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DEVELOPING THE *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM* FOR USE AT
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN

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APPROVAL SHEET

DEVELOPING THE *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM* FOR USE AT
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I dedicate this project to my three children, Eli, Abigail, and Esther, who have worked through many different catechisms with mommy and daddy over the last five years. Your joy for knowing God and applying his truths to various situations is deeply encouraging.

May you always aim to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 rd ed., ed. F. W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , 5 vols., rev. Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994).
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
NAC	New American Commentary
NCC	Redeemer Presbyterian Church, <i>The New City Catechism</i> , The Gospel Coalition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDCC	J. D. Douglas, ed., <i>The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church</i> , (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
NIDNTT	Colin Brown, ed., <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTC	New Testament Commentary
TWOT	R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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PREFACE

The idea for this project was born over a decade ago when my wife and I were expecting our first child. In preparation for parenting, we would visit our good friends' condo for dessert and time with their young family. It was on one of these summer evenings that Jim Ayres spoke to me about his desire to go through a catechism with his boys but felt that to do so he would have to develop one of his own. That left a deeper impression on me than I first realized. As my own children began to grow into and out of the toddler stage, I began to experiment with catechetical instruction. At first, I was overjoyed when Crossway published, the *New City Catechism*, but after using it for over a year in our home and church, I began to notice some obvious shortcomings – especially if I wanted to pass on my distinctly Baptist convictions. At that point, I knew that I wanted to develop my own *New Baptist Catechism*.

But with a busy schedule as a husband, father of three, and pastor, I knew that I would benefit from some extra accountability and motivation to pursue this project with academic excellence. By God's grace, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program was a perfect fit to help me accomplish these goals. With an incredible faculty and classes that deepened my knowledge of systematic theology, the DMin program profoundly enriched the *New Baptist Catechism*. In particular, I am very grateful for all the encouragement and red ink provided by my advisor Dr. Allison, and extra input on the *NBC* by Dr. Paul Held, Dr. Bobby Jamieson, Dr. Tom Nettles, Dr. Chase Sears, Dr. Bruce Ware, Dr. Stephen Wellum, and Pastors Chad Holmgren, Don Magee, Terry McIntosh, and Bobby Unis. These men each contributed much to the final product of the *NBC* with their insightful comments and edits.

I am also very grateful for the only church I have ever served in as a vocational pastor: First Baptist Church of Farmington. Since arriving in Michigan, FBCF has welcomed us with open arms and encouraged me greatly with their zeal for knowing God and serving him with their lives. Those who participated in the project were a particular joy as we studied the *NBC* together and reaped the rewards of meditating on sound doctrine. A great thanks for all who devoted time and hard work to the project. The elders of FBCF, Rick Bogusky, Paul Held, Matt Hilbert, and Tony Nagle, have also been an incredible help, taking responsibilities off my plate so I could devote more time to study and writing, and in supporting the integration of the *NBC* into the ministries of the church.

Lastly, I am forever grateful for my beloved wife. Now fifteen years into marriage, I could not imagine a better wife, mother, and friend. Her imprints are all over this work, not only in her support to free me up to do the research and writing, but in editing multiple drafts, making suggestions as we taught our children the catechism together, and greatly improving my abilities as a communicator.

For all who will study the *NBC*, my prayer is that they might be able to live-out this question: “What is our only hope in life and death? That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Ben Tellinghuisen

Farmington, Michigan

May 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, God has repeatedly demonstrated that he wants humanity to know him. He reveals himself in Word and deed, confronting us with his mighty power and perfect nature — and as he reveals, God expects our hearts to be so overcome with joy, love, and reverential worship that we can't help but tell others about the great God we know and serve. That is at the root of Deuteronomy 6, where God expects the Israelites to teach his words diligently to their children at all times. They are to speak of the Lord and his commands as they sit in the house and walk by the way, as they lie down and rise up, at every point of the day theology should be on their lips. A similar approach to God is found in the New Testament, where our passions ignite once we realize the immensity of God's grace in giving us Jesus. Unfortunately, this informed, impassioned, theologically rich approach to knowing God has been supplanted in many church settings for new methods and events to attract as many people as possible. And so, as a pastor in the early twenty-first century, I feel compelled to call our church to this radical yet expected, passionate pursuit of the knowledge of the Holy One. In years past, churches have seen fit to use various catechisms to instruct in good theology, but in recent years few Protestant churches, and even fewer Baptist churches, have utilized a catechism with any regularity. Therefore, in order to instill a love for God and an enduring passion for gospel ministry, a ministry project that develops a new Baptist catechism for today would prove to be valuable for reigniting a deep-seated zeal for the Lord.

Ministry Context

The ministry project took place in the context of First Baptist Church of Farmington (FBCF) in Farmington, Michigan. Our church has deep roots in the community, having been established in 1826 and rumored to have been a stop for the underground railroad.¹ And yet in spite of these deep roots in the community our church followed the pattern of many Michigan Baptist churches: becoming independent, separatist, and fundamentalist. As many denominations and historic churches embraced liberal theology, FBCF doubled down on the fundamentals of the faith in the early 1900s, staying true to Scriptural authority. But soon, that morphed into an intensely separatist sentiment following many independent Baptist churches and Bible colleges in the 1950s and 60s. Fundamentalism morphed into cultural fundamentalism, staying away from anything that the world embraced: movies, men with long hair, women with pants, and any Bible translation except the KJV were all strictly forbidden. Ecclesiastically, anything that hinted of the historical mainline denominations and worse yet, Catholicism, were feared and scrubbed from traditions. Instead, the church embraced an Anabaptist heritage coupled with 1940s American cultural ideals, while rejecting church covenants, catechisms, and the magisterial reformation traditions. In an effort to separate from wrong theology, FBCF and other independent fundamentalist Baptist churches confused American conservative culture with historic Christianity.²

This was especially detrimental to the use of a catechism. For many fundamentalists, a catechism was a Catholic or Lutheran practice and the idea of memorizing anything but the Bible seemed foreign, dangerous even, like substituting human doctrines for the Word of God. Thirty years ago, in the late 1980s, a mere

¹ I have yet to find a theological history of FBCF, only some simple facts from an outside secular perspective, and a pamphlet produced for our church's 150th anniversary in 1976. We do have members who have been in the church for over eighty years and this historical context is based largely on oral history passed down from our membership and previous pastors.

² For more information on the history of fundamentalism, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991).

suggestion of adopting a catechism would have been dismissed immediately by the congregation and its leadership, but FBCF has slowly morphed, shaking the worst parts of its independent fundamentalist heritage. Beginning in the early 1990s, the young, newly minted pastor began to reject some of the most obvious errors of fundamentalism: like KJV onlyism, rules against going to the movies, prohibitions on pants for women, and facial hair for men. He studied the Word with three like-minded pastors in the area and FBCF slowly but surely began a second reformation. Early on they introduced the NIV as the new translation of choice, eventually settling on the ESV. They restructured the church polity and moved towards having a plurality of elders and a separate deaconate. Musically, newer songs were embraced and styles changed. Theologically, the church shifted from an Arminian, decisionistic approach to soteriology and embraced a more Reformed approach.³ So much good has been done in returning an independent, culturally fundamentalist church back to biblical fundamentals.⁴

I have been serving as the primary teaching elder for six years and have been the blessed recipient of slow, wise and biblical change brought about over the last thirty years by God's grace. But our church still has scars from the past. Whereas so many in

³ I am speaking of Arminian and Calvinistic in the area of soteriology and the implications to theology proper. So, in our churches cultural fundamentalist past we would have assumed, though not expressed, an *ordo salutis* that highlighted an individual's decision to place faith in Jesus as the determining factor prior to conversion and regeneration. Therefore, altar calls, pressing people in evangelism to make a decision, and a popular defense of man's free-will were whole-heartedly embraced. Instead, a more typically reformed *ordo salutis* was adopted that highlighted the sovereignty of God in election, predestination, and regeneration. This led to an elimination of altar calls, a marked difference in the handling of the Scriptures, and an approach to evangelism that affirms the tenants of J.I. Packer's book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012). For an overview of the historical development and differences of these two theological systems as applied to issues of soteriology, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2011), 453-519.

⁴ "Cultural fundamentalism" is what fundamentalism became as it embraced 1950s American culture in an effort to separate from various forms of liberal encroachments. "Biblical fundamentals" are what fundamentalism as a movement originally stood for: the fundamentals of the gospel, the inerrancy of Scriptures, the historicity of the virgin birth, the resurrection, Biblical miracles, and many others core truths. Essays on these topics and many others were published originally by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, over twelve quarterly periodicals. In all there were 90 essays written that came to be known as the Fundamentals and formed the backbone of the burgeoning Fundamentalism movement in 1910. Many of these initial concerns remain the concerns of modern evangelicals. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 118-19.

our church have a good working knowledge of the overarching Biblical storylines, few have a good grasp on how those storylines intersect with theology, and how both biblical and systematic theologies give us a rich picture of the God we serve. Also, subtly, some members of FBCF can be more concerned with right actions than the motives behind those actions, namely, a robust recognition of and worship of the God who reveals himself. Consequently, many in FBCF lack a theological grid on which to attach various biblical teachings, a framework that will in turn deepen their understanding and worship of the God revealed in the Bible. Therefore, FBCF has benefitted tremendously from the regular use of a catechism that systematizes thought, defines terms, and provides the lacking theological framework.

The groundwork for establishing the use of a catechism has been laid in many ways in the recent history of the church. First, the idea of training children at home has been a constant emphasis as our church has grown to include many young families. We provide a recommended book list to be used with children of varying ages at home; we encourage and provide resources for interaction within families based on Sunday School lessons taught and learned; and through personal discipleship, parents within the church regularly encourage one another to fulfill their God-given role of raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Second, I have preached several sermon series designed to give the whole biblical perspective on certain theological topics. Third, I have a regular group of men that pour over systematic theologies together and other elders similarly have discipleship relationships reviewing similar content. Fourth, in recognition of the five hundredth anniversary of the start to the Reformation in 2017, I preached a sixteen-week series on the *Solas* of the Reformation that bolstered our churches appreciation for and embrace of the magisterial reformers and the traditions they established. Lastly, the elders made purposeful strides to include some more traditional elements to the weekly worship service that in years past would have been dismissed as rote or too “liturgical.” Lengthy, systematic readings through books of the

Bible; four prepared prayers, including a significant prayer of confession with an assurance of forgiveness in Christ; a more frequent partaking of the Lord's Supper; and finally, a weekly recitation of the *New City Catechism*.⁵

Our church has openly embraced each change and there has been obvious growth in recognizing and rejecting the hangovers from cultural Baptist fundamentalism. Nonetheless, work still needed to be done to help establish a theological framework. And as good as the *NCC* was for our church, it is not perfectly in line with all of our Baptist convictions. Hence the need to establish the *New Baptist Catechism*.

Furthermore, FBCF has many new believers who have little to no theological framework, are hungry to draw closer to God and yet, before the *NBC*, we lacked a systematic approach to discipleship that was easily replicable. Previously, some were shepherded directly by the pastoral staff, others engaged in discipleship with church members, and still others consumed the ubiquitous resources they found on the internet or television. The *NBC* has helped our church have a more consistent theological grid that unifies our discipleship efforts. Additionally, the boom of younger children at FBCF provides a wonderful ongoing opportunity to help families pass on rich theological truths to their children as they study and use the *NBC*. Studying the same catechism will help continue to break-down the typical age-segregated barriers to fellowship and Lord willing, help connect generations. Regrettably, at times our church has lacked a zeal and equipping for personal evangelism. From empirical evidence, those who have studied the *NBC*, have a clearer picture of who God is, what He has done, what He requires, and how to live the Christian life. Consequently, many members are much more motivated to both share the gospel with unbelievers and equip them to mature in their newfound faith.

⁵ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *The New City Catechism*, The Gospel Coalition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017). This recitation of the *New City Catechism* took place in our church services in the years 2018 and 2019. The *NCC* is a 52-question catechism perfect for reciting over the course of one year.

Finally, our church statement of faith was adopted twenty-five years prior in the earlier years of the transition out of cultural Baptist fundamentalism and has been in need of some refinement for several years. The *NBC* has already proven helpful in discussion among the elders regarding updating this document and in the coming years, Lord willing, we plan to update the statement of faith in stages using the *NBC* as a valuable resource.

Rationale

The ministry context indicates that FBCF has benefitted from the writing and use of the *NBC*. First, because the church has an appreciation for the magisterial reformation traditions and has read a catechism in the service for years, the establishment of the *NBC* was quickly embraced and eagerly adopted into the life and ministries of the church. Many church members have been eager to use the catechism in their home-school curriculum or as part of family devotionals and leadership is keen to incorporate it more into various church ministries. FBCF was well prepared to use and embrace the *NBC*.⁶

⁶ Some may question why create a *New Baptist Catechism* when a several historical catechisms are readily available today. To begin to answer that question it is hard to improve upon Tim Keller as he writes in his introduction to *The New City Catechism Devotional*:

Catechisms were written with at least three purposes. The first was to set forth a comprehensive exposition of the gospel—not only in order to explain clearly what the gospel is, but also to lay out the building blocks on which the gospel is based, such as the biblical doctrines of God, of human nature, of sin, and so forth. The second purpose was to do this exposition in such a way that the heresies, errors, and false beliefs of the time and culture were addressed and counteracted. The third and more pastoral purpose was to form a distinct people, a counterculture that reflected the likeness of Christ not only in individual character but also in the church’s communal life. When looked at together, these three purposes explain why new catechisms must be written. While our exposition of gospel doctrine must be in line with older catechisms that are true to the Word, culture changes, and so do the errors, temptations, and challenges to the unchanging gospel that people must be equipped to face and answer. (Tim Keller, *The New City Catechism Devotional*, ed. Collin Hansen (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 6)

I must add to Keller that historically Protestants have created multiple catechisms in successive generations ranging from Luther to *Westminster* to multiple nineteenth-century American Baptists. See excellent summaries of Baptist catechisms in Thomas J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017); and for both a broad history and popular defense of catechisms in reformed traditions, see J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).

Further, existing catechisms, especially shorter catechisms for use with children, do not tend to flesh out all the areas of systematic theology. Instead, they tend to major on the doctrines of grace

Second, because many in our church lacked a rich theological framework for both living the Christian life and rightly interpreting the Scripture, the *NBC* has begun to meet that need. A memorized and understood catechism helps congregants in their daily walk with God to better interpret and apply the truths they read in Scripture. Further, this framework will continue to help many grow in the art of theological discernment, as heterodoxy, heresy, and biblical Christianity are routinely integrated and readily available in many media forms. Personal discernment aided by the framework of a catechism is instrumental in sorting through the material bombarding the interested Christian.

Third, even though a noticeable zeal for the Lord, evangelism, and discipleship are lacking among some in the congregation, those who have studied the *NBC* are beginning to see fruit in these important Christian disciplines. The abiding and systematic knowledge of God learned through the *NBC* acts as a self-perpetuating cycle of growth in the Christian's life. The more Christians are confronted with the great reality of who God is, what he has done, and what he requires, the more they long to draw near to and follow the Lord. This zeal is infectious and easy to pass along as the accessibility of a catechism continues to be used to help train others.

Lastly, since the elders desire to revise the church statement of faith the *NBC* will be a helpful aid in that process. As we implement the *NBC* across various ministries in the church, revising the statement of faith to include language from the *NBC* will be straightforward and easy for the congregation to embrace. This project has such great potential to effect generational and lasting change in both the ministries and personal lives of those at FBCF. The *NBC*, so much as it reflects biblical truth, will be used as a guide to keep FBCF pursuing God's priorities in the midst of the clamor that comes out

or salvation, so the *NBC* addresses both the cultural moment and retools this current generation to have a more robust theological framework, having questions and answers to cover all major points of theology.

Others might object to the use of the *NBC*, arguing that it divorces the church from its rich heritage, which includes many excellent catechisms. To this I simply say that historic catechisms have been used to undergird the formulation of questions and answers in the *NBC*, while it also addresses the current theological moment and shortcomings of older catechisms.

of various Christian publishers and ministries that vie for the church's allegiance, attention, and ministerial focus. Therefore, the project has been and will continue to be helpful for FBCF.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop the *New Baptist Catechism* to be used in FBCF services and homes.⁷ It will continue to be a vital tool for varied stages of Christian discipleship so that members of the church can have a better theological framework for understanding and applying the Word of God and increase in zeal for the knowledge of God.

Goals

Several necessary goals were needed to complete this ministry project. These goals reflect a progression of steps taken in order to develop the *NBC* for use at FBCF and they aimed not only to develop the catechism but to ascertain the effect of the catechism on different demographics within the congregation and to help clarify the practical and ongoing effects of a catechism.

1. The first goal was to develop the *New Baptist Catechism* for use in a variety of venues at FBCF.
2. The second goal was to assess the current knowledge of systematic theology and the application of a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics within a select group of children, teens, and adults from FBCF (FBCF test subjects).
3. The third goal was to increase knowledge of systematic theology and confidence in applying a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics through the study of the *Catechism* among the FBCF test subjects.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a ministry plan to integrate the use of the *Catechism* into various ministries of FBCF, by encouraging the memorization, knowledge, and application of the *NBC* to Bible study and situational apologetics.

⁷ See appendix 1 for the *New Baptist Catechism*.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to develop the *New Baptist Catechism* for use in a variety of venues at FBCF. Seeing that the *NBC* is a significant tool for various stages of discipleship and will be helpful in updating the current statement of faith, it highlights what we teach in all major areas of systematic theology.⁸ The *NBC* was evaluated by an expert panel⁹ who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, and clarity of the catechism.¹⁰ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The second goal was to assess the current knowledge of systematic theology and the application of a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics within a select group of children, teens, and adults from FBCF.¹¹ This assessment provided a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation's knowledge and application of theological truths to Bible study and situational apologetics. This goal was measured by administering the Theological Knowledge and Application Survey (TKAS) to select groups of four to seven children, teens, and adults.¹² The goal was considered successfully met when this group took the TKAS showing a clear picture of their understanding and implementing of theological truths to Bible study and situational apologetics.

The third goal was to increase knowledge of systematic theology and confidence in applying a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics

⁸ More about the composition of the *NBC* is detailed in chapter 4.

⁹ All FBCF pastor-elders, four to six pastors from neighboring churches, and one to two seminary professors.

¹⁰ See appendix 2.

¹¹ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹² I define a child as between the ages of 7 and 13, a teen between the ages of 14 and 20, and an adult from age 21 up. I aimed to have at least four from each of these three categories participate in the project. See appendix 3 for the TKAS.

through the study of the *Catechism* among the FBCF test subjects. The test subjects should be better able to interpret and apply the Word of God in a faithful and consistent manner understanding how each passage fits into the larger theological framework established by the *Catechism*. This goal was measured after eight months of reviewing and studying the *Catechism* by administering the same TKAS to the FBCF test subjects and comparing the results using a t-test. This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-TKAS.

The final goal was to develop a ministry plan to integrate the use of the *Catechism* into various ministries of FBCF, by encouraging the memorization, knowledge, and application of the *NBC* to Bible study and situational apologetics. This goal was measured by the FBCF elders who utilized a rubric to evaluate the functionality of the plan, communication processes, and action steps.¹³ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Catechism. Catechism comes from the Greek word *κατηχέω*, meaning “to teach, or to instruct,”¹⁴ and the English comes to us by way of the Latin retaining the same basic emphasis.¹⁵ So a catechism is a set of theological convictions outlined in question and answer format, designed to teach fundamental Biblical doctrine.¹⁶ Despite a

¹³ See appendix 4.

¹⁴ Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., ed. F. W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 534.

¹⁵ Colin O. Buchanan, “Catechisms,” in *NIDCC*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), Accordance Bible Software 13.1.

¹⁶ Catechisms have been employed to teach a wide variety of content, ranging from the basic gospel to more robust theological truths.

rich history of responsive material used with children and new converts in the Christian church, it was not until the Reformation, specifically Martin Luther's *Kleiner Katechismus* (1529), that the catechism was consistently used in this manner.¹⁷

Situational apologetics. Traditionally the discipline of apologetics is aimed at convincing unbelievers of the veracity of the Christian faith.¹⁸ However, I plan to use the term in a less traditional manner focusing instead on how Christians can be convinced of the veracity of the Christian life. So situational apologetics provide a defense for the truthfulness of theological convictions and the application of those convictions into the various situations of the Christian life. For example, once a Christian understands the importance of the local church, they should be able to situationally defend why reading the Bible as a family and watching a church service on television is incompatible with living as a faithful Christian.

Theological framework. A theological framework is a way of thinking about God and the world he created that is coherent, systematized, and rooted in God's revealed Word. In other words, a theological framework is produced when one understands and applies systematic theology. In summarizing Calvin's contribution to the development of biblical interpretation Allison writes, "he pointed to a proper theological framework, provided by his own *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. After many centuries of Roman Catholic error, Christians needed a new theological structure so they could understand Scripture correctly."¹⁹ A theological framework then, is vital for Biblical interpretation and one's framework is built up by the study of systematic theology or sound doctrine.

¹⁷ Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 4-9, 20-23. The success of his catechism was due in large part to having little Hans as he wrote his first catechism and therefore being the first theologian in a 1,000 years to watch his own child grow up. Luther understood children better than his predecessors.

¹⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2000), 22.

¹⁹ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 175.

But a theological framework not only informs the Christian's interpretation of Scripture it should guide and direct all of life, or as stated above, improve situational apologetics.

One limitation was applied to the project. The effectiveness of the third goal to increase knowledge and confidence in applying a theological framework was dependent upon the FBCF test subjects to engage in the study of the *Catechism*. I mitigated this limitation in three ways: first, by selecting church members who agreed from the outset to follow through on the memorization and group discussions; second, by providing accountability on progress; and third, by organizing multiple venues for group discussions, so that all participants were able to interact with the material in a small group setting.²⁰

Three delimitation were placed on the project. First, only FBCF members or children of FBCF members could participate in the project. Second, due to the intensive and personal nature of the interaction between FBCF test subjects, the material, and myself, I capped the number of participants at twenty-five. It is to these twenty-five test subjects that I gave the pre- and post-TKAS. Third, the project was confined to an eight-month timeframe, which gave adequate time for memorization, group discussions, and taking the post-TKAS.

Conclusion

Catechesis is an unfortunate omission in the modern history of the church. As theological liberalism and pragmatism would take root in the nineteenth century catechism use would slowly fade.²¹ However, with a resurging interest in church history, reformed theology, orthodox creeds, and confessions, more and more churches have

²⁰ See appendix 5 for a letter explaining expectations.

²¹ More on why and how catechisms faded from use in chapter 3.

begun to implement, to some degree, the use of a catechism.²² I believe FBCF will continue to benefit greatly from the implementation of the *New Baptist Catechism*. This catechism has rooted our church both in our Protestant and Baptist heritages and provides an enriched theological framework that will help us know, follow, and worship better the great God who wants to be known, followed, and worshipped.

²² For example, the development and implementation of the *NCC*, published in 2017. In Baptist circles the managing editor of *The Gospel Project*, Brian Dembowczyk, published a catechism in 2018 called *Cornerstones*. Brian Dembowczyk, *Cornerstones Parent Guide, 200 Questions and Answers to Teach Truth* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018).

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A CATECHISM

Whenever I mention developing and using a catechism to mainstream evangelicals from other churches, I often get an odd look and a follow up question, “Isn’t that a Catholic thing?” But far from being foisted upon Christians by the Pope, the use and development of a catechism is profoundly Protestant and — more importantly — Biblical. The Bible teaches that all Christians must possess a rich theological framework so they can better fear, love, and worship God, and further, protect the theological integrity of the church. Having core theological truths committed to memory is indispensable to these tasks. So Protestants throughout the centuries have sought to faithfully train children and adults in the basics of the Christian faith through catechisms. Today, there is a growing movement to re-introduce this current generation to the faithful use of a catechism in the body-life of the church.¹ But interest in catechism use will only gain traction among those who have been awakened to the church’s great biblical responsibility of affirming, teaching, and protecting sound doctrine.

The Need for Sound Doctrine

Almost one-hundred years ago J. Gresham Machen wrote a chapter in a book dismantling the typical claim of liberal theologians of his day: “Christianity is a life, not a

¹ Thomas J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017), 9-36; J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), 21-50. Note the recent publications of *New City Catechism*, and *Cornerstones*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NCC, *The Gospel Coalition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017); Brian Dembowczyk, *Cornerstones Parent Guide, 200 Questions and Answers to Teach Truth* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018).

doctrine.”² He argued very clearly from Scriptures that Christianity is only influential in someone’s life because it is both true and built upon sound doctrine. Without sound doctrine derived from the Word of God there are no guard rails for morality, there are no lanes to stay in while reading and interpreting the Bible, and there is no accurate framework to think about for all of life. Everyone has a theology, everyone has a worldview, but Christianity is designed to be a worldview based on Biblically derived sound doctrine. For generations now sound doctrine has been minimized, so much so that evangelicals are as apt as liberal Christians to say, “Christianity is all about a relationship not a religion,” or “Doctrine divides,” or “We want good deeds not good creeds.” When sound doctrine is minimized, catechism use fades. That which used to be very Protestant — very Baptist — now seems a little more foreign to the church today. The remedy: rediscover that the whole church is to affirm, cherish, and defend sound doctrine.

Paul instructed Titus to make sure that every elder

must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9)

The goal of holding firm to the authority of Scriptures isn’t only to teach the Bible but to teach the Bible through the grid of “sound doctrine.” And this sound doctrine is designed, not just for the pastors to learn, but is the very idea pastors are to teach the whole church. To clarify what is meant by “sound doctrine,” first consider that διδασκαλία, meaning teaching or doctrine, emphasizes not just any teaching but teaching that is orthodox and reflects the whole of the Scripture’s understanding on a given topic.³ That is why Paul qualified the doctrine to be taught as “sound” or healthy, free from error; it is orthodox

², J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 17. The chapter is entitled, “Doctrine,” 15-46.

³ Klaus Wegenast, “διδασκαλία,” in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown, 3: 768-771 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 770. “Sound doctrine” as a summary or systematized set of doctrinal truths is most clearly developed in the pastoral epistles.

doctrine having been delivered to the saints through the Words of Scriptures.⁴ The fact that ὑγιαίνω (translated “sound”), elsewhere has a more literal meaning of physically healthy gives a beautiful picture of doctrine that is both truthful and nourishing. The one who imbibes such “sound doctrine” will reap its benefits: “It begets health by transmitting truth and a correct view of reality.”⁵ Catechisms were simply how the church chose to help communicate sound doctrine and thus when pastors reengage in their call to instruct the church in sound doctrine the concept of catechism use will seem a little less foreign.

Paul also issued a warning to Timothy that when sound doctrine is neglected the church grows sick and malnourished:

³For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine; but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. (2 Tim 4:3)⁶

Sound doctrine derived from the Word of God inoculates the church from their fleeting passions, their own desires, which threaten to sow discord and death. But Paul also makes clear to Timothy that sound doctrine is not a set of obscure statements for the initiated to contemplate as they grow disconnected from everyday life. Instead, sound doctrine nourishes the soul and promotes godly living. Paul repeatedly made the connection from his faithful life to his sound doctrine, writing to Timothy while in prison:

¹³Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 1:13)

⁴ Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., ed. F. W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1023.

⁵ John A. Kitchen, *The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2009), 499.

⁶ Christian Standard Bible (CSB). The ESV does not translate the same Greek words used in Titus 1:9 as “sound doctrine,” but rather “sound teaching.” The CSB captures the parallel words and consequences clearly.

In 1 Timothy 6, not only did Paul write about “sound teaching that accords with godliness,” he also warned that “different doctrines” fuel all sorts of godlessness.

³If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. (1 Tim 6:3-5)

False doctrines produce pride and all sorts of wicked fruit, whereas sound doctrine yields that which is honoring to God. That is why in the quintessential passage on intergenerational discipleship in the New Testament, Paul prefaced a whole series of commands to help one another pursue godly living with a primary and unifying framework for them all:

¹But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1)

The pursuit, knowledge, and protection of sound doctrine is essential to how God calls every Christian to live the Christian life. One might say, “Good creeds are for good deeds.” The backbone for why the Scriptures support the use of a well-crafted catechism is simply that catechisms are excellent tools to communicate, learn, and study sound doctrine. Since reciting catechisms in the services of FBCF, several examples could be cited of God using the *NBC* to protect and help, strengthen and encourage church members’ faith, long after leaving the service. One such example occurred the week after we recited catechism question 104, “Can we separate repentance and saving faith? No, repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of God’s grace because saving faith is always a repentant faith. We cannot truly believe without turning from sin and we cannot truly turn from sin without believing (Mark 1:15; Luke 9:23).” A few days after reciting this at church, a church member told me that a friend told him that he had believed in Jesus when he was young, but still wasn’t ready to give up living his sinful lifestyle. The friend was a drunkard and enjoyed multiple sexual partners, all while he said he loved Jesus too. The church member quickly pulled out the catechism statement

and verses still folded in his Bible and helped him see the truth of God's sound doctrine on repentance and faith. Several other such examples show both that sound doctrine is essential to godly living and that catechisms are an excellent tool to teach that doctrine.

But the importance of learning sound doctrine is a thread that can be traced throughout the Bible with important implications for both why and how the church should pursue catechesis. Upon considering the Scriptures, the foundation of all sound doctrine must be to know and consequently fear God. A close second is the necessity to love God which in turn will help realize the great benefit of sound doctrine, discernment. In order to highlight these truths, I will focus on three main passages in the remainder of this chapter: Proverbs 9:6-10 (cf.4:20-23), Deuteronomy 6:1-9, and 1 Timothy 4:1-11. Proverbs sets the foundation for learning a catechism as knowing and fearing God, Deuteronomy adds the element of loving God, and 1 Timothy 4 highlights the need for Christian discernment with calls to defend the faith and flee from error. Each passage continues to provide a Scriptural rationale for the composition and use of the *NBC*.

