own words, but closer investigation reveals a fuzzy conception in his mind. In answering the first question of the Westminster Catechism one child's response was "Manscheifand is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." It was not until years later that she discovered what that peculiar word meant.

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A research project undertaken in this connection among many average Junior pupils from Conservative Sunday schools serves to illustrate this danger of memorization without understanding. The Lord's Prayer is generally taught to children in the Primary Department. A Junior child, therefore, will have said it from three to six years. These Junior pupils were asked to write out the prayer. There were many classes in which no one could say it or attempt to write it. Two examples may be cited after rejecting many of the worst copies submitted by the children.

Our Father who art in heaven Al be thy name thy king come Thy will be done On earth at it is in heaven. Give us a stay our daily bread and for give us are trespess As we for give those a trespess against us. And leave us a temptation but deliver us a mevel for thy the king the power Glory forever. Amen. (10 years old)11

Our Father who are in heaven howed be thy name thy kingdor come Thy will be in earth as it is in heaven give us the state our dairy bread and forget us our threwer as we forget thos who threwer aght us. (9 years old)12

From these examples one can readily see the urgent necessity for each teacher to ascertain carefully exactly how much the pupils are understanding.

12 Ibid., p. 188.
III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JUNIOR CHILD

Enthusiasm and interest. The interests of the Junior child are many and varied. He approaches life enthusiastically, and because of his simple faith in his own ability he will attempt to do many things that are too difficult for him.\(^{13}\) His imagination is gradually turning from make-believe worlds to an intense interest in the real world around him.\(^{14}\) It is because of this eager curiosity that the children often only half understand the answers to their questions, forget a lot of what they are told, and get some information confused in their minds which are quickly jumping from one subject to another. One method of increasing their grasp of the knowledge acquired is to present them with the questions or problem and all the necessary materials, pictures, maps, reference books, etc., for discovering the answers themselves.\(^{15}\)

Limited power to understand abstractions. Generalizations, deductions of principles, abstractions, and intricate social relationships are apparently beyond

\(^{13}\) Clark, op. cit., p. 9.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 105.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 117.
the intellectual capacity of children.\textsuperscript{16}

Facility in learning. The new, wonderful things discovered by the exploring minds of Juniors make a strong impression on them. This does not happen in later life when their minds are crowded with information and experiences.\textsuperscript{17} The Junior child remembers not only what he has learned by heart but also the things he has discovered for himself. It is not too early to train him to arrange these accumulated facts in an orderly manner.\textsuperscript{18}

During their earlier years the children are given basic teaching in attitudes and habits as well as some selected Biblical material. At the Junior age level may be added instruction in Christian history, literature, and thought in a more consecutive manner. This material should be presented in language meaningful to them and related to their everyday living in some way. One method of presentation which is of special interest to Juniors is spontaneous dramatization.\textsuperscript{19}

The religious growth of Juniors. By this age a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] Clark, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 18.
\item[18] Ibid., p. 106.
\end{footnotes}
definite sense of right and wrong has developed. The Junior child knows when he has done wrong and feels his guilt and a real need of forgiveness. Repentance and forgiveness are basic elements in the Christian religion, and they should be taught to Juniors since they now have meaning for them. Such teaching is especially important at this age because at the close of the Junior period there seems to be a natural peak in the desire to have the help and fellowship of Jesus.

IV. MODERN VIEWS ON MATERIAL-CENTERED TEACHING

Objections to transmissive, authoritarian teaching. Modern religious educators are averse to transmissive teaching. The criticism has been made that the pouring of facts, rules, and principles into submissive minds can be likened to the filling of rows of empty jugs sitting passively before the teacher. According to Coe,

> It does make adherence to a church easier; it may produce lip-loyalty to ancient creeds, and it may prolong old usages; but it produces also quiet doubt, dissent, disinterest, and unobtrusive absence.

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20 Clark, op. cit., p. 107.
Further objection is made to authoritarian teaching on the grounds that it fosters ultra-conservatism and hinders independent thought and progress in religious learning. This charge is made particularly against the memorization of doctrinal catechisms.24

Criticisms of the catechetical method. The use of the catechism in religious instruction today is frowned upon by many because the concepts and terminology are generally too difficult for children and have little practical bearing on their life problems.25 (It might be stated here that this is not true of all children's catechisms.) Benson26 believes that one limitation of the catechism is the fact that it deals almost entirely with the doctrines of the Bible while omitting many profitable portions of narrative, poetry, and prophecy.

