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A STUDY IN CATECHISMS  
OF THE REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION PERIODS

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A Thesis submitted to the University of Durham

for the degree of

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A STUDY IN CATECHISMS  
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This thesis outlines the origins and development of religious and philosophical teaching by dialogue and of the christian tradition of catechetical teaching, and examines the convergence of the two traditions in the sixteenth century dialogue-catechisms, a number of which are summarised to reveal the relationship between them and their distinctive features. The way in which the Reformers and their successors over four centuries have used the form is studied, as is the role which the catechism may have in the contemporary Church. Particular reference is made to the development, teaching and revision of the Catechisms of the Book of Common Prayer.

The second section examines the varied expressions of certain key doctrinal features of the Reformation catechisms and the development of those features in catechisms produced since that period. This is divided into three headings, following the most common structural divisions of the Apostles' Creed found in the catechisms. "God the Father" includes man's relationship with God, election, sin, the law and the divine word. "God the Son" includes the Person and work of Christ, the eucharistic presence, salvation, faith, works and the Lord's Prayer. "God the Holy Spirit" includes not only the doctrine of the Spirit in the baptismal covenant, obedience to the law and the nature of sacraments, but also the final articles of the Creed dealing with eternal life.

An historical table, showing the principal influences which can be discerned between the catechisms selected and a comparative table of the contents of seven of the most important catechisms are appended.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ORIGINS OF THE DIALOGUE

The catechism as it is known today is a work composed of questions and answers, usually concerned with teaching articles of religious doctrine. It is a product of two distinct educational traditions: the technique of teaching by repetition and the dialogue-method. These converging traditions met briefly in the sixteenth century and produced the modern 'catechism'. It is perhaps most useful to begin with a brief study of the dialogue-form, its origins and development, as a background to the peculiar sixteenth century use of the dialogue-catechism which remains with us in the twentieth century.

Socrates (c. 470-399 BC.) philosophised by debate with other learned authorities rather than by lectures or classes. In such a debate, it usually became clear that neither Socrates nor his colleague held the complete answer to the problem before them and so Socrates turned to asking questions to which the friend replied in assent or dissent. The problem might remain unsolved but the two men would agree to continue their search. For Socrates, knowledge was not something to hand on but an achievement produced by constant self-criticism. The search for knowledge was at least as important as the knowledge itself. Truth lay within a man's soul and might be called forth by question and answer. This was a more open-ended search for truth than the Sophistic or the Eristic methods. The Sophists, mainly itinerant lecturers on rhetoric, had set up some permanent schools to teach a form of lecturing and some dialogue-teaching. The Eristic or Dialectic method was introduced by Protagoras and consisted of a debate between an interrogator and a respondent. The questions had to be framed in order to be capable of a simple 'yes' or 'no' reply and the debate was won if the interrogator

could persuade his opponent to answer in conflict with his original thesis. An audience was present and the exercise was a philosophical entertainment involving no necessary commitment to the ideals adopted by those taking part. It was a somewhat negative exercise; failure to win the case was little more than stalemate, and success was simply to disprove one specific thesis.

Plato (c. 428-347 BC.), who provides us with much of the evidence about the method of Socrates, was more strongly influenced by the approach of Socrates than by the Sophistic or Eristic techniques. He commonly uses Socrates as a character in his 'Dialogues', at least after Socrates' death. His early dialogues take the form of mimes and dramas, discussions between Socrates and others in apparently unplanned conversation. Socrates normally asks the questions and the form is not an Eristic game but a lively drama. However, it must be said that some of the twenty-four dialogues contain very little dialogue! All except two are fairly brief. Plato's early dialogues take simple themes, such as, 'It is worse to suffer than to do wrong' or 'Virtue can be taught'; the middle period marks the least dialectic approach, and the final period sees its renewal. Lucian described Plato's use of the dialogue as "a son of philosophy".

Elizabeth Merrill (1) defines three types of dialogue-writing: for Plato, dialogue is method, it is the search for truth; for Cicero, whose carefully-formulated set thoughts strongly influenced the English dialogue, it is a formal exposition; for Lucian, who uses the dialogue in satire and characterisation - as a cartoon, we might say - it is a form, a reflection of life.

Other early examples of the dialogue techniques can be found: the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament is the source of a number of examples, notably in the Book of Job. The central poetic section, sandwiched between the ancient tale of Job, is an extended dialogue between Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu and the Lord on the rewards and sufferings of the godly and concerning the sovereignty of God.

Advancing to the New Testament, the questions addressed by Jesus Christ to his disciples, ("Which of the three was neighbour to the man who fell among the thieves?" and many more), are more in the primitive catechetical tradition than that of the dialogue.

Justin, Augustine of Hippo and others used the dialogue as a method of asserting the truth of christian teachings, and these found a place in the life of the Mediaeval Church in Europe. The platonic dialogue of Boethius, translated into English, also influenced the religious uses of the dialogue in England. In Europe, the traditions of Cicero, Prudentius and others inspired the use of the dialogue in a variety of ways, from relatively informal debates to more structured pieces from which catechisms as we know them had part of their origin. Notable among those works which first influenced the European Church and later spread to England, were Boethius' "Consolation of Philosophy", Augustine's "Soliloquies" (Reason in conversation with a troubled being), and Gregory's "Dialogues" (between Gregory and Peter the Deacon, and translated into English by Bishop Saerferth).

Anselm (1033-1109) used the dialogue to answer the question "Why did God become man?" and gives his explanation for the Incarnation of Christ by

way of making satisfaction to God for the debt of sin. The chief significance of the work is, of course, theological but there are many charming pieces of dialogue within it. None is more interesting and less typical than in Chapter X of the second book, dealing with Christ's death not for his own sins. Boso questions Anselm on whether, if Christ had no choice but to be free from sin, he deserves any credit for it. Anselm replies that angels deserve praise; Boso parries with the fact that angels had the opportunity to sin or to refuse to sin. Anselm speaks of the perfection of God as part of his "infinite unchangeableness" and Boso is satisfied even if still curious as to why angels and men could not be created free, incapable of sin and yet also deserving of praise for their holiness. Anselm's reply to this tight corner into which he has negotiated himself sounds as though he is stalling for time:

"Do you know what you are saying?"

"Boso: I think I understand, and it is therefore I ask why he did not make them so."

Anselm's rather weak reply is that man could not be the same as God or even as the Word because there was no reason for it at the time of the creation. Boso blushes to have asked such a question and submissively agrees with Anselm's conclusion. It is not uncommon to find that many writers of dialogues are better theologians than they are dramatists. In Anselm's case the reverse is sometimes true: the characters are real enough but the dialogue-method exposes the weak points of the theology because it presents its arguments simply and with penetrating honesty. Compared with the opposite extreme of the same form, such as Baxter's "Poor Man's Family Book", which is often too cold to be convincing, Anselm's dialogue has life.



About this time, the poem "Salomon and Saturn" (along with a prose version modelled on the early chapters of Genesis) advanced the dialogue form. Saturn offers gold to Solomon if he will win his allegiance through the power of the Scriptures. Solomon begins with an allegorical interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and then a war of wits breaks out between them, with very little communication of ideas from one to another!

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in the "Summa Theological" uses a similar method by postulating an article (whether something is true) which he intends to hold, raising a series of objections to it, making an exposition of the point of view expressed by the article and finally replying to the objections. Although not a dialogue of persons, this dialogue of ideas is an excellent example of the transition from the Platonic dialogue to the modern christian dialogue. Aquinas was following Anselm's "Elucidarium" (in Latin but later printed by Caxton in an English translation) in providing a doctrinal summary after the old catechetical tradition. Alcuin produced several mixtures of treatise and dialogue, and in the early fourteenth century, two other dialogues, "Vices and Virtues" and "The Owl and the Nightingale" (the latter being a contentious poem relating a verbal contest between God and the Devil) were popular in England. The "Adrian and Ritheus" dialogue and the "Questions bitwene the Maister of Oxinford and his Scholar", both dating from about 1400, were mixtures of biblical and scientific thought developed from "Salomon and Saturn". At the same time, John Wyclif was using Latin "Dialogus" and "Triologus" to disseminate his views to a wider intelligentsia and in this respect he was reflecting the current practice of the better educated clergy who were using the dialogue in instruction and preaching and, by

so doing, fostering the development of the English mystery plays.

The later Mediaeval period in England witnessed John Heywood's "Dialogue on Wit and Folly" or "Concerning Witty and Witless" and other interludes, but by the sixteenth century the dramatic spirit was developing and the dialogue became a chief ingredient in modern drama. From that point, the catechism and the dramatic dialogue as we know them developed in their separate ways, each one a product of the collision of the old catechetical and dialogue traditions. However, the dialogue retained much in common with the catechism and it is helpful to trace a selection of examples of the use which christian writers have made of the dialogue from that critical moment in the early years of the sixteenth century. The dialogue became much more of a polemical treatise using all the resources of wit and lively argument to present a case before a popular readership. Such dialogues can be traced from around the year 1500 to the present day and many of them make amusing reading, even when their significance is lost to the modern reader. It is necessary to confine this essay to English dialogues and to select a few typical examples from the large numbers published.

In 1499, More and Erasmus translated Lucian from Greek to Latin for schoolboys; this had reached 99 editions by 1546! Just as Lucian had laughed at the gods of Olympia, so Erasmus laughed at the clergy and the corruption of the Church.

"Rede me and be nott wrothe" by William Roye and Jerome Barlow, published in Strassburg in 1528, dealt with the death and burial of the Mass and fiercely attacked Cardinal Wolsey, the "butcher's son". It is said

that this dialogue lacks some of the dramatic qualities possessed by the German model from which Roye and Barlow worked. In 1530, a Lollard dialogue about the clergy was published, entitled: "A Proper Dyaloge betwene a Gentillman and a husbandman eche complayninge to other their miserable calamite through the ambicion of the clergye". At the same time, "John Bon and Mast Parson" pseudonymously depicted a rustic character debunking catholic dogma. This was less well argued than the Roye and Barlow work but it was much livelier. William Turner's mock trials, "The Examination of the Mass" and "The Endightment against Mother Masse", published in 1547 and 1548, were both strongly influenced by the Lutheran reformers of the Continent.

Foxe makes significant use of dialogue in the interrogations of Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer and others in his "History of the Martyrs" (1563), and in this respect he goes beyond the duties of a reporter to become an apologist and popular theologian. The "Remains" of Archbishop Grindal reveal an interesting dialogue from 1576, the year of his translation to Canterbury, entitled "A Fruitful Dialogue declaring these words of Christ: 'This is my Body.' between Custom and Verity". Custom argues for a plain and literal interpretation of the words of Christ but Verity argues from biblical examples that the words are not to be taken literally and that the bread and cup are "memories" of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Using Augustine as his basis, Verity explains that "Christ ordained not his body, but a sacrament of his body". At the Last Supper, argues Verity, Christ and the sacrament were present together but not the same and Christ did not devour himself. Quoting Augustine, he says, "Believe, and thou hast eaten Christ". Grindal makes use of Ponet's Catechism in writing of the "mouth" of the spirit and of the faithful

eating of Christ, springing up to him by faith and trusting in him who died for them. Verity denies any miraculous view of the sacrament and cites the Ascension to refute a real presence in the eucharist. He cites the doctors of the Church because "Custom meddleth but little with scripture". The unworthy do not receive the body and blood of Christ but dishonour Christ by dishonouring his tokens. The practice of the sacrament has often gone beyond Christ's institution: "Christ gave bread: the priest saith he giveth a God". The controversial approach is emphasised as Grindal refers to priests who, "with words, crossings, blessings, breathings, leapings, and much more ado, can scarcely make one god, they have such virtue in their fingers, that at one cross they be able to make twenty gods; ... every mite must needs be a god."

The dialogue covers most of the topics the Reformers fastened upon in their understanding of the sacrament and, although in its initial pages the document appears to be even-handed, it soon becomes obvious (if it was not so from the title) that Verity is to carry off all the honours! This dialogue is cited in some detail because it highlights the completely distinct form from the catechisms of the period. It has an element of the dramatic, rather like the Capito-Roye catechism but unlike any catechism of the late sixteenth century, and bears the seeds of later dialogue-forms. Its content is limited to the discussion of a single topic rather than the wider issues of basic christianity. It is aimed at a specific target, those who are undecided or in error, according to Grindal, on the issue of the eucharistic presence of Christ, rather than being pastorally orientated like most catechisms. However, in one respect it is similar to the catechisms of the period, in that it deals with the subject matter in a very similar way - and the associations with Ponet's Catechism are marked. Grindal is a long way from Socrates! Other

sixteenth century pieces abound - in 1584 "A Dialogue concerning the strife of our Church" and the "Martin Marprelate" tracts of 1588-90 are both examples of the many similar puritan writings which appeared at the end of the reign of Elizabeth I.

In the seventeenth century, John Bunyan used a delightful mixture of narrative and dialogue to tell a tale full of puritan theology in "The Pilgrim's Progress". He writes in the Apology:

*"I find that men (as high as trees) will write  
Dialogue-wise; yet no man doth them slight  
For writing so: indeed if they abuse  
Truth, cursed be they, and the craft they use  
To that intent; but yet let truth be free  
To make her sallies upon thee, and me,  
Which way it pleases God. For who knows how,  
Better than he that taught us first to plough,  
To guide our minds and pens for his design?  
And he makes base things usher in divine."*

Both parts of the tale refer to the human predicament, divine forgiveness in Christ, the christian life and the christian hope. In the second part, Prudence actually catechizes Christiana's sons in the faith of the Trinity, the work of the Persons of the Godhead, the nature of man and salvation, heaven and hell, God's eternity, the creation, the word, prayer and the resurrection of the dead. All these are classic contents of a catechism and are contained in a very concise outline compared with the normally very lengthy works of the Independent churchmen.

Richard Baxter wrote several catechisms. In "The Poor Man's Family Book",

published towards the end of his life and which the author claimed contained all the soul's concern from the hour of conversion to the hour of death, there are two lengthy catechisms and a "Dialogue between Paul and Saul". Unfortunately, this work lacks any real dramatic pretence and rapidly deteriorates into a theological treatise for seventeenth century laymen. It divides into nine chapters and there are two characters, Paul, a pastor, and Saul, who begins as "an ignorant sinner" and becomes "a learner". An additional character Sir Elymas Dives, "a malignant Contradictor", appears in the third chapter. The work follows Saul's progress from the conviction of his sinful nature and his conversion, his encounters with contradiction and temptation, his holiness and family life, the Lord's Day, and ends with "Directions for a safe and comfortable death".

In 1698 a very welcome dialogue appeared as an attempt, from the Anglican side, to reconcile the Independents to the Church of England. It is entitled: "A Dialogue between Mr. Canterbury and Mr. Scott". Clearly, Mr. Canterbury represents an ecumenically-minded member of the Church of England and Mr. Scott (who refers to Richard Baxter as "our old Mr. B.") represents the Independent reformed Churches. The dialogue seeks to persuade the dissenters to stay within the Church of England, arguing that the anti-puritan emphases in the Church which have led to the separation of the two traditions are ill-founded. It has a charming conclusion:

"Cant. ... let me advise you to imitate Christ Jesus  
the best pattern of love and Communion.

Scott. I shall endeavour to tread in his Steps.

Cant. If you are going, farewell, and the Lord  
preserve you and every honest Man in the Communion

of the Church. I hope to see you next Sunday in our Parish Church.

Scott. I believe you may, dear Neighbour."

Four years later we find another dialogue on the ecclesiastical topic of the day, the authority of the Church. It uses the dissenting Lord Mayor of London as its starting-point, is entitled: "A Dialogue between Jack and Will" and apparently caused quite a stir at the time.

Berkeley's "A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge" in the old catechetical style (1710) and "Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous" (1713), written when he was a young man, put forward the theory that matter only consists in being perceived by the mind. It was in an attempt to refute this theory that Dr. Samuel Johnson struck his foot against a stone with great dramatic effect!

From Berkeley's contemporary, Dean Jonathan Swift, comes "A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation, according to the Most Polite Mode and Method and used at Court, and in the Best Companies of England". These dialogues make very entertaining reading but their subjects, the triviality of the Court and the leaders of society, need not concern us. Yet they do reveal how good a well-wrought dialogue can be.

Moving on to 1783, we find "A Dialogue between the Pulpit and the Reading Desk", apparently an abridgement of an earlier dialogue. This is an attack on those clergy and laity "who, while they treat with the most supercilious contempt all those who are called sectaries, and pride themselves in a close attachment to the Church, are yet totally un-

acquainted with her distinguishing doctrines." The Pulpit (shortly to be the subject of an attack) sympathises with the "disorder" of the Reading Desk. The Desk can only deliver the doctrines of the Prayer Book but the Pulpit contradicts him just over his head! The Desk tells the Pulpit: "you ought to have been driven out of the Church long since." The Pulpit attempts to calm the debate: "The way the multitude go, I charitably hope is right." He does not teach infallibly. But the Desk is a "bible-christian" and criticises the Pulpit's conduct: "it is evident your hearers are neither changed in heart, nor reformed in life by your preaching ... Tell them, in plain language, ..." about sin and hell. The Pulpit has neglected the Second Book of Homilies, the Reformers and others; he has preached that man has a natural power to turn to God and can earn merit with Heaven. The Desk explains his evangelical theology - with much emphasis on forgiveness - which, he says, the Pulpit should preach. His speech is throughout well spiced with quotations from the Book of Homilies, the 39 Articles, the Prayer Book and the Bible. The Pulpit finally accuses the Desk of Methodism but the reader is invited to choose between the Desk and the Pulpit. This is a very typical piece of dialogue; the dialogue is hardly more than an excuse for presenting the treatise in journalistic paragraphs. After the opening conversation, the work rapidly becomes dramatically unconvincing and the demands of the Desk's arguments overwhelm the characters.

The early nineteenth century produced many dialogues. Shelly wrote "A Refutation of deism: in a Dialogue" in 1814, but this is far from his best work. A series of Reforming Tracts published in 1819 (2) are of great interest in the number and scope of the dialogues included in this



selection. There is "The Bank Restriction Catechism or The Threadneedle-street Jugglers Exposed", attaching the Bank Restriction Act which preserved the Bank of England from bankruptcy; "The Threadneedle Street Catechism or the Bank-Bubble Exposed", again attacking the uselessness of the Bank of England and dealing with the problem of forged bank-notes - both of these so-called "catechisms" belong to an imitative tradition going back to Lord Bolingbrook's "Freeholders's Catechism" of 1773 and beyond; and "A Dialogue between a Tory and a Reformer" which needs no explanation.

Three of the dialogues in this collection of treatises are of interest in that they deal with religious topics. One is "A Dialogue on the approaching Trial of Mr. Carlisle for publishing the Age of Reason" and outlines the contrasting viewpoints of the free-thinkers and the "Established Protestant Religion". Another is "A Short Way with the Deist" and takes the form of a catechism, with question and answer, but is better classified as a dialogue. The unwitting deist reveals that his religion is derived from his father and his nation and is based on the Decalogue. He tells how the Scriptures were used as a form of punishment in his youth! He was confirmed and recalls, of the bishop: 'When I contemplated his snowy wig and sleeves, emblematic of perfect purity - when I saw on his fingers rings of gold and precious stones which seemed to indicate the richness of heaven to the true believer; - and when I reflected that this sacred dignitary's function required an annual stipend of ten thousand pounds! "Surely," I soliloquized, "he must be in the right way; and the most hardened infidel might yield to so convincing proof of the value and benefit of Christianity." '

Deism crept into the man's faith and the Scriptures were surrendered for reason. But, when sitting in a court of law, he was impressed by the force of the divine law expressed in Psalm 19; the psalm is its own defence, which he surmised, must be the reason why the bishops are so silent in their defence of the Scriptures! The conclusion makes clear that this is no attack on Christianity: "The duty of the Christian is plain and obvious. Deism stalks abroad with the most perfect assurance; and religion must not skulk in holes or corners. She must appear and dispute with her enemy". The contrast in style and effect between this and the Pulpit/Reading Desk dialogue could not be greater although the theological positions held do not widely differ. The author of the "Deist" work does not make his main point until the end and he handles the dialogue convincingly. There is dramatic tension in the 'plot' - if that is what we may call it - and between the characters.

The third religious dialogue in the 1819 collection is the most fascinating: "A Dialogue between a Methodist Preacher and a Reformer". The Preacher and the Reformer are both christians on opposite sides of a political divide - and it is interesting that for once the Established Church is not being attacked! The Preacher believes that The Society for Political Protestants is wicked, and the Reformer argues that life need not be the vale of tears which, for many, it is: "God is supremely happy. We can neither vex him nor please him - the divine mind is inaccessible to passion", an interesting statement in itself. Thus the debate is mapped-out from the first, the 'plot' will lie less in the final position adopted but in the route taken to that position.

It is agreed that to fear God is to love him. The conversation opens up

on the divinely-derived authority of the state, with the Preacher arguing that the establishment of the state is a product of God's favour and assures us of the God-given authority of its minister. The Reformer accuses the Church of sailing with the political wind and argues that the just state "shews his right by law and reason". The Preacher's religious-nationalism does not take into account the occasional disobedience of the 'magistrate' by leaders of the early Church, (an interesting point which occurs in the Reformation catechism), nor with their concern for civil rights and the exercise of the free christian conscience. When the Preacher agrees to moderate reform, the Reformer presses the radical demands of the gospel upon men. The dramatic spirit does not often fail:

"Preacher: Now, you have got these dangerous notions  
by reading the Twopenny Trash!

Reformer: And pray is there no Sixpenny Trash?"

The arguments become more pointed with a contemporary reference to the "Peterloo" incident and the support given to the militia by many preachers. The Preacher accuses his opponent of listening to "Hunt and Co." (a reference to Henry Hunt and Cobbett, two of the leading social reformers of the day). "Reformer: So then it is Hunt that makes starving people conscious that they have nothing to eat". The dialogue concludes with eleven Old Testament references to uphold its christian political radicalism.

By this time Jane Austen had already broken the Gothic Novel mould and introduced the spirited dialogue into the modern novel and this remains one of the key features of that literary form. In an age of spontaneous media, the dialogue is of less significance than in a literary age. The dramatist and the novelist are those who deal in this form.

It is partly from the origins of the dialogue that the catechism of the Reformation and subsequent periods evolved. When the dialogue and the catechetical tradition collided and so soon parted company again, the dialogue continued to be a useful political and religious weapon. The "ideal dialogue," wrote Elizabeth Merrill (1), "is a conversation that develops thought through the action and reaction upon one another of definitely and dramatically characterised personalities, and that satisfies the demand for unity made by the canons of art." Its best examples are those which emphasise the dramatic inter-relation of personalities and ideas. Although the form is different, it will be found that catechisms are subject to similar rules.

NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE

- (1) The Dialogue in English Literature
- (2) The Political House that Jack Built  
and Other tracts - London 1819.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CATECHIZING AND THE CATECHISM

The origins of the dialogue have been examined and it has been observed that the convergence of the dialogue-tradition with the catechetical-tradition produced, in the early sixteenth century, the 'catechism'.

Bishop Andrews (1) wrote: "In **κατηχέω** is included an iteration, and from **ἤχew** we have our word echo. **ἤχew** is, indeed, 'to sound the last syllable', and of such sounders haply there are enough: but **κατηχέω** is 'to sound in the whole, after one, again'. And such is the repetition which is required of the right and true **κατηχούμενοι**, young catechized Christians, and those places are called **κατηχέεις**, that give the whole verse or word again."

The use we make today of the word 'catechism' can easily mislead us as to the origins of catechetical teaching. Before the sixteenth century, the word 'catechism' "never meant a book, but actual verbal teaching by question and answer; eliciting an 'echo' or reply". (2) This confusion of meaning makes it difficult to define precisely what is meant by a 'catechism'. It can describe, on the one hand, a statement of doctrine used in teaching and on the other it can describe a specific method of teaching. Any statement of doctrine designed for the purpose of helping another person to accept that teaching can be described as catechetical but it is a long way from a catechism such as the Catechism of the Church of Geneva, and each of these is equally distant from a children's A.B.C. and religious instruction from the end of the reign of King Henry VIII. The general definition of 'catechism' which must be imposed upon this thesis is a concentrated programme of education - normally religious in content - literally a "cramming of ideas", usually taking the form of an oral instruction by question and answer.

We can trace christian catechizing back to the Day of Pentecost when, as a result of the mass conversion recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, many people were baptized and afterwards instructed by the Apostles (3). We may assume that the Apostles followed the Rabbinic practice which they had witnessed in the teaching of Jesus Christ. From one of the earliest records of the life of Christ, as a child in the Temple (4), we find him listening to the Jewish teachers "and asking questions", sharing in the practices of the teachers of Israel. All who heard him "were amazed at his intelligent answers". During the course of his three year teaching ministry he must have used the question and answer technique in the same way as other rabbis. Some of these questions clearly made such an impression on his hearers that they are recorded in the Gospels: "Who

do men say I am? ... who do you say I am?" (5)

"The baptism of John: was it from God, or from men?" (6)

"Whose head is this, and whose inscription?" (7)

"What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he? ... How then is it that David by inspiration calls him "Lord?" (8)

"Which (excused debtor) will love him most?" (9)

"What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?"

"Which of these three was neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

"Is there a man among you who by anxious thought can add a foot to his height?"

"If one of you has a donkey or an ox and it falls into a well, will he hesitate to haul it up on the Sabbath day?"

"Would any of you think of building a tower without first

sitting down and calculating the cost, to see whether he could afford to finish it? ... Or what King will march to battle against another king ...?" (10)

It is clear in this by no means exhaustive list of examples, that the question and the rhetorical question both played a significant part in the teaching of Jesus, but it is also significant that Luke should make use of such a large number of questions in relating several events which occur in the other Synoptic Gospels in plain narrative. The evidence suggests that Luke introduced the dialectic into the early accounts, but he was writing as a Gentile to a Gentile readership who, therefore did not share the Rabbinic tradition. Luke may well have been reflecting a technique of christian teaching already common in the Gentile Church, and the clue to his use of this method appears to lie in the preface to his Gospel:

"I ... have decided to write a connected narrative for you, so as to give you authentic knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed (κατηχῆθης) (11).

This catechetical teaching of the first century seems to have taken two forms. Within the Jewish world, the pattern described on the Day of Pentecost was common: acceptance of the faith of Christ, followed by baptism and instruction. In the Gentile world, acceptance of the faith and instruction in the faith normally preceded baptism in the case of adults, and this rapidly became the rule in the second century. If it is accepted that infant baptism was practised in New Testament times, a third pattern, baptism followed by instruction in and acceptance of the faith, must have been used. In the modern world, the latter two patterns are the norm.



