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THE PLACE OF THE COMMUNICANTS' CLASS
IN THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF YOUTH IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA

By

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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
in
The Biblical Seminary in New York

New York, N. Y.
April 1938

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

1. Definition of Terms

Communicants' classes are the Presbyterian equivalent of Confirmation classes in the Anglican and Lutheran churches. They consist of a series of instructions given to those who are or ought to be considering the full pledge of their membership in their particular church. That is, they are held for the preparation of those individuals who are coming to the Communion for the first time. It is in this connection that the name "Communicants" classes is derived,- they are for those who are going to "commune".

To most people this step is known as "joining the church", yet technically such is not the case unless the individual's parents do not belong to the church; for a child born of Presbyterian parents automatically becomes a member of the visible church.¹

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1. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, p.114. "The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

"All children born within the pale of the visible Church are members of the Church, are to be baptized, are under the care of the Church, and subject to its government and discipline; and when they have arrived at years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members."¹

What, then, is so frequently thought of as "joining the church" is in reality entering into full communion or full membership privileges of the church. These privileges are granted upon the individual's taking of a definite and public stand. The Constitution further states:

"When persons baptized in infancy are to be admitted to full communion with the Church, they shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety, and shall in ordinary cases, with the approval of the Session, make a public confession of their faith, in the presence of the congregation."²

This public confession of faith requires an affirmative answer to the following questions:³

1. Do you believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?
2. Do you believe in Jesus Christ, as the only-begotten Son of God, and do you receive him as your Saviour and acknowledge him as your Lord?
3. Do you believe in the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, and accept them as the infallible and supreme rule of faith and conduct?
4. Do you promise to endeavor to lead a consistent Christian life?
5. Do you promise to obey the rules of this church, and to contribute to its support according to ability, to attend its services, and to promote its peace, purity, and welfare, so long as you remain a member?

Many prefer to call this step "Confirmation", be-

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1. Presbyterian Constitution, op. cit., p.398.
2. Ibid., p.411.
3. Roberts, William Henry, A Manual for Ruling Elders, p.145.

cause the making of the public confession of faith is in effect a confirmation of the vows taken by the parents of the child at the time of his baptism. The prospective church member first confirms his position in the church and then partakes of the Communion. The writer prefers the word "confirmation" for this rite, since it is a more positive and more inclusive term, but will in this present thesis use the term "communicants'" to avoid confusion with the rite of confirmation as it is understood in the Anglican and Lutheran churches.

In these other churches the meaning of the rite is practically the same as in the Presbyterian church except for certain theological implications in regard to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. C. L. Slattery gives this interpretation¹ in his statement that the Holy Spirit is given then not for the first time, but in a full way. The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines confirmation as "one of the sacramental rites by which the catechumen is admitted to full membership in the Church . . . and is especially connected with the gift of the Holy Ghost"² Whereas the definition given in the Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia is as follows:

"Confirmation is the rite which in the Roman Catholic

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1. Slattery, C.L., Following Christ, p.8.
2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.6., p.233.

and Greek Churches is considered a sacrament conveying strength for Christian warfare and completing the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed in baptism, and by which in the Anglican and Lutheran Churches baptized persons are received into full communion."¹

Aside from this interpretation of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the benefits of confirmation in the Episcopal Church, described by Slattery are the same as those subscribed to in the Presbyterian Church; that is, the reception of the individual into full membership privileges and responsibilities, a definite public stand concerning the choice of Christ as leader and His followers as associates, and the seal of his own conversion. Conversion should be the test of readiness for full church membership. Concerning this, Slattery says, "You may . . . test your conversion by asking if you are ready for complete surrender. If you are ready for that, you are ready for confirmation."² The following statement is found in the Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia concerning admission to the Presbyterian Church:

"The terms of admission to the communion of the visible church are the same as the terms or conditions of salvation revealed in the Holy Scriptures . . . The Christian Churches have no right either to add or to take from these terms or conditions, and all who have accepted these are brothers in Christ."³

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1. Caspari, W., (in) The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia, vol.3, p.223.
2. Slattery, C.L., loc.cit.
3. Roberts, W.H., (in) Schaff-Herzog, Ibid., vol.9, p.241.

But how is the child to come into a saving knowledge of Christ, that is, how is he to be converted, unless he be taught? Provision is made in the Presbyterian Constitution for the instruction of children who have been born into the Church. It says that they

"are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." ¹

This giving of instruction should be the duty of the parents and of the Sunday school, but aside from home and Sunday school training, there are classes for informing of children of their duties in coming to the Lord's Supper and of coming into full membership in the church. Members may be received into the church at any time, but it is usually done at a Communion service, and more especially at Easter time. For this reason, pre-Communion or Communicant classes are usually held for six or more weeks before the Easter Communion. In some churches the classes are held on Sunday during the Church School session, the participants being excused from their regular classes. Other churches prefer to hold their classes on a week-day immediately after school hours. The Easter season is especially advantageous

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1. Presbyterian Constitution, p.440.

because the religious natures of the children seem to be heightened in these early spring days; furthermore, the rites in the Liturgical churches during the Lenten season are an influence in keeping religion before the minds of the youngsters; then, too, for those who hold the session on week-days, the season seems advantageous, for the emotions are heightened by the on-coming spring days, yet the days are still too cold for out-of-doors play so that the children are willing to stay within doors.¹

Mr. Lukens prefers to call his class an "Instruction" class, rather than a Communicants' class; for, while his aim is to lead children to the Communion, he does not want the children to feel that they are being "herded" to the Lord's Supper; the step should be individual and personal. Then again, by calling it an Instruction class, the pastor can exclude from full church membership, without disappointment to them, those who he feels are not ready to receive the Lord's Supper because of indifference or ignorance. This latter is very important, for, as we have before mentioned, no one should be received into full church membership who has not been truly converted.

The Pastor is usually the instructor of the class. It is an important duty for him, for by it he comes into closer contact with the children of his parish, and through

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1. Cf., Lukens, Victor H., A Pastor's Instruction Class for Children, p.3.

them with the older members of his congregation. Thus he himself becomes in a measure directly responsible for the type of members whom he gathers into his Church. And furthermore, he is better enabled to understand and cope with problems that may arise in the homes or in the Church.

2. The Problem Stated

The problem becomes specifically this: do the communicants' class have an important place in the Church, and if so, what is that place? Do not the Sunday schools adequately care for the Christian education of the children of the Church? And again: are the communicants's classes adequately filling their own place; if so, how; if not, why not, and how can the situation be remedied? Is it possible that there are Church members who are not truly converted? This final question is at the root of the whole problem. Very evidently there is something wrong with the church today, and this "something" is rooted in its members who do not live up to their profession, or their supposed profession according to the standards of the church.

Mr. Lukens makes the following very significant statement:

"I have to get the class to unlearn the idea that Church membership assures salvation. It is necessary to show that neither being in or out of the Church has anything to do with salvation, for that is dependent on faith alone, but that Church membership should come after salvation."¹

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1. Lukens, op.cit., p.23.

If there is this problem to meet, how is it to be met? What subjects are dealt with in the communicants' class? Are these the elements which should be incorporated in the curriculum? How much and what sort of teaching should be relegated to the Sunday School, and what to the communicants' class? Can we lay down any definite curriculum? And finally, what evaluation can be made of existing communicants' classes in the light of their apparent results?

B. Method of Procedure

In order more clearly to present the problem, the following chapter of this thesis will be concerned with the history of communicant education through the centuries and its development in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, since the founding of this Church in 1788. The second specific problem discussed will be that of the need for communicants' classes, including a study of the religious needs of adolescents, their need for the Church, the Church's need of them, and the specific place of communicants' classes in the Christian Church. There is no intention to indicate that only adolescents "join the Church", or need to be educated in church membership, but that this is the age at which young people are usually taken into the Church. Furthermore, the subject must of necessity be delimited, therefore a study of adult training cannot be treated here. Chapter four will be devoted

to a survey of current procedure in communicants' classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States in America, and will include a discussion of their organization, their curricula, and the methods used. The fifth chapter will include an evaluation of that procedure. Finally, the whole study will be summarized and pertinent conclusions drawn concerning the proper place and procedure for communicants' classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF COMMUNICANT EDUCATION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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THE HISTORY OF COMMUNICANT EDUCATION AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. Introduction

Communicants' classes have just been defined¹ as those classes in the Presbyterian Church which are for the purpose of preparing those who are coming to the Communion for the first time; classes in which young people, baptized in infancy, are prepared for full membership in the church. Two questions immediately present themselves: first, how did this custom arise? and second, how wide-spread is it?

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was founded just one hundred and fifty years ago, but to study the development of communicants' classes in the church, it is necessary to survey the history of communicant education through the centuries, beginning with the origin of the practice in the Early Church. It will be the purpose of this chapter to show how the communicants' class came into existence as an outgrowth of the catechumenate of the Early Church. The study will center first around the catechumenate, the cate-

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1. Cf. Ante, p.1.

chetical schools, and infant baptism and confirmation in the Early Church; then, around the instruction of catechumens from the fifth century to the Reformation; third, around communicant education from the Reformation to founding of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1788, and finally around the development and practice of communicant education in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

B. Communicant Education in the Early Church

1. The Catechumenate

The first Christians were adults as were also the first converts. Therefore in the early centuries practically all efforts to educate people in the ways of Christianity were directed toward adults. That such education was necessary is evident when one considers that the converts came directly from paganism to a religion that was entirely new and foreign in its content. One cannot become a disciple of Christ without first knowing about him, nor can one expect to carry out the principles of Christ without knowing those principles. Christ's final instructions to his intimate friends were,

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." ¹

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1. Matthew 28: 19,20. A.R.V.

Baptism is the sign of the Christian, and all who have been baptized are members of the Christian church, but before being baptized one must first be instructed as to the meaning of baptism. For the Jewish converts this transition was not so difficult, for their conception of God was the same, and their system of morals was practically the same, and they were acquainted with the idea of baptisms, or washings; but for the pagan it was a complete change of life, an absolute turning about from one code and set of customs to another. For this reason there grew up the catechumenate or system of instructions for those who wished to identify themselves with the Christian church. Of this system, M. Reu says, "The earliest traces of the catechumenate are found in the Apostolic era; it attained its highest perfection in the fourth century, but soon after, already in the fifth century, it began to decay." ¹

It is evident that at first the gatherings of the disciples were free to any one who wished to learn of the Christian faith. But as time went on it became necessary to make more stringent rules, and to take more care concerning those who were admitted to the church, for "the need of it was demonstrated by cases of relapse into heathenism, and of the seeking of membership from interested

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1. Reu, M., Catechetics, p.13.

or treacherous motives." ¹ The catechumenate became not only an instruction class, but also a period of probation when the applicant for membership in the church was closely watched for his motives, his sincerity, and his willingness to carry out the principles of the Christian religion.

An applicant was received into the catechumenate by the laying on of hands and prayer and the making of the sign of the cross. Frequently these applicants, or catechumens as they were called, were the children of Christians, who were of age to receive instruction, but while there was no particular specification as to the proper age, most of the catechumens were adults. Constantine the Great was himself a catechumen. The essential was that they had not previously been baptized.²

The length of the time spent in the catechumenate varied ⁱⁿ different places. It was divided into two periods, the first of which was more of a probation period and lasted usually for two or three years. During this time there were occasional examinations along with the instruction which was given. The information was of a

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1. Cohrs, F., (in) The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia, v.2, p.449.
2. Cf. Coleman, L., Christian Antiquities, p.51.
Cf. Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, v.2., p.153.

general nature concerning the rudiments of the Gospel and the reading of the Scriptures. The second period was a more special preparation for the reception into membership, and only those were admitted who, after careful examination, had proved themselves ready. This period was usually conducted during Lent and was in turn divided into two parts. The catechumens were now allowed to attend the services of the congregation proper, as well as to receive more particular instruction in the details of the faith. In the first period there were three very definite kinds of preparation; the first was instruction in the things which they must give up (renunciation); the second, instruction in the things that they must believe (faith); and the third, a sort of exorcism to drive away the evil spirits of paganism. By the Thursday before Easter the final list of those to be admitted to baptism was drawn up. Friday was spent by these catechumens in prayer and fasting and on Saturday morning they came together for the final preparation before baptism, which should take place that same evening. ¹ And on Easter Sunday the new members for the first time partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

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1. G. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, v.3., p.256.
Cf. Coleman, Op.cit., p.54.
Cf. Reu, Op.cit., p.28-29.

We have mentioned that the length of the catechumenate varied in different places. Not only did the length vary, but also the method of procedure and content. Coleman mentions that some authorities indicated four divisions of the catechumenate¹ while others indicated two or three. De Pressense tells us that instruction was divided into three parts, corresponding to the three years of probation.² He also states that there were two principal periods, as was mentioned above, but that

"In the first, the candidates were regarded as standing on the threshold of the Church; they could take no part in its worship, and were required to leave before the reading of the gospel. This barrier was only removed on the very eve of their baptism."³

2. The Catechetical Schools

The importance of the catechumenate may in some measure be appreciated when one realizes that it was from these classes that there arose the catechetical schools.