Another criticism of the catechism is that it sets for the child the unpleasant task of learning doctrinal statements and Scripture passages that are to him meaningless


and barren. In earlier years especially, many times neither parents nor teachers would explain the meaning of the text. Even today the child must often struggle alone, as Betts puts it, "... with great universals and concentrated generalizations in the field of religious thought and controversy, such as would test the keenest and most highly trained adult mind."28

**Gradation in theology.** The religious educators of today believe that where theology cannot be graded according to the age and ability of the child it is not suitable subject matter for the curriculum. Better gradation is possible today and will no doubt improve.29 When the pupil is guided in discovering and learning knowledge that is adapted to his age and mental powers, the element of boredom and drudgery will more than likely be absent.30 There is a value in the discipline of learning things by heart, and children often object to the traditional formulae more because they are poorly


graded than because they are to be memorized.31

Although it is true that doctrines and creeds are often professed before the child has personally accepted them because of his own religious experience, it is clear that the children should be taught such knowledge because it might be years before they arrive at the experience. Therefore, if the material is understood by the child and stored away in his mind, the teaching of it is not wasted time and energy.

V. LIFE-CENTERED TEACHING

Teaching based on experience. The modern theory of life-centered teaching bases the teaching upon the child's growing in knowledge through participation in various experiences. The educator seeks to discover the child's present status and needs and then to stimulate and guide him through suggestions and opportunities for expression into further learning. Such a method, of course, obviates fixed lesson plans and a set curriculum.32

Translating knowledge into daily living. The mere knowledge of facts does not signify actual learning. The facts must influence the emotions, interests, and daily

31 Raven, op. cit., p. 137.

32 Betts, Teaching Religion Today, p. 83.
actions before they can be considered as important to the child. In full accord with this principle, one contemporary American educator has set forth five steps as being necessary for character education. The first step is exposure—reading the Bible, for example. Repetition—memorizing it—is second. Then follow understanding and conviction, the belief that it will work and that it applies in his personal life. The fifth step is application, when the child carries out the teaching in his individual daily life.

It is agreed that a child's choices and conduct are not conditioned by the memorization of a moral precept. One may gather such associations around the precept, however, that the child will see and follow the desirable form of behavior.

Dynamic lessons. One of the aims of creative teaching is to have dynamic lessons. Memorizing purposeful, worthy material is a desired by-product in creative education today. The project of a class of older boys and girls

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33 Eavey, op. cit., p. 156.


may illustrate this modern method. In the course of studying comparative religions they represented a conference with representatives of each faith setting forth its major teachings and its contributions to humanity. The various groups quoted the important doctrinal beliefs and various Scripture passages from the faith they represented. When memorized for use in the dramatization, the learning of the necessary facts did not seem like drudgery.

VI. THE NEED FOR TRANSMISSIVE TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

The brevity of the time for Christian education. Under the present educational set-up of Protestant churches there is only a brief time available for teaching children the many vital things of the Christian faith. Since the average child attends Sunday school between the ages of four and fourteen only, of which time usually no more than seventeen hours a year are devoted to intensive, actual instruction, the Protestant child receives about 170 hours of information designed to prepare him for eternity. During this same period twelve thousand hours of public school training will be given to prepare him for a short, uncertain earthly existence. Jewish and Catholic children fare much better since about 325 hours of religious

36 Myers, op. cit., p. 193.

37 Benson, The Sunday School in Action, p. 33.
instruction are given to Jewish children and 200 hours to Catholic youth.38

Children today receive training in morals and character in the public school, but they do not learn the essentials of the Christian faith there. Few ministers preach doctrinal sermons of any depth because the congregations have had such limited instruction in the church schools during the past twenty years. Thus it can be seen that time is too short and too precious for the Protestant church to spend it in teaching things of minor significance.

The need for a Christian philosophy of life.
Children are by nature curious about basic realities. In their earliest questions about the why of things they want to know where all the people came from, who made the world, what happens to people when they die, etc. If the parent or teacher evades these questions, the child continues wondering, unsatisfied, baffled, and with shaken confidence in the adult.39 This is especially true as they grow older and are taught the methods of the modern scientific, inquiring attitude. If the Christian parent, teacher, or pastor is not prepared to meet their penetrating questions, children often become confused, then skeptical, and then

38 Benson, The Sunday School in Action, p. 32.
39 Raven, op. cit., p. 77.
indifferent to religious teachings.40

Children cannot discover concepts of God, salvation, and immortality without guidance. They should be given the facts and wisdom necessary for the formation of a worthy philosophy of life and high standards of value that will hold them true in times of decision throughout their lives.41 While they must arrive at a personal confession of faith, they should be informed of the truths which time and human experience have validated as being vital.42 It has been proved by countless lives that without such instruction people revert to superstition, idolatry, and fall an easy prey to sin.