Most of the Fathers of the Church had some connexion with catechizing and the Catechetical Lectures of Cyril of Jerusalem (c.347) provide us with helpful examples of the catechetical technique but he would hardly have recognised the modern catechism. Catechists became important dignitaries of the Church in some places, notably Alexandria and Jerusalem, and their work was regarded as of vital importance.

The catechumenate developed gradually into two stages of instruction: The first was renunciation of evil and acceptance of christian belief; the second, which was generally common by the fourth century, was exorcism. The substance of christian teaching was contained in the "Apostles' Creed" (the baptismal creed), the Lord's Prayer, the substance of christian moral principles and the practice of worship and prayer. A "scrutinium" or oral examination was often held, in some places as many as seven such examinations were held during one course of instruction. This, in its turn, led to extracts of the teaching-matter being memorised, as we find in the Church in Rome during the seventh century. The ground was being prepared for the 'catechism' at the same time as the early technique of catechizing was dying. Morris Inch (12) has written that the catechumenate "showed considerable development during AD. 200-325, reaching its peak in 325-450 but had lost its significance by 550." The catechizing tradition certainly did continue beyond 550 but the near-universality of paedobaptism in Christendom by the sixth century meant that instruction in the faith was given post-baptismally or not at all.

In the English Church, when infant baptism had become the norm, catechetical teaching developed for adults prior to confirmation. References can be found in the writings of the Venerable Bede (c.673-735)

and his contemporaries and successors of the need to educate the laity by catechetical teaching, laying particular emphasis on understanding the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism and Eucharist. In his "History" (13) Bede makes honourable mention of the teaching role of the Church, noting especially James the deacon at York, Archbishop Theodore and the Abbess Hilda of Whitby, and he comments on his own life: "my chief delight has always been in study, teaching, and writing." The ground-plan of the 'baptismal catechism' was by now clearly defined and a clear development can be traced from the Anglo-Saxon expositions of the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Decalogue to the mediaeval manuals of devotion and teaching.

By the thirteenth century, the title "catechumens" was being used to identify candidates for baptism, and the 'catechism' and the 'scrutinium' (or 'instruction' as it had become known) had been absorbed into the preliminary part of the baptismal liturgy and were concerned not with the (infant) candidate for baptism but with the godparents. Throughout the Middle Ages, the clergy continued to be urged to teach their laity the essentials of the faith, and this tradition developed into the Primers which were one of the first-fruits in England of the coming reformation in the Church. These Primers were, in England the devotional books in which many of the English catechisms of the modern period first appeared, along with 'alphabets', dialogues and other forms of religious instruction.

Significant among the mediaeval primers and catechisms are those associated with the Franciscan Archbishop John Peckham (b. 1240), Archbishop John Thoresby and John Gaytrik/Taystek, John Wyclif (c.1329-1384) and Jan Hus (1373-1415). Peckham's catechism (of the old sort)

appeared in 1281, the product of a considerable movement for renewal in the English Church in which he was involved, and this was revised by Thoresby in 1357, translated from Latin into English by Gaytrik, and adapted and enlarged by Wyclif. Thoresby was also responsible for a primer in 1373. Hus, in Southern Bohemia, was considerably influenced by Wyclif and became an important prereformation catechetical writer. Among his Czech works are his "Explicatio Symboli, Decalogi et Orationis Dominicae" which cover that familiar ground of faith, law and prayer.

Up to this point, catechizing was a technique of teaching by lecture, repetition or examination, sometimes a literary form but with what we today might call a direct or journalistic style, of a body of religious teaching framed around the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. Normally, the matters dealing with the Creed also involved teaching about the baptismal covenant. Each author added his own particular emphasis, but the basic formula remained quite clear. The great change came in the early years of the Reformation: the modern catechism was born in the 1520's. This catechism, wrote Elizabeth Merrill, (14) is "the barest type of the expository dialogue" between a teacher who interrogates and a pupil who replies with great authority; sometimes the roles are reversed.

Martin Luther began working in 1517 on the document which was to become his first catechism but it remained incomplete for about twelve years. Around the year 1525 he first gave this question-and-answer treatise the title of a 'catechism'. He had produced an exposition of the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer in 1518 and had revised this and added a section on the Apostles' Creed in 1520, but this was still in the old catechetical

tradition. Melancthon produced a similar outline of the faith for children in 1521 but Luther must have the credit for the first modern catechism around 1525. However, the Reformer did not publish the catechism until 1529 as the Shorter Catechism, to which he added its less-famous partner, the Greater Catechism, in the same year, but within those four years, others had already been published. Notable among the publishers of early catechisms is Wolfgang Capito whose 'Dialogue' was published in Strassburg in 1527 and freely translated by Roye into English in the same year. Within a few years, catechisms had appeared throughout the churches of the Reformation. Luther clearly believed that the Shorter Catechism was a very important vehicle for teaching the faith: "If one portion of the Catechism may be rightly learned (by the people, even young children) I will let myself be bled, and broken on the Wheel!"

It is interesting to see why Luther and his fellow-reformers regarded catechisms as so important: Luther expressed the hope that even if all his other works were destroyed, the Reply to Erasmus and the Shorter Catechism would be preserved. Catechisms were the basic tool for lay-training and for the christian education of the young. The young were very important to the Reformation: they had to be taught well in a faith based upon the Scriptures or else, so the Reformers reasoned, they would return to their former ways. Luther conducted a visitation of the 38 parishes in the Wittenberg area in 1528 and wrote the introduction to the Shorter Catechism when he returned: "Merciful God, what misery have I seen, the common people knowing nothing at all of Christian doctrine, especially in the villages! and unfortunately many pastors are well-nigh unskilled and incapable of teaching ... (they) live like poor cattle

and senseless swine, though, now that the gospel is come, they have learnt well enough how they may abuse their liberty."

Luther's concern here is for the laity and for solid education in the gospel. G. Strauss (15) has written: "Catechisms were, of course, the basic tool for giving sound Christian instruction. Every official directive from prince and consistory affirmed catechism teaching as the pastor's first duty and gravest responsibility".

It appears that catechizing was not always as popular with the people but, nevertheless, catechisms abounded. Luther's Shorter Catechism often had to be enforced by authority in order to restore some uniformity in Lutheran teaching and the people had to be coaxed to attend catechizing by the liberal use of Lutheran hymns to relieve the tedium of a poor presentation! Eventually, the Shorter Catechism became the basic statement of faith among the Lutheran family of churches.

John Calvin has been accused, with some justice, of inventing a history for the modern catechism. In Book IV of the "Institutes" he cites what he describes as the "ancient custom" of the Church, that "those who had been baptised as infants, because they had not then made confession of faith before the Church, were at the end of their childhood or at the beginning of adolescence again presented by their parents, and were examined by the bishop according to the form of the catechism, which was then in definite form and common use." (16)

He adds that he wishes to see the laying-on of hands, "a solemn blessing", restored to its proper reverence and dignity in the Church. The

catechism is used to confirm the promises of baptism: "All believers have one common vow which, made in baptism, we confirm and, so to speak, sanction by catechism and receiving the Lord's Supper." (17)

He has a positive role for catechizing and for confirmation. Confirmation, as traditionally ministered, did injustice to baptism because confirmation is only the laying-on of hands with prayer, <sup>but</sup> it provides an important use for catechizing, "in which children or those near adolescence would give an account of their faith before the church. But the best method of catechizing would be to have a simple manual drafted for this exercise, containing and summarising in simple matter most of the articles of our religion, on which the whole believers' church ought to agree without controversy. A child of ten would present himself to the church to declare his confession of faith, would be examined in each article, and answer to each; if he were ignorant of anything or insufficiently understood it, he would be taught. Thus while the Church looks on as a witness, he would profess the one true and sincere faith, in which the believing folk with one mind worship the one God.

If this discipline were in effect today, it would certainly arouse some slothful parents, who carelessly neglect the instruction of their children as a matter of no concern to them; for then they would not overlook it without a public disgrace. There would be greater agreement in faith among Christian people, and not so many would go untaught and ignorant: some would not be so rashly

carried away with new and strange doctrines; in short, all would have some methodical instruction, so to speak, in Christian doctrine." (18)

Here are so many aspects of Reformation catechizing: public declaration of faith, simplicity, the basic doctrines of the faith, uncontentious contents, the low age of the catechumens, the need for religious education and the influence on the laity. It is helpful to see this as a background not only to Calvin's Catechism but also Luther's, Cranmer's, Herman's and most of the other catechetical works of the period.

Other secondary benefits resulted from the introduction of the modern catechism. Not only was it a significant tool for teaching the faith, but it also brought pressure to bear on the societies in which it was used to introduce systematic religious and general education of youth.

The Counter-Reformation did not take up the challenge of the catechism with the enthusiasm of the Reformers, probably because the concerted reaction to the Reformation came too late to gain the initiative as far as catechisms were concerned. Even in the period between '1517' and the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church did not use catechisms to any great extent or effect. It could be argued that the confessional catechism (as distinct from the educational catechism) was the only type really necessary for a statement of Roman Catholic teaching because the emphasis on a biblically-informed and individually committed laity was less than among the Protestant denominations. Canisius' "Summa Doctrinae Christianae" (1554) contains 211 questions and is found in a multitude of translations. The Catechism which followed the Council of

Trent, published in 1566, is more of a teaching manual for priests than a catechism; priests used the catechism as an outline of what should be taught, but then generally used smaller, locally-published catechisms as the means of teaching the children entrusted to their care. One interesting Irish Roman Catholic catechism, Keenan's Catechism, which was withdrawn after the first Vatican Council in 1870, contained this dialogue:

Question Is then the Pope infallible?

Answer No, this is a Protestant calumny."

In the English Church from 1548 there was a considerable degree of uniformity in the use of catechisms. The authorised catechism of the Church of England continued to be the basic material for a very long time and the Prayer Book Catechism, considerably unaltered since 1549, is still in use, but it was obviously supplemented by many alternatives, especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Prayer Book catechism is an excellent example of a 'baptismal covenant' type and is clearly a very important link between the promises made in baptism and in confirmation. Most of the other catechisms are large and extend the scope of the teaching in some way.

Luther's and Calvin's catechisms were intended to be used for most if not all of the year at the afternoon service on Sunday as the theme for the preaching at that service. The English Prayer Book Catechism - in its various stages of revision - was used similarly but usually not for the whole year. The 1549 Book assumed that candidates for confirmation would be catechized, but by 1552 all the youth of a parish were urged to join in the catechism class and were presented for confirmation when the results were satisfactory. In both Prayer Books it is assumed that the



bishop would test candidates in their knowledge of the catechism at the confirmation. By 1604, the enlarged Catechism was to be used within Evening Prayer, rather than before it, and therefore included adults as well as children. The Catechism was divided up by the priest into convenient groups of questions, the children learned the replies, and the questions were amplified by the preacher into brief sermons. That was how it should have been done, but very often it appears to have been a very much poorer exercise!

The purpose of catechizing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was justified on religious, moral and social grounds. The curate, who was generally the most socially stable and literate man in society, used his ministry to instil into the children of his parish the moral and social values of the nation, based on religious principles, couched in religious terms and with implicit religious threats attached. This may be a jaundiced view of the practice. George Herbert greatly esteemed the exercise: "The Country Parson values catechizing highly; for there being three points of his duty, the one, to infuse a competent knowledge of salvation in every one of his flock, the other to multiply and build up this knowledge to a Spiritual Temple; the third to inflame this knowledge, to press and direct it to practise, turning it to reformation of life by pithy and lively exhortations."

The seventeenth century Puritans adopted catechizing with enthusiasm, especially in the home on Sundays, and in addition to the family and public acts of worship. They generally took exception to set prayer and

the reading of homilies and so were, at first, very hesitant about the lack of spontaneity in catechisms. In the end, they found the justification which they sought in 2 Timothy 1.13 "Hold fast the form (ὑποτύπωσιν) of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

The Puritan form of prophesying or the expounding of the Scriptures and the answering of questions was a favourite "holy exercise" traced to 1 Corinthians 14. 1 & 31 and not wholly unrelated to catechizing. A. F. Mitchell (19) has commented: "It may be said, without exaggeration, of the catechisms framed on the system of the doctrinal Puritans, and published in England between the years 1600 and 1645, that their name is legion."

Richard Baxter used to catechize not only the children but all his congregation, and often used his pastoral visits as an opportunity to test his people's knowledge of what they had heard in the catechism and the sermon. In 1658, during the Commonwealth, he published "Confirmation and Restoration" which was a programme of instruction and preparation, ending, on Calvin's model, with a laying-on of hands. In the eighteenth century, catechizing was usually restricted to Lent and then dropped altogether, along with Evening Prayer in many parishes and often occasioned by the pressure of time upon the itinerant assistant curates of non-resident incumbents. The Evangelical clergy kept the practice alive, though some certainly used other techniques for children's education in the faith. Henry Venn catechized for an hour every two weeks and in the homes prior to a confirmation because he, like his fellow-Evangelicals, were convinced of the importance of the individual's declaration of faith. Catechizing took place also with school class but usually at a Sunday service. The Evangelicals always

had a hesitation about the second answer in the Prayer Book Catechism, as is revealed later in the Gorham Case (1846-50) when ultimately, Gorham's evangelical interpretation was upheld by the secular arbiter. By the end of the eighteenth century, the new Sunday School movement had adopted the catechism as part of its syllabus. In the early nineteenth century, catechizing at Evening Prayer on Sundays and other occasions became much more common and many books were published on the subject, encouraged by the example of men like Newman, Hook and Samuel Wilberforce, but it was still a minority practice until the 1840's. From about that time it became popular to teach the Church's Catechism in the day schools.

Miss Frances Humphreys answered the problem of teaching the Catechism to her Sunday School pupils at Strathbane in Ireland during the 1840's by writing poems and hymns to illustrate the words. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth" was illustrated by "All things bright and beautiful"; "And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary" by "Once in Royal David's city"; "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead and buried" by "There is a green hill far away" (with an alleged local illustration as well): the final articles of the Creed by "Every morning the red sun/Rises warm and bright"; renunciation of the devil by "Do no sinful action"; and christian obedience by "We are but little children weak". These and others were in her first collection of "Hymns for little Children"(1848) published just before her marriage to the future Archbishop William Alexander of Armagh. Her work is significant in two respects. Firstly, it reveals the need to use catechisms - in this case the Prayer Book Catechism - not only as a theological dialogue but also as a syllabus for further instruction. Secondly, it

marks the fact that the catechism, along with most christian education, had passed into the hands of the educated laity.

The effects of two important nineteenth century influences, namely easier communications and the Oxford Movement, were the increased frequency of confirmations especially in rural areas, and a greater emphasis on the sacraments. As dioceses often became smaller and more in number and bishops better able to travel to <sup>the</sup> extremities of their dioceses, and as more frequent communion became customary, confirmation preparation became a much more important duty for the average clergyman of the Church of England. Courses of twenty or thirty lessons including the Catechism or based upon the Catechism were normal in parishes where this duty was respected. But at the same time, catechizing at Evening Prayer declined as that service moved to the evening and Sunday afternoon children's services and Sunday Schools (in the sense we use today) took their place. The more extempore technique of education by question and answer, descended no doubt from the formal catechism and fostered by the practice of the Evangelicals, became the order of the day. Many of the Anglo-Catholics of the late nineteenth century wrote their own catechisms but few of these have survived that contentious age. The Revised Catechism (1962) and its progeny in the Anglican Communion have revived the practice of catechizing somewhat but not entirely in the tradition of the Prayer Book, for here is a much-enlarged syllabus of faith. The 1976/9 'Outline of the Faith' of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America takes the catechism one stage further into a complete syllabus of christian teaching; it adopts the literary conventions of the catechism but takes us into a new era in the flexibility of its many uses.

A feature of the Anglican Church in Britian today is the wide diversity of preparation for adult church membership. Some provinces have deliberately allowed the age of admission to the Holy Communion to drop to seven years or even younger, moving towards the practice of the Churches of the East and based upon the theology of Cyprian and Augustine. The Ely Report of 1969 conceived of this happening in the Church of England with the seven or eight year-olds receiving some instruction before being admitted to communion by a bishop. Confirmation or its equivalent would be deferred to the age of sixteen or so and would be preceded by a concentrated period of christian education in basic belief and practice with a greater degree of christian commitment expected of the confirmees. This throws the pattern of catechetical teaching into some confusion! It may be that in those provinces which practice child communion, an elementary catechism could be used before admission to communion and a more detailed catechism used before confirmation. Those places which retain the traditional practice of confirmation as the normal means of admission to the Holy Communion within the confines of Anglican Church membership, have tended to lower the age of confirmation, partly, perhaps, on the expedient that young people should be confirmed before they abandon the Church! In such a context it is difficult to teach the faith with any great expectations of positive and intelligent commitment from the child.

The use of catechisms today in this flexible situation must be seriously questioned. Some parishes use the 1662 or Revised Catechism to great effect, but others use some of the published courses or create their own courses based on the Creed, Lord's Prayer and Commandments formula.

Question and answer and 'discovery' rather than 'instruction' are certainly used to great effect in the christian training of youth. Relatively few parishes use the catechism alone for confirmation training. If the principle of teaching young people the language of the faith in order to prepare them for the discovery of its meaning is accepted, the use of memorized catechisms may be valid. However, in a society where every child is expected to be reasonably literate, it must be hard to justify catechisms on this basis: could not a child learn the language of the faith as easily through christian worship or Sunday school? Hand-in hand with this theory is that which favours the repetitive nature of the liturgy, often characatured as "through boredom comes inspiration"; that is when the liturgical formulae become almost automatic, inspiration can come at a higher level. If, on the other hand, this theory is rejected, on the grounds that over-familiarity merely leads to a state of inert indifference, catechisms and repetitive liturgical practice are liable to be rejected. Current thinking decidely favours the flexible approach. It should moreover, be carefully noted that the catechism is essentially a sixteenth and seventeenth century vehicle of communication and like most things from the past, needs to adapt itself to the needs of the age in order to be of greatest benefit as a vehicle for communication in the late twentieth century. The catechism has evolved into a literary form, rather like a layman's guide to the faith. Its short and concise statements derived from apposite questions can be very much more helpful to the average layman than a bare doctrinal statement. It would seem foolish to pursue the course of enlarging 'baptismal covenant' catechisms into doctrinal catechisms in the way that the Revised Catechism has done and better to start afresh as E.C.U.S.A. has done with its 'Outline'.

However, the dramatic dialogue is not dead and can serve the purposes of lay and youth training in the faith. If the catechism as a memorized dialogue is to survive, it must return to its basic ground-plan, faith, obedience and devotion, the 'baptismal covenant' and it must remain short, concise and adaptable.

The future baptismal covenant or pre-confirmation catechism may well be built into a course of instruction and take the form of a series of short questions for which the young people would prepare their own answers and be ready to open up a discussion with the 'catechist'. The teacher would need to have a good command of his subject, of the Bible and of the christian formularies in order to educate by discussion rather than simply to debate. Done properly, this may take catechizing back to where it all began.

NOTES ON CHAPTER TWO

- (1) Introduction to the Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine
- (2) Simmons and Nolloth
- (3) Acts 2. 42
- (4) Luke 2. 46 & 47
- (5) Mark 8. 27 & 29 (also Matthew & Luke)
- (6) Mark 11. 30 (also Matthew & Luke)
- (7) Mark 12. 16 (also Matthew & Luke)
- (8) Matthew 22. 42 & 43
- (9) Luke 7. 42 (also Matthew)
- (10) Luke 10. 26; 10. 36; 12.25; 14. 5; 14. 28-31
- (11) Luke 1. 3 & 4
- (12) In J. E. Hakes (ed)
- (13) A History of the English Church and People; 731
- (14) E. Merrill: The Dialogue in English Literature 1911
- (15) The Mental World of a Saxon Pastor; in Reformation Principle & Practice, (ed.P. N. Brookes)
- (16) Institutes IV. xix. 4
- (17) Institutes IV. xiii.6
- (18) Institutes IV. xix. 13
- (19) Catechisms of the Second Reformation, 1886



### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRIMER

"It is known that the layman's prayer book (the primarium or primer, as it was called in England) consisted, in its earliest form, of the Psalter and Litany, to which the Vigils of the Dead are commonly added. By the end of the thirteenth century, we find it consisting not of the whole psalter, but of the seven penitential psalms only, with the Litany and the Vigils of the dead, and having been prefixed to it what are known as the Hours of the Blessed Virgin."

(1)

A 'primer' was so called probably because it was the first book in any household, although some scholars maintain that the name refers to the first Hour of the liturgical day, Prime, which the book contained. The normal title for a primer was "The Book of Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary" and it was basically a layman's guide to the daily liturgy of the Church, together with some additional material. It was framed around the 'Hours' of the monastic day: Prime, Terce, Sext and None, to which were added at daybreak, Matins and Lauds, and at night, Evensong and Compline, the daily offices of the church. These monastic hours had their origins in the forms of devotion *in* Advent, preceding Christmas and thus were associated with the Virgin Mary, later to be extended to Passiontide and Pentecost and eventually becoming the general clerical offices for the whole year. Primers had no formal order or content but they normally contained an almanac, a table of holy days, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, an abbreviated lay form of the daily offices, a selection of Psalms (usually the Psalms of the Passion, 22-31.5; the Penitential Psalms, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143; and the Commendations,

119), and, depending upon the compiler, one or more of the following; the Litany and Dirge, a 'catechism' and an alphabet or children's instruction.

Primers gained their popularity in the sixteenth century, although they had existed long before. One hundred and eighty known editions of primers can be traced in England between 1525 and 1560 in Latin and/or in English. With the exception of the influence of Wyclif's Bible on the primers themselves, the primers can be said to have shaped most of the sixteenth century efforts to translate the Scripture into English. Primers went out of general use after the publication of the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, apart from a brief resurgence of interest during the reign of Queen Mary Tudor (1553-58), but even the primers of that reign surprisingly contained passages of the Bible in English. Until the whole picture becomes complicated by the devotional influence of the Tractarians on the English Church in the mid-nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church in Britain was the only body which continued to inspire the use of primers by the people. A large number of these were published in the seventeenth century. A smaller number of reformed books of liturgically-based devotions were circulating in the Church of England during the same period.

Among the early primers, the most significant can be traced to Archbishop Thoresby of York about the year 1373. This contained the Hours, the Penitential Psalms, fifteen Gradual Psalms, a Litany, the Office for the Dead, namely the Placebo (for Vespers) and Dirges (for Matins and Lauds), and the Commendations. Bound with this layman's prayer book in Latin was Thoresby's "Lay Folk's Catechism" or people's instruction in English.

This was revised by Wyclif and republished.

The next significant step taken by the primer is in the early years of the sixteenth century. No English Bible was available for official sanction at the time and so the linguistic influence was restricted to the translation of some rubrics and prayers into English. The change from Latin came slowly but surely and we are left with one beautiful classic of the English language from a primer of 1514, the poem "God be in my head" by Richard Pynson.

Thomas Hitton was executed in 1530 for having imported a primer in English into the country from the Continent. No copies of this work are extant but it probably contained the first passages of Scripture to be printed in the English language. It appears to have been published in 1528 or 1529 and to have reached England by early in 1530. However, the first primer in English to have survived dates from the same year, 1530, and is George Joye's "Hortulus Animae" (or Ortulus Anime). Joye had produced the first English Psalter in 1530 - not yet a complete psalter but based on Martin Bucer's Latin edition - and this was proscribed and denounced by the Bishop of London in 1531. Joye was a Cambridge reformer who had fled to the Continent from Wolsey and had eventually met up with William Tyndale and had worked as an Old Testament translator and as a controversialist. Sir Thomas More referred to Joye thus: "The Psalter was translated by George Joye the priest, that is wedded now, and I hear say the Primer too. Wherein the Seven Psalms be set in without the Litany, lest folk should pray to Saints. And the Dirige is left out clean, lest a man should hap to pray thereon for his father's soul."

The Hortulus Animae (or Garden of the Soul) was a popular form of devotional writing in the Church in Germany during the fifteenth century and Joye simply adapted the form. The book was published in Strassburg and is found under a variety of titles in its several editions. The contents are a calendar, the Passion Narrative taken from Bucer's composite gospel-narrative, a religious instruction for children (without an 'alphabet' but including prayers and graces mostly derived from Lutheran sources), a "dialogue ful of lerning" based on the Creed and the Ten Commandments in Tyndale's translation, a confession and four prayers from the Old Testament, a selection of thirty-nine psalms and the Offices. The latter contained some new responses, eight new hymns, new collects and no prayers to the Virgin Mary; the Ave Maria was retained but the Salve Rex replaced the Salve Regina. We have observed that Thomas More noted the **significant** absence of the Litany and Dirge. The second edition contained a **reference** to Saint Thomas Hitton, martyr, in the calender for 23rd February.

Joye's primer is typical of the period. The children's instruction, containing prayers for morning and evening, graces, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria, was a reflection of the emphasis in the reformed churches of the Continent on the education of the young in protestant belief. It is interesting to note that the translation of the Lord's Prayer in the Hortulus is the basis of the translation used in the 1549 Prayer Book and is still the best-known translation in the English-speaking world; there are only two phrases in which the text varies significantly.

Four years elapsed before the next significant English primer appeared in

1534. This primer, a copy of which was presented by Queen Anne Boleyn to the nuns of Sion House, the guardians of the Princess Elizabeth, is generally attributed to William Marshall. Bonner wrongly attributed it to Cuthbert Marshall, Archdeacon of Nottingham, in 1542, and Strype attributed it to Cranmer but it would be most unlikely to find Cranmer so openly hostile to Rome in 1534. William Marshall was a friend of Thomas Cromwell and was the product of a legal training, as the language of the primer reveals. He re-ordered the Hortulus and added some Lutheran writings: a preface, commentaries on the Decalogue, Creed, Lord's Prayer and the role of the Virgin Mary, together with a sermon on prayer and one on the passion of Christ. The children's instruction and the dialogue-catechism remained virtually unaltered and the second and subsequent editions appended Savanarola's exposition of Psalm 51 which is found in a number of other primers of the period. William Marshall also published a separate book of Hours in 1534 and he was followed by a number of other authors of primers in the following years.

Thomas Godfray published "A christenmans' lernyng" in late 1534 or early 1535 containing the Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer, a little of the Lutheran material from Marshall, the dialogue-catechism from Joye, the Passion Narrative extended in larger type to the Resurrection, selected psalms and the liturgical material.