We quote again from De Pressense:

"There arose a true apologetic school, in which it was not deemed enough to expound Christian doctrines, but in which the attempt was made to show the correspondence of these doctrines of thought, and to harmonize them with the best aspirations of the old world. We form an idea of the importance which the Church attached to the

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1. Coleman, op.cit., p.53
2. De Pressense, Christian Life and Practice in the Early Church, p.11.
3. Ibid., p.17

instruction of its catechumens, when we see such men as Clement and Origen undertaking this office, and glorying in the name of catechists. . . . The ancient Church attached far more importance to intellectual competency than to official dignity for such a work, for she was far removed as yet from imagining that Christians are made by a rite, and that supposed sacramental grace supplies all deficiencies."¹

Further, in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, we find:

"The Catechetical School at Alexandria and similar institutions elsewhere were, no doubt, in part, though not exclusively, intended for the benefit of catechumens in the technical sense."²

The practical purpose of the Alexandrian Catechetical School was to prepare willing heathens and Jews of all classes for baptism. It later developed into a sort of theological seminary for the education of many bishops and church leaders. There was only one instructor at first, who received no fixed pay, and who conducted the classes in homes rather than in special buildings.³

3. Infant Baptism and Confirmation

The catechumenate continued to hold sway until the end of the fourth century. With the increase in the practice of infant baptism, there came a decrease in the prevalence of the catechumenate. However, instructions were not altogether stopped, for it was evident that those

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1. De Pressense, op. cit., p.16.
2. C.L.Peltoe, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, v.3, p.256.
3. Cf. Schaff, Philip., History of the Christian Church, v.2., pp. 777, 816.

baptized in infancy should be brought up to know the doctrines of the Christian church into which they had been baptized. Further, there came into existence the rite of confirmation, separate from baptism, which was the act of taking for oneself or rather confirming, the vow made for one in infancy by his parents. The term confirmation was not used in the early church, and indeed, cannot be traced beyond the fifth century.¹ It is not a Biblical term in the technical sense, and therefore was not employed by the apostles. But the rite itself was carried on as a part of the combination of ceremonies which usually made up the sacrament of baptism, and consisted in the anointing with oil and the laying on of hands. These ceremonies did not necessarily take place at the same time, but from the first it was the usual custom. The administration of the rite of confirmation was to be performed only by the bishop, hence with the rapid spread of Christianity it became impossible for the bishop to be present at every baptism and the rite of confirmation was deferred until such a time as the bishop could be present. The practice of infant baptism caused a further separation of these two ceremonies, as has already been shown. Considerable controversy arose over this, for it was felt that instruction in the doctrines should precede baptism, but here instruction necessarily

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1. Cf. Reu, op.cit. p.13

followed at a time when the child had reached the "age of discretion!"¹ However, in spite of antagonism, infant baptism became prevalent, and the catechumenate as an institution declined, at about the beginning of the fifth century. This decline was also hastened by an increase in the number of people seeking admission to the church. Non-Christians came directly to the immediate preparation for the baptismal service without having had thorough instructions and examination.² Yet there were still private instructions carried on both in preparation for baptism and for confirmation.³

It should be noted here that the rite of confirmation was definitely connected with the idea of the reception of the Holy Spirit. Scripture seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit may be received either after or before baptism.⁴ But in the development of Christian customs, it came to be regarded that the Holy Spirit was given after baptism; this was more especially so because of infant baptism. It was not, however, considered as an entirely

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1. Cf., Encyclopaedia Britannica, v.6, p.233.
2. Cf., Schaff-Herzog, Ibid., v.2, p.449.
3. Cf., Coleman, op.cit., p.53.
4. Cf., Acts 19:5,6. When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. Acts 10: They... were amazed ... because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.... And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

fresh gift bestowed at confirmation, but rather a strengthening of the grace bestowed at baptism. Cyprian is said to be the first to distinguish between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹ Some churches today retain this distinction, while others do not; the Presbyterian church does not.

C. Communicant Education from the Fifth Century
to the Reformation

The catechumenate could not disappear in a day and so we find that even with the breakdown of the rigid rules, classes continued to be held for those who wished to identify themselves with the Christian church. In the fifth century Christianity had become the established religion. Those wishing to join were examined as to their motives, and if they proved acceptable were set aside with the sign of the cross, the laying on of hands, and blessing with salt. There was no special instruction for two or three years, but at the end of that time they might ask for baptism. Then followed instructions and ceremonies, the learning of the exact words of the creeds and Lord's Prayer. Recitation of these together with a final renunciation of the ways of paganism; and the baptismal ceremony took place on the night before Easter; and then, after a week's

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1. Cf., Schaff, P., op.cit. p.257.

instruction, the candidates joined with the congregation.¹

Instruction after this period, however, decreased more and more. With Christianity forced on whole nations at once, it was impossible to be thorough in examination and preparation of candidates, and much impurity came into the church. Moreover, parents neglected the proper instruction of their children in the ways of Christianity, and the church proved itself inadequate to remedying the situation.²

Between the seventh and ninth centuries there were a few who insisted on the teaching of the young, notably Pirmin, Alcuin, and Rhabanus Maurus; but not a great deal was accomplished until Charlemagne, who was the pupil of Alcuin, put forth his effort toward the establishment of schools. These schools, however, were rather limited since they were attended mostly by future clerics. But it is well to note that at this time the first German catechisms came into existence.³

Between the years 1200 and 1517 there was a restoration of the catechumenate in the home. That is, the children received parental instruction. While the rite of confirmation was carried on at this time, it is uncertain how much, if any, instruction was connected with it.

During this period the confessional was enforced upon all

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1. Cf. Cohrs, F., loc. cit.
2. Cf. Reu, op. cit., chapter 8.
3. Cf. ibid., chapter 11.

above the age of seven, and from it the priests were able to ascertain how much information the children received at home, and at times even supplemented it. Furthermore there were the Latin Schools in which a great deal of catechetical material was imparted. But in spite of all this attempt, ignorance of the Christian creeds and doctrines was widespread in the Church itself.¹

D. Communicant Education from the Reformation to the
Founding of the Presbyterian Church in the
United States of America in 1788

Luther is considered to be the father of modern catechetics.² Through his efforts so much catechetical material was prepared, he himself preparing several catechisms. These were not only for adults, but were considered for children. In the homes, the schools, and the churches the catechisms were preached upon and taught. When it was thought that the children understood the catechisms, they were brought up for examination, upon the passing of which depended their admission to the Holy Communion. Reu tells us that "This examination was regarded as the genuine evangelical confirmation."³ These examinations were usually held during Lent and were gen-

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1. Cf. Reu, *op.cit.*, chapter 12.
2. Cf. Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, v.2, p.149.
3. Reu, *op.cit.* p.120.

erally preceded by several weeks of instruction. Public confirmation was at first avoided because of its association with the Roman rite, but gradually it came into good repute and thus "the first communion... clearly developed as goal of instruction."¹ And yet, Reu also states "It

~~was~~ "It must be admitted, however, that in many cases rote learning of the five Chief Parts,² or even of the catechetical texts, was deemed sufficient. At other places the five Chief Parts were supplemented by special questions pertaining to the Lord's Supper."³

This modified form of the Roman rite at first gained more ready access among the Calvinists than among the Lutheran districts.⁴ Thus the practice in the Presbyterian Church has its foundations even before that of the Lutheran Church. From this time on, there is a separation between the general instruction of the young, as in Sunday schools, and the special preparation for the admission to the Holy Communion, at which time the child confirmed the baptismal vows. Catechetics continued to flourish as the chief method of instructing the young in the creeds and practices of the church, the instruction being given by the parents or guardians, the Sunday school teacher, and the pastors. The culmination of instruction came in the special preparation for admission into full church membership.

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1. Reu, op. cit., p.120.
2. Five chief parts of Luther's Catechism. Cf., Reu, Ibid Ch.14
3. Ibid. p.121.
4. Cf. Caspari, W., The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, v.3, pp.223,224

Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), the founder of German Pietism, advocated special emphasis of the Sunday School, of catechetical instruction, and of Protestant confirmation.¹ It is interesting to note here that the main emphases of Pietism were as follows:

"1. That the Catechism of the Church, stamped with its authority, shall be used in instruction; 2. That the instruction is not Socratic. . . 3. That while the pupil is to learn the words of the Catechism by heart, the teacher is to explain and illustrate them from the Bible, and to enforce them on the heart and conscience of the Catechumen."²

Catechetical instruction became the practice of the Calvinists. John Calvin himself published a catechism in 1537 which included expositions on the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Sacraments. This was superseded by the Anglican, the Heidleberg, and in 1647, the Westminster catechisms.³

E. Communicant Education in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

Very little direct reference can be found concerning an actual class for the preparation of communicants in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was founded

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1. Cf. Qualben, Lars P., A History of the Christian Church, p.364.
2. Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Eccliaistical Literature, v-2., p.149.
3. Cf. Qualben, Ibid, p.266.

in 1788 and from the very first, emphasis was laid on the importance of catechetical instruction of the young.¹ To quote again from the Constitution:

"Children born within the pale of the visible church are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper."²

In the Minutes of the General Assembly of 1818 we find the following statement:

"Resolved, that the General Assembly recommend, and they do hereby recommend, to the pastors and sessions of the different churches under their care to assemble as often as they deem necessary during the year, the baptized children with their parents, to recommend said children to God in prayer, explain to them the nature and obligation of their baptism, and the relation which they sustain to the church."³

In the 1832 Minutes we find another statement which, by implication, indicates the necessity of special instruction x
for prospective church members:

"Resolved, that the use of the Catechism in the religious education of the young and of the children under the care of the church be affectionately and earnestly recommended to the session in connection with the General Assembly, as the most effectual means, under God, of preserving the purity, peace, and unity of our church."⁴

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1. See Appendix
2. Constitution, op.cit., p.440.
3. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1818, p.691.
4. Minutes 1837, p.372.

A further examination of the Minutes indicates that the instruction of children is given with a view to their understanding of their place in the church and in general preparation for full membership. No early reference is made concerning special classes for such preparation, but it is considered to be the duty of the parents,¹ the pastor,² and the Sabbath-school.³

Frequent reference is made to the fact that it is the duty of the session to examine and pass upon applicants for membership in the Church. Such a reference is as follows:

"Inasmuch as the members of the Session are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances, and the reception of such is their act, the examination of candidates ought manifestly to be in their presence, unless in special cases of sickness or other hindrance, when this duty may be performed by a committee, under the direction of the Session."⁴

The beginning of the present century marks the beginning of the demand for classes for the immediate instruction of those about to come into full membership in the Church. In the Preface to his "Manual for Communicants' Classes", Dr. Miller makes the following statement:

"The General Assembly, at its meeting in 1904, in response to many requests, directed its Committee on the Forward Movement in Christian Education, to prepare a

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1. Cf. Moore, The Presbyterian Digest of 1886, pp. 802,832, 834,847.
2. Ibid, p.800.
3. Ibid, pp. 769-773.
4. Ibid, p.848.

manual for candidates for church membership."¹

Dr. Miller's Manual was compiled in response to that request.

In 1912, Dr. Charles R. Erdman prepared a similar manual under the direction of the Joint Committee on Religious Education, in which he says,

"The practice of conducting classes preparatory to the communion is being widely adopted. The plan is in no sense novel, it is merely a modern form of the instruction which the church has given in all ages since the early centuries. Wherever the method is followed, the most satisfactory results are being secured; in fact, the establishment of such classes has come to be regarded as a necessity of the modern church."²

Further, in the 1920 Minutes, the following suggestion is made:

"We urge upon the pastors the need and importance of cooperating with the Board in its work of religious education by conducting communicants' classes or week-day classes."³

The latest work done under the direction of the General Assembly is that of Reverend Hugh T. Kerr, published in 1937. The statement in the Minutes of May 1937 reads:

"The Committee hopes that the Manual will be found worthy of our blessed Lord and His Church and that it will be used in training a finer membership in the body of the Church."⁴

There is besides this a manual published in the

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1. Miller, Preface- Manual for Communicants' Classes.
2. Erdman, Charles R., Coming to the Communion, p.7.
3. Minutes, op.cit., 1920, p.336.
4. Minutes, op.cit., 1937, p.63.

present year by Reverend Walter D. Knight entitled "Training Young People for Church Membership." These manuals cited, together with several others, will be discussed in chapter four.

Catechetical instruction is the basis for the materials used in most of these communicants' manuals. It is not catechetical instruction given as such, but some of the same material and the same subjects are necessarily employed. In the beginning of the present century memorization of the shorter catechism was yearly urged by the General Assembly, awards being given to those under eighteen who had completed a certain amount of memorization.¹ It is only natural, then, that the communicant class materials should follow the outline, and, in some cases, the form of catechisms, though not for the purpose of memorization.