The value in memorizing these Christian truths. The truths found in Scripture passages, hymns, prayers, and creeds taught transmissively are of great value since they furnish the subconscious mind with material that will govern attitudes and conduct.43 This may be substantiated by many people who have drawn on these spiritual resources. It has been the experience of some young men that the answers to the catechism questions of their childhood have helped them more in their examinations for ordination to

41 Pickes, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
42 Stock, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
the ministry than did the knowledge learned in theological seminary.44

Unified, authoritarian teaching. It is the Conservative viewpoint that such subjects as sin, salvation in Christ, faith, prayer, and Christian character should be carefully inculcated in the minds of both children and adults. By presenting this knowledge in clear, concise, and comprehensive lessons, it is clarified and classified for the students.45 Catechisms furnish this unified body of truth and meet the desire of the mind to formulate and categorize the various fragments of knowledge.46

Modern pedagogy would rule out authoritarian teaching, for one reason, because it deals with things a child does not understand. This objection may be refuted because it would eliminate all teaching about God, sin, and salvation since these are all beyond the complete comprehension even of adults.47 In the words of Good,


46 Haslett, op. cit., p. 275.

The child needs the inspiration of great ideals, ideals which he does not understand, yet which he, according to his inquisitive nature, can attack constantly. For he is always attacking the new and non-understandable.48

Transmissive teaching in the building of a strong church. There is an old saying that strong doctrine makes a strong church. This raises the question of whether the decline of religious influence today has not been aided by the lack of proper education.49 This lack of definite, concise doctrinal teaching extends too often throughout the church school. If one were to ask those uniting with the church what Christian baptism does for one or what is the nature and meaning of Holy Communion, could many give a simple, intelligent answer? Reflecting this view, Mead says, "We believe that the strong Christian is the informed Christian, and that the growing Christian is the grounded Christian."50

The catechism was of vital importance during the period of the Reformation when doctrinal questions were a burning issue. Some present-day authorities feel there is

48 Good, op. cit., p. 292.


50 Mead, op. cit., p. 252.
no longer the necessity for them because Reformation issues are centuries past.\textsuperscript{51} But the question is, Is the need really gone? Do not liberalism and Catholicism present the same problem of corrupt doctrine? If the youth and adults do not know the truth, how will they recognize error?

The Catholic churches are filled with people on some days at 5:00 a.m. in voluntary attendance, and there are crowds at the regular services. The explanation lies in the early, continuous, thorough training of the children. If the control exerted by such training in the erroneous beliefs of Roman Catholicism extends throughout all later life, think of what might be accomplished by devoted instruction of Protestant children in the truth!\textsuperscript{52}

The religious illiteracy of our generation is due, in part, to the fact that there is no thorough learning of the important facts of the Christian faith. The students are merely "sprayed with religious ideas," and they do not learn them.\textsuperscript{53} The great soul-winners in the history of the Church, such as, Paul, Luther, Wesley, Spurgeon, and Moody, have not had unsettled views on Biblical teachings. It is the Church's blessed privilege to send the children

\textsuperscript{51} Haslett, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 278-79.
\textsuperscript{52} Mead, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{53} Pickes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 151.
out with unshaken convictions and firm persuasions.54

The period of special religious interest has been shown by statistics to be between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Much prayer and head and heart preparation should be made for leading Junior children in the way of salvation.55 Their conversion should be of the mind also and not just the emotional pull common to adolescents. In the various denominations the Sunday School supplies seventy-five per cent of the later membership, eighty-five per cent of the church workers, and ninety-five per cent of all the ministers and missionaries.56 If these Sunday school pupils are not trained in the transmitted doctrinal beliefs of the Church, what kind of workers will they be?