In June 1535 Marshall revised his work into the "Goodly Primer". The Preface is strongly worded but the almanac and the calender are more traditional than in his 1534 primer. The 1534 book is substantially reprinted except that a Litany and Dirge are reluctantly added along with some prayers from Robert Redman's Sarum Primer of the same year, Tyndale's

"Office of all Estates" in society and the roles are reversed in the slightly revised 1534 dialogue. This "Dialogue between the Father, and the Son asking certain questions, and the Father answering" begins with the question: "What art thou?" The reply leads into a dialogue on faith, baptism, God and obedience, with the **notable** omission of the Lord's Prayer which is, of course, dealt with elsewhere in the Primer.

John Gough, a bookseller, published an English primer in Endhoven in 1536 and this includes an amended version of the same Hortulus catechism, apparently taken from the Godfray Primer. Its title, "A Dialogue of crysten lyuinge wherein the Childe asketh certayne questions & answereth to the same" sounds a little schizophrenic but, in fact, the adult is the interrogator as in the original Hortulus. A new section is included in the dialogue on knowing "What God is", taken from part of a catechism by Robert Wyer (1533), together with a further discussion on breaking and obeying the Commandments and the New Law, and ending with St. Matthew chapter 25 on eternal punishment. The Rouen Primer, in English and Latin also dates from 1536. In 1537, Robert Redman's Primer was published in Latin and English.

The children's sections of these primers developed into separate ABC's or children's instructions, the earliest known being an undated and anonymous one (probably from 1538) entitled: "The .BAC bothe in Latin and in Englysshe". This was compiled in order to teach the English language and the worship of the Church after the Sarum use. It contains an alphabet, The Lord's Prayer, Creed, Ten Commandments and liturgical phrases, with graces and other prayers. These works made a significant contribution to

the construction of the later English catechisms in that they were clearly designed with the educational needs of the young in mind. These were the models on which the concise educational framework of the Prayer Book Catechism was based.

A primer by John Hilsey, Bishop of Rochester, was published posthumously in 1539 under the title "A Manual of Prayers". It did not contain a dialogue-catechism in its first edition but a series of articles on "works". These formed an exposition of the Decalogue, a treatise on christian works, articles on all the estates of men and a strong denunciation of the Pope. In its second and subsequent editions, it followed, for its educational section, the same plan as the "BAC" of 1538. Hilsey had been one of the authors of "The Institution of the Christian Man" in 1537 and had joined Cranmer in opposition to the Six Articles Act in 1539, the year of his death. Cranmer has been asked by Cromwell to look over the text of the Manual but it appears that such corrections as he suggested were not implemented. The Sunday Epistles and Gospels in the primer are those which appear in the 1549 Prayer Book rather than those of the Missal, and appear to be the origins of the selection. The influence of the King and of Cromwell are strong and this is most clearly seen in the inclusion of the 1534 order "of bidding of the beads, by the King's commandment" - a bidding prayer for the Church (including the departed) and the Royal Court, the origins of the 1547 Bidding Prayer.

Nicholas Bourman's 1540 Primer contained a catechism based on that begun by the Hortulus and variously revised. This catechism takes into account the enlargements of Gough and includes a section on prayer. The three sections are faith, works and prayer. John Mayler also published a

widely-circulated primer in 1540.

In 1543 the writings of Tyndale were proscribed by royal statute (but not the Great Bible which owed so much to Tyndale's work). Although a number of printers of reforming publications were imprisoned, the English primers were not proscribed. Following "A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man", (the King's Book), which was little more than a commentary on the Six Articles' Act, an "Alphabetum Latino anglicum" was published with royal approval. This alphabet, which was combined with Lily's Grammar, was followed by an authorized ABC in 1545. This ABC ended with the catechism taken from the second edition of Hilsey's Manual and was entitled: "These questions the master ought to demaunde and to lerne his scolars".

The King's or Henrician Primer, published in May, 1545, contained no catechism, simply the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, Creed, Decalogue, graces, a good selection of prayers and liturgical material. In this liturgical material was the Litany and Suffrages of the troubled year of 1544. The Primer shows a paradoxical turning away from Rome together with a renewal of catholic dogma which characterised the last years of King Henry VIII's reign. The reasons given for the issuing of this primer are: firstly, that the people should know the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Creed and Commandments, because it is necessary that men should be brought up in the knowledge of the faith and of obedience and duty: secondly, to publish certain prayers in English; thirdly, to avoid the wide diversity of primers then in circulation; and, fourthly, so that children may first use the ABC, then move on to the Primer in English and eventually in



Latin. This primer became known in an amended form (for instance, invocations of the Virgin Mary were removed) as the first Edwardian Primer in 1547 upon the accession of King Edward VI. The primer was several times reprinted and after 1551 it included the 1549 Prayer Book Catechism. In turn, this became the final Edwardian Primer in 1553. This contained the orders for Morning and Evening Prayer for private use, the 1552 Prayer Book Catechism (slightly revised since 1549), a selection of graces and a large number of prayers. The Penitential Psalms and all unreformed elements were omitted and the Forty-two Articles were appended. It is significant that in the year of the King's death, the prayers in the last primer before the accession of Queen Mary should contain a strong emphasis on social order.

Primers continued to be published after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, for more than a century past, their descendants, the devotional manuals, have been a commonplace of church life. In the sixteenth century in England they were one of the most important influences on the English catechism: they provided a readership for the dialogue-catechism and they were designed specifically for the education and spiritual development of a generally ill-trained laity and youth.

The use of the term 'primer' today is more usually restricted to books which are basic outlines of the faith of the Church, such as the three-volumes by G. B. Caird, T. W. Manson and R. W. Moore, entitled "A Primer of Christianity" (2) or Louis Cassels' "Christian Primer" (3).

NOTES ON CHAPTER THREE

- (1) Henry Bradshaw
- (2) The beginning of the Gospel; The furtherance  
of the Gospel; The truth of the Gospel; 1950.
- (3) Published 1964.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A SELECTION OF CATECHISMS

One of the earliest major catechetical works is Archbishop John Thoresby's "Instruction for the People", "The Lay Folks' Catechism", 1537. This manual was inspired by Archbishop John Peckham's "Lambeth Constitutions" of 1281: Peckham (b.1240) was a strong, reforming prelate who was strict with his clergy and could even be strict with King Edward I. His council at Lambeth in 1281 was mainly concerned with the education and discipline of the clergy in an age when many clergy were hostile to authority, badly educated and lacking in piety and morality; sinecures were not uncommon. Thoresby's ministry continued the reforming work of Peckham sixty years later; for a time, he was Chancellor of England and temporary regent when Edward III was in France and he gained a reputation as a church-builder, especially during his archepiscopate at York.

Thoresby's catechism is in Latin, with a translation by John Gaytrik (variously spelt Tavistock, Taystek, Garryk, Gaysteke) which expanded the text in order to help the laity reading the English and cast it into what has been described as verse - though there is little poetry about it and very few rhymes. A fifteenth century writer described the work thus:

"Sir William Thorsby, archebishop of York, did so drawe a treatise in Englyshe by a worshipful clerk whose name was Garryk. In the which were conteyned the artycles of belefe, the vij dedly sines, the vij workes of marcy, the x comaundementes; and sent them in small pagyantes to the common people to learne it and to knowe it, of whiche yet manye a copye be in England."

The pagents appear to be some sort of mystery plays. This is the best known example of the typical handbooks of religious guidance from the period.

John Wyclif (c.1328-1382) possibly a relation of Thoresby and with similar North Yorkshire origins and strong desires to see reformation in the Church, adapted Thoresby's work. He added considerably to the catechism, removed Gaytrik's northern dialect and replaced it with the midland dialect of Oxford. The plan of the work reveals the shape of the Thoresby/Gaytrik original and Wyclif's adaptation. It begins with an introduction on the necessity of learning; Wyclif then added material on the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria (noting that "Eva" is the reverse "Ave"), the Apostles' Creed, salvation and the five outer and five inner senses (will, reason, memory, imagination and thought). The text returns to Thoresby/Gaytrik for the bulk of the second section on "the six things" for knowing God. The first is belief in God, the Church, Salvation and the historic acts of God in Christ. The second is obedience to the Ten Commandments, divided into two tables and numbered according to the Latin tradition. In this section, Wyclif introduces a considerable amount of new material. He contrasts belief in God with idolatry, describes the eucharist as, in part, the memorial of Christ, insists that people should "hear God's law taught in the mother tongue. For that is better to thee than to hear many masses." He approved the paying of tithes providing the priest deserved them, condemned connivance at the wrongdoing of leaders of church or state and adultery by men of religion. Theft includes spiritual theft, refusal to give alms on a holy pretext and the withdrawal of wages or labour. Christ, writes Wyclif, was not a secular leader nor did he beg for his living like many in the religious orders, and an obedient priest is not inferior to a member of an order founded by a saint. Wyclif adds a rider that keeping the commandments brings "bliss of heaven in body and soul, without end, though thou have neither bull of pardon,

nor leter of fraternity (enrolment in an order), nor Chantry after death. Therefore keep them well and do the works of mercy".

The summary of the Decalogue in the two great Commandments provides the moral necessity of obedience. The third of the six things returns substantially to the Thoresby/Gaytrik model and concerns the seven sacraments, with an interesting reference to receiving the Sacrament of the Altar worthily or unworthily. The fourth and fifth things are the fourteen points of the Faith: the seven works of mercy and the seven virtues. Thoresby compares the example of Christ with greedy monks and Wyclif points out that righteousness is not a reward for riches or for wearing monks' habits. The sixth and last way of knowing God is the avoidance of the seven deadly sins. Thoresby adds that he will grant forty days' indulgence to those who learn the things contained in the book because by doing so they will come to know God.

As history moved towards the first catechism, an important influential work was Ulrich Zwingli's "Of the Education of Youth" published in 1523 with the Minster School at Zurich clearly in mind. Part **One** consists of "how the tender minds of youth is to be instructed in the things of God", Part Two concerns of practical application of the christian faith in life and Part Three concerns service of the community.

Part One begins with the Spirit's gift of faith through the illumination of the Word, and with an interesting child-centred approach, "to bring young people to a knowledge of God in and through external phenomena". This section could be described as "God and man's predicament" dealing as it does with providence, God the Father and prayer and moving on to sin

and redemption: "we are set between the hammer and the anvil, half beast and half angel"; we must "abandon ourselves to his grace" and the gospel "restores the conscience ... puts forth righteousness ... redeems all who steadfastly believe". Faith is fundamental to the theology Zwingli expounds, the expression of "the heart which he (God) has drawn to himself". The second part urges that Latin be learned, followed by Greek and Hebrew for the studying of biblical texts. The christian spirit is to be "humble, modest ... sound and ordered" for "we direct all our gestures with the simple and unaffected moderation of the peasant". Family life is very important, ambition is a deadly poison, mathematics and music are not to be despised and arms should only be taken up in defence. Part Three deals with the "seemly pleasures" of innocent entertainments, and with neighbourly duty, parental obedience, anger, justice, truth, conversation and recreation - wrestling is only to be practised in moderation! The conclusion speaks of "absorbing Christ himself". Here all the classical contents of a catechism ready to be taken up by the early compilers.

The catechism of William Roye is probably the third printed work in English to emanate from the protestant Reformation. Roye was a former Greenwich friar who fled from England about 1525 to work with Tyndale and then went to Strassburg. The "Brefe Dialoge bitwene a Christen Father and his stobborne Sonne" was published in 1527 in Strassburg but almost all copies were bought up by Herman Rynck for Cardinal Wolsey and it was not republished until 1550 as: "The true believe in Christ and his sacramentes". Neither Thomas More nor Walter Lynne (the publisher in 1550) knew the name of the original author, who was, in fact, Wolfgang Capito. Capito was an advanced and leading reformer in the city of

Strassburg and a friend of Bucer. His catechetical work: "De Pueris Instituendis Ecclesiae Argentinensis Isagoge" (in Latin) was written by August 1527 and appears to have been shown to his colleagues who suggested some abbreviation, clarification and the softening of some anti-papal sections. This was done very quickly in time for the German edition. It follows a classical catechetical pattern, though in fact it was one of the earliest modern catechisms, in which the Father interrogates the Son.

William Roye translated from the Latin version and the most obvious immediate feature is that he reverses the roles so that the Son becomes an enquirer and the Father replies from conviction. This merely reflects the situation in England at the time when a catechism as such would be unusable. Roye is more anti-clerical than Capito's Latin version and he has a propagandist's way with words: "verba absolutoria" becomes "a feawe babblynge wordes", to take but one example. His reversal of roles also enlivens the debate between the two characters and he takes some considerable liberties with his translation, altering the emphasis in a number of places from Capito's Lutheranism towards the theology of Zwingli. In dedicating his work, Roye refers to the task of translating the Scriptures on which he was engaged and how he had thought of preparing a theological work within "the meane peoples capacitie" based on the Old Testament, when, as he describes it, "I happened on a smale worcke ... a treatous very excellent, late turned out of douche (German) into Latten" which was so simple that a babe of seven years old could thereby understand the nature of faith in God, the mystery of predestination and charity to one's neighbour. So, with the people of the English town of Calais, and of the English nation in mind, he prepared his work which was

published at the end of August 1527: "God no doubtte hathe his electe amonge oure people also".

The work begins with the Christian Man and swiftly moves to God the Father. "God can not be knowne with oute Christ as a tender and mercyfull father, but rather for a cruell and strayght iudge": through the atonement of Christ, "a cruell iudge" becomes "my father", and **this** theme is taken up often in the work. The structure is that of the Apostles' Creed but the contents range very widely over the contentious issues of the Reformation. There is a brief mention of the Ten Commandments and a brief section on the Lord's Prayer ends the work. It is strongly anticlerical and is couched throughout in vivid terms.

A number of interesting features are found in the dialogue. The article of the Creed concerning the Church adopts the Lutheran "an holy christen churche" and it is clear that Roye did not consider "syngynge and redynge in the Church" nor auricular confession, pardons, pilgrimages, holy days, regulations about food, the mass and many other things as good works consequent on faith. Monks, Friars, Canons and Nuns are all referred to as "belly bestes" and their chastity should not be construed as a saving work. Intercessions through the saints are unnecessary because Christ intercedes for us; and Roye illustrates this with characteristic humour by reference to "St. Toncombre" (St. Wilgefortis, to whom a woman might pray if she were weary of her husband) and "Sir John Shorne" (who had conjured the devil into a boot and reputedly could cure ague). He expresses an almost Zwinglian position on predestination and the eucharist but in his explanation of the words of institution in the sacrament he says: "The Lordes wordes are light" and enjoins the reader to interpret



by "the livynge sprete". Enquiry into the Trinity is limited: "God, his worde, and his sprete, are but one and thus to beleve is sufficient, withouten eny further enquiry. for the searcher of the maieste of god, shalbe overthrowne from glory."

Roye refers to the "Sacramental signs"; baptism is a sign of belonging to Christ's flock and based on the covenant to Abraham. Roye criticises those who refuse to baptise infants: "Do what thou canst, yet shalt thou never be able to satisfye soche people ... it shulde be lauffull for no manne to denye baptem to eny persone, howe wicked so ever he were, yf he once with tonge name hyme silfe a Christen manne".

Known wicked people should not be baptized, "But when it is vnknowne vnto vs whether he be a shepe or a goate, ... we ever ought to hope of the better ... baptem is nothyng but a begynnyng" and so the Church uses excommunication if it turns out badly! Auricular confession is condemned along with papal pardons: "master parsons momblyng, when he waggeth his honde over oure heddes ... his murmuracion, which he calleth absolucion ... (is) a crafte to picke mens purses with all."

Confession is to God and between any christians who are at odds with one another. The Ten Commandments are "a myroure most pure and clene" and the inability to keep the law throws men back to the merciful Father. The Lord's Prayer is treated in a very symbolic way: "The Lorde doth not constrayne vs to say these wordes. But by theym he declareth vnto vs, of what mynde and herte we ought to be when we praye ... Ye often tymes when I have sayde the fyrst or seconde worde. For when I once begynne to faule into

meditacion, I by and by forgett all vocall wordes ...

So. Thinkest thou on all these things as often as  
thou prayest?

Fa. Naye, but in generall ..."

Roye concludes with a lengthy grace, a series of advisory proverbs including "Have feawe wordes", and a short prayer.

Martin Luther's Shorter Catechism was published in 1529 and was supplemented by the Greater Catechism. However, it was the Shorter Catechism which became the most widely used and, along with the Augsburg Confession, still forms the distinctive basis of faith in the Lutheran Churches today. In his German Mass of 1525, Luther had commented on the work in which he was engaged: "What we need first of all is a good plain Catechism ... for such instruction, I know no better Form than those three parts which have been preserved in the Christian Church from the begining - the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer - which contain in a brief summary all that a Christian ought to know."

This is the basic pattern which Luther adopted, with the addition of material on the sacraments. It was next step in Luther's insistence upon educated christians: in 1523, he had taken his people by surprise by insisting that none would be admitted to the Sacrament without first giving account of his faith to his pastor.

The introduction sets out the author's aim, to educate christian people in the truth, especially as contained in the Decalogue, Creed and Lord's Prayer. A few basic principles of catechizing are listed; firstly, to use only one standard text with the young and to encourage them to learn

it ( and to abjure the lazy!); secondly, to help the young to understand the text which they have already learned and to do so slowly and carefully; thirdly, to progress to the Larger Catechism in due course and to urge those in authority to encourage this practice; fourthly, to teach the young to want to come to the sacrament and to faith without being forced to do so.

The first section of the Shorter Catechism deals with the Law, the Ten Commandments, clearly and concisely. The second section expounds the Apostles' Creed in three articles, Creation, Redemption and Sanctification with characteristic personal application: God "created me and all other creatures" and he provides for me, without any merit earned; Christ "redeemed me ... won and delivered me"; the Holy Spirit is the agent of my calling, illumination, sanctification and preservation. As so often with Luther, one is reminded of the testimony-style of Charles Wesley's hymns in this catechism. Each answer in the credal section ends with the formula: "This is a faithful saying". The third section deals with the Lord's Prayer, which Luther explains in a simple and direct way. At this point, he builds upon the ancient pattern with additional material, the material which distinguishes this catechism as a confession of Lutheran faith.

The fourth section, on the sacraments, begins with material on baptism which he links with the sacrament of absolution by way of the issue of post-baptismal sin and <sup>is</sup> entitled: "How the simple people should be taught to confess". Confession has two parts, the confession of sins and absolution by the confessor. All sins should be confessed, even unknown sins should be confessed to God in prayer, and the absolution brings

complete forgiveness in God's sight. Known sins may be tested by the rule of the Ten Commandments: here again, Luther employs personal application to great effect - (the penitent is urged to enquire of himself whether he has been disobedient, unfaithful, idle, injurious to others, etc.). However, Luther is not obsessed by sins: if a man has no burden of sin to confess, he should not invent sins but confess in general terms. His short form of confession contains an introduction which asks the confessor to "declare absolution to me" and two model confessions. In place of a code of penalties or penances, the confessor is to use the Scriptures to bring comfort and adds, after his absolution: "God be merciful to thee, and strengthen thy faith. Amen. Dost thou believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?" "Yea, reverend sir," is the reply.

The fifth section is a considerable treatise on the Sacrament of the Altar. It divides into five questions: What is it? Where is it found in the Bible? What benefits are received from it? How are they received? Who can eat the Sacrament worthily? Luther's emphasis is his typical balance of realistic sacramental language with the fundamental necessity of faith and is associated very closely with forgiveness. An appendix follows the Catechism containing the Morning and Evening Blessings, a Grace and a poetic stanza in German, Latin and Greek based on parts of Romans 13 and 1 Timothy 2.

Marshall's "Goodly Primer" of 1535 gives the clearest form of Joye's "Hortulus Animae" dialogue of learning. The catechism begins by asking what the respondent is: a creature of God and a christian. This leads on to baptism, faith, the Trinity, the fatherhood of God, the Person of

Christ, brotherly love, obedience and the Ten Commandments (with an abbreviated preface and according to the Protestant numbering). The expositions of the Decalogue are interesting. On avoiding images: "to avoid all carving and curiosity in setting forth of images to be worshipped ... for God is a Spirit". On the first two commandments: "God requireth ... our whole hearts". For the third and fourth we pray: "Thy name be hallowed, and thy will be fulfilled and not ours". The remaining six are not even quoted in full but are bracketed under man's duty to his fellow men. The original instruction ends with the words: "Wherefore the Scripture concludeth, that all men are sinners: that as many as shall be saved, should be saved by God's mercy only". John Gough added sections of Robert Weyer's Catechism (1533) on "what God is", on the relation of the Commandments to the New Law and on eternal punishment. Weyer's Catechism, "A lesson for children", was in three parts: To know what God is, that is, mighty; To know what man is, that is, a creature; and the estates which God bestows on men.

John Calvin produced an "Instruction and Confession of the Faith" in 1536/7 in French and 1538 in Latin. This is a brief catechism containing questions based on the articles of the Creed and related subjects (for instance, material on the devil). Then there follows a separate section on the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Word and the Ministry, and the two Sacraments. The Reformer substantially revised this work and wrote, in 1564 of the month of September 1541,

"On my return from Strassburg, I composed the Catechism - and in haste; for I would never accept the ministry until they had taken an oath on two points, that is, to preserve the Catechism and the discipline. And while I was writing it they came to fetch pieces of paper the size of my hand

and carry them to the printer's ... I have sometimes indeed thought of putting some finishing touches to it if I had the leisure."

It may have been written in haste, but the Catechism of the Church of Geneva, 1541 in French and 1545 in Latin, became one of the most important of the catechisms of the Reformation. Calvin described this "elementary treatise" as "a representation in miniature of the whole subject of which it treats"; he recognised that a mistake made in training a child's understanding of God can deform the child spiritually.

There are five sections: Faith, the Law, Prayer, the Word of God, the Sacraments, the same basic division as the first catechism: He begins with the chief end of human life (an opening which was to be copied by the Westminster divines in 1647) and the knowledge of God. The first major section (questions 8 to 130) deals with trust in God: God is known as powerful and good but he is revealed by the word, and faith is the Knowledge of God in Christ. The Apostles' Creed, in four articles, is the sum of the knowledge of the faith. The Trinity describes one essential God who is Father and first cause, Son and eternal wisdom, Spirit and "virtue diffused". Each of the four articles of the Creed are expounded, with fifty-eight questions on the person and work of Christ and a final twenty on the nature of faith. This final sub-section is a rare exposition of the nature of faith, "a sure and steadfast knowledge of the paternal goodwill of God towards us, as he declares in the gospel that for the sake of Christ he will be our Father and Saviour."

The second section, on the rule or law which God gives for human life, is a very full treatment of the Decalogue in ninety questions with many

references to the gospel, to every-day behaviour and to the New Law. At points, Calvin loses some of his liveliness, especially when he deals with God avenging the fathers on the children. Part three, concerning prayer, approaches the subject as essentially an inward experience of God through the Spirit. The Lord's Prayer is a God-given pattern in six petitions, three concerning God and three concerning men, and is dealt with briefly, phrase by phrase. The short fourth section deals with the word of God "in the Holy Scriptures, in which it is contained" and as it is preached. Section five concerns the sacraments and defines a sacrament as "An outward attestation of the divine benevolence towards us, which, by visible sign, figures spiritual grace, to seal the promises of God on our hearts, and the better confirm their truth to us."

There are two sacraments, baptism, "a kind of entrance into the Church" and the supper, in which "God exhibits himself to us by nourishing our souls". The sacraments are not bare "figures" but have "reality" joined to them, provided we do not reject the promises they enshrine. Infants may be baptized and sureties are not essential because of the New Covenant application of Old Testament circumcision in the Church. There is an interesting difference here between Calvin and Cranmer based on the same premise. Realistic language is used in dealing with the supper, but Christ must be received in faith. The final question (351) explains that no specific order of government is to be imposed on all parts of the Church but the elders are to exercise a role in discipline and excommunication.

Archbishop Herman of Cologne's "Boke of a Reformation" of 1543, "A simple

and religious consultation", was translated into English by J. Daye in 1547 and bears some similarities with Cranmer's work at the time.

Within the proposals for confirmation, there is a form of catechism. It is prefaced by an acceptance of infant baptism based on the precedent of the Old Covenant and views confirmation as an open offering of o self "to this fellowship of the outward and inner man" through the episcopal office of confirmation. The catechism is, like Cranmer's and Luther's, a training and testing manual for adult church membership. It should be used before a confirmation.

The structure begins with the characteristic description of a christian as born again in Christ, forgiven and having a share in everlasting life; baptism is the trustworthy sign of these gifts. The Creed is divided into three articles, corresponding with the Persons of the Trinity and each article is expounded. The gift of faith forms the subject matter for the next section, dealing with spiritual adoption, growth, good works and trust in God - "I may ever call upon his name with childrens trust". The baptismal promises are summarised as renouncing Satan and the world, being "bound to Christ and to his congregation" and being "obedient to the Gospel". Baptism itself is "the laver of regeneration", a grafting into Christ, involving not only spiritual commitments but also obedience to the Church's discipline. The Supper strengthens the christian's faith by the body and blood of Christ, "that I may live less to my selfe, & more in him". There is a commitment to pray and to give alms. All this is to be recited by one child representing the group to be confirmed. At this point, the other children are asked if they believe the same. If the level of literacy is too low, the minister is to read the replies and some way found to gain the assent of the young



people. Here is a baptismal covenant catechism which includes material on the christian life but does not contain specific expositions of the Decalogue or the Lord's Prayer.

Cranmer's first attempt at a catechism comes from the year 1548. It was a free translation of Luther's Shorter Catechism taken from a work by Justas Jonas. Cranmer, or those who translated under his instructions, did not adopt the Lutheran position throughout, tending towards the Strassburg via media between Luther and Zwingli. The major changes are that Cranmer laid more emphasis on faith in receiving the eucharist and added a section on idolatry, apart from writing in a more expansive style than Luther. The Commandments still follow the Latin division and Absolution is still regarded as a sacrament. Much criticism has been made of Cranmer for this catechism. He was moving towards the theological position of the Swiss Reformers and yet he chose Luther's Catechism, perhaps because it was politically wiser to do so, and was therefore criticised by his Swiss friends and their followers because they did not fully appreciate the importance of the small but very important changes made in the adaptation. It is also likely that Cranmer still held views nearer to the Lutheran than the Swiss Reformers in 1547/8. John ab Ulmis, who disliked Luther, wrote to Bullinger in August 1548: "this Thomas has fallen into so heavy a slumber, that we entertain but a very cold hope that he will be aroused even by your most learned letter. For he has lately published a Catechism, in which he has not only approved that foul and sacriligious transubstantiation of the papists in the holy supper of our Saviour, but all the dreams of Luther seem to him sufficiently well-grounded, perspicuous and lucid."