The Foundation of Sound Doctrine – Fear God

Proverbs is abundantly clear: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7; 9:10). But without knowing God and having a framework for his commands, laws, and wisdom it is impossible to fear, worship, and even honor God with one's life. To establish a framework for understanding God and his ways is paramount because it is entirely too common to fear an imagined god and not fear the one true and living God. In twenty-first-century America most want a god who is there for them when they want him, loves them unconditionally, and simply winks at their indiscretions. This false god is nothing more than an idol made up in the minds of the unregenerate and tragically perpetuated and peddled in some popular pulpits. Genuine fear of this god is impossible. Knowledge of him comes from within, not the revealed Word. Instead, Christians must turn to God's Word where they discover the beginning of wisdom has

always been knowing and fearing God. The fool in Proverbs refuses to learn and fear God, whereas the wise son, is constantly learning, and building upon his sure foundation — the fear of God.

Proverbs 1-9 is written to instruct a young man in the way he should go, by helping him “to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight...” (Prov 1:2), to grasp who God is and what it looks like to fear him (Prov 1:7). This falls on parents to instruct and spiritual fathers to help younger believers grasp and apply the wisdom that comes from God.⁷ Repeatedly Solomon calls his son to learn, memorize, and apply the knowledge and fear of God to all of life while at the same time warning him of the terrible consequences of neglecting his wisdom. To walk on the path of wisdom and fear of God, his son must first make sure he is off the ways of the simple.

*Leave your simple ways, and live,
And walk in the way of insight. (Prov 9:6)*

Another word for the simple is the gullible, the one who is easily convinced by every passing trend and popular sentiment. The starting point of growing in sound doctrine is to recognize folly as folly and aim for the commendation of God, not self. To let God be the arbiter of truth, not what seems reasonable to the world. American founding father Thomas Jefferson was one of history’s most notable skeptics. He famously cut the miracles out of the gospel accounts, leaving only the sayings of Jesus that he considered pertinent to the day. He was also a vocal critic of the doctrine of the Trinity which he attributed to a deformed myth. He blamed theologians for its development writing to a friend in February 1821, “The religion-builders have so distorted and deformed the doctrines of Jesus, so muffled them in mysticisms, fancies and falsehoods... as to shock reasonable thinkers.” He was almost giddy, “with great pleasure

⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 12. That parents are to be intimately involved in instructing their children in the wisdom of God, is repeated throughout chapters 1-9. Waltke notes it is the father in particular in Proverbs that must be the protector and purveyor of God’s wisdom.

at the progress of reason (in his day, that would) ... do away with the incomprehensible jargon of the Trinity.”⁸ Not much has changed today as many in the world assume the Bible to be riddled with myths and fanciful ideas. But to fear God must begin with repentance, to leave the simple ways — the Jeffersonian way of thinking — and turn towards trusting that when God speaks in his Word, he does not stutter. No longer can man be judge over what God says but must always be subject to his Creator. So Solomon is clear that the fear of God must begin with leaving the simple ways. Further, if one is serious about leaving the simple ways, he will always be confrontable by God’s truth: willing to conform his life and doctrine to the truths God has revealed.

*⁷Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse,
and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury.*

*⁸Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you;
reprove a wise man, and he will love you.*

*⁹Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;
teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. (Prov 9:7-9)*

In three parallel statements the wicked, scoffing son refuses to learn even causing injury on any who would dare help, whereas the wise son is thrice praised for being confrontable. The scoffer is unconcerned with God and his holy character, instead desires to be the final authority of what is true. Contrasted with the wise son who is interested in learning at the fountain of all wisdom, the fear of God. The fear of God can only be learned by the one who recognizes the simple paths previously traveled, desires to get off, and then is open to ongoing correction. The pursuit of sound doctrine is a whole-life pursuit and at many points Christians must be open to conform their ideas about God to God’s ideas about God. Thus, the fear of God is the beginning and the end of this process. And so Solomon continues in the next verse:

*¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. (Prov 9:10)*

⁸ Thomas Jefferson, “From Thomas Jefferson to Timothy Pickering, 27 February 1821,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-1870>.

So the foundation of all wisdom, of all sound doctrine, and of all catechisms, must be the knowledge and fear of God. For it is only when God is known that men can know themselves. Only when one grasps his sinfulness before a holy God and great dependence upon God for all of life, can he be able to grow, like the wise son of Proverbs 9. Note the parallel in verse 10, for to fear God is to know God, leading one to deduce that any knowledge of God that does not lead to an appropriate reverential fear is not true knowledge. There is a profound sense of awe that parents are to instill in their children when they teach them about the holy God, so they ought to choose their words carefully. Part of what makes a catechism so helpful is that it contains those carefully crafted words that lead to both knowing and fearing God. Proverbs does not promote a flippant exploration of God within a child's own imagination, rather Solomon provided a careful expression of God that is taught and learned, leading the wise son to fear him.

Additionally, part of knowing and fearing God is to internalize those truths. Memorization allows the wise son to hold them deep within his heart.⁹ Proverbs 4:20-23 makes this point explicit.

*²⁰My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.*

*²¹Let them not escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.*

*²²For they are life to those who find them,
healing to their entire body.*

*²³Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life. (Prov 4:20-23)¹⁰*

Committing truths to memory is a powerful tool that God frequently encourages his people to employ (cf. Deut 11:18; Josh 1:8; Psa 37:31; 119:9, 11; Col 3:16). Proverbs 4:21 expands the call to memorize, to “keep them within your heart.”

⁹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 100.

¹⁰ Verse 22 is Longman's translation. Tremper Longman, III, *Proverbs*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 153.

This is not a pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake but an eager and diligent pursuit of God's wisdom that is so carefully learned it remains within, intimately accessible at any moment. And so Solomon encouraged his son to stay "attentive," to "incline 'his' ear," to "let them not escape." (vv.20-21) The effort to walk in God's wisdom includes constant attention and care to lean into God's truths, revisiting the realities learned and memorized in the past, because they have the tendency to flit and flutter out of the heart. The "heart" is that great immaterial, spiritual, moral, and controlling center of every person, and to keep God's words "within your heart" is to memorize, understand, and consistently apply God's wisdom.¹¹ For when the foundational knowledge of God and thus the fear of God takes root within, it produces a life-giving spring that keeps the wise son on the straight and narrow (v.23).

When the righteous man knows the fear of God it is because he respects the holiness of God which in turn directs his ways towards what pleases God. That is how the fear of God becomes the foundation of sound doctrine and thus sound living. Children up through adults ought to have a consistent framework for understanding who God is and what he requires learned and guarded within their heart: so that their paths will remain straight, following and fearing their Creator. A catechism, providing this framework of knowing and fearing God, is an excellent starting point for training up Christians to walk on the narrow path that leads to eternal life.

The Generational Effect of Sound Doctrine – Love for God

There are certainly times in history when generational divides seem to widen. 1960s America as the Baby Boomers came of age, was such a time. Events like Woodstock, the Vietnam War protests, are permanently etched in the minds of Americans. "Love" and "Peace" were trumpeted on banners, emblazoned on clothing, or

¹¹ Waltke, *Proverbs*, 297.

simply painted on bodies, but these intangible realities didn't materialize simply by speaking them loud enough. Far better is God's solution to promote a love that lasts and bring generations together: sound doctrine. In the short epistle of 2 John, the apostle of love speaks of his affection for the elect lady and her children, as a "love in truth." These twin ideas are repeated, indicating the glue of generational affection is truth, or sound doctrine. Thus, to learn sound doctrine is to simultaneously grow in love for God and love for others. For the more one knows God, the easier it is to pursue the highest of all the commands, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

To go sailing is to be transported to a different world. None of the typical sounds interrupt your thoughts, just the rush of the wind flapping the sails and the slap of the water against the hull as it cuts through the open waters. But in sailing every movement is dependent on the wind. That is why three-hundred years ago sailors would dread most of all the dead spots in the ocean where the wind stopped, sometimes for months at a time. Even the strong could die if God didn't bring the wind. Something bigger and stronger than the ship had to fill the sails and push the boat along. Many prefer to think of love, like the wind — uncontrollable. It comes and goes like "a whimsical muse. If the muse strikes us, we're inspired. If not, we're indifferent."¹² But the greatest commandment, first explicitly commanded in Deuteronomy 6:5, is a command to love. To love God does not mean to follow affections wherever they might lead, but instead, steadfastly aim to love God at all times and in all things. In order to love God, one must first know God, fear God, and recognize his love for them. Sound doctrine is the wind that fills the sails of the faithful, helping them learn to love God.

¹² Bobby Jamieson, *Sound Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 64.

Fresh off retelling the Ten Commandments to a new Israelite generation on the cusp of entering the promised land, Moses' command to "love the Lord your God" comes out of a familiar progression. Deuteronomy 6:1-3 clearly works through the precursor commands: know God, fear God, obey God, and receive God's blessing. Just as Proverbs 9 laid the foundation for sound doctrine upon knowing and fearing God, so too did Moses, adding the command to obey God. The consequence for Israelites who know, fear, and obey their God is generational transformation, generational fidelity, even generational unity. God wants his people to live in a culture where every generation has the same goal, every generation wants to glorify and enjoy him.

¹Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deut 6:1-3)

Sound doctrine comes from God's "commandments, statutes, and rules," and helps God's people to know, fear, follow, and love him. The purpose for Moses' instruction was to give God's people a cohesive framework — a consistent way of thinking about God, of knowing God and his love for them — in order to help them catch the wind of God's love in their sails and motivate them to love him in return. As God's people attempt to love and obey God's law, they must be struck by God's holy standard and thus his holy character. And the more they are aware of God's holy standard, fear sets in, as they realize how unholy they are. Thus, their need for God's grace and redemption becomes personally apparent. That's why in communicating sound doctrine, catechisms have traditionally included both the ten commandments and the summary of the law, "love God and love others." The goal is to instruct not only how believers should live but reveal the holy nature of God, the sinful nature of man and thereby cultivate a healthy fear of God; the goal is to root catechumens in sound doctrine. Such sound

doctrine will have a generational effect on the faithful who fear, from “you and your son and your son’s son.” (v.2b) In Deuteronomy 6:1-3, Moses wanted to make sure that the people weaved together God’s character, his perfect requirement, their inability, and God’s gracious provisions in order to give them a thoroughgoing purpose for the commands they were about to receive.

⁴*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* (Deut 6:4)

Fundamental to all relationships is listening. A husband cannot say he loves his wife while ignoring everything she tells him. Children cannot honor and respect their parents without listening to and following their commands. The same is true with God, for the people of God before they can love God, must listen to him. The Hebrew word שָׁמַע has a much wider semantic range than simply “to hear,” and especially in covenant contexts, indicates to listen carefully and act in obedience. Considered negatively, “to hear God without putting into effect the command is not to hear him at all.”¹³ To introduce important doctrines, Moses frequently uses שָׁמַע to essentially say, “Listen up,” “Pay attention,” “This is important, so hear it, know it, learn it, and have it impact your life.”¹⁴ And the sound doctrine that is of utmost importance in verse 4 is the very name and essence of God.

In order to fear and love God, one must know God as he chooses to reveal himself. For he alone is unique and unified.¹⁵ He alone is God and he is one, representing perfect unity and wholeness within his person.¹⁶ Unlike the Canaanite god Baal or the

¹³ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville: Holman Reference, 1994), 162.

¹⁴ For example, in the immediate context it is used in Deut 5:1 and in 6:3.

¹⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 169; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 163. Merrill points out that there is a tension between those who see more of God’s uniqueness or exclusivity and those who see more of his unity or wholeness. Like both of these commentators, I believe that both are in play in this verse.

¹⁶ This of course is not anti-trinitarian but speaks to God’s self-sufficiency within himself; So, for example, in order to experience and express an attribute like love, which has to have a direct object God’s trinity helps us understand how he can be perfectly loving and yet completely self-sufficient.

Egyptian god Amon-Re, who are each said to be first among the gods, Yahweh is unrivaled, the only and exclusive God. And unlike the pagan gods who each have their domain of power, Yahweh is the one authority over all, he is concentrated and unified in his power and perfections. That's part of what made the ten plagues that brought about the Exodus out of Egypt so profound: each plague proved that Yahweh was the one true God with dominion in every land, foreign and friendly, with ultimate control over every element of creation. The generation of Israelites about to enter the promised land, along with every subsequent generation have been reminded to hear, listen, fear, and follow the one true almighty God. The church has been well served to hear these glorious and sound doctrines preserved faithfully, not just in Scriptures, but in catechisms so that an accurate knowledge of God is able to permeate the minds of believers. Just as Prince Emmanuel chose to enter the ear-gate of Mansoul in Bunyan's *Holy War*, so too must sound doctrine be communicated clearly and heard before it can be known and embraced.¹⁷ That is why so many generations of Christians have relied on catechisms to know God better, with their carefully worded questions and answers that teach sound doctrine. For it is only when God is known, when his love for his people experienced, that Christians can live as God intends: to love him with their whole being.

⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (Deut 6:5-6)

Love is not passive, it is not something that just happens to someone, it is an attitude adopted when an individual personally knows the beauty of God's love. "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us" (1 John 4:10). Therefore, Moses only gave the command to love after his commands to listen to, know, and fear God. The believer's love for God is fundamentally responsive to God's prior love. And yet one's love for God is far more than a feeling, it is marked by faithful obedience and continual

¹⁷ John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, updated ed. (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2016), 111.

pursuit of God. Tigay notes that “Hebrew verbs for feelings (like love), can refer as well to actions” that express that feeling.¹⁸ So in Deuteronomy the verb to love does not mean simply an emotional attachment but to “act lovingly,” born out of a reverential fear of God.¹⁹ A call to love then encompasses both the desire to draw near with affection combined with a motivated and diligent pursuit of what God commands.²⁰

This type of love is only possible when there is accurate knowledge of the unique and unified God. Only those who know sound doctrine can pursue God with such a whole-hearted zeal to which Moses called, “to love with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” (Deut 6:5) With the whole man, followers of Yahweh are to pursue loving God. Moses began by noting that faithful love is to come from the “heart,” that is, the volitional part of man — the mind or intellect.²¹ Further, love for God should be with the whole “soul,” the immaterial part of man, and with all “strength,” the physical side. Consequently, all the person, in all possible divisions, is to be committed to pursuing, loving, and obeying God. Many distractions vie for the affections of humanity but God alone is worth loving for all eternity. Benefits abound for those who’ve learned such sound doctrine through a carefully crafted catechism: affections are quickened for God when one knows him and the depth of his love for us. For catechisms are an excellent tool for keeping “these words... on your heart.” (Deut 6:6) Catechisms also aid the believer in having readily available truths about God to help guide conversations with future generations.

¹⁸ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 77.

¹⁹ In the context of Israel being a suzerain of sorts, they are also to “act loyally to him.” Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 77. See also Robert L. Alden, “אהבה,” in *TWOT*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, 1:14-15 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 14.

²⁰ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 77.

²¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 164. Interesting to note that when Jesus quotes this passage in Luke 10:27, he adds the word “mind,” no doubt adding that word simply because it falls within the rich semantic range of the Hebrew word, אהבה.

⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:7-9)

And here is the essence why, for many centuries, the church has employed a catechism in maintaining generational faithfulness. God desires for who he is and what he commands to be orally learned, repeated, and clearly explained in many different settings. The Hebrew word translated “teach them diligently,” *למד*, is rich with implications for catechesis. First, its primary idea is to learn by repetition.²² It is not an idea taught once and hoped to take root. The doctrines God has preserved in his Word are to be poured over again and again, carefully preserved, taught, and learned. As a seminary professor of mine repeatedly told our class, “Repetition is the key to learning, and the key to learning is —” pausing for dramatic effect and waiting for the class to finish the statement. The idea of careful repetition comes directly from the Lord and is built into the language used to encourage us to “diligently teach” the knowledge, fear, and love of God. Therefore, a carefully crafted catechism used to train generations of Christians ought to be repeated frequently in the life of the church. Second, *למד* can also mean to sharpen and even to pierce.²³ When applied metaphorically, “suggests teaching in such a way as to make a deep impression upon the learner,” to make them equipped for any and every situation.²⁴ That’s why a good catechism will not only ground the Christian in the basis of the gospel message but include a base for all theology, all the concepts, truths, and sound doctrines found in the word of God. “How was such deep and

²² Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds. *HALOT*, revised by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 4:1606-07; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78.

²³ *HALOT*, 4:1606.

²⁴ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 34.

impressive teaching to be done? It would need to be intentional, multisensory, and constant.”²⁵ And so Moses instructed the people to that end.

Considering the quartet of occasions when teaching should take place in the rest of verse 7, Moses intended instruction of God’s ways to be constant. It didn’t matter if it was the early morning or late in the evening. It didn’t matter if work was at hand, travel, or pleasure. God’s ways were to be constantly before the men and women of God of every generation. Followers of Yahweh were to anticipate interpreting all of life through the grid of what they knew and believed to be true about God and his will for their lives.

Further as noted by Packer and Parrett, training in the ways of God ought to be multisensory and intentional, seen in the quartet of locations mentioned in verses 8 and 9. “On your hand, and ... as frontlets between your eyes,” that is the forehead, signifies that all a person does with his hands or thinks with his head must be filtered through the commands of God. After all, are not the hands and forehead the most used and visible parts of the body? Similarly, “doorposts” and “gates” affirm an intentional, all encompassing, even multisensory approach to learning. The doorposts were the entrance into a family home and the gates the entrance into the city.²⁶ So as families left and returned through the doors of their family home, they should remember these truths about God. As the community left and returned through the gates of the city, the realities of who God is and what he requires should be ever before the whole community.²⁷ In order to have such a pervasive worldview, the realities that God desires for his people to pass

²⁵ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 34.

²⁶ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 79.

²⁷ I follow Merrill in the interpretation of these commands as representative of what it means to teach God’s ways in all of life. The Jewish commentator Tigay implies that they were meant to be taken literally and draws the connection to Jewish practices carried out today of wrapping a leather pouch with the words contained within on one’s hand and forehead. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167-168; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 78-79.

on to the next generation must be both accurate and readily accessible. For as important as it is to have excellent systematic theologies, carrying a thousand-page tome is impractical. But a learned catechism is a great starting point for the type of questions that permeate all of life that must be answered from a thoroughly Christian worldview.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 reveals God's desire for his people is to know, fear, and love him and that his truths are to be diligently taught, repeated, understood, and applied to all of life. The only way one can hope to have this pervasive, God-centered approach to life is to have his truth internalized. That's why learning a catechism has proven so helpful in times past and is such a vital practice to adopt again into the life of the church. A well-crafted catechism can help clearly define who God is and the essence of sin. It can give a healthy sense of fear for the Creator, while at the same time engendering a devoted love towards him as he always provides a way of escape for sins through a perfect Redeemer. Applying the Christian faith to all of life is also easier with a catechism as it will not only teach Christians to know doctrines and facts but also the right questions to ask. This skill is invaluable in taking truths of God and applying it to every situation. Deuteronomy 6 is an early commendation by God himself, of some of the hallmarks of catechetical learning. But there is yet another benefit of sound doctrine that the Scriptures reveal to be indispensable: discernment.

The Protection of Sound Doctrine – Discernment

Theological error today seems to be as prevalent as ever and Paul's instruction to Timothy is timeless: inoculate the church against all sorts of false teaching by training everyone to know the good doctrines of the faith (1 Tim 4:1-11). What better way to deposit truth in God's people than through robust theological frameworks in the form of a catechism? Though a catechism is not the only application of this text, I believe learning a catechism to be as sure a foundation as any in the training of saints to recognize and flee error — to grow in discernment.

In describing the weakness of this current generation, Albert Mohler describes the American church as “missing the art of evangelical discernment.”²⁸ With evangelicalism enduring generations of watered-down preaching, philosophy of ministries aimed at drawing the biggest crowds, and many Christian ministries highly concerned with offending as few as possible, it is not surprising that discernment is lacking among so many in the pews. Paul, in 1 Timothy 4, notes that not only will discernment be lacking in the pews but many who have departed from the faith will try to lead others astray with all sorts of false teaching.

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ²through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Tim 4:1-3)

Without taking apart the heretical teaching addressed in these verses (Mounce calls it The Ephesian Heresy), it’s sufficient to note that it is centered around a couple of perversions of God’s provisions: the blessings of marriage and the gift of food (v.3).²⁹ What is fascinating about verse 3 is that the church should not have been fooled by such heresy because they “believe and know the truth.” In other words, Christians, even before the closing of the New Testament canon, faithfully followed the words of God revealed to them through Moses and the Prophets in the Old Testament and the Apostles in what they had of the New. One knows the New Testament Scriptures are included in the “truth” mentioned here because it is only in the teaching of the Apostles that the church is taught that all foods are called clean (Acts 10:9-33). In fact, all Christians here are described as those who “believe the truth” and “know the truth.” Both πιστοῖς and

²⁸ R. Albert Mohler, “The Shack — The Missing Art of Evangelical Discernment,” *AlbertMohler.com*, March 7, 2017, <https://albertmohler.com/2017/03/06/shack-missing-art-evangelical-discernment/>. This article was first published in 2010 when *The Shack*, was on the New York Times Best seller lists while being marketed as Christian fiction.

²⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), lxxix-lxxxix. Mounce gives a thorough review of the various historical heresies as possible historical backgrounds for 1 Timothy and lands on what he calls, “The Ephesian Heresy.”

ἐπεγνωκόσι are not just two separate components but are intimately combined as a hendiadys to describe the essence of Christians: they “knowingly believe the truth.”³⁰ Knight comments that the present active participle is used here to represent an “abiding awareness believers have of the truth that Paul is emphasizing.” In order to have such abiding awareness the believer must know truth that transforms and know that truth particularly well in order to combat false teachings. Therefore, there must be some regular way in which Christians are to internalize and learn to apply sound doctrine. That is Paul’s point as he continues to instruct Timothy on how he must prepare the church to grow in discernment and flee error:

6If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. (1 Tim 4:6-7a)

Putting truth “before the brothers” includes in the context, the public reading of Scriptures and the preaching of Scriptures (v.13). But it is important to note that it isn’t just the words of Scriptures that are placed before the church: Paul details Christian training to include “words of the faith” and words “of the good doctrine.” The λόγοις of course includes Scriptures, “the teaching of Jesus and the apostles,”³¹ but likely much more. For it is not just “words of the faith” (often a summary for the basics of the gospel message), but words of “good doctrine” (doctrinal formulations which flow out of the gospel message and Scriptures), to which the apostle refers.³² Hendriksen writes, “The apostle may be thinking of certain summaries of doctrine which, in the form of current reliable sayings and other fixed formulations of truth, could be considered good spiritual

³⁰ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 191. We know this because there is only one article governing the two descriptions τοῖς.

³¹ Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 194.

³² Knight, *Pastoral Epistles*, 194; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 249. Mounce, and Knight aptly note that λόγοις is qualified by two genitives, τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς καλῆς διδασκαλίας.

nourishment.”³³ Some of the most enduring doctrinal statements of truth have been hymns, creeds, and catechetical formulations; enduring because these forms are designed to be memorized and thus permeate the heart in a unique way. Paul is explicit, Scripture alone is the source of authority, but doctrine derived from the Scriptures is profitable, especially for fighting heresy.

It’s fascinating to watch a four-year-old think and process truth, comical at times, but profound at others. I was talking to our daughter when she was four and we had just spent some time ministering to a Muslim community. As the family was returning from the outreach, we talked about what Muslims believe and how they don’t think that Jesus or the Holy Spirit are, in any sense, God. So, I asked her if she thought that was right. She perked right up and said in the words of her catechism, “The Holy Spirit is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son.” It always becomes easier to apply theological knowledge when you have the scaffolding of accurate doctrines built in your mind. That was Paul’s point, as he commanded, “have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths.” Warnings are heeded only by those who know sound doctrine well enough to recognize truth from error. But the theological framework that is so important in defending the faith does not come easily. Paul continues:

Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. (1 Tim 4:7b-10)

Compared to false teaching, which is “vacuous, no better than prattle,”³⁴ the Word of God and the doctrines derived from it are of eternal value (vv.7b-8). Paul makes a natural comparison for the body-centered, fitness culture of ancient Ephesus. With their

³³ William Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 149.

³⁴ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 251.

highly prized athletic achievements, and emphasis on physical fitness, many in twenty-first century America can relate. Scores of people religiously spend time in gyms, small fortunes on workout equipment, and carefully count every caloric intake. But as helpful as physical fitness can be, training in godliness and sound doctrine is far more valuable. What an indictment that many in the church do not pursue sound doctrine with the same zeal as physical fitness.

Considering the great worth of sound doctrine, Paul says Christians are to “toil and strive” after it (v.10). *κοπιῶμεν* has the connotation of working so hard as to grow weary and tired,³⁵ and *ἀγωνιζόμεθα*, to engage in a contest or a fight.³⁶ Growth in godliness does not happen passively but requires full engagement of the mind, body, and soul applied in a fight that has eternal ramifications (cf. Deut 6:5). Also note the profound truth that growth in godliness follows learning the good doctrines (v.7b).³⁷ For just as Solomon taught in Proverbs 4, knowing truth about God is a predecessor to loving God and obeying him; or in other words growth in godliness. Paul also in 1 Timothy 4 taught the necessity to train hard to gird up the mind with sound doctrines so as to grow in godliness, discern error, and defend the faith. So, Paul compelled Timothy:

¹¹Command and teach these things.

Conclusion

Therefore, a catechism is a valuable and Scripturally warranted aide for the whole church. As Paul has made clear to Timothy, not only should elders read and explain the text of Scriptures, but various tools should also be used to implant Scriptural

³⁵ BDAG, 558.

³⁶ BDAG, 17.

³⁷ Also note, 1 Tim 6:3-4, where Paul explicitly connects learning sound doctrine with godliness that flows from sound doctrine.

truths and accurate doctrines within the hearts and minds of every Christian.³⁸ For generations, the church has seen a good catechism as a vital tool to this end. But unlike applying Deuteronomy and even Proverbs to the use of a catechism, 1 Timothy 4 highlights the need for knowing good doctrine explicitly for adults as well as children: because good doctrine internalized inoculates Christians of all ages from the deadly poison of heresy. Further, 1 Timothy 4 implies that a good catechism not only should cover the basics of the gospel but other doctrines as well, such as the church, marriage, and Christian liberties.

Consequently, the *New Baptist Catechism* has been crafted to assist elders in training, not just children, but new converts, and entire congregations in the good doctrines of the faith — a succinct yet systematic scaffolding upon which churches can fortify the faith and defend against all sorts of heresy. But defense is hardly the only benefit of catechesis, for it will also engender a deep and abiding reverence for the Creator (Prov 4:20-27), and a warmth of affection for God as Christians rest in his electing love (Deut 6:1-9). The theological framework of a catechism follows the catechumen into the study informing her times of devotion and private worship; it follows her into the marketplace to understand how a simple job can be done for the glory of God; it follows her into the home where she is able to self-diagnose problems within her marriage and between her children according to clear biblical principles; and it follows her into the pew to inform her worship and grow her devotion for her Lord and Savior. The good doctrines taught in a catechism can have a profound impact on all of life, as Christians realize their “hope is set on the living God, who is the Savior of all” (1 Tim 4:10b).

³⁸ Of course, theologically accurate songs sung regularly as a congregation is a clear Scriptural outworking of this principle. For when we sing as a church, we “teach and admonish one another” (Col 3:16). That is why I believe crafting music to accompany a catechism question and answer has great value, and part of what has made the *New City Catechism* so accessible to the youngest of children.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEMISE OF THE CATECHISM IN BAPTIST CHURCHES

How long did Joshua’s twelve river stones, stacked one atop another in Gilgal, remain a testimony to God’s great power and steadfast love for his people? How long did they stand out as unique amongst the landscape of scattered rock? (cf. Joshua 4:20-24) As generations passed, those stones remained a useful reminder — until they weren’t. Memories gradually faded until after years of neglect, future generations of Israelites could hardly remember that Yahweh once dried up the raging Jordan River let alone proclaim his glories to the nations. It wasn’t immediate, but at some point Israel forgot the significance of the twelve stones piled up in Gilgal.

Baptists’ use of catechisms is a bit like Joshua’s stones. Like all protestants, Baptists enthusiastically and regularly used catechisms.¹ That enthusiasm however, began to wane beginning in the nineteenth century. Though new Baptist catechisms were produced throughout that century, theological trends and educational reforms each gradually led to the demise of catechetical use, especially in Baptist churches. Today, most Baptist churches neglect catechetical instruction seeing it as foreign, its former prominence forgotten.

The catechism has laid dormant for a century amongst mainstream evangelicals and the story of its demise is instructive to consider. Others have traced the history of catechetical instruction from the early church up to today.² Similarly, there are

¹ Baptist also enthusiastically embraced creeds and confessions, and as we’ll see below, the fate of all three — catechisms, creeds, and confessions — was often intertwined.

² O. C. Edwards and John H. Westerhoff, eds., *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1981); Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the*

several excellent catechism compilations that include insightful historical notes.³ Both of these types of sources are invaluable in evaluating the changes in catechetical content but the focus of this chapter will be to construct a theological-historical narrative that both explains why catechetical use thrived and how it faded, particularly in Baptist churches.

The Rise of the Baptist Catechism

The idea of training children and new converts in sound doctrine began as soon as the church began (i.e. 1 Tim 4:1-11). The early church took its charge to assure that the church did not simply grow in breadth, but also in depth, very seriously. The “Way of Life” in the *Didache*, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, and of course the Apostle Paul, each aimed to ensure that Christianity would become a whole worldview not just a loose affiliation of people who admired Jesus. They fought to define orthodoxy and warned against heresy. Therefore, the apostles and the early church taught sound doctrine built upon Scripture and scaffolded with various creeds and confessions in order to guide catechumens — new converts learning the essentials of Christianity — into orthodoxy. As the empire became “Christianized” in the fourth century, catechesis instruction for baptismal candidates became even more essential to ensure genuine conversion and to protect the purity of the church from the rush of “converts” simply desiring to be good citizens.⁴ Catechesis also discouraged the ever-present danger of religious syncretism by

Catechumenate: West and East Syria (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992); Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: Italy, North Africa, and Egypt* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992); Susan D. Gantt, “Catechetical Instruction as an Educational Process for the Teaching of Doctrine to Children in Southern Baptist Churches,” PhD diss (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004); Ian Green, *The Christian’s ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Berard Marthaler, *The Catechism Yesterday & Today: The Evolution of a Genre* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995); William P. McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011); J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).

³ Timothy George and Denise George, eds., *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996); Green, *The Christian’s ABC*; McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*; Thomas J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017).