The appeal of Christ and the New Testament for correct doctrine. At one of the most solemn hours of Christ's life, He urged His disciples to believe in Him as well as in God, to believe in His relationship to the Father, in His teachings of the heavenly home, His coming again, etc.57 Further appeal for "head knowledge" as well

55 Mead, op. cit., p. 248.
as heart experience is made by the New Testament writers who warn men against false doctrines and deceitful teachers.58 That such warning is necessary can be seen from the many converts to Christian Science, Unity, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., who still think themselves to be Christians because they have not been taught the true beliefs of Christianity. It is of this that Frost writes, "One may go away from Christ in doctrine or sentiment, as really as in service and life. The effect is equally disastrous, sometimes more far-reaching and more deadly."59

If man is to follow his conscience safely, that conscience must not rest on false ideas, imperfect concepts, wrong judgments, and loose reasoning. The truth will make men free, but they must first know the truth.60 Here it is that the curriculum of religious education must supply the truths and make them clear to the students.

To summarize, in the light of the foregoing analysis of the theory and practice of modern education, the writer believes that the use of the Junior Catechism in the Methodist Church when properly taught can and should be of great value to the children.

59 Loc. cit.
60 Betts, Teaching Religion Today, p. 166.
CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF THE DOCTRINAL CONTENT

In recent years Liberal theology has made inroads in certain areas of the Methodist Church. Where Modernism is in control in the pulpit and church school there has been a gradual consigning into the background, if not a complete rejection, of some of John Wesley's original doctrines; and the authority of the Bible, from which these doctrines are derived, has been questioned. It is for this reason that the curriculum of the church school should be carefully supervised if the Conservative approach to Christianity is to be maintained. Accordingly, this chapter presents an analysis of the Junior Catechism in its relation to fundamental Methodist doctrines.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Explicit teaching of the nature of God. It is necessary for children to have more than vague, diffuse "feelings" about God. Misconceptions and wrong attitudes may result from lack of clear teaching about the aspects of God's nature. As the children wonder and question, they should be carefully guided into a rich experience of
fellowship with God the Father. Careless training, however, will lead to crude, anthropomorphic conceptions of God. If children think of God as a man-like Being, located in one place and requiring the use of physical eyes, hands, and feet to accomplish His purposes, confused ideas arise. As the children mature beyond the age of simple credulity, they may become perplexed and skeptical because of this faulty teaching.

The revelation of God. Children want to know how men can know God. They should be taught that God is revealed through nature, through conscience, through the revelation of Himself in special times of insight, through the Bible, and most clearly through His Son Jesus. When the teacher tells the class that God our Father has made man in His own image, she should make it clear that it means men have free wills to choose the course of their lives. This particular point is not made clear in the Junior Catechism.

4 Ibid., p. 18.
The teaching of the catechism. The catechism presents all the major attributes of God: His omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, holiness, love, eternal being, the one true God manifest as a Trinity.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

His incarnation and mission. The Junior Catechism teaches that to save sinners Jesus "became man, lived, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead."\(^5\) Besides saying that in that manner Jesus provided salvation for all men there is no attempt made to clarify His mission. It is Methodist doctrine that Christ died in our place, bearing our iniquities, and suffering, the just for the unjust.\(^6\) This is not mentioned although it is within the comprehension of children to realize that He willingly suffered and died in man's place.

His unique character and life. Children should be taught that Jesus is unique among men both in character and life. This belief, however, should be based on the correct interpretation of His character and not solely


\(^6\) Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
upon His miracles.7 Regarding this problem, Blanche Carrier8 states that she has often asked children why they call themselves Christians and what did Jesus say or do that makes Him the center of our religion. Repeatedly she received the answer, "He healed the sick." This suggests that there has been the wrong emphasis on His miracles in teaching. The miracles should neither be stressed nor slighted, but told simply and reverently and always related to the purpose which lay behind them.9

The Junior Catechism admirably handles this problem. After briefly citing examples of Jesus' miracles as being "great works," it then lists as "greater works" His forgiving of sinners, healing the broken-hearted, delivering men from the power of sin and Satan, and making them children of God.10 His resurrection from the dead, the greatest miracle of all, is referred to as proof that He is the Son of God and that we too shall rise from the dead.11

The brief summary given of the life of Christ is satisfactory if it is understood that the teacher should

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7 Jones, op. cit., p. 59.
9 Jones, op. cit., p. 63.
10 Junior Catechism, op. cit., p. 9.
11 Ibid., p. 11.
supplement and expand the account as she proceeds through the lessons. Nevertheless, too minute and detailed questions, such as those in the Southern Baptist catechism, are not advisable.12

III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Third Person of the Trinity. The Junior Catechism stresses the personality of the Spirit but offers no explanation of His relation to the Father and to Christ. Tri-theism or utter confusion is the usual result of ambiguity at this point. While it is admittedly a difficult matter to explain the Trinity to anyone, an attempt at an analogy may be helpful. Although it may not be pressed to the last point, a suggestion has been made in one catechism that as water may exist in the form of steam, or liquid, or ice, so God is manifested as Three Persons and still a unity.13

The witness of the Spirit. One may say that the distinguishing doctrine of Methodism is the witness of the

12 Jeffries, M. D., Questions on the Bible for Little Folks, a Prize Catechism (Nashville, Tennessee: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1903), pp. 24-34.