From the other extreme, Gardiner referred to this catechism as Cranmer's weakest point. Even Cranmer himself was not satisfied: "But this I confess myself, that not long before I wrote the said catechism, I was in error of the real presence, as I was in years past in divers other errors: as of transubstantiation, of the sacrifice propitiatory of the priests in the mass, of pilgrimages, purgatory, pardons..." (1)

It is perhaps as well that the first Book of Common Prayer with its Catechism was published in 1549.

Bishop John Hooper did not publish a catechism but produced two works of basic christian education. "A lesson of the Incarnation of Christ" dates from 1549 and consists of a preface and two short chapters, and 'Testimonies of the New Testament'. 'Reasons out of the Old Testament' Six objections are raised to his thesis and answered, and a short conclusion is drawn. The second work dates from 1550: "A briefe and clear confession of the Christian faith". This is divided into five sections of the Apostles' Creed: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the Catholic Church and the Fruits of Faith, each section being prefaced with the relevant portion of the Creed. There are one hundred articles of faith, each beginning with the formula "I believe". There is no dialogue nor specific material on the Lord's Prayer or Commandments, but in every other respect this work must be categorised with the catechisms. Hooper adopts a typically clear-cut Reformed stance on election, the state of the soul after death, the cross, the mass, the priesthood of all believers and images. He rejects the communalism of the Anabaptists and can write of baptism that "we are changed and altered from children of wrath, of sin, of the devil, and of destruction into the children of God,

of grace, and salvation; thereby to be made the Lord's, heirs and coheirs with Christ of eternal life".

However, children of the faithful who die before baptism are saved. Although he rejects transubstantiation, he states that in the sacrament "we are indeed made partakers of the body and blood of Jesus Christ". Excommunication is the responsibility of the whole Church, that is, "by the consent of the greater or most sound part of the same". There is a very clear description of Hooper's view of hell, apparently to balance his statements about the resurrection of the flesh and of eternal life.

The catechisms of the Books of Common Prayer and their progeny will be the subject of the following chapter. They are notably brief and primarily concerned with the baptismal covenant. The material covered is commitment, the Creed, the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, with a supplement on the Sacraments added in 1604. It is closely identified with Confirmation and is found under that heading in the book until 1662. There are only three short sentences devoted to explaining the Creed.

In 1553, John Ponet, formerly Bishop of Rochester and by this time Bishop of Winchester, published the 'Catechismus Brevis' and its English translation, if Heylyn attributes it correctly. (2) The Latin edition contains the 42 Articles in their uncorrected form, which dates it to 1552, but the English edition has the final version of the Articles, which dates its completion as May 1553. Within two months, Mary Tudor was Queen and Ponet's Catechism suffered an untimely ban. Dr. Randolph (3) called it "the last work of the Reformers in that reign", therefore it may be said "to contain, as far as it goes, their ultimate decision, and to represent the sense of the Church of England as then

established".

And Philip Hughes has written (4): "Ponet's book is not so much a catechism, in our sense of the word, as a dialogue between master and scholar. Even for Tudor children it must have been mature reading. But it is written in a most pleasant spirit, master and scholar are evidently on the friendliest of terms; the explanations are extremely lucid, the language is simple and distinguished, and nowhere is the work disfigured by reviling against those of other beliefs. Indeed, the scholar has, apparently, no knowledge of any such. In this catechism the new interpretation of the Christian religion is taken for granted as the only interpretation."

Perhaps Randolph has a better understanding of the apparent purpose of this catechism, to provide a commentary on the 42 Articles, but Hughes has a better sympathy with the style. Ponet was a young bishop, possibly as young as 36 years, when he wrote this work. The contents are an index, a royal injunction to "all schoolmasters and teachers of youth", the Catechism, the 42 Articles and five prayers (two from the Prayer Book). The master interrogates the scholar.

Ponet describes the content of the christian religion as faith in God, persuasion of the contents of Scripture and charity towards God and one's neighbour. The Creed is "a short abridgement" of the law and gospel in the Scriptures; it is also described as a "Symbol". Ponet begins with a brief statement of the Law, (the second table is not even quoted in full), which helps us "know ourselves, and ... as it were in a glass, behold the filth and spots of our soul". None can be made righteous

by obedience to the law, righteousness comes only by faith in the saving work of God. The Creed is expounded as the basis of the catechism and there are no surprises in the theology but there are many colourful explanations which find their way into the work of Nowell and Grindal and others. Nowell adopts one of Ponet's reasons for the Resurrection, being the confirmation of Jesus' power to "come down from the cross"; similarly he likens the continual presence of Christ's Godhead to that of the sun in the sky; and the historic acts of Christ "be as well our own, if we will cleave thereunto with a steadfast and lively faith, as if we had done them ourselves". Grindal adopts Ponet's eucharistic illustration that "faith is the mouth of the soul". There is material on the sacraments and receiving the word of God before the last section based on the Lord's Prayer. The Catechism concludes with a summary of christian religion: first, to "know..covet..fear..love and reverence" God; second, to love others - "measure always another by thine own mind"; third, to love our enemies and keep the garden of our souls in good order.

In 1554, the protestant exiles fleeing from Queen Mary were searching for a Prayer Book: William Whittingham claimed that Cranmer had prepared a much more thoroughly reformed prayer book than the 1552 Book, and he joined John Knox in favouring a simple book based on the Genevan Book; others favoured the 1552 Prayer Book. Knox and his friends went to Geneva and adopted the version of the Genevan Book which Knox had prepared in Frankfurt, and this was printed in 1556. The third section of this book contains Calvin's Catechism of the Church of Geneva (1541/5) in English. On Knox's return to Scotland in 1559, the three sections of the book became the Book of Common Order of the Scottish Church. Although the prayers which follow the 1556 translation of the Catechism varied from

one edition to the next, the catechism itself remained in the same third section of the book until 1611. An interesting aside is that, except for the edition of 1584, the book's title begins: "The Psalms of David". The edition of 1615 replaced the Genevan Catechism with the Heidelberg Catechism and after 1615 there is no catechism until the appearance of the Shorter Catechism in the Westminster Directory for Public Worship over thirty years later.

Thomas Becon's "New Catechism" which is an enormous work, may have been written during the reign of King Edward VI but it was not published until 1560 when the author was a prebendary of Canterbury Cathedral. Becon had been a chaplain to Cranmer and admitted to being strongly influenced by Bishop Hugh Latimer. The work is dedicated to his two surviving sons and his daughter. The Father interrogates the Son, who replies with very detailed answers, well supplied with quotations from the Bible and instances from the Fathers. There is a preface and a conclusion and six sections. First, repentance, a good deal briefer than one may suppose. Second, the Apostles' Creed, with Becon's preference for "I believe that there is one holy universal church" because he considered it wrong to "believe" in anything other than God. Third, the Law, an introduction to and commentary on the Decalogue, with a typically extensive section on images. Fourth, Prayer, forgiveness and the Lord's Prayer. Fifth, the most elaborate section, the sacraments. Five definitions of a sacrament are given along the same lines: "The outward sign, and the promise of grace added to the sign ... A sacrament is a witness of God's favour, declared by an outward sign."

Becon defends paedobaptism against the Anabaptists whom he describes, with his typical pungency, as "a swarm of heretics" but insists, "he is

not a Christian only, which is washed in water ... but that is the very baptism ... even to be baptised in the heart."

All the usual criticisms of the mass are repeated but more strongly than by many of his contemporaries, particularly by 1560. He even has a preference for surplices rather than vestments but would rather have no distinctive attire for the ministry. Sixth, "The Offices of all Degrees". This is sometimes found in the continental catechisms and in Becon consists of twenty social divisions, from "Temporal Magistrates" and "Ministers of God's Word" to husbands, wives, parents, children, the unmarried, schoolmasters and scholars, the rich and poor, "Old and Ancient Women" and, just to be certain that no one was omitted, "All Degrees and Estates Generally".

A far more important catechism was published in 1563, a product of the best thinking of Lutheranism and Calvinism and known as the Heidelberg or Palatine Catechism. S. C. Guthrie describes this work thus: here "the Reformed Church confesses the good news of Jesus Christ in a joyful, thankful, free, personal way". Karl Barth used the Heidelberg Catechism as a basis for a series of lectures in 1947 in the same way as he had used part of Calvin's Genevan Catechism in 1945. (5) The catechism is the work of Caspar Olevianus, professor and later pastor at Heidelberg, and Zacharias Ursinus, a student of Melancthon, Calvin and Bullinger who was a professor at Heidelberg; both were young men and were expelled during the Lutheran reaction in the city; others appear to have collaborated. It is part of the order for church worship and has four purposes: to instruct youth, to instruct pastors and teachers, to be used in cycles of nine readings during worship, and, by division into 52

sections, to provide the subject-theme for the afternoon service. It is still a normative document of the faith in many reformed churches in Europe, and, in many places still used in public worship as originally intended. Two models were followed: Leo Judd's catechism of 1541 and that of Marten Micronius used in the German Church in London of 1542. Ursinus had worked on catechisms before.

There is only a minimal reference to predestination in the catechism and it has been criticised as being anthropocentric because it is mainly concerned with man's salvation. Barth reminds us of the free superiority of God in the catechism: he is "Deus nudus, absolutus, absconditus", only Jesus Christ "revealed in his Word" can make God known. The catechism is very little concerned with the christian and the world but is concerned a great deal with the christian and his faith. Barth describes the aspect of partial knowledge of God before the final revelation as the catechism bearing a sign, "a not yet". Like other catechisms, it begins with the christian's fundamental "comfort" and then proceeds to the Law, sin, divine justice and the gospel of salvation. The Creed is divided into three articles: God the Father, the Creator, God the Son, the Saviour, and God the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, including a reference to the "holy catholic church". The references to the work of the cross are detailed: "he bore ... the wrath of God ... the only expiatory sacrifice". The descent into hell is described in terms of the Christian's experience: "Christ my Lord has redeemed me from hellish anxieties and torment by the unspeakable anguish, pain, and terrors which he suffered in his soul both on the cross and before."

After the Ascension, Christ sent the Spirit as "a counter-pledge" because,



the catechism explains, Christ is absent from us as man but not as God. The divinity, although it is united to the humanity of Christ, extends beyond that humanity to be omnipresent. Barth describes this, perhaps a little severely, as a "theological disaster" and, justifiably, as lacking in biblical simplicity. The Spirit is God's gift of himself to the christian. The communion of saints is not simply another way of describing the Church, as it is in much Reformation theology (for instance in Ponet and Nowell), but includes christian fellowship across the divide of death and the sharing of the christian's gifts for the (earthly) Church's ministry. Two sacraments are accepted, including infant baptism, as promises and reminders but the literalist language is heavily qualified by a clear distinction between the symbol and the thing symbolized in it. Church discipline is effected by the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments which of themselves separate belief from unbelief. God's Law claims man unreservedly for his service and involves spiritual and social consequences. The final section deals with the Lord's Prayer and the christian's freedom to pray; Barth describes the attitude towards the believer expressed in the catechism as God is near and God is "for him". The expression of gratitude to God with which the catechisms closes is typical of the style of the whole work.

Alexander Nowell's Catechism of 1570 was called forth by the request of the Convocation as will be seen in the next chapter. The English translation of this Latin Catechism by Thomas Norton contains a preface explaining that "the doctrine herein taught is confirmed by the word of God, the only rule of religion" and that the biblical margin references could be taken up by "ecclesiastical ministers" to confirm the doctrines

taught and "to be better acquainted with the scriptures themselves". The Master interrogates the Scholar.

The first part of the catechism concerns the Scriptures: "ignorance of the scripture is the mother of all errors", and there is a dispute between the Master and the Scholar on how to divide the teaching of the word. The Scholar prefers Luther's and Ponet's "Law and Gospel" but "the most precise manner of dividing is not to be required of children" so the Master dictates the four sections: Obedience, Faith, Invocation and the Sacraments. "Law and Obedience" (the first part) expounds the Decalogue, with an interesting reference to national parricide, high treason; "So outrageous a thing can in no wise be expressed with fit name".

1570 was the year in which Pope Pius V excommunicated Queen Elizabeth and the Jesuit Mission was launched on England. The devil is described, in this Mosaic section, as "that hellish Pharaoh". The law is described once more as "a schoolmaster" to lead us to Christ. "The Gospel and Faith" (part two) divides the Creed into four articles, the last article being the Church, since Nowell reasoned that belief in the Church was not the same as belief in God; if it were the same, it would be idolatry. There are three types of faith: "a true and lively faith" in God, a general faith which believes the scriptural facts but does not "embrace the promises ... properly called the gospel", and a dead faith which believes the right things to be true but never bears fruit. In this section, Nowell relies heavily on Ponet in expounding belief in God. In writing of the Church, Nowell comments that to say a church is "catholic" and "of Rome" is contradictory for "catholic" witnesses to universality. This does not exclude any local church being part of the catholic church but not the whole. "Prayer and Thanksgiving" (part three) are means of

direct communication with God, without mediator. Whilst the mind is superior to the tongue, "the very sound of utterance ... quickeneth and sharpeneth our mind ... and driveth away slackness". The Lord's Prayer is divided into six petitions, and Nowell gets himself into a tight corner about "thy will be done". He explains that we must pray for our wills to conform with God's will, for his will is often offended but cannot be "compelled". "The Sacraments", (the fourth part) of which there are only two, have an "outward element or visible sign, and invisible grace"; they are "provided for our weakness" and are "marks and tokens of our profession ... seals of God's promises in our hearts ... by the one we are born again, and by the other we are nourished to everlasting life". There is strong literalist language in this catechism's exposition of the sacraments, but the outward washing of baptism is insufficient without the Holy Ghost's sprinkling of the blood of Christ; the bread and wine of the supper are a double sign so that the memory of the cross "should stick the deeper" and "The only faithful" receive the "fruit" of the sacraments. Faith is not described as the mouth of the soul, as in Ponet, but the underlying concept is clearly implicit. As to transubstantiation, "There is no need to invent any such change". Public penance and excommunication are approved by the authority of the elders and with the pastor.

The next major catechetical work to influence the English scene was written in 1647, by which time <sup>the body</sup> which commissioned it, the Westminster Assembly, had completed most of its work on Ordination, Church Government and drafting a Confession of Faith. W. M. Hetherington described the attitude of the Westminster Divines to the Prayer Book Catechism thus: "the Catechism of the Church of England was undeniably both meagre and

unsound" (1890). The Catechism of the Westminster Assembly was to be modelled on the Confession and was probably drawn up by the same committee as its final important work. During the course of writing the Catechism, it became obvious that two catechisms would be necessary, the Shorter being appropriate for children as well as adults. The Shorter Catechism was approved by the House of Commons in November 1647 and the Larger in April 1648, with the order for printing in September 1648, the same year as they were adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Both catechisms are doctrinal, with no reference to church order, (which had the consequence later in Scottish history that the three Presbyterian denominations all looked to the Shorter Catechism for a doctrinal basis). There is an interesting apocryphal account of how the drafting committee failed to agree on a definition of "God", so they selected George Gillespie, the youngest member, to do the work. He is said to have prayed: "O God, Thou art a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in Thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

The story may be untrue, but this is the basis of the fourth answer, to the question: "What is God?" and is typical of the text-book theology of these catechisms. In the end, one catechism became popular, the Shorter, and joined Luther's, Calvin's and the Heidelberg in becoming an important confessional document especially in the Presbyterian and other associated traditions. The Shorter Catechism begins with an introduction about man and the way "to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever". There follows a section on God, his nature as Creator and Provider and his eternal decrees. The next unit deals with the universality of the fall, followed by nine questions on redemption in Christ and ten on partaking in Christ. There are forty-five questions on the Decalogue, with a

reference to the New Law, thirteen on faith, repentance, the word and the sacraments, and ten on prayer and the Lord's Prayer. The Appendix contains the text of the Lord's Prayer, two graces and the Apostles' Creed (with a footnote on "hell" as the place of the dead).

The Puritans were devoted to catechisms in the seventeenth century. Dr. Owen, a leading Independent, wrote "A Catechism for Independency" to assist Richard Baxter in his attempts during the 1660's to resolve the differences between the Church of England and the Independents. At an ordination in the Church of England, "the power of the keys" was passed from the bishop to the ordinand; the Separatists passed that power from the congregation to their pastors, whereas Baxter maintained that neither bishops nor congregations could dispense this power but only God.

J. Paget's Catechism is a whole volume, divided into three "books": 'Of the creatures in heaven'; 'Of the creatures on earth'; and 'Of the creatures under the earth'. This takes sixteenth century scientific evidence of nature and uses it to support biblical theology. It is not simply a religious dialogue as such but the approach is no more catechetical than Dr. Owen's work. In contrast, from the same period we find a catechism by "R. E." This is divided into eight sections, God, the Trinity, the Scriptures, Creation and Providence, the Fall and Salvation, Christ the Mediator, the Resurrection and the Judgement. Each section contains between ten and fifteen questions and each question is answered by a verse or verses quoted from the Bible. The "Scriptural Catechism" is a very modern technique; the second edition is dated 1678.

Richard Baxter, who had reluctantly left the Church of England as a result

of the enactments of the Clarendon Code and the Act of Uniformity, produced several catechisms. "The Catechising of Families" dates from October 1682, contains 292 pages and covers all aspects of the faith in its forty-seven chapters. Baxter comments: "a larger catechism is yet needful; not to be learnt without book, but to be a full exposition of the shorter which they learn". The first chapter introduces the importance of learning and the following chapters deal with the different ways of knowing God and his kingdom. The sixth chapter, on the biblical revelation, is exceedingly lengthy. The Apostles' Creed is explained in sixteen chapters, the Lord's Prayer in nine and the Ten Commandments in twelve. The final chapters deal with the ministry, worship and the sacraments of the Church and with preparation for death and judgement.

Baxter's "Poor Man's Family Book", apart from containing the "Dialogue between Paul and Saul" referred to in Chapter One, also included two catechisms. "The Shortest Catechism" is by no means short and is divided into three parts. In the first, Baxter explains the meaning of the christian religion, the new covenant of reconciliation, faith and the sacraments; In the second, he explains the meaning of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and in the third, he delves into the nature of God the Trinity, Man, the Fall and writes of giving oneself to God. The "Short Catechism for those that have learned the First" (quite an achievement, in fact) is in nine parts, each one very detailed in its answers and very well supplied with scriptural questions. This begins with belief in God's eternal nature, then Creation, man and the Law followed by the fall and redemption. The New Testament or "Law of grace" (Baxter often prefers 'testament' to 'covenant') and the Holy Ghost form the basis of the following chapters, continuing with the final

articles of the Creed and concluding with the resolution of the will: "I give myself up to him". A Decalogue-and-Creed pattern is discernable.

Bishop John Williams of Chichester engaged in a vigorous controversy with Roman Catholicism in his "Catechism Truly representing the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of ROME with an ANSWER thereunto. By a Protestant of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND" (1686). On the left-hand page is "A Roman Catechism Faithfully drawn out of the allowed Writings of the Church of Rome" and on the right-hand page is an Anglican-protestant reply to each article. This deals with the Church of Rome and the Papacy, Scripture and tradition, Repentance, works indulgences, purgatory, the traditional protestant accusations of abuse in worship, the seven sacraments and especially baptism and the eucharist. It appears to twentieth-century eyes as extremely bigoted but it does reveal how the catechetical form could be used, even if it is far from the authentic purpose.

The Revised Catechism of 1962 is one of a series of authorised catechisms for use within the Anglican Communion, and will be examined in Chapter Five. The examples of catechisms cited above serve to show how wide is the diversity of catechisms from the Reformation and post-Reformation periods in purpose, form and content. The study of certain specific common themes will be dealt with in a later chapter, but it is possible to notice not only the diversity of the catechisms but also that the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer are constant factors in almost all of them, with additional references to aspects of life in Christ, especially the sacraments. However, it must also be clear that this particular form is so closely associated with the sixteenth and seven-

teenth centuries, that serious questions must be faced as to the role and structure of the catechism before it is used in the latter part of the twentieth century.

These "catechisms" can be divided into several categories, and few of them are so alike that they fall into the same categories with each division. There seem to be four basic divisions.

Division one: content. Certain catechisms deal in general terms with basic beliefs and practices, for instance Thoresby/Wyclif, Zwingli, Joye, the Westminster and "R.E." By far the majority specifically expound the Creed as a principal item, for instance, Thoresby/Wyclif, Roye, Luther (and Jonas), Calvin (and Knox), Herman, Hooper, the Prayer Book Catechism, Ponet, Becon, the Heidelberg, Nowell, Baxter and the Revised Catechism. Almost all of these Creed-based catechisms and of those which deal with the faith in general terms, add specific expositions of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, with the exception of Zwingli, Herman and Hooper. The majority of catechisms also add material on other subjects than the Creed, Commandments and Lord's Prayer, especially high priority being given to the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Sacraments.

Division two: purpose. There seem to be four broad categories in this division, most of which overlap because catechisms arise from their setting in time, place and theological tradition.

The first category is of training and testing manuals for youth.

The second is of confessional documents written for youth but with ready accessibility by the adult laity.



The third is of theological treatises written for youth or adult laity. The fourth is of polemical dialogues under the guise of catechisms. In the first category, we should place Zwingli, Joye, Herman, Hooper, the Prayer Book, Nowell, Baxter and the Revised as these are exclusively youth-orientated and educational. They generally focus upon the baptismal covenant and the need for the promises of baptism to be ratified at confirmation or its equivalent. This is especially true of the Prayer Book Catechism, Herman's Catechism and the Revised Catechism, all of which not only teach necessary christian doctrines for adult church membership and christian life but also form a yard-stick of basic christian knowledge.

In the second category, which certainly overlaps with the first in that all these catechisms were written with a view to training youth for adult church membership and as a basic teaching-standard, fall Luther's Shorter Catechism, Calvin's Genevan Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism. These documents are respected as historical confessions of their particular traditions, whilst also being regarded as teaching instruments.

In the third category it is sometimes difficult to discern whether some of the catechisms were really intended for use with youth since they would appear to be beyond the ability of almost all young people today. Ponet's Catechism seems to have been designed for youth as a background to the 42 Articles, and its similarity to Nowell's suggests that it would have been used in that way, but it was also used to communicate reformed theology to adult laity. Roye's Dialogue and Becon's Catechism purport to be for youth but the reversal of roles in Roye's work suggests that it was not intended as a system of catechetical education for youth but as an easily-absorbed introduction to Reformation theology for young people and adults. Becon's work is too large to contemplate realistic use with youth. "R.E's" is geared to an adult readership.

The fourth category includes works like Owen's, Paget's and Williams' catechisms, along with others cited in the first chapter.

Division three: the manner of dealing with the Creed. Almost all the catechisms examined deal with the teachings contained in the Apostles' Creed and the majority quote it and explain it. Amongst the catechisms which cite the Creed, all accept the three primary divisions, namely belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those which make no major sub-divisions of the triple-division are Luther, Calvin, Herman, the Prayer Book, the Heidelberg and Becon; but Becon relegates the final articles of the Creed to consequences of belief in the Holy Spirit and therefore he could be said to draw further divisions. Those which distinguish article three, belief in the Holy Spirit, from the remaining articles, namely Ponet and Nowell, subordinate belief in these articles to a different type of belief; the church, the communion of saints, forgiveness, the resurrection of the body and eternal life are not so much believed in, in the sense of trusting in them, as accepted in faith as a consequence of belief in God. Hooper distinguishes five articles, the three of the Trinity, the fourth of the church and the fifth "the fruits of faith". Baxter deals with the Creed line-by-line and the Revised Catechism gives an initial division into three, following the Prayer Book and then adds credal material in "The Church and Ministry", "The Holy Spirit in the Church" and "The Christian Hope". One other distinction is made in the catechisms in the line of the Creed which speaks of "the holy catholic Church". Roye, following the Lutheran Capito, quotes the Lutheran form "a holy Christian Church". Becon and Ponet use the adjective "universal" for "catholic", but those influenced by the Swiss Reformers usually retained "catholic" in the Creed.

Division four: the use to which the catechisms were put. Luther's, Calvin's and the Heidelberg were all designed not only to teach youth and to confess the faith to the laity, but also to form a plan for regular preaching, particularly at the Sunday afternoon or evening act of worship. Thus, the congregation became familiar with catechism and the preacher was obliged to preach on the major articles of the faith in a systematic way. Herman's was part of the Confirmation rite in Cologne and was the basis of the christian training of confirmees; this was essentially group use. Cranmer's Prayer Book Catechism was at first just used with confirmees, then with all the youth of the parish who could be persuaded to attend, and, eventually, in the seventeenth century, to be used publically at Evening Prayer. However, the very scant nature of this catechism demands that it be amplified by explanations: for instance, all that Cranmer provided on the Creed was its three-fold division. It is this necessity for amplification that may have accounted for the need for other unofficial catechisms in addition. The 1604 addition is very much more tightly argued and detailed than the original sections. The other catechisms were used in a whole variety of ways, depending upon circumstances, either in private, in groups or in public. For instance, Baxter's were generally to be used within the christian family.

Division five: theological emphases. The catechisms are all typical of the theological outlook of their compilers or place of origin on a spectrum which extends from Zwingli and the Puritans through Calvin and the English Reformers, (although Cranmer himself gives little scope for assessing his theology in his own catechism), to Luther. All except Thoresby/Wyclif and Luther accept two sacraments in use in the Church, except the Revised Catechism which leaves the question partially unresolved.

As it is always interesting to hear a professional theologian speak of his faith to children, because it exposes whether he is master of the essence of his subject, so it is interesting to see some of the great sixteenth century theologians attempting to present their theological patterns in a simple manner.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

- (1) The Answer to Smith's Preface
- (2) Historia Quinquarticularis et Certamen Epistolare
- (3) Enchiridion Theologicum
- (4) The Reformation in England, vol 11 (1953)
- (5) The Heidelberg Catechism for Today, (Bonn Lectures, 1947)  
The Faith of the Church (Lectures to Swiss reformed ministers, 1945)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CATECHISM OF THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

It is undoubtedly true that the two most widely known catechisms in Britain during the period since the seventeenth century are the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer and the Shorter Westminster Catechism. The Westminster Catechism has remained as it was drawn up in 1647 and the Prayer Book Catechism has remained unaltered since 1662. However, whereas the Westminster Catechism was drawn up by an assembly, the Prayer Book Catechism was drawn up by one man and then several times amended. Because it is part of the Prayer Book, it has been the model for many later catechisms throughout the Anglican Communion and its history is worthy of a case-study.

John Colet refers to a catechism in English in his "Statuta" for St. Paul's School in 1511: "I will the chyldren lerne ffirist aboue all the Cathechyzon in Englysh and after the accidence that I made or sum other yf eny be better to the purpose to induce chyldren more spedely to laten spech And thanne Institutum Christiani hominis which that lernyd Erasmus made at my request and the boke called Copia of the same Erasmus."