Communicants' classes are held usually once a year during the pre-Easter period. They are conducted definitely for individuals who have never before partaken of Communion, but they differ from the practice of the Early Church in that the applicants have usually been baptized in infancy; and also in that the period does not extend over several years. The communicants' class is not necessarily a probation period, but rather an immediate preparation for church membership. There is no debarring of applicants from

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1. Cf., *Minutes*, *op. cit.*, 1900, 1901, ff.

the church services previous to their entering the class, as was the case in the Early Church, but on the contrary, an urging of them to attend the services as well as to learn the catechisms and creeds, whether they were born within the pale of the church or not. The only restriction is that they may not partake of the Communion before their confession of faith in the presence of the Session, and their acceptance by the Session. In many cases this confession is made without there having been any special preparation for it.¹

Because of the practice of infant baptism, the members of the class are usually children twelve to sixteen years of age.² But sometimes children older or younger are admitted; and Dr. Erdman advocates a special class for adults and even suggests that such a class might be conducted for adult church members.³

F. SUMMARY

The communicants' class of the Presbyterian Church differs considerably from the catechumenate of the Early Church, and yet it is evident that the two are closely related. We refer again to Dr. Erdman's statement that "the plan is in no sense novel, it is merely a modern form of the instruction which the church has given in all

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1. This is the writer's personal experience.

2. Cf. Chart #1, p.78¹.

3. Erdman, Charles R., op.cit. pp.8,9.

the ages."¹ In the Early Church it was for the instruction of adults who came directly from heathenism into seeking union with the Christians. In the Medieval Church it was for children who had been baptized in infancy as well as for adults who sought church membership. From the Reformation to the present time the emphasis has been upon child training. But at no time has either group been entirely excluded from instruction, and at all times instruction has been given, whether to a greater or less degree, in the preparation of applicants for church membership.

Throughout the centuries the emphasis has been upon catechetical instruction; today the instruction given in the communicants' class is based upon catechetical material. In the Early Church the classes were held for those who sought baptism, which was the equivalent to church membership; today the classes are for those who are about to partake of the Communion for the first time, as regular members of the Church, a privilege granted only to those who confess Christ and who have been accepted by the Session.² The immediate preparation of the candidates for baptism in the Early Church is equivalent to the communicants' class in point of time. Thus we may say that while

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1. Erdman, *op. cit.*, p.7.

2. Minutes, *op.cit.*, 1865, pp.22,23.

there is considerable difference between the method and procedure of today as compared with that of the Early Church, yet the materials and the purpose are the same. Thus it is clear that the communicants' class is an outgrowth of the catechumenate.

CHAPTER III

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A. Introduction

In the foregoing chapter it has been shown that communicants' classes of the Presbyterian Church have their roots in the life of the Early Church and in the practices relating to church admission which were carried on through the centuries following. It was noted that it is only within the last few years that the development of communicant' classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America has begun to take definite form, and that within this period it is becoming a wide-spread custom to hold pre-communion classes. The statements that it "is being widely adopted" and that "it is in no sense novel"¹ are indications that this practice was not wide-spread or well known previously. There is now a trend in the direction of holding communicants' classes, and the problem is to discover the reason for this and whether or not that reason is valid. The answer to this problem comes in the answer to the question, "Is there a need for communicants' classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America? and in the supporting of that

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1. Erdman, op.cit., p.7.

answer. It is therefore the purpose of this present chapter to investigate the need for communicants' classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

B. The Adolescent's Need of the Church

To identify oneself with the church is definitely to identify oneself with Christ, for the church was founded by Him for the purpose of spreading the Gospel and of having fellowship with all of His followers. The question arises, then, concerning the age at which one should unite with the church. There can of course be no age limit for those who wish to become members of the Church of Christ, for following Christ depends not upon one's age but upon the understanding of the heart. Furthermore, the following provision is made in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church:

"Children, born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism . . . when they come to years of discretion . . . ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper."¹

Yet, "the profession and vow must be spontaneous, they must proceed from the child's own moral decision."² But the decision must proceed from instruction, and therefore instruction should come at a time when the individual is psychologically ready for it; at a time when he definitely needs the church.

Adolescence is usually considered the "age of

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1. Constitution, op.cit., p.440

2. Sachsse, E., (in) The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopaedia, vol.2, p.440.

discretion". Since it is the purpose of the Communicants' class to instruct those who are anticipating the definite step of coming into full membership in the church, it is well to discover why the adolescent needs the church.

It is self-evident that if the church is the organ of religion, the need for becoming identified with it is a religious one. But what is religion? what is the adolescent religious experience, the adolescent religious need? "Religion," says Dr. Horne, "is what a person is, and thinks, and does and becomes in the presence of his God." ¹ Religion is something so definitely bound up with every activity of life that there cannot very well be made of it a separate entity. It may be at once the force which initiates human activity and the goal toward which that activity is directed; it may be a blind following or a carefully thought out system of conduct; it may be social or anti-social; moral or immoral, according to the accepted standards; passive or active; highly emotional or phlegmatic. But whatever its expression it is in any case definitely connected with the God-idea, whether expressed as such or not. A man's god is not necessarily the personal God of the Christian, but may be an indefinite entity which the believer does not even recognize as the entity toward which his activity is directed. For instance, in

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1. Horne, H.H., (in) Wyckoff, Some Definitions of Religion Selected for Psychology.

Ames' definition, "religion is the consciousness of higher social values",¹ the "higher social values" become the god. This definition would agree with that of Wieman who states that "God is the growth of meaning and value in the world".² When one deals with the foundations of Christianity, it is first necessary to deal with the psychological elements common to all religions and then to indicate what is the special appeal of our particular church. For the present purpose the definition of religion used will be that which has been quoted above from Dr. Horne, namely, that it is "what a person is, and thinks, and does and becomes in the presence of his God."

1. The Child

With this in mind, the next consideration must be at what age religious phenomena begin to appear and what form these take. There are greatly differing opinions as to when children manifest definitely religious activities and ideas, and as to when they should be "taught religion".

Concerning this, G. Stanley Hall may be quoted as follows:

"I think that in some of our communions we have been premature; we have sought for too speedy results. A great many have sought to reap where they have not sown. They have endeavored to pick open the bud before it was ready to blossom of itself. We have even revival sermons I believe, still, to children; and one of these revivalists was kind enough to send me a list of his conversions, and I figured up over four thousand of

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1. Ames, E.S., (in) Wyckoff, Albert C., Some Definitions of Religion Selected for Psychology.
2. Wieman, Henry, Normative Psychology of Religion, p.51.

them, and found that the average of the children he had converted was nine years. Now whether or not so early an age is the age at which the consummate effect of religious training ought to be aimed at, I question - whether the soul is expanded enough." ¹

Further Hall states:

". . . the best, the highest service that can possibly be rendered is the service and the ministry to childhood. . . and I think our churches are coming to realize now as never before, that it is a far higher thing, because it does more good, to really reach children before they are highly matured, than to preach and work for parents." ²

Of the importance of childhood, Mudge says : "in childhood the 'set' of religious attitudes and feelings is largely determined." ³

2. The Growth of the Adolescent in Relation to His Religious Needs

From childhood one passes through puberty to adolescence. The growth is gradual and continuous, and the sudden blossoming forth in adolescence is not really so sudden as it seems. Maturation is progressing all the while, and when the process begins to be more apparent in some of its aspects, we say that the child has reached adolescence. But what is the relation of this process to the need of adolescents for the church? What is the necessity of studying adolescent nature in connection

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1. G. Stanley Hall, (in) Potter, Henry C., (introduction by) Principles of Religious Education, p.180.
2. Ibid., p.188.
3. Mudge, E.L., Varieties of Adolescent Experience, p.108.

with an investigation of the need for communicants' classes in our churches? The adolescent is definitely religion-conscious, but he needs to be guided in the form and content of the religion to which he shall give his loyalty. He is inclined to join the church as an outlet for his religious feeling, but he should be made aware of what church membership means. These subjects will be dealt with in detail later on. At this point it is necessary to study the problems of adolescent development, for it has been said that religion involves the whole of life, and if this be so, then the parts which make up the whole must be studied. These parts are so intricately bound into one another that any separation is merely mechanical and there will of necessity be much overlapping.

a. His Physical Development

One of the most powerful of human drives is that of sex. Between the ages, approximately, of eleven and thirteen there begin to appear the outward signs of sex development and increased interest in members of the opposite sex. The perplexing problems of childhood are manifoldly increased by the maturing inward urges. The emotional set-up of his earlier experiences is intensified. How is the boy or girl to meet these problems? Who will answer his questions? There is a definite religious need here, as stated by Verkuyl:

"Sex-attraction is a call for sex-control, for self-control. Christian young folks need wholesome acquaint-

ance; they should play together, pray together and serve together. Genuine dedication to Christ provides wholesome outlets for energies that otherwise might be spent with demoralizing results."¹

With these sex changes come also the changes in bodily stature. The bones grow, the organs grow, the muscles grow, the facial features change.² These processes do not all develop at the same rate, however, in the same individual; nor does a particular trait in one individual develop at the same rate as it does in another individual. Due to this cause of increasing self-consciousness there may be noted an increased interest in attempts at self-improvement, as indicated by primping, care for the clothes, and practising before the mirror. All of these things have a definite effect on the emotional reactions of the adolescent. They tend to give him feelings of inferiority, feelings of inadequacy, and a feeling of being misunderstood by everyone. And these emotions in turn have a definite bearing on the religious tendencies.

b. His Emotional Development

This leads directly to a discussion of emotional development in the adolescent. The emotions so color the whole of life that frequent reference to them is found in adolescent psychology. To say that the adolescent is a "bundle of emotions" would not be far from the truth.

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1. Verkuyl, G., Adolescent Worship, p.21.

2. Cf. Mudge, E.L., The Psychology of Early Adolescence, pp.31,32.

A feeling of inadequacy is prominent in adolescent emotional life. This period of life, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, is said to be a period of suicide.¹ Is there not something that the experienced adult can do to alleviate this situation? The problem is a difficult one, for along with these feelings of inadequacy, the adolescent harbors a resentment for the authority of adults.

Adolescent emotion is a variable experience.² He is tenderhearted and loving, and responds quickly to love and understanding in one who has gained his confidence, but as quickly resents intrusion or force. He is moody and changeable, and may at moment's notice jump from one extreme to the other. The intensity of these changes varies with the individual, and with the individual's heritage. Here again religious guidance is needed, for the habits formed in even these few years will influence his whole future life.

It has just been mentioned that the adolescent is tender-hearted and loving. This love is at first of a general nature and then develops into attraction to individuals of the opposite sex. The emotions are so keyed up that their expression may take abnormal forms if not guided. Here is where the adolescent, well-grounded in

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1. Cf. Hollingworth, *The Psychology of the Adolescent*, p.200.
2. Cf. Mudge, *The Psychology of Early Adolescence*, p.59.

the Christian faith and in church activity, has the advantage over those who are not.

A third interest of the adolescent is his personal achievement. He likes to excell in all things.¹ He indulges in hobbies of all kinds and thinks a great deal about his possible future vocation. Emotional upset is often caused by parents who try to insist that he follow the paths which they think he ought to follow. The adolescent is still dependent and unable to order his own activities, so he feels thwarted and emotional conflicts arise.

Emotional conflicts lead to the seeking of some outlet for the emotions. For this reason day-dreaming becomes prominent. Another emotional outlet employed by the adolescent is that of keeping diaries.² The diary aids him in making concrete and definite those ideas which were before just vague notions. It may also be a confidant for the child who feels that he has no one else to whom to go.

The fact should be kept in mind that adolescents are not the only ones who have emotional conflicts. All people have them. But the difference lies in the fact that the adult is to a certain degree independent and can usually find an adequate outlet; whereas the adolescent

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1. Cf. Tracy, The Psychology of Adolescence, p.127.
2. Cf. Hollingworth, op.cit., p.189.

is still dependent and unable to fend for himself.¹ The Church provides the adolescent with a solution to this problem by providing opportunity for well directed expressional outlet.

c. His Intellectual Development

It is in this early period of adolescence that the child becomes interested in religion and inclines toward "joining the church".² Early adolescence is a time of confusion; later adolescence is a time of increasing stability, when habits and tendencies have already been formed. Even middle adolescence is a time of confusion, for with increased growth there come increased demands. Quiet, painstaking thought is not easy for the adolescent; but emotional, imaginative thinking has a very prominent place. As has been noted before, day-dreaming is pronounced in the early adolescent and these dreams usually arise out of personal problems and tend to have at their center the exaltation of the dreamer. According to Miss Hollingworth,

"These reveries, when they lead to no appropriate action, may grow into a fixed habit of retreat from life's rebuffs. Their influences in such a case become baneful, for action and action alone can give a satisfying sense of genuine mastery over circumstances.