Spirit. John Wesley's own definition as set forth in his sermon on the subject is cited by Selecman as a basic doctrine of the Methodist Church:

By the witness of the Spirit I mean the inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

This doctrine of the assurance of God's Spirit is clearly presented in the Junior Catechism.

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

The Methodist definition of sin. Wesley's two-fold definition of sin was that the principle of sin is selfishness and that the opposition of man's will to the will of God is sin. Thus, it is clear that sin is an inward principle of evil and also willful transgression. In the recent manual for membership classes published by the Methodist Publishing House the fact that sin arises in the inner life as a wrong way of thinking and feeling is stated and developed.

15 Loc. cit.
16 Parker, op. cit., p. 95.
In the **Junior Catechism**, however, sin is presented as *transgression* or omission in obeying God. The discussion of the fall of Adam and Eve does not mention any change in their moral nature, and no indication is given in the catechism that there is a downward pull from an evil nature within.18

**The results of sin.** From their own experiences children can know the consequences of sin, the suffering caused by selfishness and disregard of the needs and rights of others, the sense of separation from God because of disregard of His will, and they can see the squalor and misery caused by the social sins of the community with its beer parlors, etc.19 Children should be taught that disobedience in the home results in unhappy discord; disobedience in the community results in civil punishment; and disobedience to God's standards results in disease, sorrow, separation from God, and death.20

This important subject is not considered in the **Junior Catechism**, leaving it weak in this respect.

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18 *Junior Catechism*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
Salvation and its attainment. The presentation of the necessity for salvation should be carefully handled when dealing with children. Raven says that, "Children whose youth has been clouded by morbid self-examination and terrorized by threats of hell have not been to school with Jesus." It is agreed that children should not be "scared" into seeking salvation, but sin must be denounced, and Christ did it vigorously and forcibly many times. If the children are confronted with God's holiness, their sins, and Christ's offer of loving mercy, it should result in their conversion.

Along with God's forgiveness, the Methodists have stressed in salvation the gift of power to go and sin no more. This leads to the discussion of the Methodist doctrine of sanctification.

Holiness. John Wesley taught the possibility of being entirely sanctified in this life. This holiness is described as peace in the heart with God and man, a burning desire to do good, and the Holy Spirit purifying

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22 Parker, op. cit., p. 99.
and ruling every motive of the heart. This experience results from a definite consecration of the whole heart and life to God for Him to purify and use as He sees fit.

The *Junior Catechism* states that when God accepts us we will have a new heart so that we will love Him and gladly obey Him. It does not, however, speak of a complete yielding of the heart to Jesus with a resulting second work of grace being wrought.

To the objections that might be raised that sanctification is too advanced for Junior children to understand, it may be said that one does not have to present it in theoretical form. Fundamental truths can be taught through an indirect approach presenting them in a form suited to the children's particular capacity to understand. Children can easily appreciate and accept the doctrine of holiness when it is portrayed by examples in the lives of others. There are many illustrations from their everyday life that demonstrate the need of the human heart for cleansing. The children should be taught the fruits of the Spirit and the fundamental facts of the victorious life through stories of contrasts with Scriptural references given for each one. Thus, while children may not understand it

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23 Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

theoretically or be able to philosophize about the doctrine, they can believe it and trust the facts. In this way faith is being created on the basis of authority and also on the basis of their ability to understand.25

VI. THE HEREAFTER

Life after death. The importance of teaching children about the life after death is tersely emphasized by Mary Alice Jones: "To fail to offer our children guidance in thinking of the future life is to fail as Christian teachers."26 Children in the modern church school are usually left in a woeful state of bewilderment or ignorance with regard to the hereafter. Too often it is implied or expressly taught by parents and teachers that heaven is the eventual destination for every soul. There is not much mention of a judgment and still less of punishment for the wicked. Whatever smatterings of information the children may have generally were not derived from reverent, systematic instruction.