This 'catechism' was probably a synopsis of the Creed together with a few other basic christian teachings, but its contents can only be guessed at; it was, of course, not a modern catechism. Colet also recommended Erasmus' "Institutum", which is a collection of Latin verses on the Creed and the Sacraments. Colet's own "Accidence" contained articles of the faith, comments on the seven sacraments and various moral precepts in English, together with the famous Latin Grammar by William Lily,

Schoolmaster of St. Paul's. The earliest extant edition of this work of Colet's is from 1527, and in it the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria are still in Latin. Colet recommended that the readers should commit the work to memory.

William Roye's Dialogue, from Capito, was published in 1527, followed by Luther's Catechisms in 1529 in Germany; Joye's Instruction in 1530 with its subsequent revisions, some influenced by Wyer's catechism of 1533; Calvin's Grenevan Catechism was published in 1541 and 1545 and Herman's in 1543. All of these had an influence on the English Church. In 1548, Thomas Cranmer supervised a conservative translation and revision of the Lutheran Catechism taken from Justas Jonas' Nuremberg Kinderpredigten, and this became known as "Cranmer's Catechism." Injunctions on the clergy in 1536, 1538 and 1547 had required them to teach their people the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments in English, sentence by sentence, on Sundays and Holy Days and these were to be recited to the priest at confession. The 1548 catechism was a recognition of the fact that catechisms were being used as a means to this end and it was an attempt to bring some order into the situation where some used one, others another and most none at all.

Cranmer's first Prayer Book Catechism was in the book of 1549 and is very closely linked with confirmation. It is a dialogue on belonging to Christ, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. It is in English and is a short baptismal covenant catechism designed clearly as a preparation for confirmation. The Archbishop's first defence of confirmation in the book, taken from Herman's Consultation,

is that the children should have learned what was promised for them in baptism and are now able to undertake the baptismal promises publicly. There is little doubt that the catechism is by Cranmer but Isaac Walton (1653) attributed it all to Alexander Nowell and others have suggested Bishop Goodrich of Ely or Bishop Ponet of Winchester. It is very concise and its most developed points are strongly influenced by the King's Book of 1543. The 1549 version followed the lead set by the Bishops' Book (1537) and the King's Book in abbreviating the Decalogue and omitting its introduction. The child answers questions put to him.

Bucer's "Censura" recommended, among other things, that all young people should be present at catechizings, whether they were due to be confirmed shortly or not, and that a larger catechism should be prepared for adult laity. Cranmer acted on the first of these recommendations: "The

Curate ..... shall diligently upon Sundaies, and holy daies halfe an hour before Evensong, openly in the Church instruct and examine so many children of his parishe sente unto him, as the time wil serue, and as he shal thinke convenient, in some parte of this Catechisme."

The rubric in the 1552 Prayer Book is followed by another which suggests that all children should be sent to catechizing and that when the bishop next signifies his intention of confirming those who can say "the Articles of their fayth, the Lord's praier, and the X commaundementes: and can aunswere to thother questions contened in this Catechisme" may be confirmed. In 1552, the full Decalogue with its introduction (1) was provided in the Great Bible translation of 1539 and the term "child" was substituted for "son" in the preamble to the Lord's Prayer. It had been Cranmer's intention to provide a longer catechism for this book but it did



not appear; indeed, the brevity of this catechism is one of its distinctive features, enabling it to survive so long as a teaching medium, almost always supplemented by other material. Its general lack of contentious material ensured its usefulness in a diverse and comprehensive church. The Catechism is one of the only parts of the 1549 Book to remain almost unaltered in the 1552 Book. Even the second answer (on baptism) which caused the Puritans difficulties in the seventeenth century was not altered. The 1552 Catechism is contained in the 1553 Primer, just as was the 1549 Catechism in the 1551 Primer. Archbishop Secker described the Catechism (albeit enlarged by then) as:

"that very good, though still improveable Form of sound words, which we now use. . . . . a Catechism must be simple and tempered to the youthful understanding. Nor can it be said that our Catechism leaves this condition unfulfilled. It is nothing if not simple; in it there is no Priest, no Confession, no Absolution, no Consecration; but Repentance, Faith, and Forgiveness of Sins, without reference to Sacerdotal Mediator, and the Baptism of Water and Receiving of Bread and Wine which the Lord commanded." (2)

Between 1552 and 1604, pressure was once more exerted for a larger catechism to be used alongside the Confirmation Catechism. In 1553 Bishop John Ponet's Catechism was published in Latin and English with episcopal approval and by royal authority; the 1552 Articles and a selection of prayers were added to the English edition. At the end of the reign of King Edward VI, it is said that Bullinger's Catechism, along with those of Erasmus and Calvin, were the most popular of the longer type.

Ponet's work was influential on later catechisms but, being printed in the year of Queen Mary's accession, it was therefore not widely used.

Part of Ponet's introduction to his catechism is worth quoting as it sheds some light on his reasons for writing: "It is the duty of them

all, whom Christ has redeemed by his death, that they not only be servants to obey, but also children to inherit: so to know what is the true trade of life, and that God liketh, that they may be able to answer to every demand of religion, and to render account of their faith and profession. And this is the plainest way of teaching, which not only in philosophy Socrates, but also in our religion Apollinarius, hath used: that both by certain questions, as it were by pointing, the ignorant might be instructed; and the skilful put in remembrance, that they forget not what they have learned. We therefore having regard to the profit, which we ought to seek in teaching of youth; and also to shortness, that in our whole schooling there should be nothing, either overflowing or wanting; have conveyed the whole sum into a dialogue, that the matter itself might be the plainer to perceive, and we the less stray in other matters beside the purpose."

In 1561, the Bishops agreed to the need for a larger catechism, and this was resolved at Convocation in 1562: "there should be authorized one perfect Catechism for the bringing up of the youth in godliness, in the schools of the whole realm; which book is well nigh finished by the industry of the Dean of St. Paul's."

It would appear that Ponet's Catechism was not considered suitable and the Convocation did not wish to see the Prayer Book Confirmation Catechism superceded; rather, it was to be supplemented by another which could be used with communicants and perhaps also by one in Latin for use in the schools. Alexander Nowell, Dean of St. Paul's, had produced a "Little Catechism" (known later as the "Smaller Catechism") some time before or during 1559; this was in English and Latin and designed for younger scholars. By 1562, Nowell seems to have completed his "Larger Catechism", based on the catechisms of Calvin and Ponet, and the "Catechismus Puerorum", a shortened Latin version of the Larger Catechism, designed for older pupils in the grammar schools; in English, this is often known as the "Middle Catechism". These two catechisms were presented to the Convocation in 1563 but were not sanctioned for use because the publication was also to include the Thirty-nine Articles and John Jewel's "Apology". The project did not materialise and the catechism known as "Nowell's Catechism" was eventually published in Latin in 1570 with a preface and in a translation by Thomas Norton, under the title: "A Catechisme or first Instruction and Learning of Christian Religion". This was the final revision of the Catechismus Puerorum and, because of its clarity and its episcopal favour, was the leading English doctrinal catechism into the seventeenth century.

At the 1604 Hampton Court Conference, parts of Nowell's Smaller Catechism dealing with the sacraments were added to the Prayer Book Catechism at the instigation of a committee presided over by John Overall, Nowell's successor as Dean of St. Paul's. Overall, later Bishop of Norwich, was a moderate High Churchman who had a profound influence on John Cosin. The additional section was a concession to the High Churchmen, but, by

enlarging the catechism, it even appeased the Puritans a little. Overall was in a difficult position between those who wanted the catechism much extended and those who thought even Nowell's 1570 Catechism (of moderate size for the period) was too long. The words "as generally necessary to salvation" in reference to the two sacraments, which have been the focus of a controversy in the Church of England ever since, appear to be the work of Overall and, it seems, he may have been unconscious of the two exclusive interpretations since given to the words.

In the new sacramental section, the second answer (the fifteenth of the catechism) defines a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto use, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

Nowell followed the Reformers in stating that the sign is the initial gift of God, the institution of Christ, but that the inward and spiritual gift is not bestowed on "such as be void of a lively faith." (3) From the 1662 Prayer Book, the comma after the words "spiritual grace" is usually omitted. The fact that it is found in the 1677 Welsh Prayer Book and in some subsequent Welsh editions suggests that this may have been a printing error in 1662 and it is very doubtful whether the change of theological emphasis was intended. In 1604, the Puritans were hesitant about the realistic language of the eucharistic teaching in the answer: "The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

No revision of this answer was proceeded with because it was considered a proper balance between the two extreme interpretations. Thomas Hutton,

in his reply to the Puritan objections, pointed out that the objective phrase, "verily and indeed" is balanced by the receptionist phrase "by the faithful", for, he argued, the elements in the Supper are not the body and blood of Christ if they are out of use by the faithful. Bishop Cosin was later to write: "... though the bread and wine remain, yet the consecration, the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, do not remain longer than the holy action itself remains for which the bread and wine were hallowed" (4).

Dean Overall had taken care to scrutinize Nowell's work on this point and, rejecting both consubstantiation and transubstantiation, described the christian's feeding upon Christ in the sacrament as "by the Holy Spirit working through faith".

The 1604 revision does one very significant thing, it alters the nature of the catechism. From 1549 to 1604, the catechism was clearly of the "baptismal covenant" type: its purpose was to inform the young person about the duties and privileges of baptism, to be ratified by personal commitment and prayer with the laying-on of hands at confirmation. After 1604, there were still a mere twenty-five questions, four about the baptismal covenant, two on the Apostles' Creed, five on obedience to the Law of God, two on the Lord's Prayer and twelve on the sacraments. The answers in the final section are generally shorter than in the others. From this revision the catechism set out to provide elementary theological education in subjects other than the christian's commitment to, and relationship with God. Of course, it was agreed that more information was required on baptism in order to understand confirmation and that confirmation, as the rite of admission to Holy Communion, should involve

eucharistic teaching. Thus the scope of the catechism was widened in 1604. Were it not for the necessity to compromise and therefore to make minimal changes in the catechism, we might suppose that the revision of 1604 would have been more extensive. All the explanations in the original catechism are uniquely brief compared with other catechisms of the period, particularly the summary of the Creed, and might have been expanded. Some statement of the theology of the Scriptures could well have been included. It may be that Bucer's "Censura" and the 1562 Convocation were correct and that what was needed was a second catechism alongside the first, covering all aspects of adult faith, rather than an extension of the existing catechism. In addition, a verbal alteration was made in the third answer ("renounce" for "forsake").

At the 1661 Savoy Conference many detailed amendments to the Catechism were discussed, two verbal changes made and the reference to "dipped or sprinkled" as the outward sign of baptism was excised. The Decalogue from the Great Bible was retained (unlike the Epistles and Gospels which were replaced by the 1611 version) with slight linguistic modifications; the reply on neighbourly duty concerning obedience to the monarch was the subject of a minor amendment. A more important modification was the re-framed rubric which now required the catechism to be used immediately after the second lesson at Evening Prayer, thus involving the adults in the catechizing, at least as eavesdroppers, after the established continental pattern. The rubric immediately before all the previous catechisms, framed by Cranmer to disarm the implication that confirmation is necessary to salvation and to emphasize the importance of baptism, was the subject of a Puritan objection and appears in a revised form as the penultimate rubric of the Public Baptism of Infants in the 1662 Book: "It

is certain by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

The Puritans raised some major objections to the catechism; in the first, they told the Bishops: "The Catechism is defective as to many necessary doctrines." Given the enlargement of 1604 and the inherent change in the nature of the catechism, this was a fair criticism but they certainly asked for too much at a time when not much was being given away. They urged that more material should be provided on the Creed, the Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, together with "somewhat particularly concerning the nature of faith, repentance, the two covenants, justification, sanctification, adoption and regeneration".

They asked for a change in the reference to godparents because there had been few godparents in the previous years of the Commonwealth. In many respects, the general desire of the Puritans for a more comprehensive authorised catechism had to wait until the Revised Catechism of 1962.

The second major Puritan objection related to the second question:

Question Who gave you this Name?"

Answer My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of heaven."

Their proposal, which was rejected, read: "My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was visibly admitted into the number of the members of Christ, the children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven."

The Puritans could not accept a view of baptism which implied that the action of baptizing alone made an infant into a christian and they sought clarification of the term "a member of Christ" in this proposed amendment. Cranmer had adopted Lutheran literalist language about the sacraments in the Catechism of 1548 and in the 1549 Catechism had considerably abbreviated and modified the realism of the 1548 approach.

At the same time, Cranmer could be quite definite about faith: "The first entry unto God, good christian people, is through faith, whereby ... we be justified before God.

... a quick and lively faith ... is not only the common belief of the articles of our faith, but it is also a sure trust and confidence in the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a steadfast hope of all good things to be received at God's hand; and that, although we ... do fall from him by sin, yet if we return again unto him by true repentance, that he will forgive and forget our offences for his Son's sake, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and will make us inheritors with him of his everlasting kingdom." (5)

Cranmer's concern was to provide a balance between the rebirth of "water and the Spirit" (6) and therefore to assert that sacramental initiation was complete in baptism. Baptism was, for Cranmer, a necessary part of the spiritual progress of any person in the christian Kingdom, a token of the forgiveness of sins and re-birth, a washing of regeneration. Therefore, all baptized persons could be addressed as "christian people" but mature repentance and faith were required because of the problem of sin. Cranmer's emphasis on the washing of regeneration in baptism clarified for



his age of universal infant baptism the issue of sacramental initiation and allowed for the operation of the principles of repentance and faith. By 1661, and with the growth of early nonconformity especially in the period of the Commonwealth clearly in mind, the Puritans were probably more aware of the theological climate in the parishes than were the Bishops. Fundamentally, the Puritans would have been in agreement with Cranmer's broad principles but his form of words in the catechism, they reasoned, implied in the seventeenth century that baptism alone could save without adult repentance and faith. Alexander Nowell had made a clearer distinction in his Catechism between being received into the Church and being made a child of God: "through baptism we are received into the Church, and have an assurance that we are already the children of God."

Being made a child of God is less to do with baptism and more to do with the effects of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The third major Puritan objection was that infants could not make baptismal vows proleptically through others. Infant baptism was for them firmly based on the covenants and the relationship of the children of believers to God within the new covenant. They viewed the promises rather as the security of the sponsor's faith and therefore of the christian upbringing of the child, and in this respect they were expressing a point of view only adopted by the liturgy of the Church of England 300 years later. The Bishops replied that the "effect of children's baptism does not depend upon the faith and repentance either of them or of their sponsors, but upon the ordinance and institution of Christ."

It is tempting to suggest that they missed both the point of the Puritan objection and of Cranmer's vicarious approach to baptism: "Wilt thou be

baptized in this faith?" - "That is my desire." However, the Puritans won a minor concession on this point. The answer to the question: "Why then are infants baptized, when by means of their tender age they cannot perform them?" (that is, they cannot repent and believe), was altered from: "Yes, they do perform them ..." to "Because they promise them both ..." (and it continues unaltered) "... by their sureties: which promise, when they are come to age, themselves are bound to perform." It is interesting to notice how "The Baptism of Children" in the Alternative Service Book of 1980 has implemented a number of the Puritans' points. There is strong emphasis on the duties of parents and godparents; it is said, "God gives us the way to a second birth, a new creation and life in union with him. Baptism is the sign and seal of this new birth"; parents and godparents are told that they must answer for themselves and for the children; the blessing of the water for baptism prays for the Holy Spirit to "bring them (the children) to new birth in the family of your Church"; and, whilst there remains some realistic language, "these children have been again into new life, adopted for your own, and received into the fellowship of your Church", the emphasis is laid strongly upon the sacrament as the welcome into the family of the Church, involving commitments to faith and action to be fulfilled in the course of time. Confirmation is not regarded as part of sacramental initiation but a clear reference to mature faith is provided.

The Puritans also presented a case in 1661 for a comment on the neglected fourth commandment. They proposed that the reply concerning man's duty to God should contain the words: "particularly on the Lord's-day" in the reference to worship. It is difficult to understand why this very modest proposal was refused, as it would appear to be unobjectionable, except

that it merely qualifies what is already there. Their last significant proposal was to clear up the ambiguity about the number of sacraments by deleting the words "as generally necessary to salvation" from the fourteenth answer but this was retained.

Since 1661/2 the Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer has remained unaltered but a number of revisions have been made in parts of the Anglican Communion. John Durel's Latin Prayer Book of 1670 reveals an important interpretation of the number of sacraments used in the Church as it was understood in the Restoration period.

Alexander Nowell has the simple reply "two" in answer to the question on the number of sacraments. The addition of "as generally necessary to salvation" in 1604 has led to two exclusive interpretations of the text of the Catechism. The one, which could be paraphrased "as universally necessary", leaves open the possibility of there being five other sacraments necessary to fulness of spiritual life in particular circumstances; that is, there is a necessary minimum of two sacraments. The other, which may be paraphrased "as necessary in general", allows for salvation even when one or both of the two sacraments may not be had; that is, there is a general necessity for two sacraments and no more. The second interpretation is favoured by Durel's use of "in genere". Durel was by no means committed to the ideals of the Puritans, and his translation is considered to reflect accurately the theological interpretation of the day. Other evidences for this interpretation may be exhibited. Article XXV pronounced that the "five commonly called Sacraments ... are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel", and Cranmer described baptism as "of great

necessity ... where it may be had." Nowell certainly adopted this approach but Overall could have rejected it in favour of the ambiguity in 1604. Thomas Hutton, in his replies to the Puritan objections in 1606 gives an additional slant on Overall's meaning: It is "every Man's Duty to submit to the two sacraments ... Besides, the word AS, ("as generally necessary") is as a Partition Wall, betwixt the Sacraments and Generally giving a reason why two Sacraments are received and no more ... meaning no more but two, and these two not simply and absolutely necessary, as if a Christian were dammed without them: but as Generally necessary, that is, when they may be had according to Christ's institution."

It could however, be argued that Thomas Hutton, although on the opposite side to the Puritans, was more sympathetic to Nowell than to Overall, but, on balance, he appears to be reliable. By 1674, Durel's translation had been upheld by the work, "Paraphrasis cum Annotatis ad Difficiliora Loca Catechismi Anglicani" which referred to the two sacraments as "those things, in the devout, frequent, and constant use whereof, the generality of men obtain Salvation, and no otherwise."

Archbishop Secker wrote (2): "even these two (sacraments), our Church very charitably teaches us not to look upon as indispensably but as generally necessary", and the Welsh translation of the Prayer Book (1677) adopts the word "commonly", the same word which is used in the book's title: "Llyfr Gweddi Gyffredin". There are also arguments from the English usage. Blunt's "Annotated Book of Common Prayer" quotes two passages from the 1611 Bible to authenticate the use of "generally" as "universally",

thereby arguing for the seven-sacrament theory assuring that the same interpretation of the word was intended only seven years earlier by Overall. However, an examination of the same texts in the Vulgate does not reveal the "in generis" which we might expect and we are left with nothing less than the certainty that both usages are to be found in the early seventeenth century. The use of the word "general" elsewhere in the Prayer Book indicates the same ambiguity, although the "General Confession" is presumably a "confession in general terms" rather than a "confession for use by everyone". The weight of seventeenth century interpretations favours the "two sacraments where they may be had" reading.

In 1689 a proposed revision was drafted by a commission of ten bishops and twenty divines set up in September of that year to assist the unity of Protestantism by making certain changes in the Prayer Book. This was typical of the desire for more religious and liturgical freedom issuing from the Enlightenment evident throughout Europe at that time. The commission was the brain-child of King William III and Archbishop Tillotson, and it drew up additional questions on the last section of the Apostles' Creed and the Commandments, including a reference to "Lord's-days". Nothing came of the revision.

In the newly independent American States, the Episcopal Church revised the 1637 Scottish Episcopal Prayer Book Catechism, which they had adopted as part of the arrangement to provide them with bishops, in two significant ways. In baptism, the candidate is "made a member of the Christian Church", and in the Communion, "the Body and Blood of Christ ... are spiritually taken and received". The Church of Ireland, dis-established in 1871, produced a revision of the Prayer Book in 1877 and

added an additional question based on Article XXVIII;

"Question: After what manner are the Body and  
Blood of Christ taken and received  
in the Lord's Supper?

Answer: Only after a heavenly and spiritual  
manner; and the mean whereby they are  
taken and received is Faith."

In England, in 1962 the Revised Catechism was published by the authority of the Convocations of Canterbury and York. This is a hybrid catechism, very much longer than the 1662 Catechism, virtually impossible to commit to memory as a whole and yet still definitely of the baptismal type. It is described as a statement of faith and a framework for teaching the faith according to the Church of England. It is undoubtedly popular in many parts of the Church, despite its having been written by a committee. The framework is recognizably that of the Prayer Book's: I The call of God: the christian answer; II Christian belief; III The Church and Ministry; IV Christian obedience; V The Holy Spirit in the Church (sub-divided into Grace, Worship and Prayer, the Bible, and the Gospel Sacraments and other Ministries of grace); VI The christian hope. Many find this Catechism satisfactory, and, if ever the practice of catechizing after the second lesson at Evening Prayer should revive, this may be a good Lutheran-style syllabus for the sermon. Its design is to take one who is prepared to make adult responses to the faith from an accepted standpoint of basic christian belief and to review the promises of baptism and teach those things considered necessary for an adult to know at the time of confirmation. This must be seriously questioned. There are essentially within the English catechetical



tradition, two elements in the training of youth and others in the faith: one is a proper understanding of christian belief and the other is teaching about the life of a christian in the Church and the world. In latter part of the twentieth century and in the context of considerable ignorance of the basics of Christian belief (God, man, reconciliation, Christ, etc.) the Revised Catechism begins too far in to the faith to meet the problem. On the other hand, the essence of a baptismal covenant catechism, baptismal promises, faith, obedience and spiritual life are still couched in the rather stark, formal language of the Creed, from which the Revised Catechism hardly breaks loose. It appears to many to lack that vitality which many of the early catechisms of the sixteenth century captured.

The brief of the Archbishops' Commission to Revise the Church Catechism led them to adopt two principles of revision: 1. To enlarge the scope of the Prayer Book Catechism by adding material on the Church, the Means of Grace, the Bible, Christian Duty and Christian Hope; 2. To modernise the language and to make it more appropriate to present social conditions. Doubt was expressed about the question-and-answer format but the majority favoured this form because it "emphasised the moral responsibility of the catechumen for his actions" and was "widely used in modern Forms of publicity"; not the most obvious of reasons. One catechism for all ages was agreed upon because children who might not at first understand the meaning of the words they were reciting would come to find meaning in them later; this had been discussed in Chapter Two. The primary intention was to produce a syllabus of christian facts rather than produce something to be memorised. Much of the Revised Catechism is clearly based on the Prayer Book Catechism which may be its chief fault, on the principle of

"new wineskins for new wine", but most of its material is clear and simple. For instance, the doctrine of the Bible is very basic; "The Bible was given to us by the Holy Spirit who first inspired and guided the writers, and then led the Church to accept their writings as Holy Scripture."

The fourth commandment at last gets a commentary in the Revised Catechism but it is doubtful whether the Puritans would have been so happy about the reference to "Christening".

The Catechism of the Church in Wales, drafted in 1980 and due for final revision in 1982 is a revision of the Revised Catechism with an eye on the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. "Outline of the Faith". A number of the longer answers of the Revised Catechism have been divided up, certain phrases have been clarified, the Nicene Creed has been included, God's nature has been more clearly defined and a question on creation and man has been added, "Catholic" in the Creed is additionally defined as "concerned with the whole life"; there are additional questions on the ministry and mission of the Church and bishops are no longer defined as rulers in the Church; the Decalogue retains its preface but is abbreviated according to contemporary custom and the reference to the Lord's Day contains no mention of a day of rest; and prayer is defined as "my response to God, with or without words". The defence of baptism includes the intention that the candidates "may become members of the Body of Christ" which compares significantly with the stark literalism of the Welsh revised baptismal rite which gives the reason for baptism: "that this child may be made a Christian". The definition of the eucharist is taken more from the E.C.U.S.A. Outline than from the Revised Catechism, lays little emphasis on the remembrance of the cross and neglects the under-



standing of the sacrament as the christian family meal. In its initial form, it included the American defence of prayer for the departed but the Select Committee has declined to recommend this question.

The 1978 Prayer Book for Australia contains a catechism which is merely a contemporary English translation of the 1662 Catechism with all its inherent ambiguities, but the comma has been retained in the question on the nature of a sacrament. Surprisingly, there is still no reference to the Lord's Day. It is divided into the conventional five divisions of Bishop Beveridge (1705) used above, with section-headings, and is recommended for use not only before confirmation but also "for those who are to answer for themselves in baptism".

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer of the American Episcopal Church contains "An Outline of the Faith commonly called the Catechism", referred to above. Its prefatory remarks indicate that it is a commentary on the Creeds but it does not contain the texts of the Creed, the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer, merely referring to them by their page-numbers in the book. The question-and-answer form is retained "for ease of reference". Whilst not intended as "a complete statement of belief and practice" it is undoubtedly a better attempt than any of its near contemporaries. Its purposes are three-fold: firstly, as "an outline for instruction ... a point of departure for the teacher"; secondly, as "a brief summary of the Church's teaching for an inquiring stranger who picks up a Prayer Book"; and thirdly, "to form a simple service ... for selective use, and the leader may introduce prayers and hymns as needed." It is not intended as a baptismal covenant catechism since it is presumed that the interrogations contained in the baptism and confirmation services

will be properly taught by the priest and the renewal of baptismal vows practised annually. It differs typically from the comprehensive approach of the Revised Catechism on the eucharist and eternal life, but on the subject of baptism it is relatively modest. It admits seven sacramental rites which have evolved "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" but refers to baptism and the eucharist as "the two great sacraments". The definition of a sacrament, derived from the Nowell addition of 1604, has a comma in the 1604-1662 position because of its derivation through the 1637 Scottish Prayer Book.

The Outline is divided into eighteen sections each containing approximately six questions and answers. The headings are: Human Nature, God the Father, The Old Covenant, The Ten Commandments, Sin and Redemption, God the Son, The New Covenant, The Creeds, The Holy Spirit, The Holy Scriptures, The Church, The Ministry, Prayer and Worship, The Sacraments, Holy Baptism, The Holy Eucharist, Other Sacramental Rites and The Christian Hope. The answers are succinct and have a freshness of expression about them but, in comparison with the catechisms of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, it often lacks precision in its definitions. The theology of the Scriptures is typical: "We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible."

There is a welcome biblical and credal definition of the Church, and its catholicity is defended "because it proclaims the whole Faith to all people, to the end of time."