On the other hand, when daydreams are accompanied by well directed action they lead to constructive attack upon the environment, thus aiding in the establishment of an adequate personality . . . Opportunity for action is essential . . . Such opportunity should be provided if possible."³

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1. Cf. Hollingworth, op.cit., p.213.
2. Cf. Hollingworth, op.cit., p.160.
3. Hollingworth, Leta S., op.cit., p.191.

The earlier that clear thinking habits are formed, the sooner the adolescent will be able to adjust himself. The period is one of great impressionability, of deep sensitivity to external stimuli, a time when associations are made readily and retained in the memory. The place of the religious educator is very definite in the moulding of the young lives. It is even better if this moulding comes before adolescence is fully reached, or at least during the earlier part. It must not be forgotten that with all his turmoil of thought and emotions the adolescent does have some very definite ideas. Dr. Keigwin has discovered that the "youthful mind delves into the most profound problems of theology and metaphysics." ¹ Together with these ideas, he has discovered that he has the power to assert himself. It becomes a frequent delight to him to shock his elders in the things that he says and does; and just as frequently he does not really mean these things, but it is to him an expression of his new-found power.

a. His Moral - Social Development

Another cause for emotional disturbance is the conflict which comes in the forming of ideals. At this time the child begins to reach out along moral and social lines. Instead of capitalizing upon this tendency, adults very frequently thwart it.

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1. Keigwin, A. Edwin, What You Should Know, Foreward.

Brooks says:

"One of the most serious handicaps to the moral training of boys and girls in the teens is the questionable and undesirable conduct of adults who nevertheless are respected members of the community."¹

The moral tendency, of course, in a sense includes the social, for morality is based upon the existence of a social situation. The child under eleven years of age is individualistic with gradually developing social consciousness. During the pubescent and early adolescent stage he inclines to pick out particular individuals to be his companions. Together these "chums" discover the wider social outlook. The "gang spirit" holds sway, especially in boys; but the girls, too, have their clubs and secret associations.² These secret affairs may be in a way anti-social, yet they aid in developing a certain group consciousness.

Social leanings arise partly out of the tender sympathetic nature of the adolescent. The scope of his understanding is perhaps not very wide, but it is deep and his sense of justice is strong. These attitudes arise partly out of his own sense of need and shortcoming and he becomes very conscientious in his attempts to right the wrongs of the world.³ This conscientiousness sometimes takes the form of over-conscientiousness and he will go through all sorts of unnecessary and even superstitious acts to alleviate what he deems to be social injustice.

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1. Brooks, F.D., The Psychology of Adolescence, p.335.
2. Cf., Mudge, Psychology of Early Adolescence, p.93.
3. Ibid, p.96.

Further cause for the development of social consciousness is the growing interest in members of the opposite sex. Dating becomes desirable, for it brings with it the social approval of the adolescent "set". There should be no ban on boy and girl parties, for they help the adolescent to gain poise and self-confidence in a normal way. There should be however a wise and tactful selection of the parties attended. And where some things are not allowed, the parents should give a reason which satisfies not only themselves, but also their children. Adolescents can be trusted, provided adults will give them a reason to be trustworthy,

With his social consciousness the adolescent seeks social approval.¹ And this in part is the reason for his moral development, for when he acts in a moral way, he is more likely to receive the approval which he covets. Sometimes rather than group approval, it is the favorable recognition of some particular person that is sought. This person may be some one of the opposite sex, or some member of his own sex on whom he has a "crush", or it may be God. In any case, it is a social outreach, and is a step in the direction of morality. The adolescent is capable of understanding morality for morality's sake. And especially is this so of the youth brought up in a religious environment;

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1. Brooks, op.cit., p.193.

that is, an environment in which the religion is definitely and consciously guided.

Much of the morality of youth is the result of a high idealism¹ which they have set up for themselves, or which has been consciously or unconsciously gleaned from others. Adolescents can and do stand out against things in which they feel even their own group to be wrong. If this attitude can be encouraged in the right way, it will assist the individual in the development of a strong character. The adolescent should not be allowed to become intolerant or dogmatic, but courageous and definitely moral. The church is one of the strongest stabilizing influences in young lives. If interest and membership in the Church can be brought about in the period just previous to adolescence, or in early adolescence, his character and personality will be strengthened just that much more. To quote from Dr. Link:

"The Sunday School and the Church, whatever their shortcomings as institutions, do help to inculcate the basic concepts of right and wrong, selfish and unselfish action, in the growing child. They help to establish the basic belief in God and a divine moral order as the source of these concepts. They are, therefore, of incalculable assistance to parents and society in giving children the necessary foundation for developing good characters and personalities . . . children who went to Sunday School had better personality traits than those who did not." ²

Here is also the testimony of an adolescent:

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1. Brooks, op.cit., p.325,331.
2. Link, Henry C., The Return to Religion, p.106.

"I was teaching my girls what the church said was right but what I did not believe. I thought I was a liar and a deceiver, and I said so to myself. If I had not belonged to the church then, I doubt if I would now. However, this passed away, and I felt that my faith meant more to me on account of it."¹

The importance of early religious training and church connection may be seen in the fact that a youth's idealism may not necessarily be moral. Luella Cole says² that the sudden adolescent interest in such things as "democracy", "honor", "humanity", "sexual purity", and "prohibition" may be attributed to the fact that he has only just learned that these things exist. The delinquent child becomes equally interested in "highjacking", "gang-loyalty", or "racketeering". "No essential difference appears in the underlying mechanisms. All ideals are generalizations of past experiences, used for the purpose of assaying present or future conduct."³ Here is where church connection is a valuable asset in indicating to the young people the highest level of moral activity and in stabilizing that activity.

e. His Religious Development

It is now evident that all of these aspects of life are a part of religion. In summing this up it is interesting to note the following definitions of religion, which indicate this inter-relationship:

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1. Mudge, E.L., Varieties of Adolescent Experience, Case 29, p.124.
2. Cf., Cole, Luella, Psychology of Adolescence, p.145.
3. Ibid.

"Religion is a mental faculty or disposition." 1

Max Muller.

"Religion is reverence and love for the moral ideal
and the desire to realize that ideal in life." Huxley.

"Religion is morality touched with emotion." M. Arnold.

"Religion is the consciousness of higher social values."
Ames.

And if this be so then what is the specific problem of religion in the life of the adolescent? We would refer to our first definition, "Religion is what a person is, and thinks, and does and becomes in the presence of his God;"² and we would now keep in mind especially this last phrase, "in the presence of his God". At the center of the Christian religion is God. At the center of any religion is the God-idea. And since the church is the organized center of the Christian religion, our discussion will be in connection with the God of the Christians.

Throughout childhood one forms one's conception of God in a rather blind way, accepting what is given in the way of explanations without much questioning. By the time adolescence is reached, however, the child is beginning to think for himself, and to question those things which he has been taught about God. The following case is:

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1. Cf. Wyckoff, Albert C., Some Definitions of Religion Selected for Psychology.
2. Ibid.

cited by Mudge:

"About this time Margaret and I used to engage in some very deep discussions concerning religion and the existence of God. Before this I had accepted all things dogmatically, but now I began to question the nature of God, if such a being really existed. I had a terrible fear of death and eternity, the words "forever and ever" at the end of a prayer, conveying the most "gone" feeling."¹

The fear mentioned in this experience is a very real characteristic of the adolescent's experience. To this characteristic many evangelists appeal, building up harmful negative attitudes rather than positive attitudes. The emotions are stirred up and the adolescent becomes "converted" without knowing what is really happening. Such a "conversion" is prone to be a very unstable experience, and to wear away as soon as the emotions are quieted. Coupled with fear there is often an extreme conscientiousness, almost to the point of superstition. Again quoting a case cited by Mudge, we read,

"It was during that year that I was confirmed in the church (age thirteen), and I was surely a religious little girl. I used to marvel at the things I thought I used to do, but would never do again, such as stealing a pin, an awful crime to me at that time. I used to wonder how I could even have been so wicked as I thought I had been up to that time. I immediately started a reform campaign, almost promising myself never to speak or whisper in church or even to correct by slapping a younger brother or sister."²

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1. Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience, case 4, p.110.
2. Ibid., Case, 57, p.105.

The opposite reaction to fear is that of love. The tender emotions are foremost in the adolescent. If he can be shown that God is a God of love, his religion will mean much more to him. The sense of dependence makes him desire some one who is wholly independent and capable and interested in him. He has a fear of going to adults, and other adolescents are as insufficient as he; and so God is the only one who can supply that want in his life. The fact that he can trust God, brings him to the place where he loves God. The trouble is that the problem of doubt enters in. Can God be trusted? Does he love me? Will he show me the way? How can he do it? Says one youth, "My religious experience took the form of doubts and skepticism."¹ This is a time when just the right leader is absolutely essential. The adult who can overcome the fear in the adolescent and win his confidence and friendship is the one who will be able to alleviate those doubts, free him from those religious fears, and help him to adjust his emotions. He is the one to lead the adolescent to a real and deep and satisfying knowledge of God through Jesus Christ.

Conversion means a complete turning about. As applied to the Christian religion, it is the change from one mode of activity and attitude of thought to another in relation to God, through an acceptance of Jesus Christ as

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1. Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience, case 47, p.126.

as personal Savior. Psychologically, "the convert's mind is immediately translated from a state of distrust and doubt to one of rest and peace."¹ This experience differs with different individuals. With some it is purely a momentary emotional reaction; such a state could hardly be classified as a true conversion, yet many do so consider it. With others it is a lasting experience initiated in a moment or an hour; while with still others it is a gradual process, a growing into the state of release. Again, the commitment may be taken at a definite moment, but the emotional reactions may not follow immediately. This is often a cause for confusion, and the adolescent may think he is not converted because he does not "feel" converted. Here, again, is where adult leadership is needed, where sympathetic understanding is needed; here, too, is where church fellowship can go a long way to steady the young Christian, to guide him in his growing experience with God.²

f. Summary of Adolescent Religious Needs

In summarizing the religious needs of the adolescent it must be kept in mind that the definition of religion which has been used in this thesis is one which indicates that religion embraces the whole of life. The needs of the whole of life, then, may be summed up briefly as follows: physically the adolescent needs health and

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1. Sadler, W.S. and L., *Piloting Modern Youth*, p.323.
2. Cf., *Hollingworth, op.cit.*, p.160.

activity for proper growth; intellectually he needs direction and conviction, he needs to take a definite public stand; morally he needs direction and control; socially he needs fellowship and activity in service; emotionally he needs stability, sympathy, adult recognition, inspiration, a broadening of faith and work, and the love of God. That all of these needs may be met in religion is shown in the following very adequate statement by Brooks:

"(Religion) satisfies his groping for a fundamental, synthesized understanding of the whole realm of experience. It gives him a sense of values, a sense of personal relationships and obligations. It facilitates the formation of high ideals of unselfish service. It gives him help in attaining that self-control and self-discipline which characterize strong personality. It reenforces his moral character. It aids him in resolving many conflicts of impulses and desires and thus assists him in attaining sound mental health. Praise, prayer, and other elements of worship may enrich and deepen his life, and add much to its wholesomeness and happiness."¹

Since, then, the Church is the organ of Christianity, the most satisfying religion, the Church is the logical place for the adolescent. But merely putting him into the Church will not accomplish the desired integration of character, nor satisfaction in religion. The way of life through Jesus Christ alone must first be pointed out to him, after which he must be shown his specific place in the Church. It is the purpose of the communicants' class to do this and to discover the individual needs and to point out how the Church can meet these problems.

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1. Brooks, op.cit., pp.341,342.

C. The Church's Need of the Adolescent

The adolescent needs the church. The question is to what extent the church needs the adolescent. What is the church and what are her needs? We are speaking here of the church as an organization; the particular organization which this study is considering is the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The church as an organization needs the vitality of youth. The historic founder of Presbyterianism, John Calvin, was himself only twenty-five when he entered into public life; and he was converted at twenty-two. If conversion and identification with the church can be brought about at an earlier age, how much greater can be the church's strength, how much greater its outreach, how much larger its accomplishment.

We have just been discussing the needs of the adolescent which make it important that he have a stabilizing influence. But there are certain characteristics of youth upon which the life of the church is dependent. The church is made up of its members, and from them its efficiency is derived. Spirit-filled members will make up a spirit-filled church. Growing members will make a growing church. The church must not stand still, it must press on, It needs the seeking, enquiring mind of youth; true, it needs the strength and stability of experience, but it also needs the enthusiasm of youth. The youth of the church

will grow into maturity and will become the strong foundation upon which the coming generation of youth can build. The church needs the mind of youth because of its alertness and responsiveness. It needs the dreamer to see new situations in which it can exalt the love of Christ, and it needs the sense of release and fulfillment which comes with practical application.

Again, the church needs to have its emotions heightened, its sensitivity to the leadings of Christ sharpened, its alertness to its own inner needs increased. It needs love and trust in God; it needs fear and hate of evil. If its recruits come from the ranks of youth, it will be kept sensitive.