Heaven. The nature of heaven is a subject which

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26 Jones, op. cit., p. 75.
can be taught rather easily and profitably to children. When the children may freely express themselves, they ask many probing questions with reference to heaven. Response to these inquiries should not stress the material joys, the power, or adult imaginings about heaven. The teacher should share with them, instead, the hope of fellowship with great souls of all the ages and of happy communion with God that will not be marred by selfishness, sin, and sorrow.27

The teaching of the catechism. In the closing part of the division teaching about Christ, the Junior Catechism presents three questions and answers concerning the second coming of Christ, the raising of the dead, and the results of the judgment.28 There is no further information given dealing with the hereafter.

VII. THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS

The means of grace. The Junior Catechism describes the church, the sacraments, the Bible, and prayer as the means of grace for the Christian life. Each is discussed briefly in a form that is doctrinally correct but not

27 Jones, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
adequately understandable to children.29

From the foregoing analysis it may be seen that the doctrines taught in the Junior Catechism are true to the original teachings of Methodism but that there are certain fundamental areas of evangelical Christian thought that are not dealt with.

CHAPTER V

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS

The Junior Catechism has been analyzed in the light of modern educational theories and of the original Methodist doctrines. This analysis revealed certain weaknesses. It is the purpose of this chapter to offer suggested modifications in both the content and the use of the catechism to conform to the present need.

I. PROPOSED CHANGES IN ITS COMPOSITION

Style and arrangement. The contents of the Junior Catechism are arranged in a satisfactory, logical order. If the units were adapted and presented in lesson form, the teacher could use it more wisely. The Junior Catechism of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ is a splendid example of how effectively lessons can be written in a conversational style which is both clear and appealing. It lists the questions, gives suggested Scripture references to be read together, appropriate hymns to be sung, and intersperses illustrative stories and fitting poems throughout the booklet. The questions are not designed to require a memorized answer from the pupil, and the main questions are followed by pertinent sub-questions
relating the issue to the child's everyday life. For example, the question, "Why should one go to Sunday church school when skating is good?" is asked in connection with the main discussion of daily temptations and sins.¹ Such a style would make the Junior Catechism much more profitable and appealing to the children.

Since Junior children can follow a simple line of reasoning, the questions are more helpful to them if they require a thoughtful answer.² The catechism might be more instructive if its subject matter were made applicable to the child's present experience through the use of such questions.

Creating interest through illustrations. Interest can be created by connecting the things you want a child to learn with things in which he already has an interest.³ The Junior child is interested in heroes and action. The incidents in Jesus' life that portray Him as strong, courageous, and virile are those that should be presented in the account of His life. The boys and girls will gladly


respond to the Jesus who bravely faced the greedy money-changers, the hostile judges, the angry multitude, and the high cost of fulfilling his mission. If such illustrations are not incorporated in the Junior Catechism outline of the life of Christ, the teacher should be sure to use them in her teaching of the lesson.

Reference to the Bible. Following many questions in the catechism the Scripture passage supporting the answer is quoted. It would be preferable to give the reference only. Two reasons for such a plan are offered by the committee who prepared the Junior Catechism of the Evangelical Church.

... First, to encourage the handling and use of the Bible in the study of its doctrines as given in this booklet, so that these may be seen to be a part of the Bible, and, Second, to allow each group to use that version of the Bible which it deems most advisable. The committee recommends the use of the American Standard Version of the Bible.5

The children should be able to locate in the Bible the truths being taught. Both texts and contexts should be explained wherever it is possible. The children should be accustomed to making constant reference to the Bible for

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the answers to their questions. The frequent handling and use of the Bible give it a position of importance and value in the eyes of the pupil because of its associations.

Terminology and definitions. It is of utmost importance that the children understand the terms used by the teacher. It is obviously a serious handicap if any misconceptions arise concerning crucial ideas when the teacher has assumed that she and the children have the same meaning in mind. For this reason the teacher should study the conversation of the pupils so that the terms used will be understood by them.

Certain definitions and phrases in the catechism that would not be entirely clear to Juniors may be cited.

"was subject unto his parents"
"overcame the tempter by the word of God"

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11 Ibid., p. 9.
"lives to make intercession for us"12
"crucified without the gate"13
"witnessing for him in word and life"14
"A sacrament is an outward sign, appointed by Christ, of an inward grace."15

II. SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE DOCTRINAL CONTENT OF THE CATECHISM

The teaching about God. Children often puzzle over the same problem that faces adults: Why do God's children suffer? They should be taught that troubles do come to Christians, but that God has promised to make them work out for good to those that love Him. It is through God's grace in these times of difficulty and trial that men grow in spiritual strength. It is right to ask our Father for protection from serious troubles if it be His will, but in any event one should rest quietly in Him, trusting that His love will do what is best for us. This problem and explanation might well be incorporated in the catechism.