This catechism, if any, is likely to be the model which other doctrinal catechisms may imitate. It is still a descendant of the 1549 Prayer

Book Catechism, although its form, content and purpose are, to a great extent quite different.

NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

- (1) Exodus 20. 1-17
- (2) Lectures on the Catechism, 1769
- (3) Article XXIX
- (4) Notes on the Book of Common Prayer
- (5) Homily of Faith from the 1547 Book of Homilies
- (6) John 3.5.

## CHAPTER SIX

### GOD THE FATHER

It has been observed that there are few surprises in the theology of the catechisms but the way in which certain subjects are handled in order to present them to a young or otherwise lay readership is interesting. As far as possible - for catechisms are far from uniform in their structures - this has been divided into three headings: God the Father and his word, God the Son and redemption, and God the Spirit in the Church.

Calvin's Catechism defines one essential God who is Father, the first cause, Son, the eternal wisdom, and Holy Spirit, "his virtue diffused", and the Shorter Westminster Catechism continues its definition of God quoted in Chapter Four with: "There is but one only, the living and true God." The Revised Catechism merely amplifies the credal definitions of God and personalizes them for the catechumen. The American Outline builds on the credal definitions to include respect for the creation and for "all people". Herman defines God the Father as the one who created us from nothing, who preserves and governs us through Christ, who is everywhere present and whose will operates through all men. Calvin writes of the Creator and Provider who is "the Author of rain and drought ... health and disease" and that the world is a mirror to help us see God, but "our mind cannot take in his essence."

The first major characteristic of the doctrine of God the Father is associated with human sin and divine grace. The Reformation catechisms have no doubts about the universal effects of the fall on human nature and the creation. Nowell describes man's fall as "intolerable ambition and pride ... to make himself equal with the majesty of God", and in this he is following Ponet. The Shorter Westminster Catechism allows for "the

freedom of their own free will" exercised by "our first parents" and defines sin as "any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God." All men sinned in Adam and fell with him "by ordinary generation", and sinfulness consists in the guilt of Adam's sin, lack of original righteousness, total corruption of man's nature and actual transgressions. The consequences are loss of communion with God, the wrath and curse of God on man, the miseries of life, death and the eternal pains of hell. Whilst the sixteenth century Reformers would probably have assented to that theology, it does come across in a particularly negative way in the Westminster Catechism. Calvin, for instance, refuses to define hell in a statement of faith: "nothing is held by faith except what contributes to the consolation of the souls of the pious". Ponet contrasts the image of God in man as he was created in "absolute righteousness and perfect holiness", with the present state of that image, "of which in us there scant are to be seen any sparkles".

A clear understanding of the nature of sin is not found in the Prayer Book or Revised Catechisms, and the American Outline appears to equate sin simply with transgressions. "Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation ... Sin has power over us because we lose our liberty when our relationship with God is distorted."

There is no suggestion that the creation suffered with man's disobedience, since "the universe is good". Man's disharmony with God and the creation is credited to the misuse by human beings of their freedom and making wrong choices from the beginning, rebelling against God by setting themselves in his place. This speaks of an inherited tendency towards sin or

the inherited inevitability that man will sin, rather than a doctrine of original sin; no account is given of the harsher aspects of nature. On the other hand, the American compilers would certainly not attribute natural disasters to God or to the devil, which means that they must either remain agnostic about evil in creation or review their doctrine of human sin and the created order. There would be no need to accept a single, historical Adam in order to extend the consequences of whatever we mean by "the fall".

The divine law, expressed particularly in the Ten Commandments and the New Law, had a considerable part to play in the conflict between human sin and divine grace. Ponet tells us that the moral law is common to all races, even where God's Law is unknown. Calvin views man as unable to keep any of the law, the Old or the New, while he remains in unbelief, a consequence of the total depravity of his nature, whereas others see the depravity of human nature in man's failure to keep the whole of the law. For the christian, the law is the basis of his justification, according to Calvin (clearly following St. Paul), and therefore the law has a double office, condemning and justifying as well as being the perfect rule of obedience. The Heidelberg Catechism tells its readers that the New Law, which cannot be obeyed because we are fallen creatures, condemns us and we find ourselves unable to do good without re-birth. The sin of Adam is our sin also because we have sinned and God's righteousness demands full payment to be made in eternal punishment. We are unable to make that payment because we are creatures, but God is merciful and provides a Mediator and Redeemer. Except that the Ten Commandments provide us with God's "revealed will" to be obeyed, the Westminster Catechism follows the same

approach as the Heidelberg and has no further positive role for the law than in condemnation, justification and obedience. Roye had described the law as "a myroure" in which we see ourselves in need of forgiveness by our heavenly Father. Hooper puts forward a similar idea when he describes the law as a "schoolmaster". Ponet makes the same point in saying that the law helps us "know ourselves" but this cannot make us righteous, for perfect obedience to the law is impossible. Nowell develops Ponet's train of thought: "no mortal man is justified before God by the law ... the law is as it were a certain schoolmaster to Christ, to lead us the right way to Christ, by knowing of ourselves, and by repentance and faith."

Not only does the law point to our sins and need of redemption, but it throws us back onto the mercy of the Father and leads us to salvation in his Son. This additional role for the law, which we might call "illumination" in the sense used by the Psalmist (1), has taken over as the most important emphasis in the twentieth century. The Revised Catechism summarizes obedience to the law as acknowledgement of "God's reign among men" and a target for trying to live as a citizen of God's Kingdom engaged in the fight against evil. The American Outline explains that the Commandments are "given to define our relationship with God and our neighbors", and adds, "Since we do not fully obey them, we see more clearly our sin and our need of redemption."

Having looked at sin and the Law, the Reformers looked first to God for salvation. The doctrine of grace finds an important place in most of these works. The Joye/Marshall instruction sets the tone at an early stage: "the Scripture concludeth, that all men are sinners: that as many as shall be saved, should be saved by God's mercy only."



For Calvin, the petition, "Thy Kingdom come" is a prayer that God will "govern the elect ... destroy the reprobate ... increase" the faithful and "abolish iniquity". This is his most extreme position.

For the Prayer Book Catechism, obedience to the Commandments is placed firmly in the context of divine grace; in the link between the Law and Prayer, the catechist says: "My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, not to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace."

And referring to the calling and perseverance of the christian, the catechism clearly but discreetly stresses the divine initiative: "by God's help so I will (believe and act upon the baptismal promises). And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

In the Lord's Prayer, "I desire my Lord God our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace unto me, and to all people, that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do ... and that he will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins."

The Revised Catechism has carefully removed most of these references to prevenient and concomitant grace by a view of grace assisting man to perform his duties: the christian performs obligations of the law thus:

"I can do these things only by the help of God and through his grace."

Grace is viewed principally in relation to the acts of God in Christ rather

than in the calling and salvation of the believer, but we do find this:

"By God's grace I mean that God himself acts in Jesus Christ to forgive, inspire and strengthen me by his Spirit."

And the conclusion includes a biblical reference to the gracious call of God: "May the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that we have suffered awhile, make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us.

To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (2)

The American Outline has almost no references to grace except what is implicit in reciting the works of God, and in sacramental grace. The final sections contain two replies which are the closest which this work comes to a mild doctrine of God's prevenient grace in the life of the christian. Referring to sacramental acts, we learn that "they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us."

And the christian's ultimate assurance is "that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen." (5)

The Heidelberg Catechism follows a positive view of election: "From the beginning to the end of the world... the Son ... gathers, protects, and preserves ... a congregation chosen for eternal life"

as we might expect from its theological and pastoral origins. Nowell takes up the issue of predestination at two points. In one, dealing with good works without faith, he turns to election before the creation as

the crucial issue: "Faith is the gift of God, and a singular and excellent gift."

As we should expect, the Shorter Westminster Catechism has no hesitations about predestination: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass ... God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence ... God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer."

This has come a long way from Calvin's belief that "wicked men and devils" are checked by God and worked into his will, which, he says, should reassure the believer. The Shorter Westminster Catechism is the most explicit on the subject of election, and whilst most of the Reformers held to the doctrine, it does not form a major element in their catechisms. Almost all the writers remain silent on the subject <sup>of election</sup> to eternal punishment even when they are known to hold that point of view. Calvin's statement of the doctrine (3) and especially of his defence of St. Paul in Romans 9. 20 & 21 (4) were widely accepted by the catechetical writers whose works are under examination, but did not find their way into the catechisms to any great extent. Criticisms of God's eternal decrees before the creation leading to man's conditional righteousness and apparent free will are implicit from a twentieth century standpoint but no more.

The doctrine of election merges with the doctrine of the Church in several of the catechisms. Calvin writes of the Church as a body and society of

believers who are predestined to life. Hooper's Confession informs its readers that God has elected and chosen those who are his own to be his adopted children and that the Church is the invisible fellowship of all the righteous and elect to the end of the world.

For Ponet, the "Ecclesia", the congregation or assembly, as he would have it defined, "a most beautiful kingdom and holy commonwealth", consists of those who "truly fear, honour and call upon God, wholly applying their mind to holy and godly living; and all those that, putting all their hope and trust in him, do assuredly look for the bliss of everlasting life." They were "Forechosen, predestinate, and appointed out to everlasting life before the world was made."

Nowell follows Ponet closely on this point, as in so many. The "Ecclesia" is "the body of Christ ... the universal number and fellowship of the faithful" elected by God.

Capito and Roye were convinced of the grace of God in electing the righteous but Roye takes Capito to an extreme. Where Capito writes of "mortem aeternam" as the lot of the reprobate, Roye turns it into "deadly torment withouten releace ordered for the vessels of wrath". However, the Father in the Dialogue seems to get just a little inconsistent in his prayer "that it maye please his bounteous goodness to admitt me vnto the nombre of his chosen."

The catechisms of the sixteenth and seventeenth century generally express a belief not only in the grace of God in the historic acts of creation and redemption but also in that grace in the lives of men enabling them to be saved and sanctified. This usually takes the form of a discreet reference to single predestination.

The purpose of salvation as the reconciliation of man with God occupied the minds and catechisms of the Reformers. The Roye Dialogue makes most of the christian relationship with his heavenly Father: ~~to man without~~ Christ, God is "a cruel iudge" but, with Christ to make him known, God is "a tender and mercyfull father". This theme is repeated on a number of occasions. As a result of the atonement, the christian should not "dreade him as a tyrannt, but henceforthe feare hym, as a righteous Lorde, and so love hym with a chyldly love."

But he can still emphasise the moral judgement of the Father when he writes of the Law and christian liberty: "though he (God) be to hym a father most full of mercy, yett is he a iudge also strayght and righteous."

Roye has been criticized for inconsistency at this point but the Reformers would have seen no inconsistency; the christian is for them a child and heir of God based on God's act of redemption in Christ, but accountable to God for the use which he makes of his imputed righteousness. The problem with Roye is that he made no linguistic distinction between the two aspects of the God-man relationship.

For Calvin, man's relationship with God is very important, and comes into his Genevan Catechism at several points. In the opening section, Calvin describes true knowledge of God as **knowing** him and therefore honouring him by putting all one's trust in him, serving him, obeying him, calling upon him, seeking salvation from him and ascribing all good to him. Faith is knowing God in Christ, a personal knowledge; to believe in the credal sense is to assent to a sum of this knowledge, to make a form of confession, but it is the knowing of God himself which is faith. Dealing with the words, "Our Father", Calvin joins many of the other catechetical writers in emphasizing the confidence to approach the heavenly Father which is the

privilege of God's sons in Christ.

When Herman describes the christian's adoption as a son of God, he adds that "I may ever call upon his name with childrens trust".

Ponet contrasts the transcendence of God with his immanence through Christ. God is everywhere because heaven is everywhere, it cannot be located:

"The heaven by immeasurable compass of wideness containeth all places ... no place is there, that may be hid from the large reach of heaven"; God is always near to us.

The Heidelberg Catechism identifies the fatherhood of God with God's creation and his providence of all creation: "Moreover, whatever evil he sends upon me in this troubled life he will turn to my good ... being Almighty God, and ... a faithful Father." This teaches us patience, gratitude, trust and assurance.

Nowell does not contribute anything more to the doctrine of God's parental relationship with and care of men, but in dealing with the writers of the Bible he refers to "Moses and the holy prophets, the friends of Almighty God."

Twice, the Revised Catechism makes reference to the Church as "one family under one Father" and the general approach of the catechism stresses God's approachability by man. Although the American Outline has a section on God the Father, any clear statement of his familiar relationship with his children is strikingly absent.

The Reformers clearly believed in the special relationship of the redeemed with the heavenly Father, expressed particularly in prayer. Whilst the present age emphasizes the nature of the Church as a family, the catechisms of the Reformation lay their emphasis on the special relationship with God himself, as it finds expression in the Prologue of St. John's Gospel:

"To all who received him, to those who have yielded him their allegiance, he gave the right to become children of God, not born of any human stock, or by the fleshy desire of a human father, but the offspring of God himself." (6)

The final noticeable aspect of the theology of God the Father in the catechisms is the theology of the Bible. Calvin provides the most detailed and systematic explanation of his doctrine of Scripture in Part Four of the Genevan Catechism. All that he had written before, under the headings of Trust in God, the Law and Prayer, lead us to the words of the High Priestly Prayer: "This is eternal life: to know thee who alone art truly God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (7)

In order to know God and Jesus Christ, God's missionary, one must have recourse to the word of God "in the Holy Scriptures, in which it is contained."

In order to profit by the word it is necessary to embrace it, obey it, love it and engrave it on one's heart so that one may be formed by it and bear fruit from it; all this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Diligence is required in the studying of the Scriptures and since God has commanded that every christian should gather with his brethren to hear the word, it is also necessary that the congregation should dutifully hear scriptural doctrine. Continual discipline is needed by congregations to attend to their pastors' counsel, to "listen with fear and reverence to the doctrine of Christ as propounded on their lips." Preaching was an extension of the reading of the Bible because, for Calvin, preaching had to be biblically-based. The Shorter Westminster Catechism also holds a very high doctrine of the Scriptures: they are "the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him", and they "principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man."

In both Calvin's and the Shorter Westminster Catechisms, one finds the notion that the word of God is "contained" in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The word is "an effectual means of converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation."

But, in the Westminster Catechism, it is not only "the reading, but especially the preaching of the word" which the Spirit of God uses to effect salvation provided that "we ... attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives."

There is a noticeable emphasis on the word preached, rather than on the word read, as was Cranmer's main emphasis. Richard Baxter is continually given to quoting the Bible and includes a large and comprehensive biblical review of the Bible in "The Catechising of Families". Bishop Williams' Catechism is very much occupied with the unique authority of the Scriptures and with the errors which arise when other things take their place or rival their authority.

Roye had the importance of biblical theology very much in mind when he set the tone of his work by referring to "the moste holyest worde of God, fode of many a povre soule, longe fammysshed with sower dowe, of their importable and dissaytfull traditions."

He warns of the misuse of the Scriptures, especially in sacramental theology: "Take never one pece of scripture here, and nother gobbet there, but marke well what precedeth, and what followeth."

The Heidelberg Catechism explains that God can only be known in Jesus Christ, God "revealed in his Word", which has the double meaning of the word revealed in the Scriptures which reveals the incarnate Word, who, as the expression of God, reveals the Almighty.



Nowell sets the context of his theology in the word of God: "The Christian religion ... is to be learned ... of the heavenly word of God himself, which he hath left unto us written in the holy scriptures." And the Scriptures themselves were written "by the instinct of the Holy Ghost"... "inspired with the Spirit of God."

Nowell mentions that the Bible is divided into Testaments because it is the "last and unchangeable will" of the everliving God ... "it were a point of intolerable ungodliness and madness to think, either that God hath left an imperfect doctrine, or that men were able to make that perfect, which God hath left imperfect."

The councils of the Church are called upon to expound the dark places of the Scriptures. Nowell concludes, that the Church must read and expound the Bible intelligently in order to preserve itself from error.

The Revised Catechism refers to the Old and New Testaments as "the record of God's revelation of himself to mankind through his people Israel, and above all in his Son, Jesus Christ,"

The Spirit was the giver of the Scriptures to the Church; he "inspired and guided the writers, and then led the Church to accept their writings as Holy Scripture". And the Spirit is the agent through whom God will "speak to us" and "will enable us to know him and do his will" when we desire and pray for these results. Here is a doctrine of the power of the living word in the christian's life without any reference to the authority of the Scriptures in the Church.

The American Outline refers to the Old Testament showing God "at work in nature and history" and to the New Testament setting forth "the life and teachings of Jesus and to proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom for all people." The Apocrypha is "a collection of additional books written by

people of the Old Covenant, and used in the Christian Church", a definition which would not have satisfied the Reformers. The Bible is called the Word of God "because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible."

The definitions are helpful and lively but the Reformers would have wanted to know to what effect God speaks through the Bible. There is a natural modern tendency to define the Scriptures in terms of how they are used of God in inspiring the faith of his Church, but, because modern catechisms have to cater for a wide variety of christian understandings of the use of the Bible, there is an absence of any teaching on its authority or purpose.

The Catechisms have been found to express the main teachings of the Reformation on the subject of God the Father, his law, grace and word and to outline a marked entrenchment of those teachings by the seventeenth century Puritans, and a marked lack of emphasis on sin in Adam, the Pauline role of the Law, prevenient grace in man and the purpose of the word of God. These seem to fit modern theological trends. The one which does not is the lack of emphasis upon the fatherhood of God and the approachability of God by the Church. This may be accounted for by the current stress on God's universal fatherhood as Creator and Provider, which undermines the special relationship, stressed by the Reformers, between the believer and God the Father.

NOTES ON CHAPTER SIX

- (1) Psalm 19. 7-14
- (2) 1 Peter 5. 10 & 11
- (3) Institutes, Book III, Chapters 21-24
- (4) Institutes III, 23-4
- (5) Romans 8. 38 & 39
- (6) John 1. 12 & 13
- (7) John 17. 3

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### GOD THE SON

The catechetical writers of the Reformation paid more careful attention to those doctrines which distinguished them from others than to the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, since there were few challenges to the religious dominance of Christianity in Europe, despite the Renaissance. The doctrine of Christ, his Person and his work, extends also into the doctrine of the eucharist, of faith and of prayer.

In their descriptions of Christ's Person, Ponet and Nowell are typical of many. They inform their readers that he is the anointed King, Priest and Prophet. Ponet describes Christ as "our everlasting and only high-Bishop: our only attorney: only mediator, only peace-maker between God and men".

He is the king of the Church and of the christian. Particular use is made in the catechisms of these three offices of Christ, the Anointed One.

Calvin explains the name of 'Christ' in the three offices for which men were anointed and which are also attributed to Christ in the Scriptures. Christ was granted these offices by the Father and anointed by the grace of the Holy Spirit "that he might transfuse their strength and fruit into those who are his." The kingdom of Christ is spiritual, "contained in the Word and Spirit of God", and is conferred upon us for the freedom of our conscience, to receive spiritual riches and for strength to oppose evil. The priestly office of Christ is one of "presenting oneself before the face of God to obtain grace, and of offering sacrifice, which may be acceptable to him, to appease his wrath."

He has reconciled us to the Father and opened up a way to the Father so that we may boldly approach him; we are made "colleagues in his priesthood" by the offering of "ourselves and all that we have." The prophetic role of Christ in the incarnation was as an ambassador to men and interpreter of the Father's

will, thus ending revelations and prophecies, and, as Prophet, Christ enables his own to know the Father, be taught in the truth and be made "household disciples of God." The manner of the Son's anointing by the Father to be our Saviour was that, having assumed human flesh, "he performed all things necessary for our salvation". He is "by right of nature" the Son of God, "whereas (this title) is communicated to us by gratuitous favour, in that we are his members". The incarnation is important because our disobedience had to be expiated "in human nature", and the Holy Spirit's "generation of the Son of God", involving moral purity "from the original womb", is necessary so that the redeemer may be entirely free from human failings.

The Heidelberg Catechism follows much of what Calvin had written but expands it to a certain extent. Christ the Prophet reveals the Father's will concerning man's redemption; Christ the Priest continually intercedes for us; Christ the King governs us by Word and Spirit, defends and sustains us. Christians are such because they share in Christ's anointing. The Heidelberg also repeats what most of the other catechisms say, that the second Person of the Trinity is 'Jesus', the only Saviour; that he is God's own eternal Son and by grace we are adopted as sons of God; and that he is the Lord who has redeemed us and to whom we owe our allegiance. It is noticeable that the Heidelberg Catechism adopts the 'prophet-priest-king' order of titles.

As may be expected, the Shorter Westminster Catechism takes up the theme of Christ's three offices but adds nothing to Calvin's and the Heidelberg Catechisms.

Bishop Hooper refers to Christ with the force necessary to make his point clearly: "I neither know nor receive any other mediator betwixt

God and man, neither any other advocate or intercessor before God the Father, than his only Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And, further, there is

"no vicar or lieutenant to Christ upon earth within his church, than this Holy Ghost".

The Person of Christ leads on naturally to his work. Calvin and many others point out that the Creed mentions nothing between the incarnation and the passion of Christ because the intervening period does not pertain to our redemption, a generalization in which there is some truth.

Roye's Dialogue, having passed briefly over the incarnation, moves on to a lengthy study of the sacrifice of the cross. His 'judge and father' contrast are once more apparent, as we might expect: Christ "sett vs ... attone agayne with hym . making of a crewel iudge a mercifull father, by the meanes that he made satisfaction for oure synnes with his death and passion."

Ponet notes that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were figures of the cross of Christ, which is our pardon and is not to be merited but received. Nowell takes the cross back to the context of the atonement: none but the man Christ Jesus was able to take up and bear the heavy burden of offence against God. The cross is both an act of human wickedness and also the willing suffering of Christ, ending the destructive power of death and the dominion of evil over our souls. Christ was "touched with the horror of eternal death ... he put himself under the heavy judgment and grievous severity of God's punishment."

For Ponet, the cry of dereliction from the cross does not betoken a lack of faith or Christ's despair, but the act of atonement. The absolute forgiveness of the cross could not be more clearly stated than by Nowell: Christ "hath washed and cleansed ... our souls; and, defacing with everlasting forgetfulness the memory of our sins, .. he hath cancelled, made void, and done away the hand-writing whereby we are bound and convicted,

and ... condemned." He helps the faithful to "obey and yield to the Spirit."

Others in the English Church tradition have been remarkably silent on the subject of the cross of Christ. Cranmer, whose liturgies are so fundamentally cross-orientated, says no more than that the Son of God "redeemed me and all mankind." The Nowell addition of 1604 refers to the institution of the Lord's Supper as for "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

The Revised Catechism states that one of the spiritual gifts of baptism is "union with Christ in his death and resurrection", and the eucharistic reference is extended to include the resurrection, as the statement of belief in God the Son includes all his 'historic acts', without further explanation.

The American Outline, which devotes four questions to the Person and incarnation of Christ, merely tells us that "By his obedience, even to suffering and death, Jesus made the offering which we could not make; in him we are freed from the power of sin and reconciled to God."

The catechisms of today have tended to avoid any clear-cut statement of the theology of the cross, seeking to include those who view it as a propitiation of a wrathful God, an expiation of our sin, an act of conflict between God and evil, the victory of God's love over man's evil will, or a combination of views. Calvin and those who followed his lead were very much more explicit, since this was for them, as for Luther, the key to their theology of redemption. From the reference to Pilate in the Creed, Calvin teaches the historicity of the passion and the condemnation of Christ; though innocent, he was condemned by an earthly judge so that we, though guilty, may be acquitted at the heavenly tribunal. The cross is the symbol of a curse and "by undergoing it he abolished it". Death is the consequence of sin and the Son, by enduring it,

conquered it. The descent into hell is interpreted as the enduring of the agony of God's rejection; here, Calvin, facing the prospect of patripassianism or of the fragmentation of the Godhead, is obliged to resort to language which suggests that Christ's spiritual sufferings were not real: "it was requisite that his conscience be tormented by such agony as if he were forsaken by God, even as if he had God hostile to him."

Being driven to the point of despair and fear, Christ subdued and broke them. The benefits of the cross are the expiation of sins, the appeasement of God's wrath, the restoration to a state of grace, the washing of sins, the erasing of the memory of our sins, the old nature being put to death and the lusts of the flesh no longer able to rule in us. The resurrection brings our justification, is a pledge of immortality and raises us to newness of life in purity and obedience. The passion and resurrection are both interpreted as man's problem solved by God's Son entering into it and defeating it. In the section on the Holy Spirit, Calvin writes that one of the Spirit's works is to sprinkle our consciences with the blood of Christ.

The Heidelberg Catechism follows a similar pattern. The mediator and redeemer must be a true and righteous man, yet more powerful than all creatures because man must pay for his own sin but cannot do so without God's resources. The incarnation is God's remedy, but the Heidelberg Catechism has a low view of Christ's humanity: "the true seed of David, like his fellow men in all things, except for sin." On the cross "he bore ... the wrath of God", and it was "the only expiatory sacrifice". Calvin's theology is repeated, with the addition that our own deaths cannot be reparations for our sin, and, as has been noted previously, the descent into hell is linked with the cross and is the sharing in and therefore redeeming from my "hellish anxieties".



The Westminster Catechism is quite unusually modern in its approach to the atonement. It classifies the cross as part of Christ's humiliation, from his birth to his "continuing under the power of death for a time"; and the events from the resurrection to the second coming are his exaltation. This humiliation and exaltation, the work of redemption, when "applied to us" by the Holy Spirit, brings about our conversion ("effectual calling"), justification, adoption, sanctification and ensures our preservation in grace to the end. Although Christ is said to undergo "the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross", there is a noticeable change in emphasis. The cross remains the focus of Christ's offering - that is clear from the whole catechism - but is not singled out as the only significant part of his self-oblation. The benefits of Christ's work are viewed in a positive way: we are made righteous, we receive "a right to all the privileges of the sons of God", and we are renewed after God's image; all these are present in the other writers who expound the atonement, but the emphasis given to them here comes as a surprise. The descent into hell is simply the sharing of death, literally, a descent into hades.

Moving on to the next distinctive feature, the Ascension of Christ, we find that eucharistic theology is involved. The Reformers do not doubt the historicity of the ascension, as we may suppose, and the Revised Catechism does not comment on the circumstances of the event as recorded in Acts 1. 6-11 but makes its brief comment on the basis of the interpretations of Luke 24. 50 & 51: "in the act of blessing he parted from them", and of Mark 16. 19: "the Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, and he took his seat at the right hand of God". Christ, it teaches, "was exalted to the throne of God as our advocate and intercessor".

The eucharistic point which the Reformers made was that when Christ ascended, his body was exalted to heaven but his spiritual presence remains everywhere.