⁴ McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 5-13. McDonald, also helpfully notes that catechesis in the early church was designed to reflect the personal narrative of conversion and represented a

introducing a new way to think and live, guiding converts towards a whole-hearted devotion to Christ as Lord and Savior. The typical method of catechesis was to learn and explain the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, a basic outline that has endured for millennia as a starting point for catechetical instruction.⁵

Although examples exist of catechesis happening in the early church, it was not until Luther and the Reformation that the catechism became ingrained in society.⁶ In the year 1541, just twelve years after Luther published his Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the practice of catechesis among reformation minded Christians was widespread. Indeed, multiple civil magistrates considered it imperative for the good of society to implement catechetical instruction in their dominion. Consider Elizabeth, Duchess of Brunswick and Lüneburg, who asked rhetorically:

Have we not in the past been shamefully led astray from the Gospel and the truth by human commandments and teaching? What did we know about catechism, that is the moral and religious training of children, before the Gospel reappeared? When did anyone teach us correctly...? Those who would be the heads and regents of the church should long ago have found ways to control such horrible errors and false worship of God. But, alas, no such leadership has been forthcoming, and we poor people go about now as sheep without a shepherd.⁷

“communal experience of hearing, acting, and being acted upon through ritual renunciation and profession. It is characteristically narrative rather than propositional,” 13.

⁵ For example, two of the earliest and enduring Protestant catechisms employed this standard three-fold outline, Luther's Shorter Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism. A whole family of catechisms developed from this tradition, and all start with these three basic components. This idea is developed later in this chapter.

⁶ Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 17; Timothy J. Wengert, *Martin Luther's Catechisms* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 4-9. 1529 is the year Luther's Shorter Catechism was published. McDonald explains that part of what led to the success of Luther's catechism was his question and answer format. Interestingly, however, the first known question and answer catechism came from Ceuta, North Africa in July 1504, written by Bishop Villegas. McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 22.

Even so, there is evidence that the “question and answer method closely followed the Socratic plan that was prevalent in Greek schools. All of the ‘Patristic’ Greek converts were familiar with it, and the well-educated Christians received their secular instruction in this way.” So, although we have no evidence of early Christian catechisms that include questions and answers, it seems likely that the method was employed at some level. Clarence H. Benson, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1943), 41.

⁷ Quoted in Steven E. Ozment, *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 99.

In lieu of such leadership the Duchess declared it her civil duty to initiate religious reform for the good of the people: “It has always belonged to the office of magistrate to maintain God’s Word and true divine services and to protect the common good.”⁸ Thus, Luther’s Catechisms were not only essential to Protestant churches they were also central to developing a Protestant society. Historian Steven Ozment even calls catechism “the big stick” of reformed minded magistrates who intended to instill gospel truth in the citizenry.⁹ So effective was Protestant catechesis that the Catholic counter-reformation took note. As the Jesuits began their ministry to solidify Catholic convictions in Catholic nations a key component was, and continues to be, the use of catechesis.¹⁰ McDonald notes of this reformation period, “while it is commonly thought that the Protestant reformers placed the Bible in the hands of laypeople, it is more accurate to say they were handed catechisms to learn as apt summaries of divine revelation.”¹¹

By the dawn of the seventeenth century, Luther’s model of catechism was firmly entrenched as a key feature of both Protestant and Catholic education from great cities to rural parishes. British pastor John Syme writes from his rural parish in Essex in 1617, “that the question-and-answer form of instruction was ‘without question the most profitable way for the simpler sort of people’ to learn the basics of the faith.”¹² As the Baptist movement began they stepped into this historical milieu of catechism use and

⁸ Ozment, *Protestants*, 99.

⁹ Ozment, *Protestants*, 117.

¹⁰ John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3, 27-28, and throughout. Anyone involved in educating children, wouldn’t be surprised that the early Jesuits discovered that “children enjoyed singing catechetical lines, a practice first known in Spain,” and exported elsewhere by the Jesuits, 121-22.

¹¹ McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 24.

¹² Green, *The Christian’s ABC*, 1.

therefore, “Baptist Catechisms have existed virtually since the appearance of modern-day Baptists in the seventeenth century.”¹³

In order to ally themselves with what they believed to be orthodoxy, seventeenth-century Baptists adopted various confessions and catechisms that closely resembled their Protestant cousins in the magisterial traditions.¹⁴ The earliest confession appeared in 1644: *The London Confession of Faith*, written by Baptists as the Westminster divines assembled to prepare the better known *Westminster Confession of Faith*.¹⁵ *The London Confession of Faith* underwent several revisions until a fairly static form was established in 1689 known as the *Second London Confession* or more simply, *The Baptist Confession of Faith*, which borrowed heavily from *Westminster*. Around this same time Hercules Collins, one of the more influential Baptists of the latter half of the seventeenth century and an original signatory of the 1689 *Baptist Confession of Faith*, published a revised version of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), titled *An Orthodox Catechism* (1680).¹⁶ In spite of appealing to a rich tradition of Protestant orthodoxy, *An Orthodox Catechism* only met moderate success. There is scant evidence of widespread

¹³ Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 17. For a full treatment on the emergence of Baptists from the Puritan-Separatists movement, see B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996).

¹⁴ Michael A. G. Haykin, “Some Historical Roots of Congregationalism,” in *Baptist Foundations*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 38-39. Also of interest, Baptists specifically wanted to avoid the amorphous and sometimes heretical label of anabaptist, and so the pull to align with magistral reformation traditions was very strong.

¹⁵ See William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 2nd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2011). This is a rich resource that traces Baptist confessions through the centuries.

¹⁶ Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and G. Stephen Weaver, Jr. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014). See also, Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 37-112. Nettles includes an excellent summary and explanation of the slight differences between the two catechisms. There are only eleven substantial changes, ten questions added, and one question removed, mostly having to do with baptism. The rest of the minor changes were updating the language of the 120-year-old catechism originally published in German to make it more accessible to the English church. Also of note, Collins added the Nicene and Athanasian creeds as an appendix of sorts to squarely solidify Baptists as orthodox, hence the title of the catechism. For more on Hercules Collins see Michael A. G. Haykin and Steve Weaver, eds., *Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007).

use and it was soon eclipsed in most Baptist circles by the enduring *Baptist Catechism* modeled after the venerable *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.

The premier catechism of the seventeenth century was the *Westminster Shorter Catechisms* (1648). Given its prominence amongst what we now think of as Presbyterians, Baptists desired to appropriate it for their own cause, and so *The Baptist Catechism*, or *Keach's Catechism* as it came to be known, was the resulting product of those efforts. *The Baptist Catechism* was developed by a group of Baptist ministers, most notably Benjamin Keach and William Collins, and published in 1693. Because many Baptist families were already using the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* the similarities in the updated *Baptist Catechism* allowed for a great deal of continuity for families who made the switch.¹⁷ And so, less than a century after the inception of the modern Baptist movement in England, the two most respected catechisms within Protestantism had been both revised and widely used by Baptists.

Just as the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* has endured for centuries, so too did *The Baptist Catechism*. Early in the eighteenth century the catechism migrated with Baptists to the American colonies and by 1738 the influential Philadelphia Association ordered even more to be printed. In 1794, after repeated printings, this same association affirmed “that [*The Baptist Catechism*] be recommended to the different churches in this Association, to institute the catechizing of children in their respective congregations at stated seasons.”¹⁸ But it wasn't just in North America that *The Baptist Catechism* thrived. Charles Spurgeon, perhaps the preeminent British Baptist minister, faithfully used *The Baptist Catechism* in the mid-nineteenth century and even developed his own update,

¹⁷ Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 113-15.

¹⁸ A. D. Gillette ed., *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association from AD 1707 to AD 1807: Being the First One Hundred Years of Its Existence* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851), 297.

known today as *Spurgeon's Catechism* or *A Baptist Catechism*.¹⁹ Back in America, Richard Furman, the long-time pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina, both used *The Baptist Catechism* and ensured its republication in his state.²⁰ One woman who grew up in Furman's church and learned *The Baptist Catechism* gave the following testimony:

We had no Sabbath school then, but we had The Baptist Catechism, with which we were as familiar as with the Lord's Prayer... We had to memorize the whole book, for none knew which question would fall to them. I think I hear at this very moment the dear voice of our pastor saying, "A little louder, my child," and then a trembling, sweet voice would be raised a little too loud... This practice was of incalculable benefit, for when it pleased God to change our hearts, and when offering ourselves to the church for membership, we knew what the church doctrines meant and were quite familiar with answering questions before the whole congregation, and did not quake when pastor or deacon or anyone else asked what we understood by Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification. Oh, no, we had been well taught.²¹

But it wasn't only *The Baptist Catechism* which thrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century, catechisms in general proliferated.²² In fact the genre expanded to include questions and answers about topics outside of theology, such as politics, biblical history, and church history.²³ Most importantly, following the lead of *Westminster*, catechisms tended towards teaching a simplified version of basic Bible doctrine or

¹⁹ Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 117-119. C. H. Spurgeon and T. T. Eaton, *A Baptist Catechism with Proofs* (Louisville: Baptist Book, 1898).

²⁰ Gantt, "Catechetical Instruction," 166; Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 114. Furman was the first President of the Triennial Baptist Convention, the first nationwide Baptist convention that eventually birthed the influential Southern Baptist Convention. See Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 93-97, for an interesting connection between the earliest Baptists denominations and missions.

²¹ Fannie E. S. Heck, *In Royal Service* (Richmond, VA: Education Department, Foreign Mission Board, 1926), 26-27.

²² Gantt, "Catechetical Instruction," 148-226. Gantt provides an impressive history of Baptist catechisms, including several lists of published works. Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 299. Nettles references 22 catechisms influential to Baptist catechetical instruction and highlights seven in full.

²³ Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015), 91, where, Robert Robinson's work is cited entitled, *A Political Catechism* (1782). See also, Holland Nimmons McTyeire, *A Catechism of Bible History* (Louisville: W. P. Churchill, Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, 1874). J. H. Grime, *Catechism of Ecclesiastical History*, 2nd ed. (Fulton, KY: Baptist Flag Publishing Company, 1914).

systematic theology. Consequently, two main streams of catechisms were developed: the *Heidelberg* stream with its classic three-fold outline of the Apostle's Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord's Prayer — and the *Westminster* stream which aimed to teach more comprehensively sound doctrine or systematic theology.²⁴ The *Westminster* approach is especially apparent in two nineteenth-century catechisms published by well-known Southern Baptists J.P. Boyce and John A. Broadus, neither of which have the Apostles Creed, Ten Commandments, or Lord's Prayer, and thus entrenching them firmly outside the *Heidelberg* stream.²⁵

Baptists engaged in catechesis from the beginnings of their modern iteration and remained committed to the practice well into the nineteenth century. McDonald summarizes Baptist's affinity for catechism use noting that "Baptists are not usually associated with catechisms. But this is a misconception. Baptist history has been replete with them since its seventeenth-century rise... [because they] stressed the sole authority of Scripture and preaching, the use of catechisms [was] a natural practice for Baptists from the beginning."²⁶ And yet just a few decades after Broadus produced his *Catechism of Bible Teaching* the practice of catechesis would virtually disappear. If indeed the use of "catechisms was a natural practice for Baptists," then what led to the demise of the Baptist catechism at the beginning of the twentieth century? What events influenced not

²⁴ This does not mean that all catechisms in the *Westminster* stream neglect the Apostle's Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord's Prayer, but rather that these elements are supplemented with further questions that address other areas of theology, more so than the *Heidelberg* stream. McDonald calls the classic three-fold outline "creed-cult-code," and notes that it is found in many different denominational catechisms, ranging from Protestant to Catholic to Eastern Orthodox. McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 1318.

²⁵ James P. Boyce, *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (Louisville: Caperton & Cates Publishers, 1878); John A. Broadus, *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1892). Broadus has the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer as portions of Scripture recommended for memorization, but not in the text of the catechism. Both are contained in full in Nettles with helpful introductions, *Teaching Truth*, 231-295. Cf. Gantt, "Catechetical Instruction," 216-22; McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 1235-62. McDonald only includes Broadus.

²⁶ McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 605.

just Baptists shirking catechisms but other Protestants as well? What occurred to relegate the catechism to a dusty corner of the church library?

The answers can be found in two clear themes that emerge and then converge at the beginning of the twentieth century: troubling theological developments and the adoption of modern educational theories.

Troubling Theological Developments

Many skeptics at the end of the eighteenth century prophesied the crumbling of Christianity. The thinking was that secular revolutions, akin to the 1789 French Revolution, would sweep through the world and reform it into a bastion of enlightened peace, free from the shackles of mysticism, religious texts, and war. Voltaire is said to have claimed, “that by the early nineteenth century the Bible would have passed into the limbo of forgotten literature.”²⁷ No doubt Voltaire spoke with a good deal of ignorance, yet his words represent a general religious apathy that marked the end of the eighteenth century. Then something remarkable happened: a massive movement of religious revival commonly called the Second Great Awakening.²⁸ Pervasive enough was this period of revival that, in 1816, the annual report for Connecticut’s Fairfield County Bible Society chided, “The atheism of Voltaire and his associates is gone down, almost with their dust to the grave. The blasphemies of ‘Thomas’ Paine are remembered only to be abhorred.”²⁹ Instead of fading, Christianity in America would blossom; or so it seemed.

²⁷ Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 116.

²⁸ The Second Great Awakening is referred to as such in contrast to the First Great Awakening. The first great revival on American soil centered in New England under the mid-eighteenth-century ministries of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield. As the reader will see, the Second Great Awakening was much more pervasive and birthed *revivalism*, a philosophy of ministry that would contribute to the demise of the catechism.

²⁹ Quoted in C. R. Keller, *The Second Great Awakening in Connecticut* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942), 223.

As the nineteenth century wore on, a growing majority of Americans self-identified as Protestant and Baptists would see a large percentage of that increase. Baptists growth coincided with two concurrent events: the expansion of the American frontier and the Second Great Awakening. But as Baptist churches burgeoned in the West a threat to orthodoxy loomed to the East, the migration of European liberal theology. While Baptists and their Protestant cousins multiplied due to the revivals on the frontier the cities and seminaries on the eastern seaboard lurched leftward in theology, ultimately influencing tens of thousands of young pastors and in turn untold numbers of American Christians. By the end of the nineteenth century the great mass of revival-wrought confessing Christians was largely sympathetic to the attractive ideas of liberal theology and produced what is appropriately called a “Golden Age of Liberalism,” when just a century earlier, the idea that Christianity would thrive in any sort of “Golden Age” seemed impossible to the skeptics.³⁰

As much as Baptists and other Protestants owe a great deal of their parentage to these revivals, the revivals themselves introduced some troubling theological trends. The revivalist’s emphasis on pragmatism for example, shifted the focus away from slow, methodical disciple making towards showy, decision-inducing events. The sheer numbers of converts during the Second Great Awakening spurred others to imitate such successful measures in hopes of manufacturing revival leading to an embrace of what Iain Murray calls, “revivalism.”³¹ Catechesis, designed to produce life-long disciples, was hardly a quick process with results that could be difficult to gauge. So the popular Protestant tool began to fade from use. Eventually, the grandchildren of revivalism met their liberal

³⁰ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 763-784.

³¹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*. See also, Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 435.

theological cousins later in the nineteenth century and the two would both contribute significantly to the decline of the catechism.

Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening did not happen everywhere uniformly, and it assuredly did not affect all denominations equally. Revivals occurred with greater frequency on the frontier compared to the cities and Baptists and Methodists reaped by far the most fruit. Since Baptists and Methodists did not require centralized training and commissioning of clergy but instead relied upon lay ministers and hastily trained preachers to serve growing congregations, they were able to aptly push westward with the pioneers and so saw their denominations blossom as their mobile ministries took root on the frontier.³² But it was also the Baptists and Methodists, with their poorly trained clergy, who were most vulnerable to the draw of pragmatism and its counterpart, revivalism. This led to a greater breadth, but a shallower depth, to their churches.

The Second Great Awakening began in earnest with a massive event: The Cane Ridge, Kentucky Revival of 1801. Ten to twenty-five thousand people gathered for what was originally a Presbyterian celebration of the Lord's Supper but eventually turned into a week of multi-denominational preaching, singing, and some rather strange religious experiences. Contrasted with the First Great Awakening of Jonathan Edwards era New England (c. 1730-1750), which rooted conversion in a thorough understanding of sound doctrine, Cane Ridge and the Second Great Awakening that followed, tended to place all the emphasis on an immediate, observable response to the preaching of the gospel solicited by the preachers. Consequently, signs of "spiritual life" included eccentricities such as gyrations or the shakes, falling down, incapacitation, and sudden

³² For an overview of the effect of the Second Great Awakening on different denominations see, Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 435-45. See also, Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 85.

running and laughing.³³ Singing would go on into the early hours of the morning around campfires and Cane Ridge popularized the open-air camp meetings which became a key component of the Second Great Awakening. But as Ahlstrom writes, “The most important fact about Cane Ridge is that it was an unforgettable revival of *revivalism*, at a strategic time and a place where it could become both symbol and impetus for the century-long process by which the greater part of American evangelical Protestantism became *revivalized*.”³⁴

In the months that followed, not all Christian leaders were encouraged by what happened at Cane Ridge. Several would note that Biblical evidence of conversion was being supplanted by emotional excesses and decisions to become Christian based more on the excitement of the moment rather than a full comprehension and true assent to the gospel of Jesus Christ.³⁵ The concerned were dubbed ‘anti-revival’ men and though they penned letters, preached sermons, and wrote books against the new methods there can be no question that revivalism won the day.³⁶ At the dawn of the nineteenth century catechisms were still ubiquitous but their theological foundation, namely biblical conversion and the importance of sound doctrine, began to deteriorate as revivalism became the guiding Protestant philosophy.

As camp meetings continued and revivalism seeped into the church, preachers would often plead for congregants to come forward to the altar if they were convicted of their need for Jesus. Sometimes, in lieu of an altar, there would be an open pew or bench reserved for the penitent to sit on while they waited for a pastor to come and pray with

³³ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 434-435; Robert Davidson, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the State of Kentucky* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 143-55; Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 152-53, 163-73.

³⁴ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 435. *Italics mine*. Notice the similarity to Murray’s title and main idea of his book, *Revival and Revivalism*.

³⁵ Davidson, *History of Presbyterian Kentucky*, 161.

³⁶ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 168.

them. This became known as the anxious bench and the call for immediate action of moving towards the front would become a mainstay in revival meetings and revivalist churches for the next century. Music would play, crowds would sing, sway, and pray, while preachers pleaded for the penitent to come forward — and thus the “altar call” was born, its roots founded in the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. During this period, counting conversions became an indispensable task for revivalists to quantify success. It wasn’t long before churches started doing the same and often a church’s overall health was determined based on the number of conversions counted in a given year. Sometimes, counts were based on souls present at the “anxious bench” or altar, and sometimes those who simply fell to the ground were counted amongst the converted.³⁷ No matter the rubric, revivalism inevitably led to the rejection of the biblical doctrine of conversion and the more traditional approach of slow, methodical instruction to train up life-long disciples of Jesus Christ. As the philosophy of revivalism metastasized into American churches, gradually the use of catechisms waned.

But the Second Great Awakening spurred another element of theological downgrade: a diminished concern for doctrinal distinctives and its twin — ecumenical fervor. At revival camp meetings and even in general on the American frontier, inter-denominational cooperation was the zeitgeist. With towns sparse, farms spread out, and pastors few, Christians often did not have options to participate in corporate worship and many were happy to simply join with others despite having varying convictions. On the inter-denominational cooperation present at revival camp meetings, eyewitnesses note that together, Methodists and Baptists “noisily worshipped late into the night,” when they would not have previously had opportunity to do so.³⁸ Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian ministers would all preach at the same time, often within ear shot of each

³⁷ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 185.

³⁸ Baptist Pastor John Taylor, quoted in Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 86.

other, and sometimes even taking turns from the same pulpit. As one can imagine, following up with the “converted” proved to be near impossible with such a disparate group and even if a coherent system had been developed, doctrinal distinctives would no doubt have to be shunted.

With biblical conversion, Christian discipleship, and a clear understanding of doctrinal distinctives abandoned, the American frontier became a prime breeding ground for some of the worst of nineteenth-century developments: a proliferation of Christian cults. Mormonism might be the best-known example of an antebellum cult but plenty of Christian denominations began in the early nineteenth century on dubious grounds. They all encouraged a break from traditional theology and embraced a greater role of personal experience. Nathan Hatch helpfully summarizes the motivation of Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ:

Like many of his generation, Campbell believed that stripping away the accretions of theology and tradition would restore peace, harmony, and vitality to the Christian church. Only slightly tempered by a sense of their own limitations, these reformers espoused private judgment as the sure route to coherence and harmony. Unfortunately, the more confidently they attacked the traditional order and espoused individual autonomy, the more confusing their limitless world became.³⁹

With tradition thus attacked, established confessions, catechisms, and even the training of pastors became less important as these movements swept across the nation in the wake of the Second Great Awakening.⁴⁰

Furthermore, traditional denominations that remained intact and grew rapidly welcomed an anti-Calvinistic, decidedly Arminian theology. Arminian theology was at home in Methodism which was founded by the Arminian Wesley brothers. But English Baptist traditions were historically Calvinistic. As evidenced by the heyday of Baptist catechism use, a majority of eighteenth-century Baptists were committed to the same

³⁹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 163.

⁴⁰ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 174-77.

Calvinistic and creedal convictions as their Presbyterian brothers and sisters.⁴¹ In the 1780s, Presbyterian minister John Witherspoon even confirmed, “the Baptists are Presbyterians... only differing in the point of infant baptism.”⁴² But with the expansion of the Second Great Awakening Baptists began to change, especially on the American Frontier. In 1785, the Elkhorn Baptist Association adopted the robustly Calvinist *Philadelphia Confession*, but when it merged with two other Baptist associations in 1802, they endorsed a decidedly Arminian stance.⁴³ Unsurprisingly, this occurred in the same year that Baptists in Kentucky saw exponential growth by following the blueprint of revivalism. If pastors need not be trained and creeds and catechisms deemed irrelevant, pragmatism will take root. For pragmatism ruled the day-to-day for the pioneers and if revivals worked why wouldn’t a church embrace revivalism and all the hopes of numerical growth that followed? But pragmatism and this burgeoning anti-creedal, anti-Calvinistic sentiment on the frontier undermined the hard-won gains of earlier theological and catechetical work, and while these movements saw expansion in numbers, the collateral damage was the collapse of the catechism.

Hand in hand with maturing Arminian convictions was a reliance on the ploys of men to bring about conversion best seen by the efforts of one of the premier evangelists of the middle decades of the 1800s, Charles G. Finney. Finney, a lawyer by trade, set New York state ablaze shortly after his conversion with a series of wildly successful revivals.⁴⁴ It was in these meetings in the 1820s that Finney’s evangelistic

⁴¹ Remember again the close relationship between the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* and what was known as the *Baptist Catechism*, or *Keach’s Catechism*. Both were nearly identical in their convictions on every point of theology, with the exception of baptism.

⁴² John Witherspoon, *The Works of the Rev. John Witherspoon*, ed. John Rodgers, (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward Press, 1802), 4:406.

⁴³ Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 88. This trend of nineteenth-century Baptists adopting Arminian theology in their confessions gained momentum as the century wore on. See also, 114-116.

⁴⁴ The same region would become known as the “burnt over district” in the decades that followed. All sorts of perversions to Christianity would find their origins in this region of upstate New York spanning from Mormonism, to Adventism, to Walter Rauschenbusch’s Social Gospel. Interestingly,

tactics were refined.⁴⁵ Modeled after the success of earlier revivals like Cane-Ridge, Finney codified Arminian pragmatism which placed the bulk of the responsibility for a successful revival on the planning of men. He wrote in his *Lectures of Revivals and Religion* in 1835 that “revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle in any sense. It is a purely philosophical [scientific] result of the right use of the constituted means... You see why you have not a revival. It is only because you do not want one.”⁴⁶ The weight of Finney’s new measures for conversion rested on men, not God, and stood in stark contrast to how most historic catechisms taught Biblical conversion. He would go so far as to imply that creeds and catechisms were far less important than his own superior faculties of reason.⁴⁷ With new converts filling churches in the mid-nineteenth century the confidence of Finney and revivalism swayed many to their cause. Pragmatism reigned and catechisms began to falter as the old had to give way to the new, the methods that worked to the methods, many believed, didn’t.

The effects of Finney and the Second Great Awakening led to sweeping changes in Baptist churches as many followed the Arminian theology of the revivalists and altar calls became the norm. This couldn’t have happened without revisionist histories peddled by preachers and laymen alike which conveniently neglected to remember the Calvinistic roots of Baptists. So virulent was the misinformation that all Calvinist theology was painted as hyper-Calvinist: unwilling to pray for, much less

Finney himself coined the term “burnt district” in his *Memoires*. Charles G. Finney, *Memoirs of Rev. Charles G. Finney* (New York: Fleming G. Revell Co., 1876), 78.

⁴⁵ For a full review and critique, in particular of Finney’s doctrine of conversion and how it relates to the ancient heresy Pelagianism, see Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 228-252.

⁴⁶ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co, 1835), 12, 32.

⁴⁷ Finney, *Memoirs*, 451-52.

evangelize, the lost. Nettles remarks that the doctrines of grace which built Baptist churches, “like a puff of smoke in a strong wind... vanished in American Baptist life.”⁴⁸

Indeed, the great Arminian shift was in full swing by the early 1820s as can be observed in the historical anecdote from the ministry of Baptist pastor, Jeremiah Vardaman. Pastor Vardaman delivered an hour-long address to students at a seminary in which he dismissed “the foundation of the whole Calvinistic creed... by burlesque, ridicule and sarcasm.”⁴⁹ This was unsurprising, considering the night before he had led a revival meeting in which he had whipped up at least fifty mourners to come to the “anxious benches,” and receive salvation. Vardaman then whispered with each one and loudly proclaim to the crowd, “Glory to God, here is another soul born for heaven.”⁵⁰ Other well-known and many more lesser-known Baptist pastors would follow suit. As the ministry of Finney grew, Baptists were drawn to him as well, so much so that 75 years after his death the *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* states in the entry on ‘Evangelism’ that “Finney has tremendously influenced Baptists as well as other evangelicals... With his legal logic and Scripture texts, he refuted the extreme Calvinism which denied use of one’s will and repentance or use of one’s efforts to win others to Christ.”⁵¹ Clearly, by the 1950s, when the Encyclopedia was published, the assumption that Finney was a helpful correction to supposed hyper-Calvinism in Baptist churches was well established while his contribution to the demise of the catechism and the rise of pragmatic elevation of human reasoning as the great arbiter of truth, long forgotten.

⁴⁸ Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 223. Interestingly, Murray notes that a major reason for the loss of Baptist history was a shortage of published records in the early part of the nineteenth century, *Revival and Revivalism*, 301-02.

⁴⁹ Wilson Thompson, *The Autobiography of Elder Wilson Thompson* (Cincinnati, OH: Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin Printers, 1867), 435-36. The three points of “Calvinistic creed” ridiculed and dismissed by Vardaman were, foreknowledge, election, and predestination.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Autobiography*, 434.

⁵¹ Roland Q. Leavell, “Evangelism,” in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 415.

This Baptist ignorance and the resulting theological shift that contributed to the demise of the catechism, did not go unnoticed. Nineteenth-century pastor David Benedict wrote:

The kind of preaching now much in vogue... would have been considered the quintessence of Arminianism, mere milk and water, instead of the strong meat of the gospel... In my early days, the Associated Baptists were all professedly Calvinistic in their doctrine... 'but now' ministers look for attractions which are pleasing to young people, and which will collect large assemblies... With this end in view, nothing that will sound harsh or unpleasant to very sensitive ears must come from the preachers.⁵²

Like Benedict, there were other allies of the traditional Baptist confessions and catechisms. James P. Boyce settled into pastoral ministry in 1851 and by 1856 complained that “the distinctive principles of Arminianism have been engrafted upon many of our churches.”⁵³ He also worried that unless seminaries “require a clear declaration of doctrine of professors,” heresy would undoubtedly creep in.⁵⁴ Committed to a Baptist version of Calvinism and shaped by *Keach's Catechism*, Boyce would go on to compose *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* in 1864 in order to meet the need he repined of less than a decade earlier: a need for not only seminary professors but church members to both know and hold to a “clear abstract of faith and good doctrine.”⁵⁵

As the battle over the soul of Baptist theology waged during the mid-nineteenth century, the embrace of pragmatism, paired with Arminian theology, effectively replaced catechisms with a personal zeal for Jesus as the highest pursuit for spiritual health. Packer noted of this time period, “the Reformation tag *sola scriptura*,

⁵² David Benedict, *Fifty Years Among the Baptists* (New York: Sheldon & Company, 1860), 138, 142-43.

⁵³ James P. Boyce, *Three Changes in Theological Institutions: an Inaugural Address Delivered Before The Board of Trustees of The Furman University* (Greenville, SC: C.J. Elford's Book and Job Press, 1856), 33.

⁵⁴ Boyce, *Three Changes*, 33.

⁵⁵ Boyce, *Three Changes*, 34. It is important to note that Arminianism as a rule did not have the same rich tradition of either creeds or catechisms and instead majored on what felt right or fair to reasonable people. Of course there are Scriptural warrants for this theological position, but on a popular and scholarly level Arminianism assuredly diminished any reliance upon creeds or catechisms.

which had originally meant ‘no authority *over* the Bible,’ came to mean ‘no authority *except* the Bible.’”⁵⁶ Creeds and catechisms were no longer considered necessary when personal time with the Lord was viewed as the highest of callings. By the 1850s personal Bible study was encouraged, revivals occurred frequently, and gifted ministers were sent out to shepherd burgeoning Baptist congregations often without much theological education themselves. And without a theological framework stemming from an accurate understanding of sound doctrine, Baptist churches varied widely on any number of doctrinal convictions, with the congregations ‘convictions’ shifting depending on the maturity of pastoral leadership. Although holdouts of traditional Baptist theology existed (such as Boyce and his successor at Southern Seminary, Broadus, both of whom authored and championed the use of catechisms), the old catechisms, confessions, and creeds no longer reflected the majority Baptist conviction. Certainly, the legacy of revivalism in the wake of the Second Great Awakening contributed to the slow decline of catechetical use.