Adolescents are socially and morally inclined in their outlook. They are beginning to see the broader scope of life, yet they are not set in their opinions on how to meet the problems which arise. The church must accomplish its work through moral and social channels, therefore it must be ever on the alert to see new possibilities and must have conviction and conscientiousness in carrying them out. It needs the conviction of the adolescent in the grounding of the faith of others. The right step taken by one youth in the church will lead to that same step being taken by another. Adolescents like to be of service to others.

Finally, the church is the organization which

through the centuries has sought souls for the Kingdom of Christ. It is the institution of peace and love among men; it is the organ of true religion. If it is the organ of religion, it needs as members those who are the most interested in religion, those who find God satisfying.

For these reasons, it is felt that the church needs adolescents. But she cannot receive adolescents without first instructing them. The Sunday School can do the work of grounding them in the faith, but there is the need for the communicants' class to climax the early instruction with a definite appeal to the individual for personal consecration, through the process of summing up and examining all that has (or should have) gone before.

D. The Place of Communicants' Classes in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

The previous sections of this chapter have been concerned with needs - needs of the adolescent and needs of the church. Therein lies the need for communicants' classes; they are the connecting link joining the adolescent to the church and the church to the adolescent.

1. Membership Requirements of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The only requisite for joining the church is a personal faith and confession of Jesus Christ as Savior. It is the need of the communicants' class to bring about this faith and confession or to establish that which is

already present.¹

It must be remembered that church membership as an end in itself is empty and meaningless. The prospective member must be made to see church membership and church fellowship as an answer to the problems which are confronting him; but many adolescents "join the church" just because they are expected to, or because many of their friends are doing it, or because they think they ought to. The following cases cited by Mudge are good illustrations of this:

"As I recall there was no definite awakening. I just decided that I ought to join the church, so I did."²

"I joined the church when I was fourteen, not because I wanted to at all, but because I was expected to. I wish now that I had been allowed to think things out for myself before I took such a step, because I cannot see that, coming at that time, the experience did me any good."³

One purpose, then, of the Communicants' class, should be to make Church membership meaningful to the prospective member in the light of his own personal problems. In this connection, the class should be a means of leading to Christ those who have not already accepted Him, for no one should be a full member of the Church who is not a member in Christ.

Mr. Lukens puts to his classes such questions as, "Are you

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1. Cf., Lukens, A Pastor's Instruction Class, pp.10-12.
2. Mudge, Varieties, of Adolescent Experience, case 52, p.132.
3. Ibid., p.126, case 47.

a sinner?", "What is the penalty of sin?", and "How can you escape that penalty?"¹ his theory being that the understanding of their need for salvation is necessary for an intelligent faith in Jesus Christ. The giving of intelligent faith is his object. Sometimes he sees the child turn from no faith at all to saving faith in Christ; sometimes he sees a maturation of the process already begun; while sometimes there is no response at all.² In the latter case the child should be debarred from full membership in the Church, for saving faith in Christ is really the only requirement for membership in the Presbyterian Church, and if he is indifferent to Christ he does not yet belong in the Church.

2. The Knowledge Needed of Duties of Members

Many people who consider themselves Christians are grossly ignorant of what is really required to live the Christian life and to perform the duties of church membership. Instruction is needed concerning the meaning of the Christian life, of prayer and Scripture, and of the Sacraments. What is more fitting than that such instruction should be given just previous to the individual's taking the full pledge of membership in the Church?

3. Knowledge of Creeds

Furthermore, the individual who joins the Church

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1. Lukens, op.cit., p.10.

2. Ibid., p.7.

should have a definite understanding of the principal creeds of the Church, as given in the Catechism. This is not a requirement, not a necessity, but an expediency, if he is to be an intelligent member of the Church. This does not mean that he must memorize the creed, nor know its every detail, but he should have a general knowledge of what his Church stands for. If, however, the Catechism or the Creed should be committed to memory at this time, it should be made plain to the child that the memorization is not an end in itself, but a means to his better understanding of his own position. This necessary instruction can best be given in a special preparatory class in which the child's attention is carefully directed to the step which he himself must take.

4. Knowledge of Church Polity and Government

Church polity and government is a subject which in the writer's experience was never touched upon in Sunday school. Why is it that it seems to be taken for granted that the child will just naturally understand those things? They involve the method by which the life of the Church is carried on. Certainly this information which is given in the communicants' class is of great import to the prospective member.

5. The Pastor's Relation to the Congregation

This is the pastor's "golden opportunity" to become acquainted with the youth of his church and to gain a

better insight into the homes of his congregation.

6. Service

The Church provides a great opportunity for service. Service for others may be made a pleasure as well as a duty. The child who sees his place in the Church and the Church's place in the community and who accepts the involved responsibility toward God and man, is the one who is going to find life the most satisfying. This it seems to us is an important contribution of the Communicants' class to the Christian education of youth.

7. Communicants' Class versus the Sunday School

We may well ask, "does not the Sunday School take care of these problems?" Unfortunately the answer in most cases is "no". Instruction along these lines has been all too inadequate, and children have been herded into the Church en masse whether they were ready for it or not. In substantiation of this fact we have the following statement:

"In writing your thesis I hope you have a chapter on the necessity of the Communicants' Class in this present day when so many churches take in people without really stopping to see whether they know anything about what they are doing in uniting with the church. I think that . . . church is a flagrant illustration of taking too much for granted and accepting children in a group without being sure that they know as individuals what they are doing in making a public confession of faith. It is taken for granted also that the Sunday School is giving adequate instruction in the fundamental doctrines of Scripture."¹

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1. Erdman, Walter C., in a personal letter.

We may say too, that even where Sunday School instruction has been adequate, the Communicants' class still has its place, for it serves as an examination and a summing up of the facts presented in the Sunday School. Furthermore, the approach is to the individual and leads to a personal commitment. Concerning the importance of personal commitment we read:

"My family seemed to go on the theory that when I reached the age of spiritual understanding I would naturally follow the good example set me, and so nothing was said about my becoming a member of the church. For some time I had a very uncomfortable feeling during the service but did not know what caused it. I wished to stay at home but was not permitted. Finally a teacher of mine who attended our church asked me if I should not like to become a member. I awoke to the realization of the fact that I could no longer go through life on my parents' record but that I must announce my own intention in regard to religious matters. I did so and lost that feeling of strange discomfort." ¹

8. Exclusion of Children not Ready for Church Membership

Not every child who reaches the age of twelve or fourteen is ready for full Church membership, but the Communicants' class may be the final step which causes him to see his need and the remedy for it. Again, not every member of the Communicants' class will be ready at its close to join the Church; the pastor or leader of the class must be on the alert to discover who are the ones who are really ready for membership. Concerning this the following statement is found:

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1. Mudge, Varieties of Adolescent Experience, case 3, p.112.

"The custom of confirming children as a matter of course at the age of fourteen has led to insincerity and hypocrisy and it is the duty of the church to check it as much as possible." ¹

That this warning is necessary is evidenced by the following two examples. A Sunday School superintendent stated to the writer that he does not believe that children are able to understand sin and salvation, but they need the church and therefore should be brought into full membership with the intention that they shall learn of these other things later when they are better able to comprehend them. Such a person evidently knows neither adolescent psychology nor the true aim of the church. Though in his church a communicants' class is conducted, yet it is evident that it does not have as one of its aims the exclusion of children not yet ready for full membership. The other example is one cited by Porter² in which he tells of a high school girl who one Sunday went to church without the slightest intention of joining, was met by the minister, and came home having been received into full membership. "No wonder," he says, "the salt of the earth loses its savor."³

E. Summary

In summing up this discussion it may be said that communicants' classes are needed chiefly in the in-

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1. Sachsse, E., (in) Schaff-Herzog, op. cit., v.2, p.440.
2. Cf. Porter, Being a Church Member, p.17.
3. Ibid.

struction of adolescents preparatory to church membership, for adolescents need to belong to the church as an aid in meeting the increasing psychological demands of which their life is comprised. The communicants' class may be a means to acceptance of Christ as Saviour, or it may be a strengthening of faith which already exists. In the second place, it will help the adolescent to know what is to be expected of him as a member of the church. In the third place, it provides for teaching the principal creeds, polity, and government of the church. It also gives the pastor a chance to become acquainted with the prospective members of his congregation. And finally, it can test applicants to see whether or not they are ready for membership, and if necessary to debar them from it. In this way the church can preserve its purity.

The church all too frequently fails to discriminate between the nominal and the true Christian, between the child who is coming to the communion because it is his own desire and the one who is coming because he thinks it is the thing to do, or because he is forced to. For this reason the church has been greatly weakened. It is the duty of the church to check her downward direction and to provide means for her quickening. The church must not continue to bring unconverted children into its fold but must do her utmost to bring them to a saving faith in Christ. This is felt to be the place of the communicants' class in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

CHAPTER IV

SURVEY OF CURRENT PROCEDURE IN THE COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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SURVEY OF CURRENT PROCEDURE IN THE COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. Introduction

We may draw three conclusions from the foregoing chapters. First, the church through the ages has employed some means of immediate preparation of applicants for membership. At times this preparation has been practically negligible, but it has existed at least in theory. In the second place, there is very little evidence of this practice in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, though there has been considerable emphasis upon the training of the young. It is only within the last thirty or forty years that interest in and practice of conducting a definite class for the preparation of prospective members of the church have become wide-spread. And finally, it is evident that there is a very definite need for such classes in the Presbyterian Church. These conclusions are ample justification for a discussion of present-day procedure and for an evaluation of that procedure together with a suggestion of possible methods of improvement. It is the aim of this chapter to present a survey of the organizations, curricula, and methods of communicants' classes as

outlined by ten representative manuals in current use.¹ Two of these² are not prepared as manuals, but they present study material to be considered by prospective church members. Three of these³ have been prepared under the direction of the General Assembly or of a Committee of Religious Education.

It was thought that the best way to survey these manuals was to make two composite charts of the materials presented.⁴ The first chart indicates the various systems of organization of the classes and the various methods for presenting the materials. The second chart indicates the main topics treated in the ten manuals. Such charts make it possible to see at a glance what elements are considered important in communicant education. Neither of the charts

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1. Caughey, J.L., Training the Young.
Erdman, C.R., Coming to the Communion.
Keigwin, A. E., What You Should Know.
Kerr, H.T., A Manual of Faith and Life.
Knight, W.D., Preparing Young People for Church Membership.
Lukens, V.H., A Pastor's Instruction Class for Children.
Miller, J.R., Manual for Communicants' Classes.
McAfee, C.B., When You Join the Church.
Porter, E., Being a Church Member.
Sadler, A.J., The Communicants' Class.
2. McAfee, Ibid.
Porter, Ibid.
3. Erdman, Ibid.
Kerr, Ibid.
Miller, Ibid.
4. Cf. Charts 1 & 2, pp. 78,79.

is intended to be complete in every detail but merely to give a general outline. Furthermore, many of the subjects recorded on Chart 2 are not mutually exclusive, but they are recorded as given by one or more of the authors, for sometimes a single subject may be treated from different angles by different writers. Yet, to avoid confusion, an attempt has been made to classify these materials, especially in cases where the title given by the author does not present an exact description of the content of the section treated. In cases where there is a compound title, such as "Christ and Salvation", it has been classified as two topics, i.e., "Christ" and "Salvation". The present survey will be based on the findings of these charts.

B. The Organization of Current Communicants' Classes

The organization of a class depends upon its purpose. In these manuals the purpose as stated in each case is in essence the same¹. The aim is to prepare applicants for church membership by instructing them concerning the meaning of the Christian Life, their relationship to Christ and the Church, to sum up the lessons learned in the Sunday School, and to help the applicant to understand the Communion. Mr. Lukens makes as his aim the conversion of those who have not previously accepted Christ, the

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1. Cf. Chart 1, p.78.

crystalization of the faith of those who have accepted Him, and the rejection of those whom he deems unready to receive full membership.¹

In these manuals the pastor is each time mentioned as the teacher of the class. Occasionally there are variations of this procedure. Sometimes the pastor is too busy to give the time, and the instruction of the class falls to some other capable person. Again, there may be an especially gifted teacher in the church whom the pastor feels is more capable than himself. But as a rule, the pastor prefers to conduct the class himself, and the exceptions are comparatively rare. All of these eight manuals have been prepared by men who are or who were themselves pastors.

As the leaders differ, so also will the organization of the classes differ. But these differences are in the details rather than in the essentials. For example, two of these leaders call the class an Instruction Class; one calls it a Confirmation Class; one, a Communicant's (singular) class; one, a Communicants' (plural) class; a sixth, a Preparatory Class; and another, a Class. All of these men would, however, recognize the meaning of Communicant Class, as it, in some form, is the term used

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1. Lukens, op.cit., pp.7,8.

by the General Assembly.¹

The manuals do not state definitely who should properly attend communicants' classes. There may be classes for adults who have recently been converted to Christianity as there were in the Early Church. No one is excluded who earnestly wishes to learn. But the usual age is that of adolescence, as has already been explained in Chapter III. Because of the nature of teaching, pupils of approximately the same age are grouped together.² The writers of the manuals which are under consideration are in general agreement here, but the exact limits which they define differ slightly.³ Kerr mentions Juniors and Intermediates; Keigwin speaks of adolescents; two say merely, boys and girls; while the remaining four give the age of twelve as the lower limit and fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, and eighteen, respectively, as the upper limit. But whatever the exact age, it is evident that the class is for those who have indicated an interest in Christianity or are desirous of becoming church members.