The teaching about Christ. In the division dealing with Christ, His mission and the plan of atonement should be clarified and stressed more than it is at present. The

13 Ibid., p. 10.
14 Ibid., p. 24.
15 Ibid., p. 18.
reference in Isaiah 53:3-6 would serve instructively in the teaching of this vital subject. In connection with the resurrection, its effect on the disciples could well be introduced. Their heroic lives, based on their assurance of Christ's victory over death, would be thrilling and inspirational to Juniors.16 The reasons for the antagonism against both Christ and His followers should be explained on the ground of unwillingness to have sins exposed and a desire to continue in disobedience toward God.

The subject of the future life. Children very often have very confused conceptions regarding death, the future life, and heaven. A few questions dealing with the resurrected body and its adaptation to a new and higher form of life and suggesting the joy, fellowship, and service in heaven would offer guidance to the children's thinking on the subject.17

The doctrines of sin, salvation, and sanctification. In order to hold true to Wesley's teaching on the doctrines


17 Parker, Franklin N., What We Believe (Nashville, Tennessee: Publishing House Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Lamar & Barton, Agents, 1924), p. 49.
of sin, salvation, and sanctification the Junior Catechism should describe the two aspects of sin, its results, and the necessity for confessing our sins. The catechism mentions repenting of and forsaking sin but does not make it clear that men must also confess them to God and ask His forgiveness on the merits of Christ's atonement. The essential elements of sanctification should also be included.

Discussion of the Christian life. The discussion of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, is too advanced for children of Junior age. Baptism might be presented as being an appropriate, outward symbol of loyalty to Christ and as such is required of all those who enter the fellowship of the Church. Following the definition of the Lord's Supper, a question concerning its origin should be inserted, as well as an interpretation of the elements.

Then something should be said regarding the responsibility of a church member to support the work of the Kingdom by giving of his time, money, and talents to serve God and his fellowman around the world.

18 Junior Catechism, op. cit., p. 23.

The brief section on the Bible could very profitably be elaborated on by relating how the Bible came to us and by giving a short but clear outline of its contents. By separating the books of the Old Testament into the divisions of Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy, and those of the New Testament as History, Letters, and Prophecy, a helpful summarization could be given to the children.

III. COMMENTS ON ITS ADDITIONAL FEATURES

The Beatitudes. In the appendix of the Junior Catechism the Beatitudes are listed. These should not be memorized, in the judgment of the writer, before being sufficiently explained to the children. A good interpretation of each one, which could easily be adapted for children's comprehension, is given in the Standard Catechism of the Methodist Church.20

The Ten Commandments. There is an unnecessary repetition of the Ten Commandments in the catechism, one list being in the body of the text and another in the appendix. One list should be omitted, and in its place a good explanation of each commandment should be given because here are vital principles that need to be understood.

clearly. The Presbyterian catechism, for example, explains that, "to covet is to have a wrong desire for what belongs to others."21

The Lord's Prayer. In the light of the illustrations given in Chapter Three of this study, it is clear that the Lord's Prayer should be explained phrase by phrase.22 This is done in Luther's Small Catechism with the suggestion that the head of the family teach it to the household in that manner.23

Grace and other prayers. The appendix of the catechism contains a morning and an evening prayer and prayers for the New Year and Easter. The message which the latter two are designed to convey is not as clear or as practical for children as it could be. The catechism would benefit from the substitution of another evening prayer, more appropriate for Junior children, in place of the present one: "Now I lay me down to sleep." Suitable prayers for grace at table should also be added.

21 Primary and Junior Catechism (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church, n. d.), p. 11.

22 Cf. ante, p. 27.

IV. SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE METHOD OF TEACHING THE CATECHISM

The original purpose. Catechisms were not originally designed to be memorized but were to serve as an aid and guide for the teacher. In using a catechism today the teacher should consider the worthy principles set forth by modern educational psychology.