Flourishing Liberalism

As commitments to historic creeds, confessions, and catechisms decreased among most Protestants in the nineteenth century, formerly orthodox churches and seminaries fell prey to an insidious enemy: liberal theology. Contributing to this danger, perhaps even before the damage done by revivalism, was a naïveté among Baptists in their ecumenical spirit. Since the emergence of seventeenth-century English Baptists, Baptists had worked hard to insert themselves into orthodox Christianity as evidenced by the title of one of the oldest Baptist catechisms: *An Orthodox Catechism* (1680). It was titled such in order to root the rather new Particular Baptists into orthodox Christianity

⁵⁶ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 68-69.

because many, including John Calvin, saw Baptists as heretics.⁵⁷ Baptists' ecumenism, initially an apologetic for orthodoxy, aimed to preserve the unity among gospel believing churches. This ecumenical fervor succeeded to the point that a Presbyterian preached the funeral sermon of one of the foremost eighteenth-century Baptist pastors, Richard Furman (1825).⁵⁸ But as the nineteenth century wore on, ecumenism led Baptists to comfortably befriend many preachers and denominations in the name of revival that would have disastrous long-term effects. Ministry partnerships would eventually water-down core Baptist theological convictions and by the end of the nineteenth century incited a full-on departure from historic creeds, confessions, and catechisms.

To understand how such a widespread and quick embrace of theological liberalism could occur, we must return again to Charles G. Finney. In his own *Memoirs*, Finney presented himself as continually waging war against the *Westminster* doctrines he had been taught.⁵⁹ He wrote, "These doctrines I could not receive...on the subject of atonement, regeneration, faith, repentance, the slavery of the will, or any of the kindred doctrines."⁶⁰ A later biographer would clarify, "Finney has left in literature a permanent record not only of his life, but also of his struggles to *adjust* the truths of Christianity into such a harmonious system of thought that no violence should be done to the dictates of reason."⁶¹ To Finney, the traditional Presbyterian positions on the doctrines mentioned

⁵⁷ Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 42-43. Also note that Collins' appeal to orthodoxy led him to include the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed in his catechism. There has always been a connection between creeds and catechisms.

⁵⁸ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 305.

⁵⁹ Murray convincingly writes contrary to Finney's own *Memoirs*, "Finney only gradually, over the course of his first decade in ministry, would forsake orthodoxy for his own brand of liberalism." Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 256-58.

⁶⁰ Finney, *Memoirs*, 46

⁶¹ G. Frederick Wright, *Charles Grandison Finney* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1893), 314. *Italics* mine.

above did “violence to the dictates of reason,” and he took it upon himself to liberate the church from the shackles of creeds, confessions, and catechisms.

Finney would be influenced by the “New Divinity” of Nathaniel W. Taylor of Yale University, who similarly departed from traditional Calvinistic Christianity for a version of liberalism that highlighted “the self-determining power of the human will.”⁶² These theological shifts at Yale, Harvard, and other prestigious seminaries in the first half of the nineteenth century were popularized by Finney and other revivalists who held high the prevailing opinions of men, causing the classic catechisms to become increasingly obsolete to those masses who had once been trained by them.⁶³ For how could a modern, liberated churchman, who believed mankind to be basically good, recite *An Orthodox Catechism* in good faith?

Q. Are we so corrupt that we are not at all able to do well and are prone to all vice?

A. Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴

Assuredly an Arminian, much less a liberal theologian, could never repeat *Keach’s Catechism* on the effectual call.

Q. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ.⁶⁵

⁶² Wright, *Finney*, 25, 179. Wright notes that the two spent time together in 1836 and that in his later years Finney unquestionably was influenced by Taylor’s theology. Murray likewise has noted the connection between the two, writing, “by 1831, when Finney preached the sermon ‘Make Yourselves a New Heart’ in Boston, it was beyond doubt: the voice was Finney’s, the thinking Taylor’s.” He also notes a contemporary of Finney and Taylor who made this same connection between the popular revivalist and liberal theologian. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 261.

⁶³ So concerned were traditional, “Old School” Presbyterians with the slide away from the *Westminster* standards and the supreme authority of human reason, that many regarded Taylor and Finney as incredibly dangerous to orthodoxy. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 465.

⁶⁴ Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, Q.8.

⁶⁵ In Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, Q.34.

Liberal theology and its slavish devotion to reimagining Biblical truths to match the machinations of the modern man, could no longer privilege the catechism.

This departure from orthodox Christianity lurched further left with one of Yale's early graduates, Horace Bushnell.⁶⁶ Ahlstrom described Bushnell as possessing "unusual powers as a writer and preacher [making] himself virtually the 'American Schleiermacher.'" ⁶⁷ Bushnell took Taylor's "New Haven Theology" and removed any semblance of orthodoxy, going so far as to support modalism in his book, *God in Christ*,⁶⁸ as well as denying most supernatural acts and inerrancy in his book, *Nature and the Supernatural*.⁶⁹ Like Finney, Bushnell held sectarian doctrinal formulations in disdain, deeming catechisms of no use in his particular vision of Christian nurture. He said,

It must be obvious that very small children are more likely to be worried and drummed into apathy by dogmatic catechisms, than to get any profit from them... It is generally supposed, in the arguments urged for a training in catechism, that the real advantage to be gained is the fastening or anchoring of the child in some fixed faith. But the deplorable fact is, that what is called a fastening is really the shutting in, or encasing of the soul, in that particular shell of opinion—the training of the child to be a sectarian *before* he is a Christian... Due care will be taken also not to thrust religious subjects on the child, when he is excited by other things, in a manner to make it unwelcome... untimely intrusions of religion will only make it odious—the child can not be crammed with doctrine.⁷⁰

Bushnell's rejection of "sectarianism," or what others would call orthodoxy, left no room in his parenting philosophies for the propagation of historic "sectarian"

⁶⁶ Bushnell (1802–76), was also a student of Taylor (1786–1858) and was assuredly influenced by the "New Divinity" or "New Haven Theology" taught at Yale.

⁶⁷ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 610.

⁶⁸ Horace Bushnell, *God in Christ* (Hartford, CT: Brown and Parsons, 1849).

⁶⁹ Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural, as Together Constituting the One System of God*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858). Gregg Allison also notes Bushnell's approach to Scriptures as an important development in America linking him with his German predecessor, Schleiermacher; Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2011), 71-72. See also, David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986), 77.

⁷⁰ Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1861), 368, 377-78.

errors. The natural consequence was that traditional use of an orthodox catechism was out for the progressive theologian. Bushnell instead appealed to current educational theories and the basic goodness inherent in all children to promote alternative methods to teach children.⁷¹ He considered the sprinkling in of play to a child's spiritual development and letting them direct questions and discussions when they felt ready, as far superior and much more reasonable than catechetical instruction. For Bushnell, the goal of transforming society was achieved by teaching children to be good, moral citizens. Dogmatic doctrinal formulations only hindered this goal in his mind, writing, "There is no feebler and more unpractical conception, than that children are faithfully taught, when they are abundantly lectured. If you will put in Christ, you must put him on."⁷² McDonald summarizes Bushnell's ideas well, writing that for Bushnell,

Faith is not taught, but nurtured, so instead of intense catechizing, parents best train children in religion by direct engagement through sight, sound, dialog, and reflection, activities that would begin to mark Sunday School lessons produced in mainline Protestantism by the late nineteenth century.⁷³

Bushnell's solution was to teach children good morals rather than sound doctrine. Such a rational approach appealed across denominational lines, especially to the ecumenical, pragmatic, and quick growing Baptists. Thus, as Christians began to see the need to fill the void of teaching children the outdated catechisms, religious education would gradually fall to a relatively new ecumenical endeavor sweeping across nineteenth-century America, the Sunday School.

Modernizing Education

Horace Bushnell in many ways acted as a historical hinge. He was a celebrated liberal Protestant theologian but he also, somewhat unwittingly, became the father of

⁷¹ Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 378-82. Bushnell never refers to the more modern concept of educational theories, but his writings undoubtedly appeal to what had not yet been studied and coined.

⁷² Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 380.

⁷³ McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 32.

modern educational theory. Even though Bushnell did not form any sort of cohesive philosophy of education, nonetheless it was his ideas, found in the 1861 book *Christian Nurture*, that influenced the founding philosophers of education such as John Dewey and George Albert Coe five decades later.⁷⁴ At the dawn of the twentieth century, Dewey and Coe would transform all of American education, religious and otherwise, but a couple generations earlier, it was Bushnell's approach to religious education that would be tried and tested in the confines of a new invention, the Protestant Sunday School.

As liberalism and the pragmatism of the revivalists swept into the church, the Protestant Sunday School movement launched. Ecumenical by nature, these schools were designed to help children in local communities learn both the Bible and good morals, regardless of denominational affiliation. Protestant and Catholics, liberals and conservatives, found the free child-care and basic tutoring attractive, allowing these non-denominational Sunday Schools to thrive. But as these schools grew in influence, so too did the pressure to conform to modern educational theories which in time proved hostile to the bruised and battered catechism.

The Sunday School Movement

In 1785, as William Fox of Prescott Street Baptist Church in London organized a Sunday School Society, "a principle was adopted that only the Bible should be used as the principal study book, even to the exclusion of all catechisms."⁷⁵ Understandably, catechisms, with their clear doctrinal statements, could not survive in an ecumenical environment like the Sunday School. In spite of the good that came when committed

⁷⁴ Boardman W. Kathan, "Horace Bushnell and the Religious Education Movement," *Religious Education* 108, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 41-57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2013.747860>. Kathan calls Bushnell the "spiritual father" of the Religious Education Movement, even if he was not responsible for its actual founding. The generational link between Bushnell and Dewey/Coe according to Kathan is found in Henry Clay Trumbull.

⁷⁵ Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1963), 122.

Christians from different denomination worked together to teach children the Bible, the purposeful neglect of doctrinal convictions proved damaging — not only to the catechism but to the theological trajectory of the church. The same damaging trend occurred when the American Sunday School Union was established in 1824. As one of the earliest non-denominational parachurch organizations, the Union quickly transformed into a nationwide missions endeavor to educate and evangelize America’s children. Often, a local Sunday School Union predated the existence of frontier churches and was the root from which a flourishing church, of any number of affiliations, would eventually spring.⁷⁶ These frontier churches, built on foundations that steadfastly avoided doctrinal distinctives, had no proclivity towards providing catechisms for their people.

The curriculum cobbled together in the early years of the Sunday School movement was simply portions of the Bible accompanied by guided lessons meant to help teach good morals from the selected passages. Each Sunday School was free to pick and choose lessons at the whim of the local director, which meant that even within the same town, Sunday Schools were rarely on the same page. All that changed when the “Uniform Lesson Plan” was adopted in 1872.⁷⁷ Behind this movement stood the influential leader of the American Sunday School Union, a Baptist layman named B.F. Jacobs, and in solidarity Baptists were “among the first to support Jacob’s plan for a ‘Uniform Lesson,’ by which several denominations studied the same Bible passages each week.”⁷⁸ Learning the same morals from the same Bible studies at a time when the nation struggled to reunite after the horrors of the Civil War was a powerful public service of the Sunday School Union. But in order to preserve such sought for unity, controversial

⁷⁶ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 154-65.

⁷⁷ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 186-87. This took place at the Fifth National Convention of the American Sunday School Union.

⁷⁸ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1987), 399.

doctrines were omitted and any hint of sectarianism dismissed. Thus, catechisms, clearly defining such controversial topics as baptism, regeneration, and the sinfulness of man, were expunged from the curriculum.⁷⁹

Thirty years later, as the American Sunday School Union waned, Baptists and other denominations created their own Sunday School unions, but the principles of ecumenicism, little doctrinal definition, and Bible only, had already become ingrained as the way to approach all of children's ministry. To this end, Packer and Parrett comment:

Partly in order to avoid... doctrinal controversies, the Sunday school unions came to advocate that only the Bible should be used for instruction. This likely sounds like a very reasonable thing to most evangelical Protestants ears. And great efforts were made to introduce a consistency and comprehensiveness in the use of the Bible. But is it really possible to avoid teaching doctrinal controversy by teaching the Bible?⁸⁰

The answer to their question is a resounding, of course not. But any attempt to avoid doctrine while still maintaining a semblance of Christian identity inevitably focuses on teaching morality from Biblical narratives with statements like: "David obeyed God, so you should obey your parents," and "Jesus was kind to the social outcasts, so should you look out for your neighbor." That is exactly what the Sunday School movement did, extracting moral principles from Biblical narratives that fit into the parameters of influential Christian educators like Finney and Bushnell.⁸¹ Such a moralized approach to Bible study assured the wide acceptance of the curriculum and promoted unity among an

⁷⁹ This prejudice against catechisms, creeds, and confessions had become so strong that even when theological conservatives fought with vigor against the liberal encroachments of the nineteenth century, many returned to a high view of the Bible but did not regain a high view of catechisms, creeds, or confessions. One such example would be the Fundamentalist movement which began as a reactionary coalition of Presbyterians, Baptists, and others against encroaching liberalism. In their minds, especially creeds and catechisms belonged to dead orthodoxy. Since some liberal churches still held to various creeds and since Roman Catholics continued to use their catechisms, Fundamentalists saw creeds and catechisms as something that took away from intimacy with the Lord and his Scriptures; all the while, still bemoaning the loss of the boundaries of orthodoxy. For a good summary of the movement as a whole see, Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*. For a good summary of the point of division between fundamentalists and liberals at the beginning of the twentieth century, see, Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 183-95.

⁸⁰ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 72.

⁸¹ Gantt writes, "Bushnell's influence may be seen in the proliferation of teaching materials that emphasized moral conduct and piety in all children, converted or not, who were encouraged to live as Christians." "Catechetical Instruction," 235.

increasingly disparate group of denominations and cultures in America. Catechisms simply weren't designed with these goals in mind — and so continued to decline.

In spite of how effectively the Sunday School Union mobilized lay men and women to do the work of the ministry, the movement as a whole continued to undermine any commitment to sound doctrine. The fallout of prioritizing lay-leadership at every level of the Sunday School Union, meant that those writing and developing curriculum often had little to no theological training themselves. Thus, the problems compounded, with the doctrinally blind leading the blind. Even when teachers were trained, there was a noticeable lack of emphasis on sound doctrine.⁸² The problem has continued to today, and so Packer and Parrett write, “many pastors have basically handed off their educational duties to others — typically to good-hearted members of the congregation who often have far less theological training or sensitivity than themselves.”⁸³ The demise of the catechism only exacerbated the theological weakness of the nineteenth-century church and the Sunday School movement, rather than faithfully train the next generation, only groomed them to embrace the general morality of theological liberalism.⁸⁴

⁸² Consider the shortcomings of the training program implemented by the Southern Baptists. Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 235-260. Benson is exuberant in his praise for the SBC teacher training implemented at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, by that time, catechism use had faded, and examples of the teacher training courses show little theological training. Instead, courses were routinely offered such as, “Teaching Values from the Life of Christ, Teaching Values from Old and New Testaments, Organization and Administration of the Sunday School, Training of the Devotional Life, etc.” 244. Better would have been a catechism for teachers, that provided the basic framework of theology. The recently published examples of Spurgeon, Boyce, or Broadus Catechisms could have each been sufficient.

⁸³ Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 71.

⁸⁴ In a very interesting section in Gantt's dissertation on Baptist catechetical use, she points out that it wasn't just traditional catechisms that fell out of favor among Baptist, but it was the word “catechism” itself. For even the theologically neutral Sunday School unions would often use the term “catechism” to describe any question and answers asked and considered. For example, one of the earliest publications put out by the Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was the weekly newspaper-styled children's publication *The Child's Gem*. This publication contained stories, illustrations, the weekly Sunday School Bible lesson, and in 1899 a lesson review section titled “Lesson Catechism.” By June 1901, however, the title of this section of questions and answers was changed to “Review Lesson,” in March 1909 changed again to “Some Questions,” and by February 1910, it was called, “To Help You Remember the Lesson Story.” Indeed, in just over a decade, this influential little paper in Southern Baptist life eradicated the word catechism and replaced it with something much more benign. Even if the original *Little Gem* “catechism” was far from the clear doctrinal statements of the Baptist classic, *Keach's Catechism*, the simple removal of the word “catechism” only further severed catechetical use among Baptists at the turn of the twentieth century. Gantt, “Catechetical Instruction,” 233.

Educational Theories

No doubt contributing to the fall of the catechism was the dry, rote memorization that marked how many approached catechesis. As one considers the quintessential scene of children standing before a Pastor as he quizzes them on *The Baptist Catechism*, one can't help but imagine modern educators shuddering at such a tactic. Just consider the personal testimony of a catechized Baptist, "We had to memorize the whole book, for none knew which question would fall to them."⁸⁵ This was a far cry from the experiential learning theories popularized by John Dewey and others at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁶ Yet Green helpfully points out that the practice of using a catechism for rote-memorization seemed not the intended norm. He claims, "The fixed nature of a printed text may also conceal from us the extent to which a catechist was prepared to be flexible, either by adding some off-the-cuff remarks to what appeared on the page to help catechumens understand a difficult point, or by encouraging them to answer in their own words."⁸⁷ He goes on to cite multiple historical sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which encouraged catechesis to not simply be a memorization exercise but an internalization exercise. A clear example of this is Isaac Bourne, who in 1646 stressed that the catechumen was "not to answer verbatim or by rote... but each according to his own sense and understanding of the question."⁸⁸

By the seventeenth century, Green describes "five activities associated with catechesis: memorization of the answers to the questions; quizzing students by oral examination; commenting on the meaning of answers; assessing understanding of the

⁸⁵ Heck, *In Royal Service*, 26.

⁸⁶ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 226; McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 35. For a good biography of Dewey that even touches on Dewey's liberal Christian experiences, see Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Perhaps a better biography as it pertains to Dewey's interaction with religious education is Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁸⁷ Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 8.

⁸⁸ Isaac Bourne, *A Light from Christ*, (London: 1646), title-page, quoted in Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 8.

material; and encouragement to practice what has been learned.”⁸⁹ When faithfully pursued, these activities promote a full assent and application of the catechism and the theology contained within. They encourage the catechumen to grow in his or her devotion to Christ, rather than mechanically remembering and regurgitating words. As much as the original intent of a printed catechism was to provide a carefully worded guide to help Christians learn theology and apply it to their lives, in practice, it tended to foster a rigidity to the learning process. Therefore, the rejection of catechisms in the nineteenth century was due in part to the developed inflexibility of catechesis, a failure heightened by some of the new theories on how to approach theology.

Neo-Scholasticism was one such theory. Its long-winded, abstract, and technical approach to theology engendered an environment where some theologians, frankly, talked past those sitting in the pews. Catholics especially, moved away from using succinct catechisms as an effective tool for training young Christians and towards a verbose, more abstract theological statement unfit for memorization. While these longer statements might have been helpful as thorough theological treatises, it appears that in the nineteenth century the church failed to utilize the work of Neo-Scholastics. Marthaler bemoaned this development in the Roman Catholic Church, noting that by 1879, Pope Leo XIII codified the triumph of the Neo-Scholastic movement by affirming Deharbe’s catechism as the model approach. Marthaler writes:

The popular image of the catechism, even in the minds of bishops, was no longer the traditional four pillars (that is the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Decalogue, and the seven Sacraments), but hundreds of questions and answers. The pedagogy, with children as the prime audience, fostering memorization, ended and the Neo-Scholastic theology rose [in its place].⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Green, *The Christian’s ABC*, 93-94. A similar list is summarized also in McDonald, *Christian Catechetical Texts*, 29.

⁹⁰ Marthaler, *The Catechism Yesterday & Today*, 108. Notice the similarity to the *Heidelberg Catechism* streams emphasis on the three pillars, Apostles Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and the Decalogue.

As much as careful theological statements can be helpful when memorized, the sheer size of many of the answers made it impractical. Further, the more abstract the theology, the more difficult it was to connect theology to everyday life, and thus the catechism was rendered inapplicable, dead words that were pointless to the average catechumen.

Although Neo-Scholasticism was a Catholic movement, as American Protestants reacted to liberal theology, the influential Princeton Theological Seminary perpetuated its own return to scholasticism.⁹¹ Protestants still likely to engage in catechesis, were heavily influenced by Princeton's brand of Protestant-scholastic theology and so, similar to their Roman Catholic counterparts, theology grew ever more opaque to the church layman. The withered and dry practice of catechism which expected perfectly recited, long, and precise answers, marked the movements where catechism survived towards the dawn of the twentieth century. Addressing this problem, Packer noticed:

in the end it became all too easy in too many places for catechesis to be diminished to a mere memorization of the questions and answers in the printed catechisms. This of course is wholly inadequate for real learning to occur, and it would not be long before serious educators would quite rightly point this out and call loudly and long for something else.⁹²

The dual trends that educators loathed, memorization for memorization's sake and dense verbiage seemingly designed to obfuscate truth rather than clarify it, meant that many viewed catechisms as fuel for the fire, rather than the spark that ignited a lasting passion for the Lord.

As the twentieth century dawned and educational theories flourished, a new generation of pedagogical scholars continued Bushnell's assault on the basic premise of

⁹¹ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 557. The key Princeton Theologians of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Hodge, Hodge, and Warfield, relied heavily on the Latin systematic theology written by the Protestant scholastic, Francis Turretin (1623-1687). As the fathers of the fundamentalist movement, the Princeton theologians, not only influenced their native Presbyterians, but Baptists as well.

⁹² Packer and Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 70.

catechetical use. John Dewey, likely the most influential modern philosopher of education, rose to prominence at the end of the nineteenth century and vociferously criticized the core tenets of catechesis. The root of his assault on the catechism was his outspoken unbelief. After an early life devoted to a liberal form of Christianity, Dewey distanced himself from his belief in God altogether.⁹³ Discouraged that his understanding of Christianity failed to address the most salient issues of his day, Dewey believed that it could not offer an “adequate epistemology” to match its sublime moral teachings and further, “How are our imaginations haunted by the idea of what might have happened if Christianity had found ready to its hand intellectual formulations corresponding to its practical proclamations!”⁹⁴ To Dewey, Christianity was antiquated, lacking the “revisions” and “eliminations” necessary to be of any value to those “responsible to the full exercise of reason... and experience.”⁹⁵ For him and his colleagues, the superiority of secular humanism and experiential learning had trumped any sort of grip on orthodoxy.

Additionally, Dewey undermined the catechism by developing a new system to teach morality. Dewey believed the best part of Christianity was that it provided a firm footing for ethics and so, in order to replace the moral void left when he embraced secularism, he developed alternative means to teach morality.⁹⁶ His solution: collaborative scientific and social inquiry, which would lead pupils to learn how the world works — including morality. According to his philosophy, education ought to be

⁹³ John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910). Note the preface which speaks of Darwin’s influence in his brand of “pragmatic philosophy,” iii-vi.

⁹⁴ Dewey, *Influence of Darwin*, 178. Dewey acknowledges the benefits of Christian morality, while dismantling its steadfast adherence to belief that goes contrary to what can be observed and experienced as true and real.

⁹⁵ Dewey, *Influence of Darwin*, 194.

⁹⁶ Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 418-419. Westbrook makes the fascinating note, that Dewey has “proved something of an embarrassment to secular humanists in their battles with religious fundamentalists over the place of religion in the public schools. Because Dewey regarded his own humanism as religious and argued that this religious perspective should be ‘in possession of the machinery of education.’”

infused with pragmatic experiences from which the pupil could draw out his or her own personal scientific and moral truths. Dewey could find no place for “religious theory or theology” in such a system, because it sought to codify belief apart from and prior to experience.⁹⁷ Thus, Dewey’s philosophy of education had no room for creeds, confessions, and catechisms, no room for any doctrinal formulations based on the Bible — the truthfulness of which, in his mind, had been handily dismissed by modern naturalistic humanism.

Whereas John Dewey grew to reject his Christian heritage and identified as an atheist later in life, his contemporary, George Coe, remained a committed liberal Protestant until his death.⁹⁸ But the end result of both their educational theories was identical. Coe, an influential leader in the philosophy of Christian education, firmly believed that the goal of Christian education was not to pass on doctrinal convictions but transform the world by drawing out the internal goodness within every child.⁹⁹ “Shall the primary purpose of Christian education be to hand on religion or create a new world?”¹⁰⁰ he once asked. For Coe, the answer was the latter. He wrote,

We need an education that will perpetuate a solemn conviction of the seriousness of life and of the awful difference between right and wrong; that will bring the pupil... to glad consecration to the kingdom of God on earth... This, rather than Biblical fact or doctrinal idea, was the real religion of the fathers, and this is what any effective religious education must hand on.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin*, 178.

⁹⁸ Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 781.

⁹⁹ Ahlstrom connects Bushnell to Coe, having a profound impact on Coe and Coe’s college classmate and father of the social gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch. Coe (1862-1951), rivaled Dewey (1859-1952), in their influence on American education, with Dewey growing more secular and Coe continuing to embrace classic liberal Christianity. Coe and Dewey even overlapped for several years in the same cities, holding very similar if not identical teaching posts at rival institutions Dewey at the University of Chicago (1894-1904), Coe at Northwestern University, just outside Chicago (1892-1909). Then Dewey moved to Columbia University in New York City (1904-30) and Coe followed him to New York teaching at Union Theological Seminary (1909-22) and finally joining Dewey at Columbia University (1922-27). Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 781, 907.

¹⁰⁰ George A. Coe, *What is Christian Education?* (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1929), 29.

¹⁰¹ George A. Coe, *Can Religion be Taught?* (New York: Union Theological Seminary, 1909), 21.

The bias against doctrinal statements had so seeped into the warp and woof of Protestantism that it was soon assumed as indisputable fact that doctrine was not only unnecessary, but unnecessarily divisive.

Unsurprisingly, Dewey and Coe's philosophies of education were championed by liberal Protestants. By the year 1917, "At the annual meeting of the Religious Education Association... a well-organized movement was starting to introduce [Dewey's] methods into the field of religious education."¹⁰² Their proposed curriculum was notably void of doctrinal content and critics wrote, "The experience-centered curriculum turns out to be an ethical cultured curriculum which cannot be distinguished from humanism."¹⁰³ In the end, Dewey and Coe's philosophies of education, liberal theology, and the Sunday School movement formed an alliance that vanquished the catechism and led to its complete abandonment.

More conservative Christians rightly saw the dangers of entrenched liberal theology, but ignorantly embraced components of the educational theories of Coe and Dewey. They never realized the inherent damage those theories would cause to raising up the next generation to know and follow "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3) The rise of educational experts and their calls for educational reform would convince churches that any set of questions with right and wrong answers would prove ineffective. Writing in 1943, the Secretary of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association, Clarence H. Benson, encapsulated this progression. He was not shy to diminish the significance of catechisms in exchange for whatever was new. Even, while dismissing 1850s era Sunday School curricula, as part of the "Babel period," having "completely ignored the child" by having too many questions and answers, he believed that it was still "superior to the catechism in that its biblical content was greatly enlarged

¹⁰² Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 228.

¹⁰³ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 228.

and arranged in more logical order.”¹⁰⁴ Benson opined that the previous centuries Sunday School education suffered from a lack of insight into educational theories, or as he put it, “a serious defect... to neglect the psychological approach.”¹⁰⁵ But questions and answers have repeatedly been used in education over the centuries, as exemplified by the Socratic method of asking the right questions in order to learn how to learn. What Benson represented in the 1940s was a general dismissal of the old and an endorsement of modern and progressive ideas of how children, and in fact all people, learn. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the rise of educational experts and their philosophies, had a profound impact on the catechism, leading most to view it as antiquated and unhelpful.

Even within the Baptist denominations, liberal Protestantism and their various philosophies was rife; in fact, two of the early twentieth centuries most notable liberal pastors were Baptists: Harry Emmerson Fosdick and Walter Rauschenbusch. By the early 1920s however, orthodox Baptists, Presbyterians, and others resolved to correct the liberal course of their respective denominations coalescing into a loose network of Fundamentalists. Fundamentalists in the Northern Baptist Convention went so far as to appeal for the removal of a liberal seminary professor.¹⁰⁶ The response was typical for liberal Baptists who claimed, “There can be no such thing as a heresy trial in the Baptist denomination... because Baptists have no authorized or standard confession of faith.”¹⁰⁷ The Fundamentalists in the Northern Baptist Convention lost that fight, as well as the denomination. Observing the failures of the North, the Fundamentalists in the Southern

¹⁰⁴ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 176-78.

¹⁰⁵ Benson, *History of Christian Education*, 179. A major goal of Benson’s book was to help his students at Moody Bible College in the 1940’s understand why he was so passionate about creating new, graded or age appropriate Sunday School materials. Materials that he would teach his students to write. cf. 229-33.

¹⁰⁶ Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 187.

¹⁰⁷ Kidd and Hankins, *Baptists in America*, 187.

Baptist Convention prioritized solidifying their commitment to a confession of faith, that would help define Baptist orthodoxy. But they did so in such a way, that signaled their abandonment of creeds and catechisms.

In 1925, the Southern Baptists formally adopted a new confession based on the 90 year-old *New Hampshire Confession*.¹⁰⁸ Realizing that many in the denomination would see the adoption of this confession as a new Baptist creed, the committee recommended softening the title to *The Baptist Faith and Message*¹⁰⁹ and included the following caveats:

‘The confession of faith’ is not intended to add anything to the simple conditions of salvation revealed in the New Testament. ‘Further,’ the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Confessions are only guidelines to interpretation, having no authority over the conscience. They are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life.¹¹⁰

Even orthodox Baptists implemented their much-needed *Baptist Faith and Message* with reluctance and clarifications, exemplifying the hostility towards doctrinal statements that was typical at the turn of the twentieth century — an impossible environment for catechisms to not only thrive, but exist. Educational theories, the Sunday School movement, and a general distrust amongst Baptists of any doctrinal statements outside of Scriptures each contributed a heavy blow to the historical use of catechisms and for all intents and purposes, the Baptist catechism was dead by the second decade of the twentieth century, holding virtually no place in the educational environment for the next one-hundred years.

¹⁰⁸ The *New Hampshire Confession* (1833) itself was an update of the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith* (1742) which in turn was an update to the *London Baptist Confession* (1689). Each of these could be said to be of the lineage of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. Catechisms related to these confessions have been noted above.

¹⁰⁹ McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 678.

¹¹⁰ Preamble to the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message*, reproduced in, Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell, eds., *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America’s Largest Protestant Denomination* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 163.