There is likewise no limit to the size of the classes, but they usually are not large. Dr. Erdman advocates the smaller group as being more profitable, and Dr. Caughey suggests that the boys and girls be separated if the

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1. Kerr, H.T., "Faith and Life", Forward, "The General Assembly recommends . . . the preparation of a communicant's manual for uniform use in the Church."
2. Erdman, C.R., op.cit. p.8.
3. Cf., Chart 1, p.78.

groups are large.¹

The Communicants' Class generally meets in some part of the church building,- the pastor's study, a Sunday school class room, or the chapel; Dr. Erdman suggests that upon occasion it might meet in the home of the pastor; and Mr. Knight provides for the arrangement of the place according to the convenience of the pupils.²

As in the Early Church, the season for the immediate preparation of church members is usually that just preceding Easter, but this is not necessarily so. This is because it is desirable that the course should have as its climax the public confession of faith and the partaking of the first Communion at the time when the Church is especially aware of that Last Supper at which the Sacrament was initiated. Nor is there any limit to the number of times that the class may be conducted during the year. One or two times is advocated.³ Two of the manuals mention that the class should meet on a week-day, one says specifically Friday after school and three say that it should meet weekly. Whatever the time, it should be made to suit the convenience of the pupils. The Lesson period may last a half an hour, to one hour. There is a difference as to

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1. Caughey, op.cit., p.4.
Erdman, op.cit., p.9.
2. Cf., Chart 1, p.78.
3. Ibid.

the length of the courses; they may be anywhere from six to ten weeks or more long. Kerr provides for sixteen units. Of course these manuals are not intended to be followed exactly by every pastor, but are given as suggestions concerning the possible procedure. Units may be lengthened or shortened according to the circumstances.

The following chapter will deal with an evaluation of this organization, and procedure; but first the subjects and methods used must be discussed.

C. Curricula of Current Communicants' Classes

It has been said previously that as the leaders of the classes differ, so also will the organization of those classes differ. Furthermore, it is a perfectly obvious fact that the subjects treated will also vary; for while it is true that the communicants' classes are an outgrowth of the early catechumenate, nevertheless, they have not been worked out into such a well formulated system of instruction. It is only within the last year that a manual of instruction has been prepared by Reverend Hugh T. Kerr for uniform use in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,¹ but even this is intended for a source book rather than a text book, a guide rather than a rigid outline. This manual, however, is so recent that it is not yet uniformly used; nor will it necessarily ever be used ex-

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1. A Manual of Faith and Life - A Guide for Individual Christians or Communicant Classes.

clusively. For this reason it is felt that the subjects dealt with in other manuals should also be considered in the present study. We have already referred to the ten (including that by Dr. Kerr) which are here being surveyed.¹

For convenience, the subjects have been divided into six groups: First, the God-head; second, the Relation of Man and God; third, God's Revelation to Man; fourth, the Relation of the Christian to the Church; fifth, the Relation of the Christian to Society; and sixth, God's Eternal Purpose.

Upon examining the chart the attention is drawn immediately to the second group as being the most outstanding; there are seventy-six references to this group distributed among twenty-one topics. On the other hand, the references to God's Person are relatively very few, being only nineteen in number. The emphasis is definitely on man's personal experience rather than on a system of theology. The reason for this will be discussed in the next chapter,- suffice it now merely to make a summary of the topics suggested. Of the twenty-one topics in this second group, seven are concerned with the way of salvation, these seven being referred to twenty-one times in all, by the various writers; and coupled with this subject is that of maintaining the Christian life, mentioned thirty-nine times

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1. Ante., footnote, p, 65.

under seven different topics, including the Lord's Supper, Prayer, and Baptism. In this survey, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the subjects dealt with are considered by the various writers as important in the preparation of candidates for full time membership in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

The next great emphasis which is found in this analysis of the curricula of communicants' classes is that laid upon the Christian's relation to the Church. Here are found forty-three references in all, dealing mainly with church organization and membership. It is of interest to note in this connection that, of the manuals included in this survey, only five make specific reference to the Presbyterian form of church government. Furthermore, the creeds, as such, and the hymns of the church are barely touched upon.

It has been stated before that many of the subjects as they have been charted are not mutually exclusive;¹ so also some of the subjects included under one heading might as correctly be included under another heading. The divisions have been made arbitrarily for the sake of clarification. Thus there has been made a distinction between the Christian's relation to the church and his relation to society by including under the former only those subjects which bear directly upon the church and indirectly upon

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1. Ante, p. 66.

society, and under the latter those subjects which bear directly upon society. In turning to the latter group, it is found that the idea of Christian living is the most frequently used, followed in turn by service and missions. This group is referred to a total of twenty-two times in the ten manuals.

The group which appears to be fifth in importance is that which describes God's Revelation to Man, including revelation, religion, and the Bible. Christ, who is himself the revelation of God, was included under the group entitled the God-head, to which there are nineteen references.

The last group, God's Eternal Purpose, is numerically the least important of the list. Indeed, this whole group might well be included under group II, since the creation, heaven, hell, life, death, resurrection, and the judgment all have to do with the relation of God and Man. Yet, they also may include more than this, and for this reason they have been relegated to a separate group.

After this brief presentation of the general groups of subjects which are treated in the different manuals, it will be well to take note of those specific topics which are most frequently used. The following list includes those topics which are referred to seven or more times altogether: Christ, being a Christian, Prayer, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, the Church, reasons for joining the Church, Christian living, and the Bible. The Lord's Supper is specifically

mentioned in all of the ten manuals.

The manual prepared by the Reverend Hugh T. Kerr deserves special attention, since it is the most recent one authorized by the General Assembly. It is not necessarily a text book, but rather a guide book "for Individual Christians or Communicant Classes",¹ and is an interpretation of the "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" which was adopted by the General Assembly of 1902.² After an introduction concerning the creeds of the Christian Faith, it discusses the following articles: God, Revelation, The Eternal Purpose, The Creation, The Sin of Man, The Grace of God, Election, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Faith and Repentance, The Holy Spirit, The New Birth and the New Life, The Resurrection and the Life to Come, The Law of God, The Church and the Sacraments, The Last Judgment, and Christian Service and the Final Triumph. This is the most complete list of subjects presented by any of the manuals.³

D. Methods Used in Current Communicants' Classes

As the organizations and the curricula vary, so also do the methods used in communicants' classes. The method must necessarily differ with the different aims, the different leaders, and different pupils. The manuals considered in this survey may be classed under three general

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1. Kerr, op.cit., Title page.
2. Cf., Ibid, pp. i,ii.
3. Cf., Chart 2, p.79.

heads; the socratic, the catechetical, and the text-book methods.

The first method mentioned is that used by Mr. Lukens.¹ He uses no text, for he is not so much interested in the information gleaned by the pupil as he is in the reaching of the soul.

Three of the manuals use the catechetical method.² The answers to the question may or may not be given with the questions, but in each case a reference is given through which the pupil may discover the answer for himself. These references are taken usually from the Bible or from one or more of the catechisms. Along with the outline of study, Mr. Sadler suggests daily Scripture readings and a memory verse for each week. Dr. Caughey suggests that the answers to questions studied in class be written out afterward at home and then returned to the leader to be corrected and graded. Dr. Keigwin gives in his manual the questions and answers used, but does not state his method.

Three of the manuals use the text-book method.³ Most of the information desired is given in the manual itself. The Bible and catechisms are used as references.

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1. Lukens, op.cit., p.10.
2. Sadler, op.cit.
Caughey, op.cit.
Keigwin, op.cit.
3. Erdman, op.cit.
Knight, op.cit.
Miller, op.cit.

Note books are kept, assignments given, memorization encouraged, and quizzes given. Mr. Knight's approach borders on the catechetical method. His pupil's manual contains a series of questions together with references where the answers may be found, and each week a self-test is given that the pupils may the better find how they are progressing. These tests are not graded.

The Manual of Faith and Life does not present any particular method of approach. And the other two booklets, we have said, are not prepared manuals, but contain material pertinent to the instruction of those who are about to join the church.

E. Summary

From the preceding survey it is evident that there is no one system or organization, no standard curriculum, and no definite method pursued in the instruction of those seeking full membership in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. But in summary it may be said that the classes are usually held on a weekday for six or more successive weeks before the Easter Communion. The leader is the pastor, and the pupils are usually children born within the pale of the visible church who have been baptized and who have come to the "age of discretion". The three main topics discussed have to do with the way of salvation, the Church, and the relation of the Christian

to Society. Finally, there is no one method of instruction which can be said to be in general use, but the method varies with the situation and the leader.

CHART #1

ORGANIZATION OF
COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES
IN THE UNITED STATES
AS INDICATED BY EIGHT

MANUAL and AUTHOR	CAUGHEY Training The young	ERDMAN Coming To The Communion	KEIGWIN What You Should Know	KEE Manual of and L
NAME	class for Instruction	Preparatory class		Communica
PURPOSE	To explain the meaning of the Christian life Preparation for church membership	To inform inquirers Handbook for instruction of classes preparatory to Communion To explain our relation to Christ and The Church		
PLACE		Some part of the Church building occasionally in the Pastor's home		
DAY SEASON		Usually a week-day Before one or two communions every year		
TIME COURSE	(8 units provided)	6 Sessions	(8 units provided)	(16 units)
SESSIONS	Weekly	Weekly		
LENGTH		3/4 - 1 hour		
PUPILS AGE	Children who have indicated an interest in Christ 12-16 Small classes preferred separate sexes	Not limited to those baptized in infancy 12-18 Small classes more profitable	Adolescence	Juniors and
LEADER	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor Teacher Parents	Pastor Teacher
METHOD	Catechetical	Text-book recitation	Catechetical	

**CRYSTALLIZATION and METHODS IN
 'S' CLASSES in the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 BASED BY EIGHT REPRESENTATIVE MANUALS**

	KERR Manual of Faith and Life	KNIGHT Preparing Young People for Church Membership	LUKENS A Pastor's Instruction Class for Children	MILLER Manual for Communicants' classes	SADLER The Communicants' Class
	Communicants' class	Confirmation Class	Instruction class	Class	Communicants' class
		Preparation for Church membership	Conversion Crystallization of faith Rejection of those not ready for membership		Preparation for Church membership Summary of Sunday school lessons To help the child understand the Communion
		Where convenient	The Chapel		
		Week-day when convenient Before Easter	Week-day - Friday When convenient Lent		Before Communion
dd)	(16 units provided)	8 sessions Weekly	6 sessions Weekly 1/2 hour	6 sessions	8 sessions
	Juniors and Inter-mediate	Boys and girls	Non-communicants 12-14	Those uniting with the Church Boys and girls	12-15
	Pastor Teacher	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor
v/		Inductive and Catechetical (Text)	Socratic	Text-book recitation	Catechetical

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PROCEDURE IN COMMUNICANTS' CLASSES
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION OF CURRENT PROCEDURE IN COMMUNICANT'S CLASSES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A. Introduction

After surveying the procedure in conducting communicants' classes it becomes necessary to make an evaluation of that procedure in order to discover wherein it is adequate to fulfill its purpose. It is the aim of this present chapter to make such an evaluation, to point out the adequacy of present-day procedure in communicants' classes as well as to indicate its shortcomings, and to suggest possible improvements.

Frequent reference already has been made to the charts which have been compiled to indicate the organizations and curricula of communicants' classes. These were compiled with the idea that a point of view may be determined by discovering the relative stress or neglect of items in the materials presented; thus it will be determined that the items the most frequently repeated are to be considered as the most important in the conducting of communicants' classes.

Furthermore, this evaluation will be based upon statements which the various writers make in support of

their own particular point of view considered in the light of the purpose of communicants' classes. Together with this will be considered some of the psychological elements which enter into dealing with the different age groups.

Again, the evaluation must be made from the point of view of the purpose of the church, which is to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to be a fellowship of those who are already one with Christ.¹

B. Evaluation of Current Organization of Communicants' Classes

The Communicants' class is specifically for instruction in things with which church members should be familiar. One of the main purposes of the class as indicated by the manuals, is to bring the applicants to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, for this is the sole requirement for membership in the Presbyterian Church. This may mean complete conversion for some, while for others it is merely a "crystalization of their infantile faith"² Furthermore, in the process of presenting Christ, the meaning of the Christian life, including the meaning of the Church and its relationships, will of necessity be explained. And finally, contact with the individuals in the class gives the pastor an opportunity to discover who are the ones who are really

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1.Cf. Constitution, op.cit., pp.139,327ff.
2.Cf. Lukens, op.cit., p.7.

ready to become full members of the church. Thus, exclusion from membership of those not yet ready is indicated as an indirect aim. All of these aims are in accord with the chief purpose of the class which is to prepare individuals for church membership.