This is expounded in some detail by Archbishop Grindal's "Custom and Verity" dialogue. Calvin views Christ's promise of his continual presence (1) spiritually: "There is on the one hand the body received up into heaven; and there is on the other his virtue which is diffused everywhere."

To the modern mind, this is a notion which is difficult to accept, because of the literalism of Christ's bodily ascension and because of the division of Christ into a part which is localized and a part which is ubiquitous.

Ponet uses the ascension as a basis for his eucharistic theology and he runs straight into an aspect of the problem which he is trying to avoid. Christ, he says, is not bodily present on earth, but he can be seen by the eyes of faith because he is present "in the midst of them, wheresoever be two or three

gathered together in his name", and he dwells in the mind and heart of the trusting christian. The ascension means that Christ is bodily absent from the world, although his Godhead fills heaven and earth. Therefore "Christ's body ... is a great way absent from our mouth, even then when we receive with our mouth the holy sacrament of his body and blood."

The continual presence of Christ's Godhead is likened to the continual presence of the sun in the sky. The ascension is Christ's heavenly reign and not an earthly sovereignty. However, although Ponet is explicit about the corporal absence of Christ in the sacrament, his is no more a view of 'eucharistic absence', as it has been called, than Cranmer's. Both are quite content with literalist eucharistic language. Although Nowell rejects too much physical imagery in the session of Christ at the Father's right hand, he follows Ponet closely on this article of the faith.

The Heidelberg Catechism makes a similar distinction between the corporal and spiritual presence of Christ. Barth comments (2) that if Luther had not made the mistake of speaking of a corporal presence of Christ in the eucharist, Zwingli and others would not have answered with a simple spiritual presence.

"We can learn ... how dangerous it is when one partner in a theological conversation lets himself be misled by a false thesis to make a false counter-thesis."

And he asks the question as to whether the Logos is indivisibly "intra naturam humanum" or "intra et extra naturam humanum", with the implication that a division within Christ is not sensible.

Baxter is certain that Christ's body is in heaven but he remains respectfully agnostic about the extent of Christ's presence: "But how far the presence of Christ's soul and body extendeth, is a question unfit for man's determination".

It is not difficult to see the thought pattern of the Reformers, and interesting to see how they brought eucharistic teaching into their theology of Christ. Apart from the problem which Barth points out, there is an additional difficulty. If the 'spiritual' presence of Christ is represented by a large circle which is Christ's universal presence, and placed in this circle, at its centre, is a smaller circle representing Christ's bodily presence in heaven, can there be other small circles within the large circle which represent some sort of concentration of Christ's presence, a special kind of spiritual presence which is not a bodily presence but described by: "where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them" (3) or "this is my body ... this is my blood" (4) or "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it" (5) or "And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time" (6) ? Clearly, there is much symbolism behind such words but their stark literalism suggests the mystery by which Christ can be spiritually present in a form which is at least more than his universal spiritual presence, a true presence rather than a real presence in the eucharist.

It is unfortunate that some of the Reformers used the ascension to illustrate their eucharistic teaching in the catechisms. The literalism of the theory of

transubstantiation, the substantial presence of Christ bodily under the accidents of bread and wine, appeared to drive many of them to find any possible means of stating their belief in a spiritual or true presence, and often to over-stating the case. Luther and Calvin did not use this argument from the ascension, Luther because he had a very high view of eucharistic presence, and Calvin presumably because it was not a strong enough argument for the catechism. Hooper's Confession brings the ascension into his eucharistic theology on a much more sound basis, using theology that was widespread among the Reformers:

"we have no need that Christ should come from heaven to us, but that we should ascend to him, lifting up our hearts through a lively faith".

Take that argument one step further, however, and you abolish sacraments.

This naturally leads on to one of the major controversies of the Reformation, after the issues of faith and Scripture, the interpretations of the eucharist: holy sacrifice or Lord's supper?

Wyclif, in his revision of the Lay Folk's Catechism, had called for a better balance between Word and Sacrament, as has been noted in chapter four. It was not that he or his successors in the sixteenth century were anti-sacramental but that they believed that intelligent access to the Scriptures was at least as important as access to the sacraments. The catechism makes no reference specifically to the administration of the eucharist in the mother tongue, and Ponet is the only one who gives a sacramental reference to the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread", and he denies it. As would be expected, Bishop Williams' seventeenth century catechism lists communion in one kind as one of his many objections to Roman Catholic eucharistic practice, but otherwise, this issue was not considered important enough to be part of the catechisms: presumably, it was sufficient to make the point indirectly by reference to receiving the bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ. Surprisingly, several of the catechisms refer to the minister

of the sacrament. Calvin said that this ministry was confined to those who exercised the teaching-office in the Church, as Christ ministered the Last Supper to his disciples. This is confirmed by Nowell's Catechism and by the Prayer Book Ordinal in the delivery of a Bible only to the newly-ordained priest: "Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments in the congregation".

There are four areas of disagreement with traditional Church teaching outlined by the majority of the catechisms under examination; the presence of Christ in the eucharist, the eucharistic sacrifice, the benefits of the sacrament and the necessity of faith in receiving the sacrament.

The first area, the eucharistic presence of Christ, is the one which occupied the thoughts of all the writers. It is probable that they considered reformed liturgical practice would be sufficiently distinct from the Roman Catholic tradition to render it generally unnecessary to deny the eucharistic sacrifice. But the dominical words of institution would certainly form some part of reformed eucharistic worship and the words, "this is my body ... this is my blood" would require explanation.

The Lutheran tradition, as outlined by Luther in the Shorter Catechism, had no problems with literalist language. Luther asks what the sacrament is and the reply focuses around the answer: "the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the Bread and Wine".

He asks where the institution of the sacrament is to be found and replies that it is in the Synoptic Gospels and in the 1 Corinthians 11 narrative of St. Paul. Luther is anxious to retain the sacramental realism of the language of Christ's words, with emphasis on "This is my Body, which is given for you" (7).

Memorialism and receptionism were both judged in the light of this interpretation. Royce built upon the Strassburg Lutheranism of Capito and made several

references in his dialogue to the eucharistic presence. Christ's presence with his people is in the Holy Spirit and not bodily, as, he argued, the doctors of the Church claimed about the mass. At the Last Supper, Christ

"remayned bodily sittynge before their eyes ... the bred which he took and blist, remayned breade, and wyne, wyne."

He recalls how Christ made water into wine in his first miracle but then says the Last Supper was not like that! The son presses the point about Christ giving himself "in forme of breade for to be eaten". The father quotes the passage in St. John's Gospel where the Lord uses realistic symbolism about himself: "I am the bread of life" (8) and puts this firmly in the context of "the words which I have spoken to you are both spirit and life" (9). It is clear that, unless Roye were to assume that St. John wrote eucharistic theology into chapter six - an impossible assumption for his age, - the passage must be interpreted as illustrating faith, prefiguring the cross and anticipating the eucharist. It is therefore quite in order for Roye, from his prespective, to read this Johannine passage into the Last Supper narrative, which he does, to produce a symbolic interpretation of the sacrament. If, in our own age, we were to remove the eucharistic references in the last section of the story (10) as not original, the passage ceases to anticipate the eucharist and the evidence points to an increased literalism by St. John or even to his replacement of the Last Supper by this story. Roye is by no means the only catechetical writer to use St. John in rejecting the plain literalism of the eucharistic presence. He extends the argument to the use of biblical interpretation: "yf we shulde leane vnto the bare wordss thereof", we should not call our father, 'father', nor wear shoes, and so on. Roye becomes characteristically obsessed with the idea that this misinterpretation of the supper is all the fault of the clergy: "they have so gotten their heddes vnder their girdles ... they suppose the prestes to have thorowe these wordes power to make their lorde of a pece of breade."

Capito follows Bucer's understanding in declaring that the body and blood of Christ enter the heart of the believer by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The bread and wine are the external signs in which Christ is spiritually present, a modification of Luther's theology. Roye is not prepared to go as far as this and always refers to eating Christ's body and blood "spiritually".

Calvin devotes twenty-one questions to his eucharistic theology. The meaning of the supper is that it is Christ's institution, communion in his body and blood, to teach us and assure us of eternal life. The bread and wine are identified with the body and blood of Christ in that the bread and wine feed our physical bodies while the body and blood of Christ strengthen our souls - a classic reformed definition included in the Prayer Book Catechism. Facing the question of whether we eat the Lord's body and blood in the supper, Calvin replies that we do, for "it is necessary that he be possessed by us". The death of Christ on the cross wrought man's salvation "but it is not enough for us unless we now receive him, that thus the efficacy and fruit of his death may reach us".

Faith is, of course, fundamental to Calvin's eucharistic theology, but he emphasizes the sacramental gift as well, for we also receive a pledge from God. The Shorter Westminster Catechism hedges around its doctrine of the eucharistic presence more than Calvin: "the worthy receivers are ... by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth is grace."

Returning to the sixteenth century Anglican tradition, Hooper denies that the true and natural body of Christ is anywhere but in heaven. It is also probable that Hooper was influential on the Council's decision to insert the "black rubric" into the 1552 Prayer Book at the last moment in October of that Year: "And as concernynge the naturall body and blood of our sauour Christ,

they are in heauen and not here. For it is agaynst the trueth of Christes true natural bodye, to be in moe places then in one, at one tyme."

Transubstantiation, argued Hooper, was based on a misunderstanding of the words "This is my body"; the words were, in fact, "metonomia ... a figurative manner of speech".

For Ponet, the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ crucified. Following the food-for-the-soul notion, he explains that the soul is fed by "the flesh and blood of Christ ... through faith, and quickened to the heavenly and godly life".

He uses the phrase: "faith is the mouth of the soul", which Nowell adapts and Grindal repeats, and which forms an excellent summary of the special emphasis of the non-Lutheran Reformers. Becon interprets the words of Christ "figuratively" because Christ is received "sacramentally and spiritually".

Nowell also understands faith and the lifting-up of our hearts to heaven to be the key to understanding the sacrament. But Christ is also at work in the eucharist; he "as surely maketh them that believe in him partakers of his body and blood, as they surely know that they have received the bread and wine with their mouth and stomach."

This is more than bare receptionism. The additional section of the Prayer Book Catechism, from Nowell, contains a typical balance between the literalism of "The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received ... in the Lord's Supper", and the reformed Augustinianism of "by the faithful".

The Revised Catechism repeats the same answer and adds that "Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ means receiving the life of Christ himself, who was crucified and rose again, and is now alive for evermore."

This echoes Calvin, who wrote of the body of Christ symbolizing his life. The American Outline states that the body and blood of Christ are "given to his people" and faith is the means by which they are received. Perhaps it is



possible to read too much into the change of emphasis between "The Body and Blood of Christ are ... taken and received by the faithful" (Prayer Book) and "the Body and Blood of Christ given to his people, and received by faith" (American Outline). If there is an intentional distinction, the English formula speaks of the body and blood of Christ being received only by the faithful - those without faith "carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint

Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ" (11); and the American formula speaks of the body and blood of Christ being given unconditionally to his people, that is, presumably, to the baptized, regardless of having a 'lively faith', but they are received only "by faith". Failure to "discern the Body" (12) is, to the American Outline, failure to recognise a given presence of Christ; to the Reformation tradition, it is failure to discern the spiritual reality expressed by the given bread and wine. It was an important detail for some of the catechetical writers but it is the same dilemma as the lost comma in the Prayer Book Catechism's definition of a sacrament and its significance is as difficult to assess.

The second area of eucharistic division was over the nature of the eucharistic sacrifice. Royce does not follow his Lutheran source when he describes the eucharist as a calling "to your remembrance" the sacrifice of the cross "once for ever", a declaration "to one another the Lord's death" and a renewal, quickening and strengthening of this in one's heart.

The Heidelberg Catechism denies that there is any repeated sacrifice or should be any worshipping of the elements in the supper. It accuses the mass of denying the uniqueness of the cross and establishing idolatry. The remembrance of Christ comes when I am reminded of the broken body and shed blood of the cross "as surely as I see with my eyes that the bread of the Lord is broken for me and that his cup is shared with me."

The Shorter Westminster Catechism briefly mentions that Christ's death is showed forth but, if we should be uncertain, it does not tell us to whom it is shown forth! Baxter has a close relationship between the eucharist and the cross in the three actions he lists as part of the sacrament:

1) Consecration, 2) Commemoration, and 3) Covenanting and Communion, but there is no repetition of the one sacrifice of Christ.

In the English Church tradition, Nowell makes the point that the sacrament is not offered to the Father for sins because of the uniqueness of Christ's offering on the cross. The Prayer Book Catechism speaks of "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." In this, Nowell was following the liturgical pattern of the Prayer Book "Lord's Supper" from 1552 to 1662 with its dominant proclamation of the cross, Christ's "one oblation of himself, once offered", and its post-communion offertory.

The Revised Catechism has to cater for much more diverse interpretations of the eucharistic sacrifice and therefore speaks of making "continual remembrance of him, his passion, death, and resurrection, until his coming again", and the title 'Eucharist' describes it as "the Church's sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving".

The American Outline decidedly reverses the reformed emphasis in saying that the eucharist "is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself."

The Outline also grants the eucharist the additional title of "the Great Offering". The Church in Wales' proposed revision copied the American definition in its first draft but at the subsequent stage of revision reverted to a form of the Revised Catechism's wording, with the American addition that "Christ unites us to his one offering of himself". The understanding of the eucharistic sacrifice expressed here is quite different from the reformed tradition and reveals just how far Anglican comprehensiveness

can be stretched.

The third area of eucharistic division was the nature of the supper and the benefits received from it. Calvin described the sacraments as badges of our profession; the Revised Catechism describes the eucharist as "the meal of fellowship which unites us to Christ and to the whole Church" and Roye tells us that the breaking of bread reminds us that we are "members of Christ with as many as love hyme", but otherwise the definitions are on a much more individual level.

Luther, emphasizing the words "given for you ... shed for you and for many for the remission of sins", listed the benefits of receiving the sacrament as forgiveness of sins, new life and salvation, all bestowed on us. Calvin contrasts the once-in-a-lifetime action of baptism with the regularity of the eucharist which testifies of God's "continual interest in nourishing us" who are part of his household, whereas Herman's emphasis is that we receive strength of faith in Christ's testament by the sacrament, "that I may live less to my selfe, & more in him." For Ponet, the great benefit of this remembrance of Christ's death is that it confirms our hope of the great feast in the life to come. In the Heidelberg Catechism, the believer embraces the cross, is assured of forgiveness and eternal life and is united more closely with Christ by the sacrament; Christ assures us that his sufferings were for us. In the English Prayer Book Catechism, our souls are strengthened and refreshed in the sacrament, and the American Outline collects three benefits together: forgiveness of sins, "the strengthening of our union with Christ and one another, and the foretaste of the heavenly banquet which is our nourishment in eternal life." There is a teasing ambiguity about the third benefit.

The fourth area of division was the attitude in which the sacrament was to be

received. Luther again returns to "given for you ... shed for you" in the words of institution. The only requirement he makes of a communicant is that he should believe that the body and blood of Christ are given for him; if he does not believe it, he is not worthy. But this "for you" demands a believing response and would be impossible if not founded upon faith in the first place. Fasting and prayer are useful helps to prepare oneself for receiving the sacrament.

Calvin accepts indiscriminate infant baptism but would have the eucharist withheld from those who are clearly unworthy, that is, to those who would insult the sacrament. Judas Iscariot was not prevented from sharing in the Last Supper is the quick-witted response of the child in the catechism, but it is argued in response that his impiety was unknown to men and Jesus did not wish to expose him at that point. As for hypocrites, the pastor can do nothing about them until God reveals the truth about them, and before anyone is refused communion there must be "a legitimate investigation and decision of the Church" by the discipline of the elders.

Nowell would refuse none but those who abuse the sacraments, and the condemnation of the wicked by the sacrament is that they have hypocritically profaned it. The Prayer Book Catechism's requirements are self-examination, repentance and resolution to lead a new life, a living faith, a thankful remembrance of Christ's death and charity towards all men. To those requirements the Shorter Westminster Catechism adds "knowledge to discern the Lord's body" and "faith to feed upon him".

Turning from the eucharist to faith, there are in this area a number of distinctive views and these are indivisible from the writers' views of salvation, forgiveness and good works.

For Zwingli, steadfast belief in the gospel of redemption in Christ releases us from sin and its guilt and penalty by making us righteous: "he is ... our all".

Believers are born of God and their confidence in Christ constrains them against idleness: God will move "the heart which he has drawn to himself ... to engage his service". They must study righteousness, fidelity, mercy and consecration of spirit, which means keeping away from evil and being "as nearly like God as possible".

Roye saw the christian as a chosen sinner cleansed from sin by Christ's death and having faith, "a lyvely and stedfast perswasion of the mynde". Asking why we say "I believe", he makes the point that a person cannot believe vicariously, you must believe "thy sylfe onli".

Calvin's view of salvation is characteristically that it is all the work of God, who, by his free goodness, forgives, pardons and will neither judge nor punish the faithful. This is not a reward for merit but the receiving of Christ's satisfaction for the sins of the world; the forgiveness of sins depends upon being united with the people of God, because schismatics and dissidents from the Church are excluded from the hope of salvation. Faith itself, the knowledge of God's good will towards us in Christ, is a gift which the Holy Spirit brings to our experience; it justifies us and makes us righteous and heirs of eternal life. Man cannot merit favour with God - it is all "mere mercy, without any respect to works, (God) embraces and accepts us freely in Christ."

For Calvin, good works performed after faith are not meritorious but are pleasing to God because they issue from the Holy Spirit and because Christ makes up for any deficiencies in them. Calvin's teaching on salvation may be summarized in three of the answers towards the end of his credal section: first, "the free love of God" is the source of heavenly rewards; second, the true way to worship God is to obey his will; third, the worship of God is not a matter of human devising but of divine prescription. Calvin would have had no time for the so-called Prayer of St. Francis, "for it is in pardoning that we are pardoned", for as he comments on the Lord's Prayer, we do not even gain

merit by the act of forgiving, we simply receive the measure we give.

Ponet teaches that the Father created us and by the Holy Spirit gives us re-birth. In the death of Jesus Christ we were crucified and our sins punished, and by his burial both were buried. In his resurrection we are risen again and death has no more rule over us; in his ascension we are raised to heavenly glory. The consequence of bearing Christ's heavenly image is that we must follow his example and honour him in our earthly lives. To be "saved only by faith" means that we, by "trust alone, doth lay hand upon, understand and perceive, our righteous-making to be given us of God freely ... by no deserts of our own ... saved ... by the only mercy of God, and pure grace of Christ".

Forgiveness comes by prayer to God and through the love of Christ and it is absolute, providing that we forgive offences against ourselves. The christian must overcome evil with good, for it is God who appoints all good works for believers.

For the Heidelberg Catechism, salvation can be summed up as "I belong to Jesus Christ". The source of salvation is the gospel revealed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the Son of God. Faith and the acceptance of Christ's benefits are the basis of salvation, and this faith involves accepting as true God's self-revelation in his word, and "a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit creates in me through the gospel, that, not only to others but to me also, God has given the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ's saving work."

Nowell puts the emphasis on repentance in salvation - a turning-away from sin and a quickening of the spirit. Good works, godliness and holiness cannot justify us before God, we must flee to his mercy: "justification is the mercy of God ... conveyed to us by Christ ... offered to us by the gospel, and received of us by faith". Good works must also be rooted in

faith.

Clearly the Reformers were at one in their belief that salvation was a result of faith, by which they meant a personal trust based on the acts of God in Christ, and, to varying degrees, a product of divine grace; so much is clear from their catechisms. Disappointingly, neither of the twentieth century catechisms under examination deal with faith itself but prefer simply to define 'the faith': this appears to be a major handicap in the training of youth. At least the American Outline has what the Revised Catechism lacks, the response of the Old Covenant people "to be faithful; to love justice, do mercy and to walk humbly with their God", and that of the New Covenant "to believe in him (Christ) and to keep his commandments."

Finally, in discussing issues raised by the theology of God the Son, the catechetical writers gave instructions on the use of the Lord's Prayer. Almost without exception, the prayer is treated as a starting-point for prayer. Urging his pupils to familiarity with God in prayer, Calvin describes the Lord's Prayer as God's pattern for prayer, containing three petitions about God and three about mankind. The prayer is a standard - a guide and not a straight-jacket. Nowell follows Calvin closely on this point.

For Ponet, the prayer is the "certain and appointed manner of praying", and it is sufficient in itself but we have leave to pray otherwise and God has promised to answer our prayers. The simplicity of the Lord's Prayer means that "it belongeth equally to all, and is as necessary for the lewd as for the learned."

The Heidelberg Catechism sets the prayer in an unique context. Jesus Christ worked with men and so his prayer is chiefly concerned with man's fulfilment of God's will. Man does not have to live without God because he is invited to take his prayers and thanksgivings to the Almighty directly.

The Shorter Westminster Catechism commends "The whole word of God ... to direct us in prayer" but the Lord's Prayer is "the special rule of direction". As

with many other writers, the petitions of the prayer are expounded as representing various aspects of prayer in general. For the Revised Catechism, the Lord's Prayer is simply repeated with no commentary (unlike the Prayer Book Catechism which at least explains it all) at the end of a section on prayer, and the American Outline merely calls it "the example of prayer".

Since the sixteenth century, we have moved from viewing the Lord's Prayer as the pattern of prayer to viewing it as Jesus' example of prayer. When the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray <sup>(13)</sup> the Reformers interpreted his reply as a lesson in how to pray but the modern catechisms interpret it as a demonstration-prayer. There is an interesting double use of the Lord's Prayer in the Church: on the one hand it is recited in a set liturgical manner, often unrelated to the act of praying (in the sense of praising, thanking, interceding or confessing - for instance, associated with the eucharistic communion), and on the other there has always been a trend to meditate upon the prayer petition-by-petition and this trend is, if anything, a growing one. Yet the twentieth century catechisms cited here both treat it in a liturgical way.

It is clear from the theology of the catechisms concerning the Person of God the Son that they reflect the doctrinal climate in which they were formed and that there has been a distinct change in that climate over four hundred and more years, as we would expect.



NOTES ON CHAPTER SEVEN

- (1) Matthew 28. 20
- (2) The Heidelberg Catechism for Today
- (3) Matthew 18. 20
- (4) Mark 14. 22-25 & 1 Corinthians 11. 23-26
- (5) 1 Corinthians 12. 27
- (6) Matthww 28. 20
- (7) 1 Corinthians 11. 24
- (8) John 6. 35 & 48
- (9) John 6. 63
- (10) John 6. 52-59
- (11) Article XXIX (included in the 'Historical Documents of the Church'  
appended to the E.C.U.S.A. Prayer Book, 1979)
- (12) 1 Corinthians 11. 30
- (13) Luke 11. 1

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The majority of catechisms divide the Creed into three sections, one for each Person of the Trinity, and include teachings about the Church and the Christian hope under the heading of 'The Holy Spirit'.

The Reformers saw the Holy Spirit at work in repentance, faith and sanctification, and in Christian obedience and service but they did not mention other supernatural gifts, as we might expect. The first major area of doctrine which the Reformers concentrate upon in their doctrine of the Spirit is baptism. Baptismal teaching is fundamental to the whole concept of a catechism and for 'baptismal covenant' catechisms, like Luther's or Cranmer's or Herman's, it forms the context of the whole work. There are three areas which are found in some form in most of the catechisms: first, the meaning and importance of baptism; second, baptismal discipline; and third, the baptism of infants, those unable to answer for themselves.

Roye does not follow the great stress upon baptism in the Lutheran tradition which had formed Capito's theology, but, nevertheless, he insists upon the sacrament as a symbol of the Christian's profession. Describing it as the Christian's "badge or livery", he explains: "Even so though that a man

be of the seed of abraam, and house of Israel, borne of christen father and mother, yet is he not manifestly declared to be of Christis house and congregacion till that he openly be clothed with the garment of baptem, which is nothyng but a signe or token declarynge hym to be of christis flocke and nombre, makynge hym before God, nether better nor worse. but betokeneth the baptem of Christ, which in the sprete and fire purifieth mans conscience from synne, and geveth trewe righteousness

to as many as thorowe this baptem exteriorall have put on the lorde Jesus Christ spretually. For it is the maner of wholy scripture comenly to take signes and figures for thynges by theym represented. as the baptem of water, for Christis baptem. Our baptem is no better than Christis blissyng" in so far as those who are baptized are partakers of the Father's promise, they hope for the kingdom of heaven and are received into the congregation of Christ's Church. The preaching of the word is a fundamental requirement of baptism. It is worth noting that the baptism of Christ to which Roye refers is the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (1) predicted by John the Baptist. Roye's theology of baptism is predominantly that of making a declaration of faith and being baptized with the Spirit, and less of grace, forgiveness and regeneration.

For Calvin, baptism is "a kind of entrance into the Church" which figures the forgiveness of sins and spiritual regeneration. This "figure" has "reality joined to it ... it is certain that both pardon of sins and newness of life are offered to us in baptism and received by us." Forgiveness itself is a spiritual washing and the "water poured on the head" figures the death of our old nature, and "instead of remaining immersed under water, we only enter it for a moment as a kind of grave, out of which we instantly emerge", a figure of new life. But the water of baptism cannot wash the soul of itself, only the sprinkling of the blood of Christ by the Spirit, which is sealed in the sacrament. Regeneration comes from "the Death and Resurrection of Christ taken together", death to the old nature and life for the new, "so as to obey the righteousness of God". Unless we reject the promises of God, and thereby render them unfruitful, "we are clothed with Christ and presented with his Spirit."

Bishop Hooper held a very high view of baptism which is difficult for the twentieth century mind to reconcile with his outspoken 'evangelical' utterances.

"By this baptism we are changed and altered from children of wrath, of sin, of the devil, and of destruction into the children of God, of grace, and salvation; thereby to be made the Lord's, heirs and coheirs with Christ of eternal life."

Cranmer's original Prayer Book Catechism begins with the covenant of baptism. The child expresses thanks to God the Father "that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" and explains that in baptism "I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven".

In order not to misunderstand this from our own distinctly different point in time, we have to notice that this was not a statement of baptismal discipline, nor was it the only requirement for the christian life. It was a statement of what baptism means, assuming that it has been performed according to Christ's institution and the Church's discipline, and viewed as a beginning rather than as an end. If we uproot this statement and others like it into a totally changed national and religious setting four hundred years later, we will be likely to misinterpret its meaning seriously. The 1604 addition provides us with a more easily understood statement of the meaning of baptism: it describes the inward and spiritual grace as "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

Howell's Catechism helps us further, in that it represents a more developed form of his work. Whilst using realistic language about baptism, he also notes that the outward washing does not obtain the forgiveness of sins because this is the work of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is the sign and pledge of the Spirit's work and is received by the faithful.