Conclusion

The catechism enjoyed a fruitful period from the reformation through the end of the eighteenth century. But throughout the nineteenth century, several factors created a hostile climate to the beloved practice. The Second Great Awakening, thriving theological liberalism, the growth of the Sunday School movement, and the rise of certain learning theories each contributed to the lengthy decline of the catechism. These historical, theological, and pedagogical movements converged at their embrace of pragmatism. In the nineteenth century when determining how to train children, how to shepherd new converts, even how to win new converts, the church became far less concerned about what the Bible had to say and instead focused on what worked. The questions that arose were: “Does it work? Is it reasonable? Is it practical?” If “Yes,” then logic led one to believe, “The practice must be sanctioned by God.” Conversely, if it didn’t work, wasn’t reasonable, or wasn’t practical, then one dismissed the practice.¹¹¹ In the minds of most church leaders at the dawn of the twentieth century, catechisms failed this pragmatic test.

Nineteenth-century pragmatism thrived in all corners of Protestantism. Liberal churches ran towards societal and scholarly acceptance, proudly touting their success. Conservative churches as well, often measured the success of ministries with the pragmatic rubrics of revivalism. Consequently, by the beginning decades of the twentieth century the importance of creeds, confessions, and catechisms had all but faded, collateral damage to the broader theological battles of the day. By 1920, the catechism was essentially dead. Particularly in Baptist churches, it has lain buried for the last century, like Joshua’s twelve stones. But God always purifies and directs his church back to himself, and in recent years an appetite for sound doctrine has grown, causing Baptists

¹¹¹ A perfect illustration is found in Finney who chastened those who dared refute his revival tactics, “Much fault has been found with measures which have been preeminently and continually blessed of God for the promotion of revivals...Take care how you find fault with God.” In other words, if you questioned Finney’s methods (which worked), you questioned God. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals*, 212.

to reconsider the importance of catechesis and priming churches to consider reinstating this important practice.

CHAPTER 4

THE *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM* IMPLEMENTED AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FARMINGTON

As America has grown more secular in recent decades, the veneer of Christianity is showing signs of deterioration. This has had a purifying effect on churches as cultural Christians no longer feel the societal pressure to remain and those who do remain, often spend time to evaluate their theological heritage. For the last few generations that heritage has been sanitized of doctrinal distinctives by the decisionistic, ecumenical movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as just discussed in chapter 3. Only recently has a resurgent interest in theology gained significant traction among the laity.¹

Most notable among Baptists has been a renewed interest in historical theology and subsequently, Calvinism. Over thirty years ago Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth noted “a new trend among Southern Baptists, still small but growing, ‘that’ represents a resurgence of Calvinistic theology... ‘a’ resurgence by the 1980’s ‘that’ represented a strong presence within the SBC.”² He goes on to suggest a couple of factors for this resurgence:

First, there can be no doubt that Calvinism has been a major part of Baptist heritage, an emphasis which has diminished over the years... Calvinists wish to reappropriate some of this heritage... Second, neither the style nor the substance of some

¹ See chapter 1 for historical developments at Frist Baptist Church of Farmington, MI which are indicative of similar movements amongst Baptists in general.

² H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1987), 699.

Southern Baptist evangelism has been above reproach... Calvinists have pinpointed shallowness ‘and’ emotional manipulations.³

As Baptists further studied their own history these last thirty years, Calvinistic convictions have only strengthened and renewed an appreciation for the Magisterial Reformation. Consequently, now more than in recent decades there is a willingness to appreciate and carefully consider the Reformers and their ways.⁴ Further, there is a growing recognition that revivalism and pragmatism are behind many problems with how the church has engaged in evangelism and church ministry in general. Just consider the title of a book by current Southern Baptist Convention President, J. D. Greear: *Stop Asking Jesus into your Heart*.⁵ Greear winsomely refutes a hallmark of Southern Baptist revivalism, the ‘sinner’s prayer,’ in a book that wouldn’t have received much traction a generation earlier.

The reformed resurgence couples naturally with a conservative inclination that appreciates history and models ministry after historic, biblical, and orthodox Christianity. Revivalist hangovers from the Second Great Awakening, creedal aversions, and pragmatic ecclesiology are no longer in vogue for many Baptists. Therefore, now more than any time in the previous one-hundred years, Baptists are primed to appreciate and use a *New Baptist Catechism*.

³ McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 699.

⁴ This is admittedly simplistic and a large amount of the success of the Southern Baptists in particular to return to a Calvinistic and consequently more creedal stance can be attributed to the conservatives taking back the seminaries in the early 1990s. On the forefront of this movement was Dr. Albert Mohler who spearheaded significant changes at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, KY. For a brief account of this conservative resurgence see, Thomas S. Kidd and Barry Hankins, *Baptists in America: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 237-46.

⁵ J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus into your Heart* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013).

Composing the *New Baptist Catechism*

With the need for the *NBC* established in my mind, I set to work studying historic catechisms focusing special attention on Baptist catechisms.⁶ In order to better understand the evolution of the catechism I first studied the oldest of the catechisms and progressed to the newest. As I studied each catechism, I would note particularly poignant questions and answers and categorize them into standard systematic theology groupings that eventually became a guide as I composed the *NBC*.⁷

Since my focus was on Baptist catechisms in particular, my oldest catechism I consulted was *An Orthodox Catechism* written by Hercules Collins (1680).⁸ This catechism only slightly updated the *Heidelberg Catechism* and so remains an excellent example of how early Baptists desired to firmly root themselves within the clear stream of orthodox theology and distance themselves from their more radical non-conformist cousins (i.e., anabaptists). The next catechism referenced was *A Baptist Catechism*, also known as *Keach's Catechism*, composed by Benjamin Keach and William Collins (1693), which itself was an update of the venerable *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.⁹ These two historic catechisms proved in many ways to be the backbone of the project as many future catechisms were simply modifications of these works. The other historic catechisms referenced in the composition of the *NBC* were: *A Catechism for Girls and*

⁶ For this task, Thomas J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017), proved an indispensable starting point.

⁷ For the *New Baptist Catechism* see appendix 1.

⁸ Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and G. Stephen Weaver, Jr. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014). The original publication date is 1680. Note dates in parenthesis refer to original publication dates for the subsequent catechisms.

⁹ Benjamin Keach, *The Baptist Catechism; Commonly Called Keach's Catechism* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1813).

Boys (1798),¹⁰ *Spurgeon's Catechism* (1855),¹¹ *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (1878),¹² and *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (1892).¹³ Additionally, I found two modern catechisms useful, the *New City Catechism* (2017),¹⁴ and *Cornerstones* (2018).¹⁵ Other catechisms were read and studied, but these were the ones that proved most helpful.

The subtitle of the *NBC*, “190 Questions & Answers to Lay the Foundation of our Faith,” strikes to the purpose of the project: to provide a theological framework for understanding and applying the Word of God and increase in zeal for the knowledge of God. To set the *Catechism* within Protestant orthodoxy I began the *Catechism* with some overview questions, in a section titled, “The Big Picture.” In the first five questions I introduce key phrases that are repeated throughout the *Catechism*, such as the first question adopted from *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, “What is the chief purpose of humanity? Answer: To glorify God and enjoy him forever.” The second question is derived from *An Orthodox Catechism* (also in *Heidelberg*), “What is our only hope in life and death? Answer: That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.” The rest of “The Big Picture” questions reference the five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation answering the questions, “3. What does it mean to belong to God? 4. Can we belong to God apart from Christ? [and] 5. How

¹⁰ Contained in Nettles, *Teaching Truth*, 145-68.

¹¹ C. H. Spurgeon and T. T. Eaton, *A Baptist Catechism with Proofs* (Louisville: Baptist Book, 1898).

¹² James P. Boyce, *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (Louisville: Caperton & Cates Publishers, 1878).

¹³ John A. Broadus, *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1892).

¹⁴ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *The New City Catechism*, The Gospel Coalition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017). The *NCC* is not specifically Baptist but as it was produced by the Gospel Coalition and published by Crossway, many Baptists were eager to utilize it in their churches.

¹⁵ Brian Dembowczyk, *Cornerstones Parent Guide, 200 Questions and Answers to Teach Truth* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018).

do we know there is a God?”¹⁶ I thought it was essential to start the *Catechism* in a familiar way for those who have previously engaged in catechesis but also to set the tone for the rest of the *NBC*, rooting it in Protestant history and orthodoxy.

As I continued to compose the *Catechism*, I worked through in logical order the main topics of systematic theology and structured the questions to build upon the previous and give a full-orbed understanding of each biblical doctrine.

Figure 1. *New Baptist Catechism* outline

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Questions</u>
The Big Picture.....	1-5
The Word of God.....	6-21
God.....	22-42
Created Things – Humanity – Sin.....	43-64
God the Father.....	65-66
God the Son.....	67-81
God the Holy Spirit.....	82-89
Salvation	
Election and Calling.....	90-94
Regeneration.....	95-99
Conversion.....	100-108
Justification and Sanctification.....	109-119
Church	
The Local Church.....	120-136
Ordinances.....	137-148
The Christian Life	
Prayer.....	149-155
Scripture Reading.....	156-157
Evangelism.....	158-162
Discipleship.....	163-166
Worship.....	167-172
Last Things	
Personal Eschatology.....	173-182
Cosmic Eschatology.....	183-190 ¹⁷

¹⁶ *NBC* question and answer 1 actually highlights *solī Deo gloria*. But note the four other *solas* italicized in *NBC* answers 3, 4, and 5:

Answer 3: To belong to God is to be forgiven of sin, adopted into God’s eternal family, and united to Christ by *faith alone* through *God’s grace alone*.

Answer 4: No one comes to the Father, except through *Christ alone*.

Answer 5: All creation proclaims there must be a Creator, and all humanity has a sense of morality and eternity imprinted within them by the Creator; but the *Word of God alone* fully reveals the one true God and tells us how we can belong to him.

¹⁷ See appendix 1 for the *NBC*. The print edition utilized this outline as a table of contents.

In composing the *Catechism*, I tried to balance memorability with thoroughness — a difficult task that others have similarly noted.¹⁸ One way I aimed for that balance was by borrowing an idea from the *New City Catechism* to include a shorter answer within the longer answer.¹⁹ The shorter answer being the starting point for memorization. As an example, note question 7, “What does the Bible teach? Answer: The Bible reveals the one true God, explains what is wrong with the world, and tells how we can be right with and belong to God forever. **The whole Bible is centered on the gospel message**, making us wise for salvation.” The bolded portion is designed as a stand-alone answer, but the full text adds further clarity. This was done for almost all one-hundred-ninety answers and required careful arrangement of sentence structure to assure that answers would be grammatically and theologically correct for both shorter and longer answers.

In addition to having a shorter catechism of sorts within the *NBC*, I also chose a one-year rotation of fifty-two significant questions and answers to be used in the church services of FBCF. The one-year *NBC* covers all major points of theology and can act as a starting point for individuals who find one-hundred-ninety questions daunting or simply be a helpful introduction to catechesis for new believers before covering sound doctrine in greater detail with the full *NBC*. And yet, there seemed also to be a need for the youngest of children to engage in catechesis at a level appropriate for them and so I selected a twenty-question foundation containing the simplest of answers that would be accessible for even preschool aged children. Thus, the very same *Catechism* is designed to be used from the youngest of children up through adulthood and can be a tool for

¹⁸ In December 1891, after finishing the first lesson of his catechism, Broadus wrote, “It is, of course, an extremely difficult task to make questions and answers about the existence and attributes of the Divine Being, that shall be intelligible to children, adequate as the foundation for future thinking, and correct as far as they go.” A. T. Robertson, *Life and Letters of John A. Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1909), 398.

¹⁹ Redeemer, *New City Catechism*.

Christian discipleship at any point of maturity. The goal was versatility so the *NBC* could be an enduring tool.

After composing an initial draft of the *Catechism* I contacted and received feedback from an expert panel consisting of the four pastor-elders of First Baptist Church of Farmington, two seminary professors, and six full-time pastors of local churches.²⁰ They each provided feedback on the content of the *Catechism* as well as completed the *New Baptist Catechism* Evaluation Rubric.²¹ Based on their edits and evaluations I made a few resubmissions until each of the members of the expert panel determined that the *NBC* met or exceeded the sufficient level of the evaluation rubric. With a finalized draft of the *NBC* ready to use I started gathering participants for the project from FBCF in February 2020.²² By March 2020 I had an initial group of volunteers from each of my three designated age groups: seven children (ages 7-13), six teens (ages 14-20), and seventeen adults (ages 21 and up).²³

Implementing the *NBC* Project at FBCF

After gathering the project participants my first task was to administer the pre-project Theological Knowledge and Application Survey (TKAS), which I did electronically using Google Forms.²⁴ Upon completion of the TKAS each participant received both a link to the *NBC* posted on the FBCF website and a hard copy which

²⁰ Seminary professors included Drs. Gregg Allison and Thomas Nettles, with additional feedback on specific portions from Drs. Bruce Ware and Stephen Wellum. Pastors included local Michigan pastors and out of state pastor-scholars Drs. Bobby Jamieson and P. Chase Sears.

²¹ See appendix 3.

²² See appendix 5 for a letter I sent to the members of FBCF to explain the expectations of the project.

²³ The participant's age was determined based on age as of April 1, 2020. These numbers met or exceeded my goals of at least four participants per age group. Further, I expected some individuals would begin the project but be unable to complete the project.

²⁴ See appendix 2 for the TKAS along with the corresponding agreement to participate. The results of the TKAS will be discussed in the subsequent evaluation of the project, in chapter 5.

included an introduction to provide guidance for participating in the project.²⁵ I had individual conversations with each participant to make sure they understood project expectations, the duration of the project, and to give ample opportunity for clarifying questions to be asked. The expectations for every participant were summarized with five tasks: take the pre-project TKAS, memorize the questions and answers for at least the “20-Question Foundation,” read through the *Catechism* a minimum of five times, participate in three discussion-based reviews of the *Catechism*, and take the same TKAS after completing the previous four requirements. The entirety of the project was scheduled to take place over the course of eight months.

Since the bulk of the earliest part of the project required private study, I checked in with the group at least bi-monthly to see how studies were progressing. Towards the end of the summer, I encouraged participants to complete their third reading of the *NBC* prior to the scheduled *Catechism* review classes, which took place in the month of October 2020.²⁶ The *Catechism* review classes covered the entirety of the *NBC* and aimed not just to review content but highlight how the *Catechism* helped define orthodoxy, aid in Bible study, and could be applied to various situational apologetics. In the first class I covered a brief history of catechetical instruction — including why Baptists stopped catechizing, an overview of the contents of the *NBC*, and a review of questions 1 through 42.²⁷ In the second class, I focused on reviewing questions 43 through 119, and in the third class, questions 120 through 190.²⁸ I covered the material

²⁵ These booklets were self-published by a local printer. The introduction can be found in appendix 6.

²⁶ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these classes were a blend of in person and virtual instruction.

²⁷ See appendix 1 for the *NBC*. The reader will note that question 42 is the last question in the theology proper section, titled simply, “God.”

²⁸ Session two began with anthropology and moved through soteriology, and session three began with ecclesiology and ended with eschatology. See appendix 1 for the *NBC* and the corresponding headings.

for two different groups on two different nights of the week: a children’s class that lasted ninety minutes and a combined teen and adult class, that covered the same material but lasted two hours. After the final review class each participant was sent the post-project TKAS to take at their leisure over the last month of the project.²⁹

In order to highlight the benefits of learning the *Catechism* to the whole congregation, I also preached a three-week sermon series on the importance of sound doctrine. Each week I covered one of the three main texts referenced above in Chapter 2 thereby solidifying the biblical justification and practical vitality for knowing sound doctrine. The sermon series also helped explain why we repeat a weekly *Catechism* question and answer and how these statements can have a direct connection to how one chooses to live life. A significant goal of the sermons was to prepare the congregation to incorporate the *Catechism* into both their personal lives and the different church ministries. As the project was being finalized the pastor-elders of FBCF discussed implementing the *NBC* into other areas of the life of the church and each of them completed the Ministry Plan Evaluation Tool.³⁰ They marked the rubric at or exceeding sufficient and the whole elder-body is eager to see FBCF use the *NBC* for generations to come.

Conclusion

The project lasted eight months, which was enough time for participants to saturate themselves in the material and ensure slow, substantial growth. One of the reasons discussed above for the demise of the catechism in Baptist churches, was the abandonment of the Biblical doctrine of conversion and the slow, methodical practice of

²⁹ Only those who finished the catechism review classes were considered to have finished the project. In the final TKAS I also gave each participant an opportunity to note how many times he or she read the catechism and how well they memorized the 20-question foundation. This meant that each of the seven children finished the project, five of the six teens finished, and thirteen of the seventeen adults finished the project.

³⁰ See appendix 4.

discipleship. Even eight months is a relatively short time to grow familiar with a catechism the size of the *NBC*, so I encouraged participants to continue to use the *Catechism* in a variety of capacities in the coming months and years. As a final step in the project implementation, I had each participant fill out a survey and provide feedback on their involvement.³¹

Upon the readministering of the TKAS, the goal of “increased knowledge of systematic theology and confidence in applying a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics,” was considered successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-project results. The results of the t-test indicates that the study of the *NBC* made a statistically significant difference, resulting in the increased competency to know and apply theology ($t_{(24)} = 10.70, p < 0.00000000013$).³² The following chapter will provide an extensive evaluation of this project.

³¹ See appendix 7.

³² See appendix 8.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM*
IMPLEMENTED

After our morning worship service, a church member confided in me, “I’m always hesitant to talk about the Lord with others, because I’m afraid I won’t be able to answer their questions.” This brother was a faithful member — albeit with weak personal study habits. Nevertheless, I was saddened and encouraged him to speak boldly and feel free to say, “I don’t know,” to the hard questions. I wish I could say this was the first time I had heard this sentiment, yet as often as I would try to provide the occasional answer, teach a class, or preach a sermon, what was missing was a tool for slow-methodical discipleship. Christians need slow, methodical training in theology — a theology that does not simply expand knowledge of God but awakens a rich love for him and equips Christians to have accurate and edifying conversations about God.

In composing the *New Baptist Catechism* there were countless shepherding scenarios like this one running through my mind and upon completion of the project, I am deeply encouraged by the significant improvement participants showed in applying theology to life.¹ After completing the project, one adult participant who strongly agreed with the statement, “I can better answer typical questions or objections that some might have about my faith after studying the *NBC*,” also wrote, “I think this was where the *NBC* helped most – giving me concise answers to questions people may have about the Bible and the Gospel.”² She was not alone as the average score of the TKAS rose 38 points out

¹ See appendix 8 for the t-test results on the TKAS.

² All personal statements from participants quoted in this chapter were collected in the *New Baptist Catechism* Project Evaluation form. See appendix 7.

of 212 (or 18 percent).³ The teens showed the most marked improvement averaging 54 points higher (or 26 percent). The TKAS was carefully designed to assess not only theological truth but the application of theology to life and virtually everyone, upon careful study of the *NBC*, improved on the survey. For example, statement 27 of the TKAS makes a false assertion: “Heaven is a place where we will simply worship God for all eternity, like an everlasting church service.” Initially 66 percent of all participants either didn’t know or agreed with this statement, compared to only 12 percent on the post-project TKAS. This statement is not only theologically incorrect but also affects the Christian’s eager anticipation, or lack thereof, for Christ’s return (as great as church is, few, if any, would eagerly anticipate having church all day, forever). It becomes easier to glorify and enjoy God in all that is done on this earth once the Christian grasps that God designed eternity as a new creation to be similarly enjoyed, yet without sin. The *NBC* asks and answers some crucial questions that clarify the believer’s eternal state: “178. What is heaven and why is it our greatest source of hope? 179. Will the new heaven and new earth be like the first? 180. Will we have things to do in the new earth?”⁴ Studying and reviewing the *Catechism* proved to be invaluable in establishing the content of the Christian’s hope while avoiding typical errors.

But catechism work is not fast work — it is not accomplished in the hour that it takes to read one-hundred-ninety questions and answers, or in a class, or a whole

³ The t-test revealed a 1.3 in 1 trillion probability that the observed score increase happened simply by chance. See appendix 8, table A.2 for more t-test data.

⁴ *NBC* 178. Answer: Heaven is the place of eternal, conscious blessing for those united to Christ by faith. It is described as a new creation, a return to Edenic like blessings, with no sin, death, or disease, where in perfect bodies we will live with and enjoy God forever.

NBC 179. Answer: Yes, part of Christ’s work of redemption is to redeem every part of fallen creation and reverse the curse of Genesis 3. Therefore, creation waits eagerly to be renewed and will be like the first creation, without the effects of sin.

NBC 180. Answer: Yes, there will still be distinct societies and nations in the new earth, and just as societies function here on earth, we too will have certain jobs and tasks to perform for the good of the whole. Similarly, there will be leisure and personal relationships to enjoy for all eternity.

weekend retreat. Catechism work is slow. It takes months of repetition, discussions, and careful study to get to the point where complex theological truths begin to take root and effect change. Thus, this project spanned the better part of eight months and in many ways is not finished. For the *NBC* was designed to grow with the catechumen, to be profitable for circling back in repetition and for picking up fresh ideas no matter the level of Christian maturity. Yet I am grateful to report that even within eight short months the project was deemed profitable for every participant, and the vast majority plan to continue to use the *NBC* personally, within families, and with friends for years to come.⁵

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project, stated in chapter 1, was “to develop the *New Baptist Catechism* to be used in FBCF services and homes,” and to utilize the *NBC* as a “vital tool for varied stages of Christian discipleship so that members of the church will have a better theological framework for understanding and applying the Word of God and increase in zeal for the knowledge of God.” Since the *NBC* was completed and implemented at FBCF, this purpose has been fulfilled.

The *NBC* has been fully incorporated into the services at FBCF as we corporately read both the questions and answers of the one-year *NBC* at the beginning of each Sunday service. There have been no comments of dissatisfaction and in fact, many frequently note how the *Catechism* ties in well with the day's worship or to an act of God's providence during the week. One new Christian proudly told me how he had the opportunity to share the *Catechism* question and answer on the difference between justification and sanctification with his friends in his Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.⁶

⁵ 87% answered agree slightly, agree, or strongly agree to statements 9 and 10 in the *NBC* Project Evaluation: “9. I plan to use the *NBC* in my home with my family or in personal study. 10. I want to use the *NBC* as a study resource for discipleship with other Christians.” See appendix 7.

⁶ *NBC* Question 109. What is the difference between justification and sanctification? Answer: Justification is our declared righteousness before God, our settled standing at the point of conversion. Sanctification is our gradual growing in righteousness that continues until our death or the Lord's return.

Several noted the pertinent timing of questions on God’s sovereignty and providence, and how those realities encourage believers — we read and recited these questions in the very first weeks that the church stopped meeting for the sake of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of March and the beginning of April.⁷ The congregation has openly embraced the corporate aspect of the *Catechism*.

Similarly, the families who participated in the project have noted that they plan to continue to use the *Catechism* in their homes and have appreciated both the structure and content of the *NBC*. There were also several families whose children were too young to officially participate in the project, who nonetheless have been using the *NBC* in their homes and plan to continue. The *NBC* has become integrated into family and personal devotions for many church members and I expect this to only increase when the *Catechism* goes through a second printing and is more widely available to the membership.

I have personally used the *NBC* in both one-on-one and small group discipleship opportunities and even begun to incorporate pertinent questions and answers into a couple of different membership classes, specifically when teaching on the Trinity, church leadership, the ordinances, and formal church membership. Judging from the successful t-test evaluation of the TKAS, the *NBC* has indeed provided “a better theological framework for understanding and applying the Scriptures.”⁸ As far as

⁷ *NBC* Question 40. Why call God sovereign? Answer: Because he is king over all, with limitless power and authority to reign over his creation, he is able to do whatever he desires according to his holy and perfect will.

Question 41. What is the providence of God? Answer: God is present and active in all creation. He is working personally and powerfully to guide all creation to fulfill all his purposes for his glory and the good of his children.

Questions 42. How does knowing God’s sovereignty and providence encourage us? Answer: It encourages us to be patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity, resting our highest hope in God our Father. We can be sure that there is nothing which can take us out of his faithful love, for he is the only Lord of all.

⁸ See appendix 8 for the t-test results.

evaluating an “increase in zeal for the knowledge of God,” this is admittedly a little harder to discern. One anecdote should suffice. Prior to the *Catechism* project one late-elementary school child was struggling with certainty about his faith and assuredly was not zealous. Post-*Catechism*, he not only had one of the highest point-total improvements on the TKAS, but his mother also noted that he has been quick to note the logical consistency of Christianity as they have family devotions and talk about various other faiths.⁹ Certainly, in knowing God with greater clarity, drawing near to him has become a higher joy, seeing his handiwork in creation has taken a clearer focus, and trusting him at all times a greater source of comfort.

Evaluation of the Projects Goals

The project goals noted in chapter 1 were each accomplished and proved to be helpful markers in directing the implementation of the *NBC*. The first goal was “to develop the *New Baptist Catechism* for use in a variety of venues at FBCF.” This process was described above in chapter 4 and was successfully met with the completion and publishing of the first draft of the *NBC* in March 2020.

The second goal was “to assess the current knowledge of systematic theology and the application of a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics within a select group of children, teens, and adults from FBCF.” In order to meet this goal I had to first carefully design the TKAS.¹⁰ Having found the bi-annual “state of theology” survey by Ligonier Ministries helpful, I used that tool as a gauge of fitness for my TKAS statements and questions.¹¹ Further, I used portions of the *Catechism* itself to craft the TKAS, making sure that every question on the TKAS would correspond to a

⁹ See appendix 8, table A1, “Child 5.”

¹⁰ See appendix 2.

¹¹ “The State of Theology,” Ligonier Ministries, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://thestateoftheology.com>.

specific *NBC* question and answer.¹² The next step was to ensure that an appropriate number of church members would participate in the project from each of three demographics: child, age 7-13; teen, age 14-20; and adult, 21 and up. This was important because if the *NBC* was indeed an enduring tool able to be used for young children up through adults, I had to ascertain its effectiveness on each demographic. More than enough participants volunteered to participate which allowed for an accurate assessment of each demographic at FBCF.¹³

Upon further reflection of the TKAS, I think a few questions could be added in order to assess more areas of theology and possibly remove a few that were designed to cover one area from a couple different angles. That being said, I am pleased with the usefulness of the TKAS and believe it is a helpful tool to use along with the *NBC*, to help connect theological truth to life situations.

The third goal was “to increase knowledge of systematic theology and confidence in applying a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics through the study of the *Catechism* among the FBCF test subjects.” The process for the project participants was outlined above in chapter 4 and judging from the high retention rate (only four adults, one teen, and no children dropped), overwhelmingly positive t-test results from the TKAS ($t_{(24)} = 10.70$, $p < 0.00000000013$), and consistently favorable feedback from the project evaluation form, this goal was considered successfully met. One adult participant who was raised in a Christian home wrote, “The *NBC* addressed some things that I had never really considered before, and some things that were erroneous in my past religious education. It certainly was clarifying.” Only one individual noted that they did not have a better grasp on what they believed about God, how it is that

¹² See appendix 2. The right-hand column includes the specific *NBC* questions addressed.

¹³ Initial participants included: seven children, six teens, and seventeen adults. Those who completed the project were seven children, five teens, and thirteen adults.

God saves, or how the church fit into God’s program, and his reason was, “The *NBC* was a refresher more than new information,” adding, “the concise wording was helpful.”¹⁴

Further, the profitability of the *NBC* spanned generations as is evidenced by the great increases in TKAS test scores in children up through adults.

Table 2. TKAS comparison by age-group

	<i>TKAS - 1 - Ave.</i>	<i>TKAS - 2 - Ave.</i>	<i>Ave. Increase</i>	<i>Percent Dif.</i>
Adults	168	199	31	15%
Teens	135	189	54	25%
Children	136	175	39	18%
All	152	190	38	18%

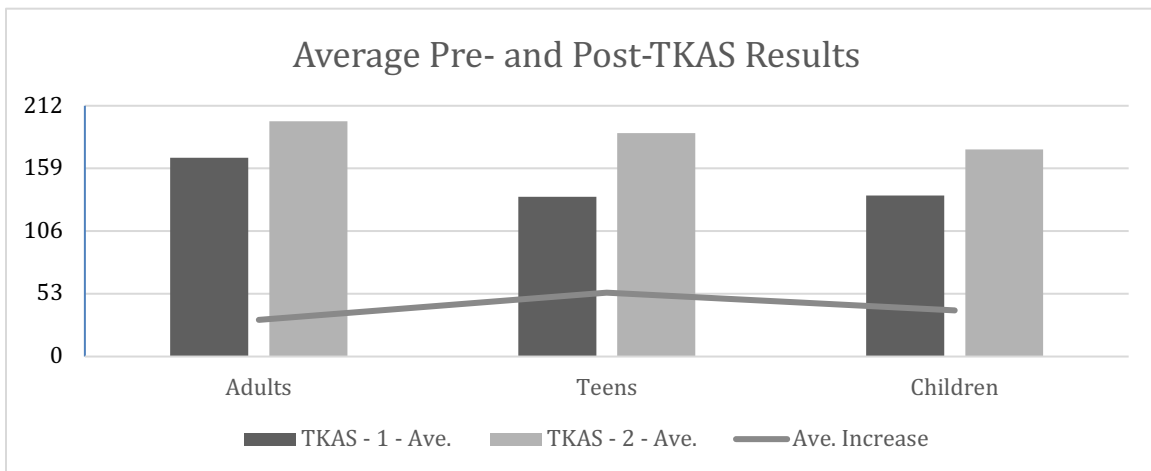


Figure 2. TKAS comparison by age-group graph

Table 2 and figure 1 show the significant increase in average test scores in all three groups, showing that no matter the age or spiritual maturity, everyone was able to grow in his or her ability to know and apply a theological framework after studying the *NBC*.¹⁵

¹⁴ See appendix 7, questions 2, 3, and 4. 54 percent would strongly agree with these statements and most of the rest agreed.

¹⁵ When assessing the average scores of each individual participant in appendix 8, the wide variance of TKAS scores within an age group, indicated the starting spiritual maturity of those individuals.