The organization of a class has much to do with its success. Without organization no institution can run smoothly, nor will it be successful if that organization is not suited to its purpose. Since the purpose of the communicants' class has been seen to be to prepare young people for church membership, which in turn entails an understanding of Christian living as well as a knowledge of church organization and membership duties. Thus it becomes necessary that there be a personal dealing with each individual of the class as well as group handling. For this reason it is indicated that the leader of the class should be one who is capable of understanding personal difficulties and of teaching in a constructive way. This should be the relation of the pastor to the whole congregation and especially to those who are about to become members of the congregation. It has been noted in the last chapter that in the manuals which were surveyed for the suggested organization of communicants' classes, each one mentioned the pastor as being the logical leader of the class. In this connection Mr. Knight states, "This

is my best opportunity to get acquainted with the young people who are coming into full membership in the Church."¹

Dr Erdman also suggests that,

"No pastor should willingly forego this opportunity of rendering a supremely important service to those most in need of his guidance and influence. A considerable expense of time and strength must necessarily be demanded by the preparation and teaching, yet the busiest pastor will feel fully repaid by the results achieved."²

According to these manuals, then, except in unforeseen circumstances, the pastor should be the leader of the communicants' class.

In line with the purpose, too, should be considered the name given to the class. The name "Communicants' Class" has been applied because the class is for those who are about to become communicant members of the church. This is the accepted term used in the Presbyterian Church. Yet, as Mr. Lukens indicates,³ there is a danger here that many may be led to think that the class is held for the purpose of leading children "wholesale to the Communion Table". Furthermore there is the possibility of deep disappointment or embarrassment to those who at the end of the course are not deemed ready to partake of the Communion. For this reason he prefers to call the class an Instruction Class. Dr. Caughey also calls it an Instruction Class. The present writer has before stated a preference for the name Confir-

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1. Knight, op.cit., p.2.
2. Erdman, op.cit., p. 10.
3. Cf. Lukens, op.cit., p.4.

mation Class,¹ since the step taken is in confirmation of the baptismal vows made for the child by his parents. The name Communicants' Class, however, has been retained in this thesis since it is the name accepted by the Presbyterian Church, and also to distinguish it from the rite of confirmation as it is practiced in the Anglican Churches.²

It has been noted that there is no set rule concerning who shall attend the communicants' class. The Constitution states that when children baptized in infancy have come to "years of discretion . . . they ought to be informed . . .", and that "the years of discretion in young Christians cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the session."³ The age group usually included in this is that of adolescence, as has been pointed out previously.⁴ That this is an excellent time for such instruction has been shown in the discussion of adolescent psychological needs in Chapter III of this thesis. Where there is a wide range in ages it would seem advisable to divide the group into two or more sections, the younger ones to meet at one time and the older ones at another. The wisdom of this is evident since a different approach is needed with different ages.

While the lower limit is, generally speaking,

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1. Cf. Ante, p.3.
2. Cf. Ante, p.3
3. Constitution, *op.cit.*, p.440.
4. Cf. Ante, P.68.

placed at twelve years,¹ the child should not be made to feel that as soon as he reaches that age he should join the church, for membership should be a voluntary thing. Nor should young people join because their special friends are doing it, or because it is "the thing to do", for church membership should come only after the individual has a true understanding of the meaning of the step coupled with the sincere desire to take it. "The candidate", says Porter, "should know so surely that he has made up his own mind that he can never doubt that fact as long as he lives."² Porter also suggests three ways in which one may determine whether a candidate has really made up his own mind:

1. By not encouraging children to come into the Church at too young an age . . . (i.e. under twelve)
2. By bringing the matter to their attention well before a decision is necessary, thus allowing mention of it from time to time over a considerable period.
3. By consulting with the parents."³

Obviously a smaller group is more advantageous than a larger one, for it makes for more individual attention. Caughey suggests the separation of the boys from the girls.⁴ Separation would make for greater freedom on the part of the leader as well as on the part of the pupils. Moreover, early adolescents will express their intimate

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1. Cf. Chart I, p.78.
2. Porter, E., Being a Church Member, p.16.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. Caughey, op.cit., p.4.
Op.cit., Chart I, p.78.

religious ideas more freely in the absence of the opposite sex.

Concerning the time and place of holding the communicants' class there is no universal arrangement advocated; it must be made to suit the particular group in the particular community. The suggestion is that usually a week-day is to be preferred.¹ The purpose for this would seem to be three-fold: first, that the pupils might not be burdened with too many sessions on Sunday; or second, that they might not have to miss the regular Sunday School session; and third, that the Christian life might be made a part of regular everyday activity. Mr. Lukens prefers a Friday afternoon immediately after school, for "to let them go home first would be to lose many, for "an errand for mother" and the necessity of making a fresh start after having once returned from school would be just enough to hold back a considerable number."² Of the manuals under consideration, those which mention the time of meeting speak of it as a weekly session. Only two mention the length of each session; a half hour would seem to be rather too short a time, but certainly the session should not last over an hour.

The season for holding the communicants' class is specifically before some communion service, usually for

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1. Cf. Chart. 1, p. 78.

2. Lukens, op. cit., p. 84.

from six to ten weeks. The advisability of this is evident, since the classes are for individuals who are coming into full communion in the church. The Lenten season is advocated by Lukens in the following statement:

"The early spring seems to be a time of remarkable religious opportunity for those who deal with boys and girls...It is the Lenten season also, and the influence of the Liturgical churches helps to bring religion to their minds. Moreover, the days have considerably lengthened since midwinter, yet outdoor games are not yet in their full attractiveness. It is, therefore, generally the best season to secure the afternoon attendance of children at such a class." 1

The Lenten season has also been connected with joining the church in the customs of past centuries. The catechumens of the Early Church were baptized on the night before Easter and joined the congregation either on Easter Sunday or on the Sunday following.² Thus, individuals are brought into the church at the time of the celebration of its birth.

By glancing at the chart it is seen that the usual number of sessions for the class is from six to eight. There was a recent recommendation to increase the number to a minimum of ten sessions.³ It is an obvious fact that very little can be accomplished in six, or even eight, forty-five minute periods. In the above recommendation it was further stated that some churches would have a fifteen-week period. It is of importance to note in this connection

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1. Lukens, op.cit., p.3.

2. Cf. Ante, p.15.

3. Minutes of the Committee on Confirmation of the Presbytery of New York, Nov.25,1935.

that the manual prepared by Kerr discusses sixteen different topics, following the order given in the "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith". It would seem that possibly the length of the period might depend to some degree upon the group and upon the adequacy and amount of previous instruction in the Sunday School.

C. Evaluation of Current Curricula of Communicants' Classes

If the number of sessions required for the communicants' class depends upon the amount of previous training, so also will the curricula of the class depend upon what has gone before. Nevertheless, the class is intended to be a summing up of what has been learned in the Sunday School as well as to instruct applicants as to their specific relation to the church, and it was with this in mind that the manuals for instruction were prepared.¹ It is altogether fitting, then, to examine the materials here presented. Porter states that "the primary requisite for membership is not the ability to answer catechetical questions, or to give a rationale of prayer, but soberly and humbly, in all sincerity and before the world, to take Christ as their Lord and Savior."² By what means, then,

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1. Cf. Lukens, op.cit., p.8.
Cf. Erdman, Op.Cit., pp.7-9.
Cf. Sadler, op.cit., p.4.
2. Porter, op.cit., p.15.

is training for membership to be carried on? If young people are facing personal commitment to Christ, the Church must face the responsibility of selecting the materials to be presented.¹

By way of answering this question the first thing to be noted is the emphasis laid on the problem of the relation of God and man as indicated in Composite Chart #2 on page 79. It has already been mentioned that there are seventy-six references to this group of subjects, including twenty-one references to the way of salvation and thirty-eight references to the means of grace. Within these groups the subjects of being a Christian, prayer, the Lord's Supper, and baptism are stressed the most. These four subjects contain the answer to two of the main problems which naturally arise in the mind of one who is considering church membership; namely, what does it mean to be a Christian? and how does one maintain the Christian life? Moreover these questions are especially pertinent to the adolescent who is reaching out into the broader experience in religion, for in finding the answer to them he can find the answer to the ever-increasing problems which he must meet. It may be said that in relation to the church, these subjects answer the "what" and the "how" of Christian living.

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1. Cf. 14th Annual Report of Board of Christian Education, p. 20.

The next great problem which arises is the "why" and the "who" of the church. This is found to be answered in the second great emphasis, indicated on the Composite Chart, in the group entitled the Christian's Relation to the Church. Here there are forty-three references in all, of which thirteen have to do with church organization and twenty with church membership. Certainly a church member should be acquainted with these things. He should realize that the church is the instrument for the propagation of Christianity and that its success depends upon its individual members.

In his booklet "When You Join the Church", Dr. McAfee lays his entire emphasis on these two general points, that is, regarding the meaning of Christianity and the Church. About these two, all of the other topics may be built.

The third great question is the "where". Where can one find for himself the necessary information concerning Christianity? From whence may one derive the inspiration for carrying on the duties of a Christian and a church member? The obvious answer is "through revelation". Man must have the revelation of God which is given in his word, the Bible, and in personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. This conclusion is borne out by an inspection of Chart #2. Both of these subjects are mentioned nine times.

To quote from "A Manual of Faith and Life", - "This we do know, that God has manifested himself in Jesus Christ . . . The revelation of God . . . is recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures."¹

It has been noted that these materials are not given as entirely new, but as a summing up of what has gone before. Obviously the whole Sunday School course cannot be taught in a few weeks, but the main emphasis can be made clear so that the applicant can join the church intelligently. For this reason, only those subjects are treated which bear out these main emphases. In summing up these particular topics, it has been said that the following are mentioned seven or more times as single subjects; Christ, being a Christian, prayer, the Lord's Supper, Baptism, the Church, Church membership, Christian living, and the Bible.

D. Evaluation of Current Methods Used in Communicants' Classes

The method used is of great importance in teaching any subject. And the method used depends upon whether it is content or attitudes which the teacher wishes to impart to the pupils. Three methods have been noted in communicant instruction, namely, the socratic, the catechetical, and the text-book recitation. And of these three, no one method seems to stand out as having the preference

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1. Kerr, op.cit., pp.13,19.

over the others. Important as the instruction is, there is a warning which one dare not overlook in regard to the preparation of candidates for church membership. This warning is very aptly stated by Porter as follows:

"Over emphasis on catechetical instruction, or explanation of Christian doctrine, or even discussion of prayer and worship, may lead the candidates to conclude that the essential thing is an understanding of certain truths or an ability to credit and accept these. Church membership then becomes a kind of diploma for learning the catechism or submitting to other theological indoctrination." ¹

Knight also recognizes this when he states, "Factual knowledge is not a completely adequate criterion for judging spiritual development"², but he also goes on to show that pupils should have gleaned at least a few facts from their Sunday School training. Porter's warning does not mean that he does not advocate communicants' classes, for he also says of people joining the church, "Too many are received as religious illiterates and remain so all their lives."³ The warning concerns the emphasis and the method of procedure in the classes.

From the foregoing discussion it is obvious that a purely catechetical method is undesirable, for such puts too great an emphasis on factual knowledge, whereas the desired aim is that the applicants might understand the

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1. Porter, op.cit., p.14
2. Knight, op.cit., p.2.
3. Porter, Ibid.

meaning behind the facts. The text-book method may also be criticised in the same way in that it tends to be a mere presentation of certain facts to be learned. The facts are necessary, of course, but they must be presented in such a way that they will lead to personal commitment on the part of the learner.

The socratic method, on the other hand, would seem the best means of leading the pupils to an understanding of those things which they have known before in only a rather vague way. This method guides their thinking and at the same time draws from them the questions which need answering, and provides opportunity for intelligent supplementation and correction of the things with which they are already familiar.¹ Knight's manual rather than following the ordinary text-book method, combines the inductive and the catechetical methods,² as well as providing supplementary material for reference. The "catechetical" questions are presented without the answers but with reference to places where the answers may be found; then in the class discussion, instead of keeping close to the text, questions are considered which may have suggested themselves to the pupils. This method includes not only the facts, but is adapted to leading up to the desired personal

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1. Cf. Lukens, op.cit., p.10.
2. Cf. Knight, op.cit., p.3.

commitment, and also to the discovering of those individuals who are not yet ready for that commitment. Thus the aim of the class is more perfectly fulfilled

There are certain other items which enter into the method of procedure which have not been discussed previously. For example, two of the authors¹ suggest the giving of written examinations at the end of the course, for the purpose of helping the pupils rather than to grade their knowledge. Furthermore, four of the manuals² suggest that memorization of Scripture and hymns would be profitable. This is desirable if it is presented not as a requirement, nor as an embarrassing task, but as a profitable exercise which would aid in a clearer understanding of the lessons and which would be of use in later life. But Lukens, on the other hand, states that he does not wish to have in the class the appearance or suggestion of school work, for that might discourage some young people from coming. He is "after the soul through the mind".³ This again shows the relation of the method to the aim.