Ponet similarly tells us that baptism signifies new birth, spiritual cleansing, belonging to the Church and the communion of the saints, and death and resurrection in Christ. Becon, typically, insists that the baptism of the heart is "the

very baptism".

The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of baptism as a promise that "I am washed with his (Christ's) blood and Spirit", which is a promise of forgiveness, renewal and sanctification and which leads to mortification of sins and consecration of life. Baptism is not simply a matter of outward washing but of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Shorter Westminster Catechism reflects the Puritan hesitations about the sacrament. It mentions no 'effect' of the sacrament but says that baptism

"doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."

The Revised Catechism puts the original Prayer Book remarks in the context of what God did for us in our baptism, and adds: "In my Baptism God called me to himself".

It later defines baptism as "through the action of the Holy Spirit, we are 'christened' or made Christ's". From the year 1962, this undoubtedly suggests that the Holy Spirit works invariably and unconditionally through the sign of water, although a discipline is added later. Yet there is a distinct implication that baptism may be an end in itself rather than a beginning. This weakness is compounded by expounding only a proleptic view of the vows made in infant baptism. The Alternative Service Book 1980 reflects a more pastorally-orientated but nevertheless theologically defensible approach to the meaning of baptism - in this case, adult baptism: "Baptism is the outward sign

by which we receive for ourselves what he has done for us: we are united with him in his death; we are granted the forgiveness of sins; we are raised with Christ to new life in the Spirit." (2)

The American Outline summarizes the benefits of baptism - adoption as God's children, being made members of Christ's Body and inheritors of God's kingdom, being united with Christ in his death and resurrection, being born into God's family, having our sins forgiven and receiving new life in the Holy Spirit.

Moving on from the meaning of baptism to its discipline, two apparently paradoxical attitudes are found in the reformed catechisms. The first is a reluctance to impose any pastoral discipline in the administration of baptism and the second is an insistence upon a doctrinal discipline. It is, perhaps, symbolic of the sixteenth century Reformer's paradox of faith: on the one hand is the free exercise of divine grace without any merit, and on the other is the need for every man to know God by faith. Wherever pastoral discipline (as opposed to doctrinal discipline) is mentioned, the only people who may be excluded are those who openly abuse the sacrament. Of course, there are probably more mundane reasons than the theology of grace for this attitude, since almost all the catechisms under examination arise out of societies which were, to a much greater extent than our own, christianized even to the point of Erastianism in some cases. Even Roye, writing for a pre-Reformation England, was charitably disposed to all except those who excluded themselves. But as far as doctrinal discipline was concerned, acceptance of the chief articles of the faith, the Reformers were far from lax.

Calvin exercises very little baptismal discipline; the benefits of the sacrament are extended to believers but the only people to be denied are those whose depravity excludes them. He has no sureties for baptismal candidates of any age for it "is not necessary that faith and repentance should always precede baptism ... It will be sufficient, then, if after infants have grown up, they exhibit the power of their baptism."

The Anglican tradition is much more insistent upon the conditions of belief which are required of those to be baptized. Whilst exclusion from baptism is nowhere explicit in the catechism or anywhere else in the Prayer Book, it is certainly implicit in the requirements of baptism. Three vows are taken in the child's name - (the sixteenth century was an age of uniform infant baptism) - to renounce evil, to believe all the articles of the christian faith and to

keep God's will and commandments for the whole of life. It was almost inconceivable in the sixteenth century that these vows could not be taken honestly because there were fewer challenges to the faith; how much more important should these vows be in our own age. Interestingly, Nowell's additional section has a slightly different slant. Here it is the requirements, rather than the vows, which are being examined. The requirements are repentance and the forsaking of sin (virtually the same as renouncing evil), and faith in the promises of God made in the sacrament (promises of being made a child and heir of God, of spiritual regeneration, of the forgiveness of sins and of dying and rising again in Christ made by the gospel). These promises the children are "bound to perform", that is, under the obligation <sup>(3)</sup> of their baptismal vows to do so. Nowell's Catechism of 1570 makes the point that in confirmation candidates should give full account of their religion and faith. The 1962 revision returns to the earlier Cranmer section for its three requirements which it lists as repentance, faith and (this one is new) giving oneself to Christ as his servant.

Ponet's doctrinal discipline was expressed in the basic elements which he believed were necessary for baptism: pure water, the profession of the articles of the christian religion, a desire for baptism and for enrolment into the Church.

The Shorter Westminster is similarly simple and explicit about the requirements for baptism; they are, as usual, not excessive, but "Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him".

The American Outline is so simple in its requirements that it omits any mention of belief in the substance of the faith, other than what is implicit in the title, 'Saviour', and any mention of obedience, other than what is implicit in the title, 'Lord': "It is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins, and accept Jesus and Lord and Saviour."

The catechisms teach us that the sacrament of baptism, a sign of grace, is not lightly to be refused to anyone, but there are requirements of repentance, faith and obedience which are an intrinsic part of the sacrament's normal administration and which cannot be set aside. The catechisms remind us not to be careless of doctrinal discipline in baptism which is arguably more important today than ever.

The Reformers had few doubts that infants could and should be baptized.

The fundamental principle which guided them was that baptism is the sign of the new covenant in Christ in the same way that circumcision was the sign of the old covenant of Abraham. If children are included in the old covenant, how can they be excluded from the covenant of grace?

Roye makes the classic statement of the general position - and Roye had no time at all for Anabaptists! - "as Abraam's children were not excluded from the

comnaunt ... no more are our children ... excluded from it ... Christ wolde and commaunded children to be brought vnto hym".

Hooper adopted the same approach, and Cranmer's failure to make any Prayer Book provision for adult baptism (apart from its being unnecessary at the time) combined with his use of Mark 10. 13-16 (to which passage Roye alludes) and the whole understanding of his baptismal liturgy shows that he was of the same mind. The Prayer Book Catechism does not doubt paedobaptism but protects it with sureties. Ponet agrees that babies need sponsors for baptism but he is less rigorist: "their parents' or the church's profession sufficeth".

Nowell reminds us that infants are baptized on the basis of promises of faith, with a view to the later acknowledgement of the truth. Circumcision, he argues, betokened repentance under the Old Testament and, according to St. Paul, it anticipated faith in the New. To refuse to baptize anyone is to defraud children and to disobey the Lord's own welcome of children. His Prayer Book



sacramental section, after dealing with the outward and inward elements and requirements of baptism, asks why infants, those who cannot consciously repent and believe, are baptized. The reply, which was clarified in 1661, does not attempt to justify paedobaptism, it merely says that the requirements of baptism were fulfilled in the sureties' vows, which became obligations on the child. Infant baptism is, nonetheless, based on the covenant principle but its practice in the Anglican Church is protected by the security of the sponsors: from the sixteenth century, these promises were made as if by the child but in contemporary practice they are made both by the sponsor and also on behalf of the child, thus providing additional sureties. However, the Revised Catechism still views the promises simply on the child's behalf and does not refer to the mature acceptance of the vows in adulthood: "others, making the promises for them (the infants), can claim their (the infants') adoption as children of God".

Baxter expounds nine biblical reasons for the practice of infant baptism and the American Outline provides three. The first of these three is a modern statement of the covenant principle but the other two are either consequences of the first or no reasons at all, depending upon one's reading of the answer:

"Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God."

Calvin, on the other hand, has a different approach. He associates faith, repentance and baptism but denies that there is any special order to these three essential elements. The circumcision principle applies to the people of the New Covenant but the practice of infant baptism is not founded upon making a parallel between Israel and the christian family or the christian church or the christian nation but upon the promises of God in the gospel. The sign of circumcision was superceded by that of baptism because of the principle of progression by grace from obscurity to clarity, from less abundant to more

abundant. To deny infants their right of baptism is to put the clock back to the Old Covenant in terms of the consolation of grace, for, since "the power and substance of Baptism are common to children", by virtue of God's promises, the sign cannot be denied them. Infant baptism attests that the children are heirs of the promised blessings of God; the children must themselves receive the promises of the baptism and bear fruit by acknowledging the reality of the baptism when they grow up. There is no mention here of the covenant relationship of believers' children which Calvin has previously stated in his examination of the threats and promises of the second commandment, in which God is said to be benign to the children of believers, "sanctifying their souls" and giving them a "place among his flock". The Shorter Westminster Catechism adopts a milder form of Calvin's theology, requiring merely that the infants should be "of such as are members of the visible church".

Calvin, Cranmer, Nowell and most of the others all begin at this point, the relationship of God with his people, his covenant. But for Calvin, the only security needed for infant baptism is the security of the divine promises in the gospel. For Cranmer in his catechism and liturgies and for Nowell in his catechetical works, there were further necessary securities in the vows of repentance, faith and obedience. It is in the context of Cranmer's strong insistence upon sureties (as exemplified by his third and fourth answers) that we must view his high claims for baptism (as exemplified by his second answer). Both traditions looked for later confirmation of the baptism in adulthood.

The Reformers were of one mind about the definition of catholicity in the Creed, viewing it as the whole body of christians and usually making a distinction between the 'visible' Church and the 'invisible' (for want of a better word) fellowship of believers. Apostilicity is a matter of the continuity of

apostolic faith and doctrine - New Testament doctrine - than of orders. This is even true of Cranmer's attitude, although it does not feature in his catechetical works. However, concerning obedience to the law of God - a work of the Holy Spirit - there were two areas which were interpreted in a characteristically sixteenth century manner: the prohibition of idolatry and obedience to parents.

Wyclif struck a blow at the worshipping of images in his version of Thoresby's work, and the Hortulus instruction, as we find it in Marshall's Goodly Primer, urges its readers "to avoid all carving and curiosity in setting forth of images to be worshipped ... For God is a Spirit".

Calvin is more precise in his condemnation of idolatry. He does not forbid sculpture or painting, only "resemblances for the sake of representing or worshipping God." What matters is that the christian should not pray to or make bodily signs to an image as if to God himself. Cranmer's Catechism from Jonas includes an inserted section on similar lines. The Revised Catechism reflects an age in which 'idolatry' is not a problem and widens the issue into stewardship: my duty towards God is "to allow no created thing to take his place, but to use my time, my gifts, and my possessions as one who must give account to him".

Most of the Reformation catechisms mention some form of condemnation of idolatry and there is substantial uniformity among them. The same is true for the statements of obedience to the fifth commandment.

Calvin explains the commandment and its threat and its promise simply and strictly, then opens up the context by saying that the promised land of Canaan (part of the promise) is a symbolic reference to the whole earth. Obedience to parents means obedience to all who are over us because God's order in the world is important.

Ponet lists magistrates, ministers of the church, schoolmasters and all elders and betters in the "loving affection" in which we should honour our parents. Nowell follows Ponet's list as far as the schoolmasters and then adds a few more, those of reverent age, wit, wisdom, learning, worship, wealthy state or otherwise our superiors. He approves oaths made to magistrates. The Revised Catechism includes honouring the Queen and fulfilling one's duties as a citizen.

Hooper divides authority into two powers, the spiritual, bearing the sword of the Spirit, and the temporal, the magistrates. He enjoins his readers to obey the secular magistrate but not to submit to ecclesiastical rules of celibacy nor of "babbling .. mumbling .. crying .. or braying in church".

Roye's dialogue, which was, in fact, proscribed, is a very law-abiding attempt to stir up reformation in the English Church from exile in Strassburg. He asks, "Maye eny lawe, or temporall constitucion bynde a christen man?" and, as far as "divlysshe doctryns" are concerned, they may not. Nevertheless, obedience to the law of the land is of great importance: "he shulde soffre bothe bodi and goodes to perysshe, then once to withstonde theym, remembrynge in hym sylfe that he whyche is rebellious unto the temporall power, resisteth agaynst the ordinacion of God."

The insistence upon the authority of 'the magistrate', which is one of the social marks of the Reformation, comes through clearly in the catechisms, as does the related discipline which must be exercised in the Church.

Herman gives a detailed summary of church discipline. Baptism leads to a "communion of Christ", and part of the commitment of this communion is the acceptance of the elders' discipline. The child is to be obedient to those "whom the Lord hath made feeders of his congregations, curates of souls and elders". Any who live evil lives should be warned but if they refuse to heed, the elders are to be told and they may inflict the punishment of

excommunication. Hooper would see this 'power of the keys' in the hands of the whole Church but exercised in practice by a special assembly which he does not actually define.

Ponet includes "brotherly correction" as one of the marks of the Church (along with the pure preaching of the gospel, brotherly love and the uncorrupted use of the Lord's sacraments). The power of the keys belongs to the one Church but it is a discipline which the preaching of the word brings about, "for that is done by the ministration of the word"; the discipline is basically a matter of accepting or rejecting "the gospel preached in this church". This is very close to the Heidelberg's position. Nowell follows Ponet once more but adds approval of moderate public penance by the authority of the ministers of the word. Not surprisingly, the twentieth century catechisms make no mention of church discipline except that the Revised Catechism has a dated reference to a bishop as "a ruler in the Church". Church discipline is rarely mentioned in the modern Church until a divorcee gets married!

The penultimate area in which the catechisms denote distinctive reformed doctrines is the number and nature of the sacraments. Wyclif follows Thoresby exactly on the matter of the seven sacraments, making no changes or additions of any theological significance.

Luther accepts three sacraments, baptism, sacramental confession and absolution, and the eucharist. Luther's interpretation of auricular confession and absolution was very much more along the lines of a sacrament of reconciliation than of penance, and it was linked with baptism. Cranmer, untypically for 1548, follows Luther's Shorter Catechism on this number of sacraments.

Nowell's 1670 Catechism lists only two, and his addition to the Prayer Book Catechism lists two if the interpretation preferred in Chapter Five of John

Overall's supplementary phrase, "as generally necessary to salvation", is agreed, or two plus five sacramental signs if the alternative interpretation is placed upon them. The Shorter Westminster Catechism mentions only two.

The Revised Catechism interprets Overall's phrase quite explicitly and contrary to the Latin Prayer Book of Durel in that it says: "Christ in the Gospel has appointed two sacraments for his Church, as needed by all for fulness of life".

The five other sacramental ministries of grace are listed and then incorporated into the list of sacraments without distinguishing them from Baptism and Holy Communion. The reason for this obvious change of emphasis is not that there have been such theological advances since 1604 to warrant the restoration of those five signs excluded by the Reformers but rather because of a change in the sacramental emphasis in the Church of England over the last 150 years.

The American Episcopal Church reflects this change in its Outline. Although it does relegate the "Other Sacramental Rites" to a section quite distinct from the preceding three on "The Sacraments", "Holy Baptism" and "The Holy Eucharist", nevertheless it also interprets "as generally necessary" as "necessary for all persons". The definitions of these five sacramental rites are not such that the Reformers would have quarrelled seriously with them; they would have insisted on a clear distinction between sacraments of the gospel and divine ordinances.

A sacrament is variously defined in the catechisms as ordained by Christ, containing a visible sign and a spiritual grace by which the Holy Spirit seals the promises of God, confirms the truth and strengthens faith. The Spirit's power is not found simply in the outward elements which are, according to Calvin, "figures or mirrors" of invisible spiritual realities provided for our human weakness. They are not to be dispensed with just because they have

been abused, for in them, as Calvin wrote, "we are pointed directly to Christ." The sacraments are also effectual signs, penetrating remembrances of the benefits of Christ's saving work and declarations of the christian's profession.

The final area of importance to the catechetical writers which they usually categorized under the heading 'God the Holy Spirit' was that of death. Their teaching on the state of the faithful departed was critical for their doctrines of salvation and of faith. If God has granted fulness of salvation to the soul in Christ then it would be an insult to Christ, so the Reformers argued, to pray for that salvation because it would imply that the promise was unfulfilled. It might also lead to the attitude that lack of faith in one's lifetime could be made up by other people's prayers after one's death. Such were the Reformers' fears, and they pointed to the Mediaeval Church as evidence of how far from the Scriptures the Church had at times departed on these issues. The critical point was not so much to do with teachings about purgatory or the like, but the fundamental assumption that God grants 'eternal light and peace' unconditionally to the souls of the faithful departed, those made righteous in Christ. The Reformers were, therefore, primarily concerned with the state of the faithful soul after death.

Wyclif had written into Thoresby's Catechism that no man could be certain of belonging to the Church before his eventual salvation on the other side of purgatory, and that evil popes might find that they were not members of the Church! Thoresby and Wyclif both mention the separation of the body and soul after death but, since they draw no conclusions from this, we must assume that they did not challenge the orthodoxy of their own age.

Roye deals on a number of occasions with the subject of death and casts off his

Lutheran source. Capito had said that the soul sleeps in death until the resurrection, and, although Luther does not mention this in his Shorter baptismal covenant Catechism, Capito must have been following the Reformer who wrote in his early works of the temporary death of the soul until the resurrection. After death, writes Roye, "christen menne shlepe in the lorde . yett dye they not, for the soule departynge out of this wretched boddy entreth immediately into greet ioye and rest, so remaynyng vntill that oure lorde shall awake it agayne".

Purgatory is "Truly in the graunges, cellers, and porses of our anoynted and shorne company ... which thyng in no wyse canne stonde with fayth. Wherefore he that beleveth that there is an everlastynge life, admitteth no purgatory. For he which hence departeth, withouten delaye entreth into lyfe, or els into death endles."

As far as the prayers of the saints were concerned, Roye denies that there is any "commaundment of god" for us to desire such intercession for our only heavenly mediator is Jesus Christ. But, he concludes, "the ded, we shulde committ to god, in whom they rest." Having advised his readers to commend the departed to God's care, Roye would have them exercise the trust to leave them there without further intercession.

Calvin, though elsewhere he attacks "psychopannychia", the sleep of the soul, does not do so in the Genevan Catechism. However, on the subject of prayer, we read that "God does not assign to saints the office of assisting us" and "he does not wish us to ask" angels for our salvation.

Hooper clearly follows Calvin and expresses, in his forthright manner, the general sentiments of the English Reformers: "I believe that this resurrection shall be of the flesh, and not of the spirit; that is to say, that the spirit or soul of a man shall not rise, because it is immortal and dieth not". And, "I do clearly reject and esteem as



fables all the limbos of the fathers, and of young children, purgatory, and all other such like to be follies, mockeries and abuses, which are invented and found out by man".

The Heidelberg Catechism follows Calvin, as so often: "after this life my soul shall be immediately taken up to Christ". And it introduces an important emphasis often ignored by those catechisms which deal with death:

"I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy" - the strain of New Testament teaching that eternal life begins in this life.

Nowell deals with the subject on three occasions. Death is "to the faithful, .. not a destruction, but as it were a removing and changing of life, and a very short and sure passage into heaven." He says, further, concerning the faithful after death; "we do therefore certainly believe not only that our souls, .. being delivered from the company of our bodies, do by and by fly up pure and whole into heaven to Christ, but also that our bodies shall at length be restored to a better state of life, and joined again to their souls". Beginning his discussion on prayer, he notes that prayer is directed to God and not to dead holy-men or angels who are neither all-knowing nor all-present as is God; to pray to them would signify a lack of trust in God himself.

The Shorter Westminster Catechism states the reformed position concisely, adding a point about our bodies resting in the grave: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

Baxter follows this up with his thirty-two scriptural citations for the separation of body and soul at death, and Bishop Williams makes a meal of replying to the Roman Catholic teachings current in his age concerning purgatory, limbo, prayer to angels and saints and mariolatry.

The Revised Catechism does not touch the sensitive subject of christian death and merely refers to "resurrection" thus: "God, who has overcome death by the resurrection of Christ, will raise from death in a body of glory all who are Christ's, that they may live with him in the fellowship of the saints."

The American Outline has no such scruples; it defines the resurrection of the body by saying that "God will raise us from death in the fulness of our being" and informs us that "we pray for the dead ... because we still hold them in our love, and because we trust that in God's presence those who have chosen to serve him will grow in his love, until they see him as he is."

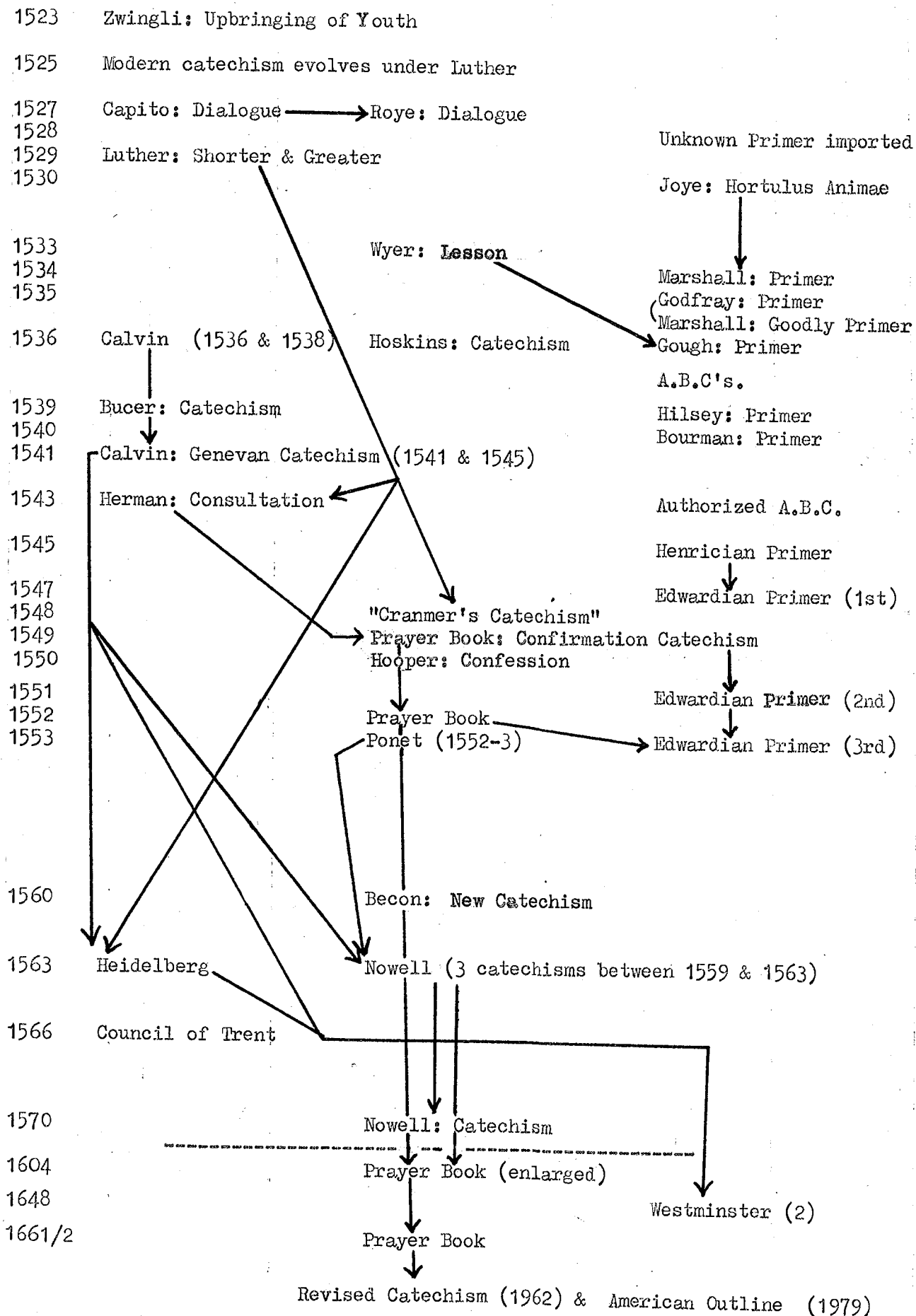
This particular answer, which found its way into the Church in Wales' revision of the catechism, was rejected at an early stage after some pressure of opinion against it became apparent. The Reformers would have been unhappy not only at the possible implication that the departed were not beloved by them, but also that they were held in that love, when in fact they believed that the departed were held in God's love and care. The notion of the departed growing in the love of God after death implies that there is a pre-resurrection state of life in which such growth is possible beyond death, although this is not defined as a state for the soul or for the whole person, nor is it clear what relation this state of life has to eternal life. Whatever the ambiguities of the statement, there can be no doubt that it cannot be reconciled with the Reformers. The goal of this 'growth' after death, that is, to see God as he is, would, according to the Reformers, not be a result of progress in God's love but the automatic privilege of the redeemed soul at death and of the body at the resurrection. They may at least have been happy that here is no doctrine of being made a christian after death from a state of unbelief, although this would have been the part which was least inconsistent with the Reformers' broader principles of grace, for we may assume that the reference to

"those who have chosen to serve him" is to those who have made the choice during their earthly lives. This is a classic example of two features of the modern catechism: ambiguity of definition, often occasioned by broader theological understandings and more comprehensive traditions of belief and practice; and rejection of many of the doctrines of the Reformation, occasioned by our ever-changing view of the eternal God and by the predilections we all bring to our understanding of him.

NOTES ON CHAPTER EIGHT

- (1) Matthew 3. 11 & Luke 3. 16
- (2) Baptism and Confirmation: section 12
- (3) Compare: "bounden duetie" in the 1549 and 1552 Prayer Books

APPENDIX A: CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF CATECHISMS AND INSTRUCTION-MANUALS



APPENDIX B: STRUCTURAL COMPARISON

<u>LUTHER</u> <u>Shorter</u> <u>Catechism</u>	<u>CALVIN</u> <u>Genevan Church</u> <u>Catechism</u>	<u>Book of</u> <u>Common</u> <u>Prayer</u>	<u>Heidelberg</u> <u>Catechism</u>	<u>Shorter</u> <u>Westminster</u> <u>Catechism</u>	<u>Revised</u> <u>Catechism</u>	<u>American</u> <u>Outline of</u> <u>the Faith</u>
Introduction	Knowing God	Baptismal commitment	Sin and forgiveness	Knowing God	Baptismal commitment	Man
Decalogue	Belief	Creed	Creed	God	Creed	God the Father
Creed	Creed	Decalogue	Sacraments	Sin	Church and Ministry	Old Covenant
Prayer	Decalogue	Prayer	Prayer	Christ	Decalogue	Sin & Redemption
Sacraments	Prayer	(Sacraments)		Decalogue	Decalogue	God the Son
Appendix	Word			Faith	Holy Spirit in the Church (including Prayer and Sacraments)	New Covenant
	Sacraments			Sacraments	Christian hope	Creeds
				Prayer	Christian hope	God the Spirit
				Appendix	Prayer	Word
					Church	Church
					Ministry	Ministry
					Prayer	Prayer
					Sacraments	Sacraments
					Baptism	Baptism
					Eucharist	Eucharist
					Other rites	Other rites
					Christian hope	Christian hope

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