Therefore, both the *NBC* and the TKAS were well designed and accessible regardless of the age and spiritual maturity of the participant. It is to be expected that the adults had the lowest average increase due to having the highest beginning test scores, but that the average adult still increased by 31 points indicates a significant improvement. The teens had the highest average increase which affirms the idea that the teenage years are some of the most fertile years for spiritual growth. As children become young adults, they are significantly more capable of thinking on deeper and more critical levels and so it is imperative to capture that crucial time of life to help them grow rooted in their faith. But too many associate catechisms as something for children, when in reality, teenagers might actually benefit the most from catechetical instruction. As the data indicates, three of the four highest increased TKAS scores were from teens.¹⁶ The increased average test score for children was also higher than adults but the limitations of age and critical thinking skills may have plateaued the TKAS scores from reaching the peak of the teen's average.¹⁷ The goal of using the *NBC* as an effective cross-generational discipleship tool to "increase knowledge and confidence to apply a theological framework to life," was successfully met.

Unexpectedly, the TKAS proved to be a valuable tool not just of assessment, but of instruction and growth. The TKAS statements generated much discussion in the review classes and provided a starting point for related questions on how to apply the theological truths taught in the *NBC*. One example came up when discussing

Those who began with lower scores often increased more than those who began with higher scores. However, it is significant that everyone increased their TKAS score.

¹⁶ See appendix 8, teens 1, 4, and 5.

¹⁷ Also contributing to the slightly lower average among the children was "Child 6" who increased only by one point. The parents of this child said that the child studied the *Catechism* well and had been eager to share his newfound knowledge with his siblings. But in taking the second TKAS, he took the test on his own without his parents reading him the questions and marking his answers. They assume that he read a number of the statements on the TKAS too quickly and inaccurately and thus did not increase his score as much as he, or they, anticipated. If he would have increased his score more significantly, the children's average increase would likely have been into the 40s.

ecclesiology. When coming to the conclusion that it is not best for a college student to neglect church membership and only attend an on-campus Bible study, students in the class also made the connection to missions work and how understanding ecclesiology greatly focuses all types of ministry, both local and foreign. Particularly helpful was *NBC* questions 120, 124, 168, and 169 which could be applied to a number of different life situations.¹⁸ Project participants would frequently stay after class late on a Friday night and continue to talk theology and various applications of the truths they were learning. The third goal was successfully accomplished.

The fourth goal was “to develop a ministry plan to integrate the use of the *Catechism* into various ministries of FBCF, by encouraging the memorization, knowledge, and application of the *NBC* to Bible study and situational apologetics.” Upon a careful discussion with the elders of how the *NBC* can continue to be used in the body life of FBCF there was mutual excitement about the details spelled out in Appendix 4. Participants likewise expressed a desire to see the *NBC* incorporated into the ministries of FBCF, with all but one participant expressing a desire to include the *NBC* in the children’s ministries. The one participant who slightly disagreed was a teen who said, “I don’t know if kids would totally get it.” In a way this is high praise for the *Catechism*

¹⁸ *NBC* Question 120. What is a church? Answer: A church is a Spirit-regenerated, new covenant community of individuals united to Christ by faith, committed to one another, and Biblically organized into one local body. Baptism as a believer inaugurates membership into that body, and the Lord’s Supper perpetuates that union.

Question 124. What does a local church do? Answer: A local church gathers regularly to worship around the preaching and reading of the Word of God, the celebration of the ordinances, the edification of one another, and the pursuit of holiness. A church scatters to evangelize the lost, engages in acts of mercy, and in all ways aims to glorify God.

Question 168. Is attending a church service important to our worship? Answer: Yes, we are commanded to regularly meet together for corporate worship, and some aspects of worship cannot be done apart from the gathering of the local church, such as the participation in the ordinances, and submitting to leadership.

Question 169. What are the essential elements of corporate worship? Answer: Those elements that the New Testament explicitly commends, namely: prayer, reading the Word, preaching the Word, singing, giving of offerings, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. Although there should be uniformity in the elements included in corporate worship, various forms of each element are permitted.

from a teenager who was challenged by the theological truths of the *NBC*. I hope to create a kid-friendly devotional for the one-year *NBC* that could easily be incorporated into FBCF's children's church ministry so that teachers could briefly expand on the truths of the *Catechism* recited earlier in the service. In addition to incorporating the *NBC* into children's ministry, 90 percent of the project participants would like to encourage or require prospective members to read the *NBC* before joining the church.¹⁹ The hesitation that some expressed was more of a deep appreciation for the current members class format rather than an aversion to incorporating parts of the *NBC* when appropriate. I think incorporating specific questions and answers into the current topics covered in the membership class would be the best approach, while making sure the *Catechism* is available to prospective members as a valuable resource used by the church in many different settings. This fourth goal of strategically incorporating the *NBC* into more aspects of ministry at FBCF was successfully met, affirmed by both the elders and project participants.

Strengths of the Project

Several members noted that their favorite part of the project was the *Catechism* review class. "The class is the highlight of the project." "The review class was extremely helpful," "the most beneficial," and "very insightful." Part of the great value of the review class was that everyone was familiar with the *NBC* prior to each class and thus participation was high, and interest already piqued. Every participant said that they would both recommend others study the *NBC* and recommend others take the *NBC* review class.²⁰ In the strategic plan to further implement the *NBC*, the elders desire to offer the *Catechism* review class for the benefit of the whole church. Currently, I plan to teach a

¹⁹ See appendix 7, question 14. See question 11 for the topic of incorporation into children's ministry.

²⁰ See appendix 7, evaluation questions 12 and 13.

version of the class on a biannual basis. This should help expose more church members to the importance of having a theological framework for life and help those who learn best in an interactive classroom environment.

Another strength of the project was the completion of the *NBC*. Unlike many projects, books, or classes, the *NBC* should prove to be a more enduring tool for ministry. The *NBC*, like many catechisms that have come before it, is not situational in nature, but rather designed specifically to summarize biblical teaching. That being said, the *NBC* addresses certain current issues that at earlier times were assumed in the wider culture, such as questions “21. Can we trust the Genesis account of the beginning?” and “44. Is our gender part of God’s good creation?” and “45. What is marriage?”²¹ The answers to these questions are just as biblical, significant, and enduring as question “2. What is our only hope in life and death? Answer: That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.” Although the *NBC* addresses important issues uniquely faced by the church today, it was written to be more timeless than timely. Lord willing the *NBC* will be influential in the life of FBCF for generations to come and might even prove useful for other Baptist churches.

A final strength of the project was the posting of the *NBC* on the church website which proved helpful for new visitors exploring FBCF. One new family in particular, noted in their membership interview how helpful the *Catechism* was when they were looking for a church. Being new to the area and after having a bad experience with a theologically liberal church a few years back, this family was intent on doing

²¹ *NBC* 21. Answer: Yes, Genesis 1-11, like the rest of the Bible, presents historical facts and should be trusted completely, just as Jesus did.

NBC 44. Answer: Yes, God created us, his image bearers, as male and female. This means that all men and all women have dignity and significance before God and before one another. It also means we are to treat all people with respect and love, avoiding any sense of superiority and inferiority.

NBC 45. Answer: Marriage is God’s ongoing gift to humanity, always defined as the union of one man and one woman. Any attempt to subvert this definition, separate sexual intimacy from marriage, or reject God’s gift of gender rebels against God’s good design.

better research in finding a church to attend. When they read the website, they found not just sample sermons, but several helpful questions and answers. They had never heard of a catechism before but found the *NBC* to answer some of the exact questions they had wanted to ask of a new church. This certainly was an unintended benefit of posting the *NBC* on the church website but one that providentially helped a family find a good church in their area.

Weaknesses of the Project

I think a consistent weakness of the project was the misconception that accompany catechisms. Even though there was not a reaction against reciting the *NBC* in the services of FBCF, there seemed to be a misunderstanding among many that the only way to review the *Catechism* was to repeat the question-and-answer word for word, with no mistakes; that is, to use it only as a tool to be memorized. Instead, as stated in chapter 3, catechisms have often been used as a starting point for teaching theological truth that need not always be perfectly memorized. What is far more important are the concepts revealed in each answer. Memorization is helpful and should be pursued, but if the goal is only memorization, it is easy for the theological concepts to get lost in the precision of it all. One family in particular noted a marked improvement once this was realized. Another related weakness was to assume that handing people the *Catechism* is sufficient for building up theological acumen. In reality, the *Catechism* worked best as a tool used in various discipleship settings. Correcting this misconception seemed to be behind the overwhelming praise for the *Catechism* review classes. It wasn't simply reading or memorizing the *Catechism* alone that proved the most transformative but private study coupled with a group class.²²

²² This reality should not surprise any educator who knows that repetition and repetition in various ways helps people learn. What is particularly helpful to note is that the *NBC* lends itself to this multi-disciplined approach.

What I Would do Differently

If I had to do the project differently, I would want to explore in greater detail the historical theological developments of the catechism and flesh out the themes addressed in chapter 3. It would be interesting to do a biographical chapter or two exploring key seventeenth century English Baptists and their embrace of catechisms that updated the better-known *Heidelberg* and *Westminster Catechism*.²³ This research would enrich the historical motivations for catechism use and possibly provide added impetus for the church today to reengage in widespread catechesis.

As far as implementation of the project, I think having an initial *Catechism* review class at the beginning of the project would be helpful to not only communicate the project plan more clearly, but to ensure that everyone could have a summer of fruitful personal study. I fielded many individual questions, but the energy and unique environment of an initial class might have been particularly helpful.²⁴ With regard to the composition of the *NBC*, I still consider it a work in progress: refining answers, shifting word order, adding verse references; but overall, I am pleased with its usefulness.

Theological and Personal Reflections

I cannot help but recall chapter 3 when I consider the most important theological reflections from the project — for in considering why catechism use faded, the timing was certainly tied to the development of erroneous theological trends, and many of those same trends persist today. As a teenager, I was actively encouraged by several adults in my life to pursue Christian unity by way of keeping doctrinal definition to a minimum. Theological ideas were interesting pursuits but should not be held with certainty and diversity should be celebrated. Any dogmatic assertion of doctrine (other

²³ Hercules Collins and Benjamin Keach would be initial choices but upon further research there might be another early Baptist that would provide even more helpful insights.

²⁴ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this was not an option in the late spring of 2020.

than the reality that Jesus died and rose again), was met with suspicion and thus many of my peers found flexibility to make God into whoever they felt they needed him to be. I wish I could say this was an isolated experience, but as it turns out, I was simply breathing the ecumenical air of the anti-doctrine, decisionistic nineteenth century revivalists. In such an environment catechism use was choked out, and probably will still be met with some suspicion today — especially a catechism as detailed and lengthy as the *NBC*. But after the project, I am more convinced than ever of the great need that Christians have to learn and continue to pursue sound doctrine. The *NBC* is an effective tool to that end.

To know God, to know his will, to appreciate the joy of growing closer to him, are all much more accessible after studying the sound doctrine of a good catechism. Such knowledge also proves to inoculate Christians from false ideas about God and sinful habits that often creep in unaware, especially if ideas about God fluctuate with one's fancies. Good books are assuredly a necessary aide in this fight, but one can only read a good book so many times. A catechism is different: it is designed for repetition, it is designed to grow with the Christian, it is designed to teach how to ask good questions, it is designed as a discipleship tool. Therefore, incorporating a catechism into Christian discipleship can prove to leave a powerful, cross-generational legacy. When some of the excesses and flaws of nineteenth century revivalism are more clearly perceived, catechism use has the opportunity to again flourish in the church.

To cement the importance of knowing God and its connection to all of life, it is hard to improve upon the powerful opening of A.W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason, the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact

about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.²⁵

The *NBC* provides the Christian child, teen, or adult with this high view of God. But it does so not in a moment or after a quick read. No, the *NBC* is best used as part of God's slow, sanctifying work, his gradual growing us in righteousness. For Christians are not in need of turning God into who they most want him to be, rather discovering who he is, and finding grace and truth to help in our greatest moments of need.

I have found myself repeatedly turning to the *NBC* as I prepare sermons, write devotionals, counsel the hurting, and shepherd my children. As someone who knows theology better than the average church member, I can speak to the profound help that this tool has personally had in my life. The project has further confirmed a passion for personal discipleship as I have a new and enduring tool at my disposal and have seen it utilized with marked success. I also recognize more clearly the limitations of a catechism which is not a substitute for various ministries but instead, only an aid. For example, a catechism does not eliminate the need for personal discipleship and interaction, nor does it negate crisis discipleship or counseling, instead it supports the process of personally ministering God's Word. Further, the *NBC* is not a substitute for either the teaching or preaching ministries of the church but acts in concert with those crucial and biblically commanded endeavors. Regardless of the aspect of ministry, public or personal, the *NBC* is a valuable instrument to be used in the hands of God's servants. An instrument that helps correct some of the problems that have plagued the church for generations.

Conclusion

With the completion of the *NBC* there is now a tool available for pastors and parents, friends and family, to help disciple one another in the Christian faith. A tool that can be slowly reviewed as it methodically introduces a high view of God and sound

²⁵ Aiden Wilson Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1961), 1.

doctrine, encouraging the type of Christian growth that is sustainable and alters the believer's approach to all of life. The crowning achievement of this project lie not in these five chapters, as important as they have been in establishing the need for catechetical instruction and understanding the history of catechetical use. For as much as one can be motivated to pursue catechesis, that motivation falls flat if catechisms are not readily available or if the catechisms that are available remain inaccessible in language, style, or theological content. The *NBC* aims to help fill the need for an orthodox yet accessible catechism for today's Baptists. The success of the implementation of the *NBC* at FBCF suggests that the crowning achievement of this project lies in the 190 questions and answers of the *NBC*.

APPENDIX 1

NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM

Abbreviated Citations with Annotations (Ordered by publication date)

- Hammett* John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019). Monograph on ecclesiology.
- Allison* Gregg R. Allison, *50 Core Truths of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018). Short systematic theology.
- DC* Brian Dembowczyk, *Cornerstones Parent Guide, 200 Questions and Answers to Teach Truth* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018). Original catechism.
- NCC* Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *The New City Catechism*, The Gospel Coalition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017). Shortened and revised *Heidelberg*.
- Jamieson* Bobby Jamieson, *Understanding Baptism*, Church Basics Series (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2016). Short book for laity.
- Piper* John Piper, “What is Sin? The Essence and Root of All Sinning,” *Desiring God Blog*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-sin-the-essence-and-root-of-all-sinning>. Transcribed sermon.
- Whitney* Donald S. Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015). Short book for laity.
- Truth:78* Sally Michael, *My Purpose Will Stand: A Study for Children on the Providence of God* (Mendota Heights, MN: Truth78, 2013). Sunday school curriculum.
- FOF* Grace Community Church, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009). Curriculum for new Christians developed by Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA.
- BFM 2000* Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell, eds. *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America’s Largest Protestant Denomination* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007). Monograph on the history of the Southern Baptist Convention’s confession of faith. Only the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* is cited below.

- Alcorn* Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004). Monograph on history, much of which is organized into questions and answers.
- BTB* John A. Broadus, *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1892). Original catechism.
- BDB* James P. Boyce, *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (Louisville: Caperton & Cates Publishers, 1878). Original catechism.
- SC* C. H. Spurgeon and T. T. Eaton, *A Baptist Catechism with Proofs* (Louisville: Baptist Book, 1898). Revised *Westminster/Keach*, originally published in 1855.
- CGB* *Catechism for Girls and Boys*, in Thomas J. Nettles *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2017). Simplified *Westminster/Keach*, originally published 1798.
- KBC* Benjamin Keach, *The Baptist Catechism; Commonly Called Keach's Catechism* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1813). Revised *Westminster*, originally published 1693.
- OC* Hercules Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin and G. Stephen Weaver, Jr. (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014). Revised *Heidelberg*, originally published 1680.

All citations below indicate a reference to the source, not a full reproduction of the question and answer. A few phrases below are quotes of the works cited, but in order to keep the catechism more readable I chose to eliminate quotation marks and use them only for the direct quotation of Scriptures or creeds.

Key

- Shorter answers are in **bold** and are specifically designed to be memorized
- 52 Week Cycle – Noted by **grey highlights** and could be used over the course of a year in a weekly church service, or as a starting point for memorization
- 20 Question Foundation – Noted by **underlined questions** and could be used for young children (ages 3-6), as a starting point for learning the catechism

The Big Picture

1. What is the chief purpose of humanity? *SC 1*
 - A. **To glorify God and enjoy him forever** (1 Cor 10:31; Ps 73:25–26).
2. What is our only hope in life and death? *NCC 1, OC 1*
 - A. **That we are not our own but belong**, body and soul, both in life and death, **to God** and to our Savior Jesus Christ (Rom 14:7-9; 1 Cor 6:19-20; 1 Thess 5:9-10).
3. What does it mean to belong to God?
 - A. To belong to God is **to be forgiven of sin, adopted into God’s eternal family, and united to Christ by faith** alone through God’s grace alone (Eph 1:5-10; Gal 2:20-21; John 1:12).
4. Can we belong to God apart from Christ?
 - A. **No one comes to the Father, except through Christ alone** (John 14:6).
5. How do we know there is a God?
 - A. **All creation proclaims there must be a Creator**, and all humanity has a sense of morality and eternity imprinted within them by the Creator; **but the Word of God alone fully reveals the one true God and tells us how we can belong to him** (Rom 1:19-20; Ps 19; Eccl 3:11).

The Word of God

6. What is the Word of God?
 - A. **The Bible is the Word of God and our sufficient guide** to teach, correct, and train **for all of life** (2 Pet 1:3; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
7. What does the Bible teach?
 - A. The Bible reveals the one true God, explains what is wrong with the world, and tells how we can be right with and belong to God forever. **The whole Bible is centered on the gospel message**, making us wise for salvation (2 Tim 3:14-15; Eccl 12:13).
8. What is the significance of calling Jesus the Word?
 - A. **Jesus perfectly reveals God in the flesh, and through Christ alone** we are made right with God and **can belong to God forever** (John 1:1,14; Luke 24:27).
9. Who wrote the Bible? *DC*
 - A. **Men inspired by the Holy Spirit** wrote the Bible using the language and style with which they were most familiar (2 Pet 1:20-21).
10. What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?
 - A. **It means the Holy Spirit moved the writers of Scripture to write all that God desired, making it God-breathed.** Every word in the original documents is exactly as God intended it to be (John 14:26; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21).
11. Since men were involved in writing the Bible, is it without error?
 - A. **Yes, since the Bible is inspired, it is inerrant and wholly true, reflecting the truthful nature of God** (Heb 6:17-18; John 17:17; 1 Thess 2:13).
12. To what extent is the Bible authoritative in our lives?
 - A. **We are to believe and obey God's Word** in everything it addresses, **as if God Himself spoke directly to us** (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:14; 2 Pet 3:15-16).

13. Do we need the Bible in order to belong to God?
- A. **Yes, the Bible is necessary to know God's gospel, to grow in holiness, and to discern how to glorify and enjoy God both in this life and for all eternity (Rom 10:17; Matt 4:4; 1 Pet 2:2-3).**
14. Is the Bible still relevant today?
- A. **Yes, the Scriptures are clear and remain relevant for Christians today**, revealing truth about God and ourselves. Therefore, the Bible should be translated carefully into every language (Deut 29:29; Col 3:16; Heb 4:12).
15. How many books are there in the Bible?
- A. **There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, for a total of 66 books.** Jesus affirmed the divine authority of the Old Testament and promised the inspiration of the New Testament (Luke 24:44; John 16:13-14; 2 Pet 3:15-16).
16. What are the books of the Old Testament?
- A. The books of Moses are: **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.**
- The historical books are: **Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.**
- The poetical books are: **Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.**
- The major prophets are: **Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.**
- The twelve minor prophets are: **Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.**

17. What are the books of the New Testament?
- A. The gospels are: **Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.**
The story of the early church is: **Acts.**
Paul's letters are: **Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.**
The general letters are: **Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude.**
The book of prophecy is: **Revelation.**
18. Should anyone add to or take from the Bible?
- A. **No, not a single word.** No person, prophet, or angel has authority to add to, or take from, the Scriptures (Deut 4:2; Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18-19).
19. Can we trust that the Bible has remained unchanged?
- A. **Yes, the Word of God promises it will remain forever.** Further, we have an abundance of ancient documents that demonstrate God's preservation of the Bible in the original languages with few significant variations (Isa 40:6-8; Matt 5:18).
20. How should we interpret the Bible?
- A. **We must always aim for the author's intent,** taking into account the grammar, literary context, and flow of redemptive history for each passage. **Additionally, Scripture helps interpret Scripture** since God is the author of it all and cannot contradict himself (2 Pet 1:20-21; Acts 15:14-18).
21. Can we trust the Genesis account of the beginning?
- A. **Yes, Genesis 1-11, like the rest of the Bible, presents historical facts and should be trusted completely, just as Jesus did** (Matt 19:4-5; 24:37-39).

God

22. What is God? *NCC 2, KBC 7*

A. **God is the creator, sustainer, and ruler of everyone and everything.** He is eternal Spirit, infinite and unchangeable in his power and perfections, and goodness and glory (Ps 24:1, Ps 90:2; John 4:24; 1 Tim 1:17; Jas 1:17).

23. Is there more than one God? *SC 5*

A. **No, there is only one God and he alone is to be worshiped and feared.** He tells us that his name is Yahweh (Jer 10:10; Deut 6:4; Exod 3:14-15).

24. Who is the one true God? *KBC 9*

A. **The one true God eternally exists in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.** These three are one God, the same in essence, and equal in power and glory (1 John 5:7; Matt 28:19).

25. If there is only one God, why name three persons?

A. God's Word reveals the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. **Without three persons, God is not God**, nor is he eternally self-sufficient (1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:3; Acts 5:3-4).

26. Is God dependent on creation for anything?

A. **No, because God is Triune, he is totally independent and sufficient within himself** to possess and enjoy the full complement of his attributes, including relational attributes, such as love. And yet God is glorified by and derives joy from his creatures (Acts 17:24-25; 1 Cor 2:11; John 17:5, 24; 1 John 4:8, 13-16).

27. Does each person in the Trinity differ in their roles? *Allison, 90*

A. **Yes, each person of the Trinity carries out the one work of God distinctly and is uniquely involved in creating, sustaining, and saving creation.** And yet the three operate inseparably in all divine works: the Father originates through the Son by the Spirit (Gen 1:1-2; John 15:26; 2 Cor 13:14; Col 1:3-20).

28. How does the Nicene Creed help us understand the Trinity?
- A. **It clarifies the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit in this way:**
- “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,** of all things visible and invisible.
- And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,** begotten of his Father before all time; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; **begotten, not made,** being of one substance with the Father, **by Whom all things were made;** who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.
- And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son;** who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and Son, and who spoke by the prophets.” (Gal 4:4-6; Heb 1:1-3)
29. Can God be fully known?
- A. **No,** even though God graciously reveals himself to us, **our limited minds cannot fully know the greatness of his persons and perfections** (Job 36:26; Ps 145:3; Isa 55:8-9).
30. If we cannot fully know God, why should we try to know him at all?
- A. **Because** our highest boast is that we know the inexhaustible God; **the more we know God the more we are able to glorify and enjoy him** (Jer 9:23-24; Col 1:10; Ps 139:17-18; Phil 3:10).

31. Does God change his mind or make mistakes?
- A. **No, God is an eternal and perfect being and has no variation or shadow due to change**, and yet God responds to our prayers and encourages us in the midst of our trials (Jas 1:17; Ps 102:26-27; Isa 46:9-10).
32. Where is God?
- A. **God is omnipresent, and is everywhere equally**, not contained by physical space. And yet his presence can have different functions, such as to bless in heaven and punish in hell (Ps 139:7-10; Amos 9:1-4; Deut 10:14).
33. What does God know? *DC*
- A. **God** is omniscient and therefore **knows all that is, was, will be, and could be**. He knows the secrets of our hearts and nothing escapes his notice (1 John 3:20; Heb 4:13; Isa 46:9-10).
34. What does it mean that God is holy?
- A. **God** is perfectly pure, **sinless in every way**, transcendent **and set apart**, highly exalted **above all creation** (Isa 6:3; Hab 1:13; Lev 16:2).
35. Is God always just to punish evil?
- A. **Yes, God's wrath is justly poured out against all sin**. He is always righteous and therefore his judgments are always just. He alone is the standard and arbiter of absolute justice (Deut 32:4; Isa 10:1-4; 45:19).
36. But isn't God merciful, withholding his wrath?
- A. **Yes, he has mercy on whom he wills**, is slow to anger, and abounds in steadfast love. His mercy is a common grace gift to humanity as he allows the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, **patiently withholding his wrath until the due time** (Exod 33:19; 34:6; Matt 5:45; 1 Cor 4:5).

37. Does God have a primary attribute?
- A. **No, at all times God is all of his attributes;** no one attribute ranks before another. **Therefore, he is perfectly just and angry while simultaneously merciful and loving.** His hatred of sin and love for humanity unite most vividly at the cross of Jesus Christ (Exod 34:6-7; Isa 53:4-6; Rom 3:23-26).
38. How did God create all things? *SC*
- A. **God created all things out of nothing, by speaking them into existence.** He created the entire universe and everything within the universe, both physical and spiritual, in six consecutive days. **In the beginning, all of his creation was very good and untainted by sin** (Gen 1; Col 1:16-17; Heb 11:3).
39. Does God reign over his creation?
- A. **Yes, the entirety of creation is upheld by his power,** from the weather to the worst of sinners. Nothing and **no one can act outside of his sovereign control** (Ps 24:1; Heb 1:3).
40. Why call God sovereign?
- A. **Because he is king over all,** with limitless power and authority to reign over his creation, **he is able to do whatever he desires** according to his holy and perfect will (Ps 103:19; Matt 19:26).
41. What is the providence of God? *Truth:78*
- A. **God is present and active in all creation.** He is working personally and powerfully to guide all creation **to fulfill all his purposes for his glory and the good of his children** (Gen 50:20; Prov 19:21; Matt 10:29-31; John 9:1-3; Rom 8:28).
42. How does knowing God's sovereignty and providence encourage us? *OC 27*
- A. **It encourages us to be patient in adversity and thankful in prosperity, resting our highest hope in God our Father.** We can be sure that there is nothing which can take us out of his faithful love, for he is the only Lord of all (Job 1:21; Rom 5:3-5; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Rom 8:38-39).

Created Things – Humanity – Sin

43. What makes humanity special? *KBC 13*
- A. **God created us in his own image** with the capacity **to know, glorify and enjoy him forever**. We alone are like God and we alone can represent God (Gen 1:26-27; Isa 43:7).
44. Is our gender part of God's good creation?
- A. **Yes, God created us**, his image bearers, **as male and female**. **This means that all men and all women have dignity** and significance **before God and before one another**. It also means we are to treat all people with respect and love, avoiding any sense of superiority and inferiority (Gen 1:27; Gal 3:27-29).
45. What is marriage?
- A. **Marriage is God's ongoing gift to humanity, always defined as the union of one man and one woman**. Any attempt to subvert this definition, separate sexual intimacy from marriage, or reject God's gift of gender rebels against God's good design (Gen 2:18, 23-24; Rom 1:26-28).
46. How should we think of singleness?
- A. **Singleness is a season of life for all human beings and is to be lived in purity**. To some people God grants the gift of singleness so they may follow him with undivided attention and service (1 Cor 7:6-9, 32-35).
47. What is God's purpose for humanity?
- A. Beginning with Adam and Eve, **God wants us to fill the earth, work, worship, and enjoy him**. He also wants us to be conformed to the image of his Son (Gen 1:28; 2:15; 2 Cor 3:18).
48. Are our physical bodies important to God?
- A. **Yes, God created us as the good and blessed union of soul and body**, and to harm the body or dismiss the physical realities of eternal life is to ignore God's good purpose and hope for all creation (Gen 3:22; 9:5; Rom 8:23).

49. Is hatred or murder of another ever acceptable?
- A. **No, so all acts that take away human life, either in the womb — abortion, or at the end of life — euthanasia, are strictly forbidden.** So too is any hatred of our fellow man for any reason, especially related to differences in ethnicity, culture, age, or gender (Ps 139:13-16; Exod 21:22-25; Heb 9:27).
50. What other creatures did God create to serve him?
- A. **God created angels to continually serve him. But some angels, led by Satan, rebelled against God.** (Ezek 28:12-18; Jude 6; Rev 12:4).
51. If we are made in God's image, why is there sin and death? *CGB 27*
- A. **Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden** by eating the forbidden fruit, succumbing to Satan's temptation. **Instead of holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable,** were cast out of the garden, and eventually died (Gen 3:14-24; Jas 1:14-15).
52. What are the effects of this first sin on us?
- A. **We are all born in sin and guilt,** spiritually dead, inheritors of a sinful nature **and therefore unable to glorify and enjoy God** (Rom 3:23; 5:12-19; Eph 2:1-3; Ps 51:5).
53. How can we glorify and enjoy God? *NCC 6*
- A. **By loving him, trusting him, and obeying his commands and law** (Deut 11:8-9; Col 3:9-11; 1 John 5:3).
54. What does the law of God require? *OC 4*
- A. Perfect and perpetual obedience: **that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves** (Matt 5:48; 22:37-40; Rom 13:8-10).

55. What is the summary of the law stated in the 10 commandments, and how are they divided?
- A. **One: You shall have no other gods before me**
Two: You shall not make any idols
Three: You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God
Four: Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy
Five: Honor your father and your mother
Six: You shall not murder
Seven: You shall not commit adultery
Eight: You shall not steal
Nine: You shall not lie
Ten: You shall not covet
- Generally speaking, **the first four instruct us how to love God, the last six, how to love one another** (Exod 20:3-17; Deut 10:12,13,19).
56. As we relate to God, does God primarily regard our religious acts or the heart behind our worship?
- A. **God is righteously angry when we honor him with our lips while our hearts are far from him** (Isa 29:13; Matt 15:8).
57. As we relate to one another, does God *only* regard right actions, or also the heart behind those actions?
- A. **God is always most concerned with the heart. So, he warns us that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked**, and therefore the root of all evil. Jesus clearly stated that murder stems from a heart of anger, and adultery from a heart of lust (Jer 17:9; Matt 5:21-22, 27-28).
58. Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly? *NCC 13*
- A. **Since the fall, no mere human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly.** Instead, we are prone to hating God and our neighbors (Rom 3:10, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10).

59. Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose? *NCC 15*
- A. **That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts, and thus our need of a Savior.** The law reveals God's good standard of perfection that promotes human flourishing (Rom 3:20; Gal 3:24; Rom 7:7).
60. What is sin? *Piper*
- A. **Sin is not thinking or saying, not being or doing what God requires in his law. The root of all sin is the truth of God not sought, the holiness of God not revered, the promises of God not trusted, the wrath of God not feared, and the person of God not loved.** (1 John 3:4; Heb 11:6; Rom 14:23).
61. What is idolatry? *NCC 17*
- A. **Idolatry is trusting in, or worshipping, created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance and security** (Rom 1:21, 25; Col 3:5).
62. Will God allow our sin and idolatry to go unpunished?
- A. **No, God is righteously angry, and his holiness demands that no sin go unpunished. Therefore, his pure justice determines that the wages of sin is both death and eternal condemnation in hell** (Rom 6:23; Eph 5:5-6).
63. Are we able to satisfy God's justice by our good works? *OC 13*
- A. **Not at all. No matter how many good works we do, we increase our sin and debt to God every day.** Even the good we do is as filthy rags before our Holy God (Matt 6:12; Isa 64:6; Eph 2:8-9).
64. How can we escape punishment and belong to God? *NCC 19*
- A. **God himself, as a loving Father, graciously reconciles us to himself, and delivers us from the power and penalty of sin by a Redeemer** (Isa 53:10-11; Rom 5:21).

God the Father

65. Who is God the Father?
- A. **He is God, coeternal with the Son and the Holy Spirit.** As the first person of the Trinity, **all creation comes from him and exists to bring him glory** (1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; John 3:16; 14:16).
66. How does God the Father love us?
- A. **He loved us before the foundation of the world and showed us his love most fully by giving the Son as Redeemer** and sending the Spirit to seal our adoption as sons and daughters (Eph 1:4-6; John 17:24-26; Gal 4:4-6).

God the Son

67. Who is the Redeemer? *NCC 20*
- A. **The only Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.** He alone purchased us with his blood and brought us back to God (1 Tim 2:5-6; 1 Cor 6:19-20).
68. What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God? *NCC 21*
- A. **One who is truly human and also truly God,** coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is like us in every respect, yet without sin, and at the same time never gave up his divinity, always upholding the universe by the Word of his power (Col 2:9; Heb 4:15; 1:3).
69. Why must the Redeemer be truly human?
- A. **First, to obey God's law** which we could never obey. **Second, to physically die, suffering the punishment for sin** which we could never endure. Thus, he is fully able to sympathize with our weakness and comfort us in our moments of need (Heb 2:14, 17; 4:15).
70. Why must the Redeemer be truly God? *OC 17*
- A. **First, to endure God's wrath** poured out for the sins of humanity. **Second, to restore righteousness** and eternal life **which we lost at the Fall.** Thus, he is fully able to save the redeemed (1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2; Acts 2:24; 1 John 4:9-10).

71. How did God the Son become man?
- A. **He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, so as to be of two natures**, yet not inherit the sin of Adam. **This is called the incarnation.** He grew naturally, and was perfectly dependent on the Spirit, and humbly obedient to the Father (Luke 1:31-35; 2:52; 4:1; Heb 10:5).
72. What was God's design for the incarnation?
- A. **Christ** endured the humiliation and weakness of humanity and **willingly died in our place to purchase our redemption and give glory to God** (John 10:17-18; Phil 2:5-11).
73. Why do we call God the Son, Jesus Christ?
- A. God commanded Joseph and Mary to call him **Jesus**, which means **"God saves."** **Christ is a title meaning "anointed one," or "Messiah"** (Matt 1:21; John 4:25; Isa 61:1-2).
74. What three offices does Jesus fulfill? *SC 22*
- A. Both in his incarnation and exaltation **Jesus perfectly fulfills the three Old Testament offices of Prophet, Priest, and King** (Acts 3:22; Heb 5:6; Ps 2:6).
75. How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? *CGB 84-85*
- A. **He reveals God**, fulfills all the prophecies about the Messiah, **and teaches us his will. Without him we would be ignorant** of God and his saving love (John 1:18; 1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Cor 4:3-6).
76. How is Jesus the perfect Priest? *CGB 86-87*
- A. **He offered himself as a perfect sacrifice**, reconciles us to God, **and continually mediates between us and God. Without him we would remain guilty** of sin and separated from God (Heb 2:17; 9:24; 1 Tim 2:5-6).

77. How is Jesus the perfect King? *CGB 88-89*
- A. **He rules over all creation** and accomplishes his perfect plans, **guiding and protecting the redeemed. Without him we would be helpless** and left to follow our shifting passions (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:19-21; Rev 1:5-6; Rom 1:24-26).
78. Why was Jesus' life and sacrifice perfect and effective for salvation?
- A. **Because God made him who knew no sin to be counted as sin for us, and then credited us with his righteousness.** His death fully satisfied God's just wrath, and thereby delivers us from the power and penalty of sin. **This is called "penal substitutionary atonement"** (2 Cor 5:21; Col 1:21-22).
79. What else does Christ's death redeem? *NCC 26*
- A. Christ's death is the first fruits of the redemption and renewal of **every part of fallen creation.** The whole creation groans in eager anticipation of the final glory of Christ's perfect reign (Col 1:19-20; Rom 8:20-23).
80. Is the death of Christ sufficient to cover the sins of all people?
- A. **Yes, the death of Christ is sufficient** to cover every sin ever committed, **but only intended to be effective for the elect** (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2-3; John 10:11; Eph 1:4-7).
81. Did Jesus stay dead?
- A. **No, on the third day Jesus rose bodily from the grave, according to the Scriptures,** and was seen by eyewitnesses, including over five hundred at once. **He ascended into heaven and promises to return again** to judge the living and the dead (1 Cor 15:4-6; Acts 1:9-11; 2 Tim 4:1).

God the Holy Spirit

82. Who did Jesus promise to send to the redeemed?
- A. **God the Holy Spirit permanently dwells within us, comforts us, and intercedes for us**, even when we don't know how to pray. His ministry in this age began at Pentecost, when he came from the Father sent by the Son (Rom 8:9, 26-27; John 14:15-17; Acts 2:33).
83. Did the Holy Spirit also dwell in Jesus Christ? *BTB*
- A. **Yes, the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus without measure, and he perfectly depended upon the Spirit** to live a holy life, perform miracles, and receive God's strength (Luke 4:1; John 3:34; Mark 3:28-30).
84. What do we believe about the Holy Spirit? *NCC 36*
- A. **That he is God, coeternal with the Father and the Son.** He is a distinct person, yet equal in nature, power, and glory and should be worshipped with the Father and the Son (Gen 1:2; Acts 5:3-4).
85. What role does the Holy Spirit play in securing our Redemption?
- A. **The Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts**, draws us to Christ, **convicts us of sin**, grants us faith to believe, **and unites us to Christ** (Ezek 36:26; Eph 1:13-14; 2:8; 1 Cor 12:13).
86. How does the Holy Spirit continue to help us? *NCC 37*
- A. **The Holy Spirit assures us of our salvation**, guides us, sanctifies us, enables us to pray, **and helps us understand God's Word** (Rom 8:9, 12-17, 26-30; 1 Cor 2:12-13; 2 Cor 3:18).
87. What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?
- A. **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.** The redeemed will walk in the ways of the Spirit, gradually growing in righteousness and exhibiting this fruit (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:18-20).

88. What are spiritual gifts?
- A. **Spiritual gifts are specific abilities given to the redeemed for the purpose of building up the church**, spreading the gospel, and ministering to one another (1 Cor 12:7, 14:12; Eph 4:7-13; Rom 12:4-8).
89. Are the miraculous gifts still in operation in the church today? *Allison, 196-97*
- A. *Cessationism*: **No, the miraculous gifts**, such as the speaking in tongues, prophetic revelation, and healing, **ceased with the end of the apostolic age**. In the New Testament, these gifts are associated with the ministry of the apostles, **and there is little to no evidence of the continuation of these gifts in most of church history**. However, even though the miraculous gifts have ceased to operate normatively in the church, God is able to perform miracles whenever he so desires (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4; Eph 2:20; 1 Cor 13:8-10).
- B. *Continuationism*: **Yes, the miraculous gifts**, such as the speaking in tongues, prophetic revelation, and healing, **continue in the church today. Since the giving of the gifts is tied to the mission of the church, the gifts will cease only when Christ returns**. Historical evidence, especially in the 20th century, points to the continuation of the gifts for the church today. However, the practice of the miraculous sign-gifts must always be for the building up of the church, and carefully administered by church leaders (1 Cor 13:8-10; 14:13-19).

Salvation

Election and Calling

90. Is salvation first a work of God or a free choice of man?
- A. **Salvation is first a work of God, entirely a work of grace, “even as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”** (Eph 1:4; Rom 9:15-16)

91. Is there any grace that God shows commonly to all humanity?
- A. **Yes**, in God's common grace to all humanity **he reveals himself, restrains evil, and provides for our daily needs** (Psa 145:9; Rom 1:19; 2:14-15; 13:1; Gen 4:20-22; Matt 5:45).
92. Are all people saved who experience God's common grace?
- A. **No, only those elected and effectively called by God are saved.** The rest are hardened and left in sin and death. Even so, God desires all men to come to a saving knowledge of him (Acts 13:48; Rom 11:7-8; 1 Tim 2:4).
93. What is God's effective call?
- A. God's call always begins with the preaching of the gospel which becomes effective as **a work of the Holy Spirit that regenerates our hearts, convicts us of our sin, enlightens our minds to know and cherish Christ, and draws us to respond in repentance and faith** (John 6:44; Rom 8:29).
94. Does the preaching of the gospel always produce gospel fruit?
- A. **No, the very same preaching of the gospel will prove effective for some and folly for others**, based on God's electing grace (Isa 6:8-12 Rom 10:14-15; 2 Cor 2:15-16).

Regeneration

95. What is regeneration?
- A. **Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, by which he removes our dead heart and gives us a living heart, and thus, we are born again.** The Holy Spirit, at the moment of regeneration, permanently indwells every believer, uniting them to Christ (Titus 3:5; John 3:5-8; Ezek 36:26-27; Rom 8:9; Eph 1:13).

96. Does hearing the Word of God always precede regeneration?
- A. **Yes, the Word of God is the means by which the Holy Spirit regenerates sinful people.** The Holy Spirit makes the reading, and especially the preaching of the Word, an effective means of converting, convincing, and comforting (Ps 19:8; Rom 1:15-16; 2 Tim 3:15).
97. Does faith come before regeneration?
- A. **No, it is only the new heart, moved by the Spirit, that can respond in repentance and faith** (John 3:8; 2 Cor 5:17).
98. What is the proof of regeneration?
- A. **A repentant faith, which results in a whole life devoted to turning from sin and giving glory to God** in all that we do. (Ezek 11:19-20; Col 3:17).
99. How does God baptize and seal us by the Spirit?
- A. In connection with the work of the Spirit in regeneration, **Christ baptizes us by the Spirit into his body and the Father seals us with the Spirit so that we can belong to God.** Therefore, we are permanently declared righteous and adopted into his eternal family (Eph 1:13-14; 1 Cor 12:12-13; 2 Cor 1:21-22).

Conversion

100. What is a summary of the gospel message?
- A. Four main ideas summarize the gospel message that we all must know and believe to be converted. **First, God is the one true, holy, and Triune God, who requires perfect obedience to his law** for our good and as an expression of his love. **Second, every person has fallen short of this law and deserves eternal punishment in hell.** **Third, God sent his Son to live the perfect life we could not live, die on the cross in our place, and rise again on the third day,** thereby paying the penalty for all our sin. **Fourth, in response, we must repent of sin and believe this gospel** (Rom 1:19-20, 24-25; Rom 3:23; Rom 5:8; Rom 10:9).

101. What is repentance?
- A. **Repentance is** recognizing sin as sin, grieving and hating it, then **turning from sin, dying to self**, renewing the mind, **and following Christ** and all his ways (Luke 9:23; Eph 4:22-24).
102. What does it mean to die to self and follow Christ?
- A. **We must aim to avoid all sin and** idolatry and live for the glory of God; to **seek true joy in Christ rather than in what we think will make us happy** (Rom 14:17; 12:1-2; Gal 2:20).
103. What is saving faith? *NCC 30*
- A. **Saving faith knows and affirms** gospel truth revealed in God's Word **and trusts in the person and work of Christ**, resting on him alone for salvation (Rom 6:8-9; Phil 3:8-9).
104. Can we separate repentance and saving faith?
- A. **No, repentance and faith are inseparable** experiences of God's grace, **because saving faith is always a repentant faith**. We cannot truly believe without turning from sin, and we cannot truly turn from sin without believing (Mark 1:15; Luke 9:23).
105. Since salvation is by God's grace alone, is our faith also a gift?
- A. **Yes, "For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift."** Like regeneration, repentant faith is a gift from the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:8 CSB; Titus 3:4-6; 2 Tim 2:25).
106. Can we purposefully pursue a sinful lifestyle and expect to be saved? *BTB*
- A. **No, a repentant faith always hates sin and seeks to live for Christ**, and die to self (2 Cor 5:15; 1 John 3:5-6).
107. Does conversion happen in a moment, or slowly over time?
- A. **Conversion happens in a moment, when the Father draws us to the Son by the regenerating work of the Spirit** as we repent and believe for the first time. However, God may prepare our hearts over time and thus we might not know the precise moment of conversion, only that our repentant faith is genuine (John 6:44; Acts 2:38; 1 John 5:1).

108. What is the summary of our faith presented in the Apostles' Creed?
- A. **“We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into the realm of the dead. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy and universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”** (Jude 3)

Justification and Sanctification

109. What is the difference between justification and sanctification? *NCC 32*
- A. **Justification is our declared righteousness before God**, our settled standing at the point of conversion. **Sanctification is our gradual growing in righteousness** that continues until our death or the Lord's return (Rom 5:8-9; 6:22; Heb 10:14).
110. How is it that we are justified before God?
- A. **By grace, God proclaims our sins forgiven and credits Christ's righteousness to us.** This happens the moment we repent and believe through our union with Christ (Rom 3:24-26; 2 Cor 5:19-21).
111. What are the benefits of our union with Christ?
- A. **Because we are one with Christ, we are a new creation** united with him in his death and resurrection; all the blessings of salvation are ours in Christ and we are united with one another in Christ's body, the church (John 17:20-23; Eph 1:3; Gal 3:28).

112. What are the benefits of God's adoption?
- A. In spite of our sinful rebellion, **we have the full rights and privileges of children of God, fellow heirs with Jesus Christ.** Therefore, our inheritance is eternal, imperishable, and exceedingly valuable (Rom 8:16-17; 1 Pet 1:3-4; Eph 1:5-6).
113. Should we seek to be justified through good works? *NCC 33*
- A. **No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ alone.** To attempt to earn God's favor through good works is to deny the sufficiency of Christ's work of redemption (Gal 2:16, 21; Eph 2:8-9).
114. Are good works a necessary part of the Christian life?
- A. **Yes, Christ not only justifies us, but sanctifies us. He created us "for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."** Considering all the benefits that are ours in Christ, our lives ought to show love and gratitude to him (Eph 2:10; Rom 12:1-2).
115. What is the best evidence that our salvation is genuine?
- A. 1 John gives us three evidences of genuine salvation: a repentant faith, a consistent obedience, and a love for other Christians. James says, "Faith without works is dead," and so we see that the best evidence of our salvation is **sanctification. Every genuine Christian will grow in holiness and produce fruit** (1 John 5:1-5; Jas 2:17; 1 Thess 4:3; Luke 8:15).
116. How does God use sanctification to bless us in this life?
- A. As the Holy Spirit sanctifies, **he protects us from the damaging effects of sin,** comforts us when we are discouraged, **and helps us live for God's glory** (Prov 4:18; 1 Cor 10:13, 31; 2 Cor 1:3-4).
117. How secure is our salvation?
- A. **Completely secure, for our assurance rests on the faithful nature of God and the finished work of Christ.** For God says, "nothing... can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39; John 10:28-29).

118. How do we know that our faith will persevere to the end?
- A. **God promises that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”** (Phil 1:6; Heb 13:5; 1 Pet 1:5)
119. What is the final hope of our salvation?
- A. **To partake in the blessed resurrection, when we will be given a glorified body and dwell in the presence of God forever, free from sin in the new heavens and the new earth** (John 3:16; Rom 5:2; 8:30; Rev 20:6).

Church

The Local Church

120. What is a church?
- A. **A church is a Spirit-regenerated, new covenant community of individuals united to Christ by faith, committed to one another, and Biblically organized into one local body. Baptism as a believer inaugurates membership into that body, and the Lord’s Supper perpetuates that union** (Heb 12:22-24; 1 Cor 12:12-13a, 10:17).
121. How does the universal church relate to the local church?
- A. **The universal church includes every Spirit-regenerated, new covenant believer from the inception of the church until Christ returns. Local churches are gatherings of the universal church** (Eph 5:25-27; 1 Cor 10:32).
122. When did the church begin?
- A. **At the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in power regenerating three-thousand souls through the preaching of Peter. Before that point, the Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell anyone, nor did the disciples come together regularly to worship Christ. On the same day the universal church began, a local church was formed in Jerusalem** (Acts 2:37-47).

123. Can we belong to the universal church but not a local church?
- A. **It is possible** to be regenerated and yet unable to join a local church; **however, this is extremely rare. The normal Christian life is in constant connection to a local church as an integrated member of the body of Christ (Rom 12:4-8; Heb 10:24-25).**
124. What does a local church do?
- A. **A local church gathers regularly to worship around the preaching and reading of the Word of God, the celebration of the ordinances, the edification of one another, and the pursuit of holiness. A church scatters to evangelize the lost, engages in acts of mercy, and in all ways aims to glorify God (1 Tim 4:13; Matt 28:19; Eph 3:21).**
125. Must a church gather only on Sundays?
- A. **No, it is not commanded in the Bible, but Christians regularly met on Sundays for corporate worship, calling this first day of the week “the Lord’s Day,” to celebrate Christ’s resurrection.** Therefore, it is common and prudent for churches to continue this tradition (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10).
126. Should Sabbath regulations apply to the Lord’s Day?
- A. **No, we are free in Christ to enjoy a variety of activities on Sunday, so long as we do not forsake corporate worship** and aim to enjoy regular periods of rest from our normal activities (Mark 2:27-28; Gal 4:9-10; Heb 10:25).
127. What is the primary goal of the preaching ministry of the church?
- A. **To preach the Word, making the main point of the text the main point of the sermon, and applying it to the Christian life.** Although the gospel should be evident in all sermons, preaching is not primarily for the unbeliever, but for the building up of the redeemed (2 Tim 4:2-4; Neh 8:8).

128. Should churches ever separate from other churches or Christian organizations?
- A. **Yes, churches should only cooperate for the sake of gospel ministry with other churches** and organizations **that clearly hold to the gospel message.** However, cooperation and interdependence are important biblical values meaning separation is always a tragic consequence of apostasy or heresy (2 Tim 3:1-5; 2 John 7-11).
129. Should local churches be self-governed?
- A. **Yes, each local church should be autonomous, free from external authority or control.** However, churches can and should cooperate with other churches and organizations to further the impact of gospel ministry (Titus 1:5; Phil 4:14-18).
130. What leaders did Christ give to the church?
- A. He first gave Apostles through whom we received the New Testament. **Today, he gives the church two offices: pastor-elders and deacons. All church members** are called to recognize and affirm their leaders as well as **guard the purity of the gospel** message and gospel witness **through church discipline** (Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 3:1, 13; 1 Cor 5:4-5; Heb 13:7, 17).
131. Who can become pastor-elders?
- A. **Biblically qualified men** proven to be above reproach, and **capable of teaching,** leading, shepherding, **and protecting the doctrine of the church** in the love of Christ (1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Pet 5:1-3).
132. Who can become deacons?
- A. **Biblically qualified Christians** proven to be above reproach, and **capable of organizing ministry,** administrating, serving, **and protecting the unity of the church** in the love of Christ (1 Tim 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-7).

133. Is church membership biblical?
- A. **Yes, in the book of Acts the early church kept rolls, lists, and numbers of those who joined the church.** Further, church leaders are called to watch over their flock, and individuals are called to submit to leaders and guard one another, which is only possible in the context of clearly defined church membership (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Tim 5:9; Heb 12:14-15; 13:17).
134. What is church discipline?
- A. **Church discipline is a process of accountability for our good,** laid out by Christ in Matthew 18. If church members continue in sin, they are lovingly confronted: first, by individuals; second, by two or three; **and** third, by the whole church. If they refuse to listen to the church, they are to be removed from membership. Discipline **always has the goal of restoration** and results in protecting the purity and witness of the church (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5).
135. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? *OC 92*
- A. **The affirmation of the gospel message and church discipline, by which heaven is opened to the regenerate and shut for the unbeliever.** The keys are held by the entire membership of the church who affirm the gospel and exercise church discipline (Matt 16:19; 18:18).
136. How is the kingdom of heaven open and shut by church discipline? *OC 94*
- A. **If professing Christians remain in sin following the discipline process, they are, by the same church, kept from the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and removed from membership.** As far as we can tell, unless they are restored, they remain in apostasy and will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:17-18; 1 Cor 5:4-5; 11).

Ordinances

137. How many ordinances did God give the church, and why?
- A. There are **two** ordinances: **Baptism and the Lord's Supper**. They are given by God, instituted by Christ, rendered effective by the Holy Spirit, and clear symbols of gospel truth. **As visible signs reflecting God's saving work, they unite Christians together as a local body in gospel harmony** — just as we are one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, we are one with one another (Acts 2:38, 41; Luke 22:19-20).
138. What is baptism? *Jamieson, 6*
- A. **Baptism is a church's act of affirming** and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; **and a believer's act of publicly committing to Christ and his church**, thereby distinguishing them from the world (Rom 6:3-5; Matt 28:19).
139. Does baptism with water wash away sin? *BTB, OC 77*
- A. **No, baptism only represents regeneration like a picture**; the washing of water representing the purifying work of the blood of Christ to cleanse us from all sin (1 John 1:7; 1 Pet 3:18, 21).
140. Who should be baptized? *BTB*
- A. **Every regenerated believer in Christ should be baptized** because Christ commanded us to declare our faith through this ordinance. However, since baptism inaugurates church membership, only those prepared to join the church should be baptized (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48).
141. Should infants of Christian families ever be baptized? *KBC 99*
- A. **No, infants are unable to confess the gospel message**, thus they cannot be members of the church like their parents (Luke 3:7-8; Acts 18:8).

142. How can we determine if our baptism is valid?
- A. **If our baptism occurred after our conversion, and if it was associated with the preaching of the true gospel** (Acts 8:12; Rom 6:4).
143. What is the Lord's Supper or Communion?
- A. **The Lord's Supper is a church's celebration of union with Christ** as the many commune together in one body, by partaking of the bread and the cup, **remembering his death** — his body and blood, broken and shed, as a perfect substitute for every sin — **and anticipating his return** (1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:23-26).
144. Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work? *NCC 47*
- A. **No, Christ died once for all our sins.** The Lord's Supper celebrates and remembers Christ's atoning work as a picture that encourages us to look to all that he has done for us (Rom 4:24-25; Heb 9:25-28; Matt 26:26-28).
145. Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? *KBC 103; BTB*
- A. **Only baptized believers who do not possess a divisive and unrepentant spirit, and who remain in good standing with their local church.** Those who do not take the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner eat and drink judgment to themselves (Matt 5:23-24; 1 Cor 12:13; 11:27-30).
146. How should we prepare to take the Lord's Supper? *Hammett, 323-26*
- A. **With these five looks: look up to thank God for the gift of Christ, look within in repentant self-examination, look back at the cross-work of Christ, look ahead to Christ's return, and look around to celebrate our union with one another,** just as we are one with Christ (1 Cor 11:26-33).
147. Where and when should we take the Lord's Supper?
- A. **When a church gathers corporately, we take the Lord's Supper** as a symbol of union with one another and with Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:33).

148. Should we take communion at non-gospel preaching churches?
- A. **No, for in those settings there is no true union with Christ to celebrate** (1 Cor 5:6-11; 2 Cor 6:15).

The Christian Life

Prayer

149. **What is prayer? KBC 105**
- A. **Prayer is pouring out the desires of our hearts to God.** We pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for things agreeable to God's will, trusting him to guide and answer (Ps 62:8; John 16:23; 1 John 5:14).
150. What are the five main types of prayer?
- A. **Praise, confession of sin, petition, thanksgiving, and lament** (1 Tim 2:1; Ps 13).
151. Why is prayer necessary?
- A. **We must pray to commune with God:** recognizing him alone as God, expressing our dependence, and **orienting our hearts towards him at every moment** (Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 5:16-18).
152. **What should we pray? KBC 106; Whitney, 32**
- A. **The whole Word of God directs us in what we should pray** as we learn to take words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulate them through our hearts and minds back to God (Eph 3:14-16; John 6:63).
153. How can we learn to pray?
- A. One example to consider: **read the Bible, stop after each verse, meditate, and pray.** In particular, Jesus teaches us to pray by giving us the Lord's Prayer (Ps 1:2; 119:9-16).

154. What is the Lord's Prayer?
- A. **“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”** (Matt 6:9-13)
155. Must we always use this form of prayer? *OC 142*
- A. **No, each phrase can act as a topic that guides and directs our prayers** as we pour out the desires of our hearts to God (Matt 6:7-8).

Scripture Reading

156. How is the Word of God to be read and heard? *KBC 95*
- A. **With diligence, preparation, and prayer, relying upon the Holy Spirit** to illumine God's words to our minds and help us apply his truth to our lives (Ps 119:18; 2 Tim 2:15; Eph 1:17-18).
157. What are five ways to approach the Bible?
- A. **We should read** the Bible, **listen** to the Bible read and taught, **study** the Bible diligently, **memorize** key verses, **and meditate regularly on God's words**. As we know it is good to eat a balanced diet, so too are we to have a balanced approach to the Word of God (Acts 17:11; Ps 1:2-3; 40:8).

Evangelism

158. Has God commanded us to proclaim the gospel to all people?
- A. **Yes, God commands his people to proclaim the gospel to everyone**, even unto the ends of the earth, **so that some will be saved**. Sharing the gospel with unbelievers is something we can do in this life that we cannot do in the next (Matt 28:19; Rom 10:13-15; 1 Tim 2:1-4).
159. How should we feel about those who have not trusted in Jesus? *DC*
- A. **Our hearts should mourn and grow with compassion towards all unbelievers**, and thus be motivated to share the gospel (Rom 9:1-3; Jonah 4:1-4, 10-11).

160. How are we to do the work of evangelism? *FOF 11*
- A. **By showing our Redeemer through our redeemed life, praying for the effective movement of the Holy Spirit, and compassionately using God's Word to communicate God's gospel** (Col 4:3-6; Heb 4:12).
161. What is the goal of evangelism?
- A. **To explain the gospel clearly and trust the Holy Spirit to regenerate hearts in order to make lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.** Then we aim to gather those disciples into self-sustaining churches (Acts 4:12, 29; Col 1:28-29).
162. What is the relationship between evangelism and missions work?
- A. **Missions work includes evangelism that leads to establish and strengthen local churches in a geographic, linguistic, or cultural setting different than our own.** Missions work is necessary to fulfill Christ's Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 14:21-26).

Discipleship

163. What is discipleship?
- A. **Intentionally investing your life into others** with the goal of growing together in Christian knowledge, affections, and applications, **so that you can present each other mature in Christ** (Titus 2:1-8; Col 1:28-29).
164. Is discipleship for all Christians?
- A. **Yes, the New Testament frequently commands every Christian to love and care for one another,** faithfully helping one another to live holy lives (1 John 4:7-8; Heb 10:24; Eph 4:25).
165. How is discipleship done?
- A. **By regularly spending time with other Christians, engaging in purposeful conversations** that teach and correct, doing ministry together, **and modeling Christlikeness** (Acts 20:18-20; Deut 6:4-9; 1 Cor 11:1).

166. Who should we disciple?
- A. **We should prioritize the discipleship of our family first, then members of our local church,** and finally faithful Christians from other churches (Gal 6:10; 1 Tim 5:8; Titus 2:3-5).

Worship

167. **How can we worship God?**
- A. **By glorifying and enjoying him in everything we do,** offering our lives as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Cor 10:31).
168. Is attending a church service important to our worship?
- A. **Yes, we are commanded to regularly meet together for corporate worship,** and some aspects of worship cannot be done apart from the gathering of the local church, such as the participation in the ordinances, and submitting to leadership (Heb 10:25; 13:15-17; Acts 20:7).
169. What are the essential elements of corporate worship?
- A. Those elements that the New Testament explicitly commends, namely: **prayer, reading the Word, preaching the Word, singing, giving of offerings, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.** Although there should be uniformity in the elements included in corporate worship, various forms of each element are permitted (1 Cor 14:26, 40; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 1 Tim 4:13; Col 3:16).
170. Why is singing an important element of worship?
- A. **As we sing,** God delights in our praise and prayer, **we learn truths about God put to music and memory, and we teach those truths to one another.** Therefore, songs for corporate worship must be carefully chosen to reflect Biblical truth about God (Col 3:16; Ps 30:4).

171. Why is giving an important element of worship? *BFM 2000*
- A. **As we give of our finances, we recognize that all we have is from God**, entrusted to us as a stewardship; **how we spend our money reflects the priorities of our hearts**. Therefore, we should contribute cheerfully, regularly, and sacrificially for the advancement of gospel ministry (Luke 12:15-21; 2 Cor 9:6-7; Ps 37:21).
172. Why is serving an important aspect of worship?
- A. **As we serve, we give of our time, talents, and abilities for the strengthening of Christ's body** rather than for our own good. Therefore, our serving must be varied according to the individual gifts each possess (1 Pet 4:10-11; Rom 12:5-8; 1 Cor 15:58).