Planned teaching. In planning a lesson the first major aim should be to teach redemptively. If the teacher would have the children become what God wants them to be, she must help them understand themselves as they are and God as He is. In selecting the purpose for each lesson she should visualize the class to be taught and find the place where the lesson material will fit their interests, needs, and experience. Then the instruction should be adapted to the individual differences in ability and previous knowledge of the pupils. This is especially important in church school teaching since pupils often come and go, skipping weeks or months of training, in a

26 Dobbins, op. cit., p. 113.
manner quite unlike public school attendance. Campbell emphasizes the necessity for the teacher's knowing the present state of information of the pupils, thus: "So long as a teacher supposes a learner to know what he does not know, the teacher is in no position to help him learn."28 She should see that each idea is clearly understood before she proceeds with another.29 It is also better not to try to teach too much in one lesson. A few major points carefully explained and emphasized are better than presenting a confusing multitude of ideas.30

Illustrations. To catch attention and change it into interest is another important teaching aim. Objects, pictures, charts, and stories may all be used effectively to introduce and illustrate the lesson to be discussed.31

If the doctrines of the catechism are set forth along with interesting background information on the heroic lives of the men from New Testament times who formulated them, the pupils will more readily identify themselves with these great causes, ideals, and persons


30 Ibid., p. 80.

31 Dobbins, op. cit., p. 114.
and thus grow religiously.\textsuperscript{32} For this reason the teacher should \textit{always} know, and have in reserve, more of the subject than the lesson requires or time allows for presentation.\textsuperscript{33} She should also possess enough knowledge of theology to be able to recognize doctrinal defects, such as, modernism and eternal security, in the books she may use to supplement the lesson material.

\textbf{Class discussions.} It is possible for a child to learn something merely by rote, but it is much better if memorization comes as a by-product. Group discussions of a subject in which comparisons and contrasts are made with material already familiar establish valuable mental associations.\textsuperscript{34} An example may be cited to show how one may teach portions to be memorized from the catechism. A fifth grade teacher first read the psalm to be memorized, and then the children put each phrase into their own words. The teacher placed these on the blackboard so that they could look at them during the discussion. She also had on hand a dictionary for the children to use in looking


\textsuperscript{33} Schuette, Walter E., \textit{The Best Possible Sunday-School} (Columbus, Ohio: The Book Concern, n. d.), p. 114.

words they did not understand. After a class has discussed the significance and application of the material to their everyday life and associated the meaning of it with incidents from history and experiences from their own lives, memorization becomes a simple task.

A teacher should not spend all the class period in talking as this prevents her from knowing the thoughts of the children. She should induce the pupils to volunteer their questions and ideas, discuss them, and then guide the children into the right beliefs. At a later time she should test the results of the teaching by asking them questions. It is never safe to assume that because one child gives the correct answer that the rest of the class understand it or will remember it.

Corroborating the fact of the importance of class discussion, educators have found that three minutes of study and two minutes of recall yield better results in learning than five consecutive minutes spent in study.

36 Ibid., p. 188.
38 Fickes, op. cit., p. 98.
The catechism as preparation for church membership.

The **Discipline of the Methodist Church** states that,

All children who are baptized by a Methodist minister and other baptized children under the care of a Methodist church shall be enrolled as preparatory members in the Methodist Church until this status is terminated by their reception, after a proper course of training, into full membership, or by death, withdrawal, or transfer to another evangelical denomination.39

Since children promoted from the Junior Department are generally old enough to be received into full membership, the use of the catechism during their final year as Juniors or in the pastor's class offers the children a well-rounded preparation for membership.

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CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

There is a great need today for instruction in the fundamental truths of Christianity. The catechism, which was for a long time the basis of the religious curriculum, is not used very extensively at present. This is due in part to the prevailing trend of educational psychology away from authoritarian teaching and toward a child-centered activity program.

In doctrinal content the present Junior Catechism holds true to the evangelical teachings of Methodism, although certain areas of Christian thought are either inadequately presented or, in some cases, not dealt with at all. This study has endeavored to make certain suggestions designed to improve both its content and use.

To build strong Christians and in turn a strong, evangelical church, transmissive teaching of Biblical truths, such as is possible through the judicious use of a catechism, is essential. The conclusion, therefore, is that after the revisions previously mentioned are made, the Junior Catechism can be a very effective means of religious instruction, preparing the children for full, intelligent membership in the Methodist Church today.
BOOKS


Two sections: Manual for Pastors, 40 pp.


Holy Bible, King James Version.


PERIODICAL AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS


Primary and Junior Catechism. Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church, n. d. 15 pp.


PERSONAL INTERVIEW