The method used will of course vary with different situations. For example, Dr. Caughey says "For some

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1. Miller, op.cit., p.8.
2. Knight, op.cit., p.4.
2. Erdman, op.cit., p.11.
- Knight, op.cit., p.1.
- Sadler, op.cit., p.3.
- Miller, op.cit., p.7.
3. Lukens, op.cit., p.10.

classes it may be necessary to make the questions more simple." ¹ Dr. Miller states, "It is taken for granted that each teacher . . . will alter wherever improvement may be made." ² And Dr. Erdman, in his manual, says, "The method of conducting the preparatory classes is left to the discretion of the leader, and will obviously vary in different cases." ³

Examination by the session is necessary before an individual is accepted as a member in full standing in the Presbyterian Church. Such an examination is indicated in these manuals as the logical conclusion to the communicants' class, though of course this depends upon whether the individual pupil is really desirous of "joining the church". The final decision of acceptance or rejection, rests in the hands of the session.

E. Summary

An attempt has been made in this chapter to discover the strong and the weak points of the organization, curricula, and methods used in communicants' classes today. This evaluation was made in the light of the purpose of the communicants' classes, the frequency of the repetition of certain items as presented by ten representative manuals, and supporting statements made by the authors of

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1. Caughey, op.cit., p.4.
2. Miller, op.cit., p.6.
3. Erdman, op.cit., p.10.

these manuals. It was found that to a great extent, the procedure of individual classes is dependant upon attendant circumstances. Concerning the leader of the group, the consensus of opinion is that he should be the pastor of the church, for the pupils comprise his future congregation. There is a difference in the names suggested by the different pastors, depending mainly upon the emphasis put forward as the chief aim; if preparing for the Communion is the chief aim, the name given is properly "Communicants' Class"; if the emphasis is on the taking of the vows, then the term "Confirmation Class" may be used; or the term "Instruction Class" may be employed to avoid either of these emphases. There is general agreement that the pupils should usually be adolescents, since this is considered the "age of discretion" and since children need to be under the care of the church. But it is also deemed advisable to conduct similar classes for adults. The church is the desirable place for the conduction of these classes, and because of the connection with church history the pre-Easter season is preferable. The particular time depends upon the individual circumstances. And a greater number of sessions is more profitable.

Concerning the curricula, those subjects are considered most important which have a direct bearing upon man's relation to God and the Church. These as well as

other subjects are treated as a summing up and clarification of what has been learned in the Sunday School. This is an important emphasis, since it is evident that the whole of this information could not be treated in a six to ten week session.

Again, the methods pursued vary according to the desired outcome in the life of the individual. If knowledge of facts is the desired end, the catechetical or text-book methods ~~may~~ be employed. If an attitude is desired, the inductive method is best. Considering that both of these aims are desirable, Mr. Knight presents an interesting combination of the catechetical and the inductive methods. Furthermore, these aims, and consequently the methods, will vary according to the circumstances. Thus, with a group of applicants who are definitely consecrated to Christ, knowledge of facts may be all that is required; whereas with a group that already has the knowledge, personal consecration will be the desired aim.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

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The purpose of this thesis has been to discover the place of the communicants' class in the Christian education of youth in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Communicants' classes were defined as those classes which are conducted for the purpose of preparing applicants for membership in the church.

In order the better to understand the purpose of the classes, the history of communicant education was studied. It was found that communicant education first took the form of the catechumenate which was conducted for the purpose of training adults who came directly from heathenism desiring to become Christians and to join through baptism the fellowship and worship of the Early Church. At that time no one was allowed to witness the church service who had not had at least some instruction concerning the Christian religion and who did not give evidence of a true change of heart. With the increase in the practice of infant baptism, the catechumenate began to decline and the rite of confirmation came into practice as distinct from baptism. Child training was relegated to the home. Through the following centuries definite and adequate training was more and more neglected, though Charlemagne attempted to establish schools

for the training of boys. At the time of the Reformation catechetics again became prevalent. Luther is said to be the father of modern catechetics, because of the catechisms which he prepared and because of his insistence that they be taught to children. Calvin, the founder of Presbyterianism, also prepared catechisms to be used in the training of children. At this time a modified form of the Roman rite of confirmation was adopted by the Protestants, this being at first more readily accepted among the Calvinists than among the Lutherans. From the Reformation on, the emphasis has been upon child training in preparation for their membership and future usefulness in the church. This has been an emphasis in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America since its founding in 1788. In the nineteenth century Sunday school training as well as home training became prevalent, but it is only since the beginning of the present century that there has arisen the demand for a special instruction class for children who are about to be taken into full membership in the church. Within this time the custom of conducting communicants' classes has become widespread. It was seen that this custom is an outgrowth of the provision in the Presbyterian constitution which reads,

"Children, born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in baptism, . . . when they come to years of discretion, . . . ought to be informed it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's Supper."

Adolescence is generally considered the age of discretion. It was found that at this age the young person is peculiarly in need of the foundation, the fellowship, and the challenge to a definite personal conviction which the Christian church offers; and that the communicants' class can be a definite aid to him in taking this public stand which is so important in determining his life choice and aims, and which helps to settle him emotionally. Furthermore it was seen that the church needs youth in that she needs the characteristics which youth can impart to her; that she needs enthusiasm, sensitivity, trust in God, and growth; and that if youth and the church must be brought together, the youth must be instructed as to their position and responsibility, and the requirements which the church demands. Herein was found to be the importance of the communicants' class. In addition to giving the desirable factual knowledge, it should be a summing up of the work which the Sunday school has given, and a means of leading individuals to Christ if such a commitment has not already been made. Furthermore it was seen that the class should be a means of bringing the pastor into the desirable fellowship with and understanding of his growing congregation; it should enable him to discover those who are really ready for full membership in the church and to suggest to the others that they wait a little while longer before taking the step. All too frequently young people are received into the church who because of a superficial knowledge or training or a lack

of personal conviction are not ready to take this step.

In the Early Church instruction was deemed so important that it must necessarily precede baptism and participation in worship. It is true that this was chiefly because those seeking admission were adults who were entirely unacquainted with Christianity. Yet today, such instruction is also necessary because children and adults need to be shown the true meaning of the Christian life and the Christian church in a day when these things are being taken too much for granted. That this need is being realized is indicated by the increasing demand for such classes. This increase in demand also shows that the results obtained are satisfactory. Dr. Erdman has been quoted as saying, "The busiest pastor will feel fully repaid by the results achieved."

Since, then, it was seen that there is a definite need for communicants' classes in the church, there followed an examination into what is being done in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. For this purpose, ten representative manuals recommended for communicants' classes were analyzed as to their organization, curricula, and methods. This survey and evaluation was made by means of two analysis charts constructed for the purpose. It was found that in order to keep the church pure the aim of the class should be two-fold: first, that it be for instruction in church membership, considering

that this depends upon a personal experience with Christ; and second, that it be for instruction in church membership, considering that this necessitates a knowledge of the duties of church members and of the continuance of the Christian life. This prepared individuals for the Communion and leads up to the personal confession of faith in confirmation of the baptismal vows. The name given to the class will depend upon the main emphasis, whether it be confirmation, the Communion, or instruction. In the discussion it was found that the classes are conducted usually for six weeks just previous to Easter. This season was seen to be the best time of year for this purpose. Furthermore, the class should meet once a week on a week-day. Here, however, the procedure is optional and dependent upon the particular community in which it is held. Because of the amount of material to be covered, the tendency now is toward continuing the classes for a longer period of time; ten, or even fifteen, weeks was seen to be advisable, for a shorter time leads to inadequate preparation and too hasty decisions.

The pastor is usually the leader of the group, for in this way he is better able to be related to his congregation and to become acquainted with the young people. Occasionally the leader is some other capable teacher, but the pastor is generally unwilling to forego this opportunity. That young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen are the pupils is generally accepted, for as has been indicated before,

this is an age peculiarly susceptible to religious instruction and personal consecration. By this it is not meant to exclude adults, but to suggest that there be also a separate class for adults, which may meet at a different time of the year, for it is evident that adults who are coming into the church for the first time will also need instruction in the things of the church. The group should not be too large, since, in the light of the aim, personal contact is altogether desirable.

It was discovered that the subjects considered the most important are those pertaining to salvation, the Christian life, and the duties of church members. These are directly in accord with the aims of the class; they include a study of Jesus Christ, what it means to be a Christian, prayer, the Lord's Supper, baptism, the church, reasons for joining the church, Christian living, and the Bible. In this consideration the following subjects may be recommended for a ten-week session:

1. God's Righteousness
2. Man's Sin
3. Christ's Work
4. Man's Salvation
5. The Holy Spirit
6. The Christian Life
Prayer, the Bible, Service
7. Purpose and Creeds of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
8. Polity and Government of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
9. Church Membership
Purpose and Meaning, The Sacraments.

There are two sides to every question. It is

therefore only fair to repeat the warning which has been stated before, namely that if communicants' classes are made a matter of course and if church membership is made a matter of being able to answer certain questions rather than to experience these answers, the purpose of the class will be defeated and the church will be kept from impurity no more than before.

The method of presenting these materials has been shown to be all important in producing the desired results. It certainly should not be a mere presentation of facts, therefore a lecture method is not to be considered. The best method has been seen to be that which draws out from the pupil the questions which must be considered. Group discussion is well suited to this. A certain amount of factual material must be presented, but a purely catechetical method is too cold and unstimulating. The method which appears to be the most desirable is that suggested by Reverend Walter D. Knight in his manual "Preparing Young People for Church Membership". This method has been noted to be a combination of the inductive and the catechetical methods. Above all an atmosphere of worship is desirable. Such an atmosphere will be a means of assisting to lead pupils to the desired personal commitment to Christ. Examinations should be given, not as a means of grading, but of assisting the pupils to discover their own progress and to prepare them for the examination before the session,

upon which depends their reception into the church.

In the light of this thesis it is urged that as increased effort be made toward communicant education on the part of those pastors who have been negligent in this matter. It is urged that many investigate the need for definite classes for preparing young people for membership in their own churches; and furthermore that the warning be heeded concerning the making of such classes a mere matter of course; that it be remembered that the purity of the church depends upon its members and their relation to God; and that the example of the Early Church in its care of catechumens be heeded.

In a study of this investigation those pastors will be encouraged who have been faithful in this matter. It will further stimulate them to continue in the good work; it will help them to see the importance of their work; it will stimulate them into seeking means of possible improvement of existing classes; and finally, it will stimulate them to urge upon others the necessity of thus maintaining the purity of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

QUOTATIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Concerning Religious Instruction of the Young

1804. . . "It is the opinion of this Assembly, that where the field of labor is too extensive for the ordinary and regular ministrýs certain assistants, like the helps or catechists of the primitive church, may, under proper restrictions and limitations, be usefully employed in instructing the young in the principles of our holy religion". . . (Minutes of 1789-1820, p.301.)
1809. . . "Resolved, That the different Presbyteries within our bounds are hereby directed to inquire of the different sessions whether a proper pastoral care be exercised over the baptized children in their congregations, that they learn the principles of religion, and walk in newness of life before God, and that said Presbyteries do direct all sessions delinquent in this respect to attend to it carefully and without delay". . . (Minutes of 1789-1820, p.431.)
1830. . . "it . . . hereby is recommended to pastors, sessions, heads of families, superintendents of Sabbath Schools, and all charged with the education of youth in our connection, to give these admirable summaries of Christian truth and duty a prominent place in their instructions, to the youth and children under their care". . . (Minutes of 1821-1837, p.304. This statement refers to the #Catechisms of this Church".)
1835. . . "In consequence of but little being said in the presbyterial narratives in regard to the care and instruction of the baptized children of the Church, the Assembly fears that there is a lamentable deficiency in this respect. Let us, as we value the covenant which makes the promise not only ours but our children's, take a more diligent oversight of these youthful members of our Church. . . (Minutes of 1821-1837, p.37.)

1849 . . .

- a. "The following resolutions on the subject of catechetical instruction were unanimously adopted, viz:
1. Resolved, That this General Assembly considers the practice of catechetical instruction as well adapted to the prosperity and purity of our Zion.
 2. Resolved, That this Assembly view also with deep regret the neglect, on the part of many of our churches, of this good old practice of our fathers - a practice which has been attended with such blessed results to the cause of pure and undefiled religion.
 3. Resolved, That the institution of Sabbath-schools does not exonerate ministers and parents from the duty of teaching the Shorter Catechism to the children of the Church.
 4. Resolved, That this Assembly earnestly and affectionately recommend to all the ministers and ruling elders in its connection to teach diligently the young of their respective congregations the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. . . (p. 181.)

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