Last Things

Personal Eschatology

173. Where do we go when we die? *CGB 140*
- A. Our bodies return to dust, and our soul remains conscious in an intermediate state. **If we belong to God, we go directly into the blessed presence of Christ with the redeemed; if we die in sin and unbelief, we go directly to hell with the damned**. (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Luke 16:19-31; Heb 12:22-24).
174. Is it possible to be saved after death or purified from sin in purgatory?
- A. **No, it is appointed for us to die once and then face judgment, and there is no such place as purgatory** (Heb 9:27; Luke 16:19-31; Matt 8:11-12).
175. Will our physical bodies ever live again? *BTB*
- A. **Yes, all humanity will physically live again for eternity; both the redeemed and the damned** will be resurrected (Dan 12:2; John 11:25-26; 1 Cor 15:42-44).

176. Will all humanity be raised at the same time?
- A. **No. Blessed are the redeemed who partake in the first resurrection**, when Christ returns to reign. **Cursed are the damned who partake in the second resurrection** and come before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:5-6, 11-13).
177. What is hell and why is it to be feared?
- A. **Hell is the place of eternal, conscious torment for those not united to Christ by faith.** It is described as an **unquenchable fire**, full of weeping and gnashing of teeth, where the dead will be joined by Satan and all the fallen angels (Matt 25:30, 41; Rev 14:9-11).
178. What is heaven and why is it our greatest source of hope?
- A. **Heaven is the place of eternal, conscious blessing for those united to Christ by faith.** It is described as a **new creation**, a return to Edenic like blessings, with no sin, death, or disease, where in perfect bodies we will live with and enjoy God forever (Isa 65:17-25; Rev 21:1-5).
179. Will the new heaven and new earth be like the first?
- A. **Yes, part of Christ's work of redemption is to redeem every part of fallen creation and reverse the curse of Genesis 3.** Therefore, creation waits eagerly to be renewed and will be like the first creation, without the effects of sin (Gen 3:17-19; Acts 3:21; Rom 8:18-23).
180. Will we have things to do in the new earth?
- A. **Yes**, there will still be distinct societies and nations in the new earth, and just as societies function here on earth, **we too will have certain jobs and tasks to perform for the good of the whole.** Similarly, there will be leisure and personal relationships to enjoy for all eternity (Rev 5:9-10; Rev 21:24-26; 22:3; Lu 6:20-23).

181. Will everyone have equal roles in the new earth? *Alcorn, 369*
- A. **No**, distinct roles and responsibilities are not a result of the curse but God's created order. So, when we receive crowns and are judged according to our works, **we can expect that there will be diversity in the new earth, but it will never incite envy, greed, or sin of any kind** (1 Cor 9:24-25; 2 Cor 5:10; Matt 6:20).
182. Will we be able to know our closest friends and family from this life in the new earth?
- A. **Yes, God created us to thrive in relationships, and we will be comforted knowing that we will see, know, and relate to our loved ones again.** Our resurrected bodies and even personalities will still be distinct and recognizable, like Christ who rose before us (1 Thess 2:19-20; 4:16-18; 1 Cor 15:48-49).

Cosmic Eschatology

183. Where is Christ now?
- A. After Christ's work of redemption was finished, **he rose physically from the dead**, ascended into heaven, **and is now seated at the right hand of the Father** (Col 3:1; Heb 10:12).
184. What is Christ doing in heaven?
- A. **He upholds the universe, prepares a place for us, and intercedes for us**, granting us access to the Father (Heb 1:3; John 14:3; Rom 8:34).
185. When and how does Jesus say he will return?
- A. **Jesus will return personally, physically, obviously, and suddenly at a day and an hour known only to God.** He will return as he ascended (Matt 24:36; 1 Thess 5:2; Acts 1:11-12; Zech 14:4; Luke 17:24).

186. Why are Christians “caught up” to meet Jesus in the air at his return?
- A. *Dispensational: To deliver us from the wrath to come before the great seven-year tribulation;* also called the rapture, it is pretribulational. At this point the universal church is no more, and thus the great restraining presence of the Holy Spirit is set aside before the Day of the Lord (1 Thess 1:10; 4:16-18; Rev 3:10; 2 Thess 2:6-10).
- B. *Non-dispensational: To join the Lord in the air as he returns in judgment and victory* over all his enemies (1 Thess 4:16-18; Luke 17:28-37; Rev 19:11-16).
187. Is there a coming tribulation period and antichrist?
- A. **Yes, the Scriptures anticipate a great and terrible day of God’s wrath** and judgment on the earth. **Similarly**, even though many antichrists are already in the world, **a final antichrist is prophesied** (Isa 34:8; Matt 24:21; Rev 6-19; 1 John 2:18; 2 Thess 2:3-4).
188. What is the millennial kingdom?
- A. *Premillennial: It is the literal, physical, and bodily reign of Christ in Jerusalem over the whole world lasting for one-thousand years.* Jesus ushers in the kingdom at his second coming where he destroys God’s enemies, binds Satan, and sets up his reign. It is distinct from the new creation which comes after the millennium and is necessary to fulfill God’s promises to national Israel (Rev 19–20; Isa 2:2-4; 65:19-20).
- B. *Amillennial: It is not a literal kingdom, but rather refers to the spiritual kingdom at work in this present age through the gospel ministry of the church.* Satan is bound, thus enabling the advance of the gospel. When the fullness of time has come, Christ will return to judge the world and usher in the new creation (Rev 20; Luke 17:20-21).
189. When will the final judgment take place?
- A. **At the Great White Throne, before the introduction of the new heavens and the new earth** (Rev 20:11-15; Rom 2:5-8).

190. In light of all these future events, what is our great hope?
- A. That death has lost its sting, that our Lord and Savior is certainly coming again soon, and **that we will perfectly glorify and enjoy God forever in his new creation. So, we say, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”** (1 Cor 15:53-55; Rev 21:6-7; 22:20).

APPENDIX 2

NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by an expert panel to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, scope, and clarity of the *NBC* developed by the author.

NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<i>New Baptist Catechism (NBC) Evaluation Tool</i>					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The <i>NBC</i> is a good representation of the major areas of systematic theology and will provide a rich theological framework for Christians.					
The <i>NBC</i> contains sufficient detail on theological positions that should be included in a confession of faith.					
The selected Bible references are accurate and provide sufficient grounding for the answers given.					
The <i>NBC</i> questions are clear and lead logically to the answers given.					
The <i>NBC</i> answers are clear and easy to follow for the lay person.					
The shorter answers to memorize are both thorough enough to be helpful and abbreviated enough to memorize. Also, they stand on their own grammatically.					
The selected “52 Week Cycle” and “20 Question Foundation,” work well as self-contained shorter catechisms, representative of the full <i>NBC</i> .					
Overall, the <i>NBC</i> is accessible and could be used in homes and easily consulted by any church member.					

APPENDIX 3
THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION
SURVEY (TKAS)

The following survey was used to assess the current knowledge of systematic theology and the application of a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics. Both the pre- and the post-TKAS were administered using Google Forms, and did not include the references to the *NBC* questions cited below.¹

¹ Google Forms, <https://docs.google.com/forms>.

THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION
SURVEY (TKAS)²

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify your current grasp of two main categories: first, basic *theological knowledge* and second: how well you are able to apply that knowledge to various situations, or, *situational apologetics*. Benjamin S. Tellinghuisen is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for his Doctor of Ministry project. This same survey will be taken at both the beginning of the project and at the conclusion. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential* and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time.*

By completion of this survey, and checking the appropriate boxes below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your (or your child's) responses in this project.

– I agree to participate / I give permission for my child to participate

– I do not agree to participate / I do not agree for my child to participate

Basic Demographic Data and Parental/Guardian Approval

Participant Name _____

Age Group – as of April 1, 2020

– Child – aged 7-13

– Teen – aged 14-20

– Adult – aged 21 and up

Are you a member or the child of a member of First Baptist Church of Farmington?

– Yes

– No

Participant Signature (if over 18) _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if participant is under 18) _____

Date _____

² Parts of this survey are based upon the Ligonier operated website, The State of Theology, indicated by a * following the statements. "The State of Theology," Ligonier Ministries, accessed January 15, 2019, <https://thestateoftheology.com>.

Directions: Answer each True/False statement below using the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:
SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, NS = Not Sure, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Part 1 – Basic Theological Knowledge

	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1. The Bible is our sufficient guide to teach, correct, and train for all of life.					1. <i>NBC 6</i>
2. Humans make mistakes, so the Bible was written entirely by the Holy Spirit without using the language and style of each individual author.					2. <i>NBC 9-11</i>
3. God has three modes, God as Father in the Old Testament, God as Son in the New Testament, and God the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.					3. <i>NBC 24 (25-27)</i>
4. God created us because he wanted to be able to express love.					4. <i>NBC 26</i>
5. God’s primary attribute is love.					5. <i>NBC 37</i>
6. God is sovereign over the weather and the worst of sinners.					6. <i>NBC 39</i>
7. Jesus Christ is primarily viewed as the great King.					7. <i>NBC 40,74 (75-77)</i>
8. Christ is a title and not part of Jesus’ name.					8. <i>NBC 73</i>
9. Jesus is part God and part man.					9. <i>NBC 68, (69-71)</i>
10. The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.*					10. <i>NBC 84</i>
11. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual new birth or new life before a person expresses faith in Jesus Christ.*					11. <i>NBC 85,90,93,97</i>
12. Satan has always been God’s enemy from eternity past.					12. <i>NBC 50</i>
13. Our physical bodies are of little to no value to God.					13. <i>NBC 48</i>
14. Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.*					14. <i>NBC 52</i>
15. Sin is more than the bad things we do.					15. <i>NBC 60</i>
16. Jesus’ death was only intended to be effective for the elect.					16. <i>NBC 78, 80</i>
17. Jesus had to die for your sins because God is perfectly angry over sin and must punish every sin.					17. <i>NBC 62</i>
18. Jesus went to hell after his death to pay the penalty to Satan for our sins.					18. <i>NBC 78</i>
19. The preaching of the gospel is not always effective.					19. <i>NBC 94</i>
20. Repentance comes after faith, sometimes long after.					20. <i>NBC 104 (101,03)</i>
21. Only the power of God can cause people to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.*					21. <i>NBC 90, 105</i>
22. Pastors, elders and deacons are the three church offices.					22. <i>NBC 130-131</i>
23. Baptism as a believer should initiate our membership into a local church.					23. <i>NBC 120, 138</i>
24. Hell is where people are destroyed in fire, annihilated.					24. <i>NBC 62, 177</i>
25. God’s presence is not in hell.					25. <i>NBC 32</i>
26. Jesus will return to reign in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.					26. <i>NBC 188</i>
27. Heaven is a place where we will simply worship God for all eternity, like an everlasting church service.					27. <i>NBC 178, 180</i>
	SD	D	NS	A	SA

Part 2 – Situational Apologetics

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 28. When we read the Bible, we must ask ourselves how each passage connects to Jesus, and every passage will. | SD D NS A SA
28. NBC 7, 20 |
| 29. If someone doesn't know about or rejects the idea of the Trinity, they cannot be a Christian. | 29. NBC 24, 25 |
| 30. If someone is baptized in a church that does not believe in the Trinity, so long as they really believed that Jesus died for their sins, their baptism was valid. | 30. NBC 142 |
| 31. Since God is a gracious heavenly Father, there will be people in heaven who never heard of Jesus and faithfully worshipped whatever God they knew. | 31. NBC 91, 92 |
| 32. God will always reward true faith with material blessings in this life.* | 32. NBC 111-12,115 |
| 33. God's common grace extends to unbelievers often letting them live in peace and prosperity. | 33. NBC 36, 91 |
| 34. If you do something very bad, you can lose your salvation. | 34. NBC 117 |
| 35. The security of your salvation is based on the faithful nature of God and the finished work of Jesus. | 35. NBC 117 |
| 36. An adult that doesn't grow in obedience, denies the faith, and doesn't go to church can still be a Christian if they asked Jesus to be their Savior as a child. | 36. NBC 104,106,115 |
| 37. God has made us with free-will and so we are always free to choose whatever we like. God doesn't control us, he simply knows what we will freely choose. | 37. NBC 39,40 |
| 38. Churches must provide entertaining worship services if they want to be effective.* | 38. NBC 169 |
| 39. Church membership is Biblical and so we should be concerned if a church doesn't have membership. | 39. NBC 133 |
| 40. Baptism should always be done in connection with a local church. | 40. NBC 138, 140 |
| 41. It doesn't matter if you take the Lord's Supper before you are baptized. | 41. NBC 120, 145 |
| 42. Taking the Lord's Supper by the bride and groom at a wedding is a great sign that the two of them love Jesus. | 42. NBC 147 |
| 43. Prayer is primarily about feeling the presence of God; it is not just content driven monologue. | 43. NBC 149-50 |
| 44. Religious belief is intensely personal; so, it is impolite and often best to not bring up religion with friends. | 44. NBC 159 |
| 45. It is very important for me <i>personally</i> to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. | 45. NBC 160 |
| 46. The goal of evangelism is always to get the unbeliever to say the sinner's prayer and thus get saved. | 46. NBC 161 |
| 47. It is okay to sometimes have a weekly church service focused on singing and prayer. | 47. NBC 169 |

SD D NS A SA

Part 3 – Short Answer

Directions: Please answer the following with no more than two sentences.

48. When someone says, “I don’t sin anymore,” should we congratulate them and be happy for them? Why or why not?

NBC – 52, 58

49. Someone excitedly tells you they heard a great illustration of the Trinity saying, “God is like water or H²O which has three modes, ice, liquid, steam. All three are still water, even though they look different. That’s like God who is all God, but is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Are you concerned about this illustration? Why or why not?

NBC – 22, 24, 27

50. When we read that God said, “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me,” in 1 Sam 15:11, does this mean that God has to change his plan based on Saul’s free decision to sin? Why or why not?

NBC – 31, 39-42

51. Catholics believe, justification is being made righteous, slowly growing in holiness over time. Their catechism teaches “We can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life” (RC Catechism, 2027). Is this a good definition of justification? If not, what’s wrong with it and can you give a better definition?

NBC – 109-113

52. Is it okay for Christian college students to be primarily involved in on campus Bible studies, like Cru and InterVarsity, and not attend church regularly? Why or why not?

NBC – 120, 124, 169

53. Some will say, “Because all of us are sinful, it doesn’t seem right for the church to exercise discipline against anyone.” Do you agree with this statement? If not, what would you say are important reasons for a church to practice church discipline?

NBC – 134

APPENDIX 4

MINISTRY PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the elders of FBCF to evaluate the plan to integrate the *NBC* into various ministries at FBCF. Details of the plan follow directly after the rubric.

MINISTRY PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

Ministry Plan Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
A — The <i>Catechism</i> is available in formats that are easily accessible for members of FBCF.					
B — The <i>Catechism</i> has been successfully integrated into the liturgy of FBCF's weekly Sunday morning service.					
C — The plan includes integration into children's ministries on Sunday morning in meaningful ways.					
D — The plan includes integration into children's ministries on Wednesday evening in meaningful ways.					
E — The plan incorporates the <i>Catechism</i> into the membership class.					
F — The plan highlights ways to use the <i>Catechism</i> in various discipleship situations.					

MINISTRY PLAN DETAILS

A — The *NBC* is available in formats that are easily accessible for members of FBCF.

- The *NBC* is currently posted on the church website.
 - It is posted on three separate tabs:
 - the Full *New Baptist Catechism*
 - One-Year *NBC* (52 questions)
 - Foundations *NBC* (20 questions)
- Produce a second printing of the *NBC* that can be available to give out and/or to purchase, whichever is deemed most appropriate.

B — The *Catechism* has been successfully integrated into the liturgy of FBCF's weekly Sunday morning service.

- The One-Year *NBC* has been integrated and will remain a part of FBCF's weekly Sunday morning service. The whole congregation reads the selected question and answer corporately near the beginning of every service.

C — The plan includes integration into children's ministries on Sunday morning in meaningful ways.

- A brief devotional and/or explanation of the One-Year *NBC* recited in the service can be included during the Children's Church hour, after the children are dismissed from the main service.
 - I hope to write a one to two paragraph devotional for every question in the one-year cycle by years end 2021.
- The Foundations *NBC* can be incorporated into the Sunday School curriculum.
 - Children can work on memorizing the Foundations' 20 questions and answers together in class.
 - Short songs can be developed with the help of FBCF musicians who have already volunteered their expertise.
- An additional possibility is to integrate the *NBC* into the Truth:78 curriculum used during the Sunday School hour.
 - The goal would be to include specific questions and answers to be memorized that correlate to the topics studied in a given semester (ie. on God's providence, or the Trinity, etc.).

D — The plan includes integration into children's ministries on Wednesday evening in meaningful ways.

- After children finish their AWANA book in a given year, they are encouraged to learn the *Catechism* as additional sections.
- Sparks students are expected to start with the Foundations *NBC* and then, depending on a discussion with parents, can choose to move either to a specific section (ie. the Theology proper section), or to the one-year *Catechism*.
- If and when TNT moves to the new curriculum, in addition to the base verse to be learned altogether each week, extra "sections" can be taken from the *Catechism* –

—either correlating to the topic covered in a particular lesson or simply in order of the *NBC*.

- E** — The plan incorporates the *Catechism* into the membership class.
- The New Members class is refreshed to add specific questions and answers from the *NBC* as the topics are addressed.
 - Consider requiring New Members to read the *NBC* once before completing the membership class.
- F** — The plan highlights ways to use the *Catechism* in various discipleship situations.
- The author has and will continue to use the *Catechism* as a tool in individual discipleship meetings.
 - All church members are encouraged to do the same.
 - A bi-annual *NBC* Adult Sunday School class can be taught that reviews either the whole or portions of the *Catechism*, depending on what is deemed necessary by the pastor-elders of FBCF.
 - Aim to update the statement of faith and incorporate portions of the *Catechism* into that update.

APPENDIX 5

LETTER DETAILING PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

February 13, 2020

Dear Church Family,

I'm excited that some of you have already expressed interest in participating in the *New Baptist Catechism* project as part of my doctoral program. If you aren't, no worries, go ahead and disregard this letter. However, if you think you might be interested, I think you'll find this letter helpful in giving you a picture of what you can expect if you decide to participate.

Just as a reminder, for my project, I need at least four people from each of three categories to participate: 4 children (ages 7-13), 4 teens (ages 14-20), 4 adults (age 21 up). My hypothesis is that if you use the *Catechism* devotionally, and study it over the course of the next several months, you will be better equipped to understand the Bible, and apply that knowledge to various life situations. Essentially, be more confident in bringing glory to God with your whole life; what Christian doesn't want that!

In order to help you decide if you are able to officially participate in the project, first, I wanted to lay out my expectations of all participants so that there are no surprises. Specifically, the project is designed to begin on March 1, 2020 and conclude no later than November 30, 2020. I expect each participant to do the following:

- Take the pre-project Theological Knowledge and Application Survey (TKAS)
- Memorize the answers for at least the 20 Question Foundation *NBC*
- Read through the Full *Catechism* a minimum of 5 times
- Participate in 3 discussion-based reviews of the *Catechism*, each lasting no more than two hours
- Take the same TKAS post-project

This may seem like a lot but rest assured — this is all doable over our 40-week time frame. I plan to check-up with everyone monthly and can help individuals set benchmarks to keep you on pace if that would prove useful. For the discussion-based reviews of the full *Catechism*, every effort will be made to accommodate schedules. These review sessions will likely begin in Fall of 2020, and you must have read the full *NBC* 3 times before the first review.

Both the pre- and the post-TKAS will be administered electronically, or if the participant is a child as defined by the project, orally. The pre-project TKAS will be administered during the month of March 2020, and the post-project TKAS will be administered in the month of November 2020, at the leisure of each participant.

By agreeing to participate in this project, you plan, as far as God's providence permits, to participate fully and for the duration of the project. Also, with the taking of the pre- and post-TKAS you are giving your informed consent for the use of your responses in Benjamin S. Tellinghuisen's Doctor of Ministry Project. Your participation is part of the research component of said project. (This is all necessary legal terminology :).

A note to parents of minors participating in the project: Because an aspect of the project is to work with groups of children (ages 7-13) and teens (ages 14-20), I will need parental or guardian consent for minors under 18 to participate. The TKAS will begin with a place to give parental or guardian consent. I also expect that especially for children, parental involvement in the whole process will be vital to successful participation in the project expectations. That being said, the same expectations will be had of children as adults, with two minor differences: first, it is expected that the *Catechism* will be read to the children, and second, the 3 discussion-based reviews of the full *NBC* will be shorter, held at a separate time, and accommodated to the level of the children in attendance.

I am excited that we can work together in implementing this *New Baptist Catechism* into the life and ministries of First Baptist Church of Farmington.

Please let me know if you have any further questions and **e-mail me by February 28 to let me know if you are planning to participate.** Grateful to be serving God together with you at Farmington!

In Christ,

Ben Tellinghuisen

APPENDIX 6

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRINTED *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM*

The following introduction was included in the printed *NBC* which I gave to the project participants at the beginning of April, 2020.

The church has long used catechisms to help train Christians, young and old. From the early church to the Protestant Reformation to a resurged interest today, many Christians have repeatedly turned to catechisms to cement rich theological ideas in concise, easy to remember questions and answers. Many fondly remember the answers that first moved their heads and hearts to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Even years after learning a catechism, their truths still speak clearly.

For many evangelical Christians today, catechisms are thought to be a Roman Catholic thing, something formal, stodgy, and very ‘high church.’ In reality, Rome saw the huge success of the Reformers’ employment of various catechisms and sought to develop their own. Catechisms are very much part of our rich Protestant heritage. Still others think of catechisms as something for children only. Children are definitely well served learning a catechism, but throughout church history catechisms have been developed with everyone from nursery aged to pastors in mind. Learning theology through questions and answers is valuable for all ages and all levels of theological maturity. Catechisms are still one of the best tools to communicate theology concisely.

With such venerable catechisms available, like the Westminster Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism, and for Baptists, Keach’s Baptist Catechism and even Spurgeon’s Catechism, why is there a need to write a new catechism? Interestingly enough, even these classic catechetical texts were developed to meet certain needs. In fact, in Baptist history, new catechisms were developed up until the early twentieth century. The slow fade of catechetical instruction amongst evangelicals is lamentable, but not altogether unexpected.¹ Thankfully, we’ve seen a renewed interest in the use of catechisms today and a couple new catechisms have been developed and well-received in recent years.

Still, the question remains, why a *New Baptist Catechism*? For many Christians a perennial weakness is fitting the whole storyline of Scriptures together, discerning how each passage integrates into Christian theology. A catechism provides that framework. In Bible teaching churches we are taught to read our Bibles and pray, but reading the Bible

¹ The theological fruit of America’s Second Great Awakening and its decidedly decisionistic flare produced a church culture that increasingly was more interested in counting decisions to follow Jesus, than seeing the long view of training Christians to know Biblical doctrine as an important purpose of the church. That coupled with an educational preference away from memorization, meant that catechisms were often relegated to the ways of a by-gone era.

without a theological framework, often results in a hodge-podge of related truths rather than a neat and tidy scaffold built on God's revealed Word. Since most systematic theology books are inaccessible to the average Christian, a catechism provides a helpful foundation for the rich theological tradition we've inherited over the last two-thousand years. So, to accommodate the development of language, the development of Biblical and theological studies, and to reintroduce a new generation to the idea of catechism, it is helpful to develop this *New Baptist Catechism, 190 Questions and Answers to Lay the Foundation of our Faith*.²

A couple of notes to keep in mind as you work through the catechism:

- Note the Table of Contents and each section heading used for the catechism. The structure of the catechism is designed to walk you through the major points of theology.
- Try to read through the catechism in a single sitting or two.
- Incorporate catechism review into your daily devotion time.
- The only answers designed to be memorized are in **bold font**.
- Start your memorization work on the 20 Question Foundation, noted by underlined questions. This is a good place to start for younger children.
- Work on memorizing sections that feel less familiar to you.
- As you work on memorization, always repeat the question when you give the answer, so the question too is committed to memory.
- The note, "NCC" refers to a similar *New City Catechism* question and answer. Parents may find the *New City Catechism* app helpful for memorization of certain questions and answers set to music.³
- As one of my seminary professors used to say, "Theology is life," so always approach the catechism expecting God to make the truths that you learn imminently applicable to your life.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions as you walk through the catechism and I pray the Lord will use it to richly encourage you in your walk with God and help secure the foundation of your faith.

Pastor Ben Tellinghuisen

March 2020

² The *New Baptist Catechism* revises certain questions and answers from several of the best catechisms from history. For a full list, see the Appendix.

³ Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *The New City Catechism*, The Gospel Coalition (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

APPENDIX 7

NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM PROJECT EVALUATION

The following *NBC* evaluation survey was sent to and completed by those who completed the *NBC* project, following the release of the final TKAS. Like the TKAS, this project evaluation was given using Google Forms.¹

¹ Google Forms, <https://docs.google.com/forms>.

NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM PROJECT EVALUATION

Please fill out the evaluation as honestly as possible.

Answer the following questions according to the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Disagree Slightly; 4 = Agree Slightly; 5 = Agree; 6 = Strongly Agree

Following each answer, you will be given an opportunity to provide any clarifying comments. These comments are optional, but you are especially encouraged to provide feedback for all statements answered with a 1 or 2.

1. The content of the *NBC* and the review classes was understandable and presented at an appropriate level.
2. I have a better grasp on what I believe about God after studying the *NBC*.
3. I have a better grasp, not just on the gospel, but on how it is that God saves us, after studying the *NBC*.
4. I have a better grasp of how the church fits into God's program after studying the *NBC*.
5. I am better able to read the Bible on my own and connect each passage to the theological truths that I learned from the *NBC*.
6. I can better apply the Bible to everyday life after studying the *NBC*.
7. I can better answer typical questions or objections that some might have about my faith after studying the *NBC*.
8. I get more out of reciting the *NBC* question and answer in the service after studying the *NBC*.
9. I plan to continue to use the *NBC* in my home with my family or in personal study.
10. I want to use the *NBC* as a study resource for discipleship with other Christians.
11. I would like to see the *NBC* incorporated into the children's ministries of FBCF in the future.
12. I would recommend others study the *NBC*.
13. I would recommend others take the *NBC* review class.
14. I think prospective members of FBCF should read through the *NBC* before becoming members.

APPENDIX 8
T-TEST RESULTS

The following tables display the t-test results comparing the pre- and post-project TKAS scores. This t-test demonstrates that studying the *NBC* both individually and as a group made a significant statistical difference in increasing knowledge of systematic theology and confidence in applying a theological framework to Bible study and situational apologetics.

T-TEST RESULTS

Table A1. Pre- and post-project TKAS results

<i>Participant</i>	<i>TKAS #1</i>	<i>TKAS #2</i>	<i>Points Improved</i>
Adult 1	169 / 212	201 / 212	32 / 212
Adult 2	158 / 212	206 / 212	48 / 212
Adult 3	158 / 212	204 / 212	46 / 212
Adult 4	186 / 212	212 / 212	26 / 212
Adult 5	183 / 212	212 / 212	29 / 212
Adult 6	120 / 212	170 / 212	50 / 212
Adult 7	135 / 212	168 / 212	33 / 212
Adult 8	171 / 212	211 / 212	40 / 212
Adult 9	168 / 212	182 / 212	14 / 212
Adult 10	180 / 212	208 / 212	28 / 212
Adult 11	187 / 212	197 / 212	10 / 212
Adult 12	190 / 212	208 / 212	18 / 212
Adult 13	178 / 212	205 / 212	27 / 212
Teen 1	153 / 212	209 / 212	56 / 212
Teen 2	128 / 212	163 / 212	35 / 212
Teen 3	152 / 212	189 / 212	37 / 212
Teen 4	126 / 212	191 / 212	65 / 212
Teen 5	115 / 212	194 / 212	79 / 212
Child 1	129 / 212	171 / 212	42 / 212
Child 2	117 / 212	170 / 212	53 / 212
Child 3	169 / 212	206 / 212	37 / 212
Child 4	134 / 212	172 / 212	38 / 212
Child 5	127 / 212	188 / 212	61 / 212
Child 6	172 / 212	173 / 212	1 / 212
Child 7	106 / 212	144 / 212	38 / 212

Table A2. T-test: paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	152.44	190.16
Variance	694.256667	362.89
Observations	25	25
Pearson Correlation	0.74339298	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	24	
t Stat	-10.696646	
P(T<=t) one-tail	6.4924E-11	
t Critical one-tail	1.71088208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.30E-10	
t Critical two-tail	2.06389856	

Table A3. T-test: paired two sample for means (adult participants only)

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	167.923077	198.769231
Variance	436.74359	237.692308
Observations	13	13
Pearson Correlation	0.79914202	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	12	
t Stat	-8.8069851	
P(T<=t) one-tail	6.9366E-07	
t Critical one-tail	1.78228756	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.3873E-06	
t Critical two-tail	2.17881283	

Table A4. T-test: paired two sample for means (teen participants only)

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	134.8	189.2
Variance	285.7	276.2
Observations	5	5
Pearson Correlation	0.37752326	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	4	
t Stat	-6.5039022	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00144179	
t Critical one-tail	2.13184679	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00288358	
t Critical two-tail	2.77644511	

Table A5. T-test: paired two sample for means (child participants only)

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	136.285714	174.857143
Variance	629.904762	357.47619
Observations	7	7
Pearson Correlation	0.66497283	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	6	
t Stat	-5.4064917	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00082686	
t Critical one-tail	1.94318028	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00165372	
t Critical two-tail	2.44691185	

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING THE *NEW BAPTIST CATECHISM* FOR USE AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN

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This project seeks to consider the history of catechism use in Baptist churches and then develop and utilize a *New Baptist Catechism* for use at First Baptist Church of Farmington, Michigan. Chapter 1 presents the history and ministry context of FBCF and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 considers the biblical rationale for the use and implementation of a catechism by considering Paul's call to pursue "sound doctrine" and grow in discernment in the pastoral epistles, which is supported by the Old Testament exhortations to know, fear, and love God (Prov 6:6-9; Deut 6:1-9). Chapter 3 explores the history of catechetical instruction in Baptist churches providing a historical-theological analysis of why most Baptists stopped using catechisms by the turn of the twentieth century. Chapter 4 describes the process of composing the *New Baptist Catechism* as well as its implementation at FBCF. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the stated goals. Even though contained only in an appendix, the crowning achievement of the project is the composition of the *New Baptist Catechism* (appendix 1).

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