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### The Catechumenate of the Church

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**THE CATECHUMENATE OF THE CHURCH**

**A thesis presented to**

**the faculty**

**of**

**Concordia Seminary**

**St. Louis, Missouri**

**by**

**G. F. Busch**

**In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of**

**Bachelor of Divinity**

**1940**

Approved by

*F. E. Kretzmann*  
*A. M. Reinwinkel*



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1930



Man is called the crown of creation. As true as it is, when considering the faculties of his soul, it is just as true on the other hand, that he is more helpless than any other creature when entering into this world; and if you would leave him alone he would soon miserably perish. And this is true of man not for several weeks only, but for some years, as to his mind and as to his body. Left entirely to self, without contact with other superior minds, his mind would remain practically a blank, and would rise little, if any, above the instincts of an animal. See Gergerding The Lutheran Catechist page 17-18. And if he would come in contact with savage creatures he would accept some of their peculiarities and fall into many hurtful practices. Consequently man needs a teacher who leads him to the truth and higher ideals of life.

But man needs more than intellectual guidance. His mind is filled with darkness and sin, as he is "out a crying child in the night; only a child crying for a light." Gergerding page 18. His soul is made for God and finds no rest until it rests in God. Augustine. Without a teacher he finds out very little truth.

In a Christian home the mother usually is the first teacher. And after baptism the child is a child of God, and must then be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and this by means of living and instruction. It is true, the child does not understand much at first, sometimes not even his own prayers, but it will soon learn to understand, and sometimes if mother forgets about the evening prayer, the child will remind her of it. And if we search the Scriptures, as Jesus commands us to do according to John 5, 39, we plainly see that at all times pious parents taught their children in the way of salvation, and thus some kind of a catechumenate was always there, as its roots lie far back in the Old Testament.



## A. I. The History of Religious Teaching in the Old Testament.

In Paradise we find the very beginning of some kind of religious instruction. God Himself using the teacher instructing his children in the doctrine of sin and grace, Law and Gospel, transgression, its consequences, and its remedy. Here we find a catechesis in Law and Gospel, sin and grace. Similar instruction God gave to Cain, Noah ect. Kretzmann The Teaching of Religion. Vol. V. page 1.

In the Patriarchal age the father was the prophet, the teacher, the priest, and the catechist of the house, which sometimes numbered hundreds of souls. In Gen. 18, 19 God speaks of Abraham: "For I know him he will command his children and his household after him that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." And in Ex. 12, 26ff., we have a wonderful example how God instructed the Jews to explain the Passover to their children. And finally in Deut. 6, we find that Moses tells the children of Israel now to teach their children.

But we do not find systematic instruction in the home only, for the Church of Israel also made provision for it. The priests and the Levites were to teach the people, as we clearly see from Lev. 10, 11; Deut. 33, 10.

As time went on and the Jews became a mighty nation, it followed in the course of time that Gentiles were admitted to membership. But before they were admitted to participate in the services, they were instructed in the true religion and then had to confess their faith in God, and then they were received by means of proselyte-baptism. And in later days they had special instruction in the Law and the prophets, special teachers and afternoon services, free for all who would come to receive instruction. This then clearly shows that, while there was no formal modern catechumenate in the Old Testament the idea is there. And we see that religious instruction is as old as humanity.

During the time Israel was in Egypt, at least the first two hundred



years, they had plenty time to teach their children the will of God, as we see from the fact that Moses was so well trained in the knowledge of the true God, that by faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Heb. 11, 24-26. And when he became the leader of that great nation his chief aim was always to instruct and educate his people in the true religion of God. The same must be said about Joshua. Although his instruction was not yet formal, out there was instruction and training in every house. Even the religious standard in Israel was quite low, as, for instance, in the time of the Judges, there was still true worship, and people believed in Jehovah. The Tabernacle at Shiloh and the annual sacrifices of men like Elkanah give evidence of this statement. And in the time of Samuel as judge, we find the "schools of the prophets." Kretzmann The Teaching of Religion page 5.

According to the Second book of the Kings we find that there were four schools operating namely at Rama, at Gibeon, at Gilgal, and at Jericho, and still they could not house all the students, some had to live in neighboring houses, and others in dormitories, and additions to the schools were made frequently.

Under the reign of David and Solomon religious teaching was of a high standard, of which the psalms, the Prophets, and the Ecclesiastes give sufficient evidence. Yes, even during the Exile religious teaching was not forgotten, especially under Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. And when the Jews finally returned to the Holy Land they soon built up schools and taught their children. This was chiefly done by extending the scope of the synagogues, which were found almost in every city in the



Holy Land, but particularly by the establishment of regular schools according to the system of Simon ben Shetah. See Kretzmann The Teaching of Religion page 5. There can be no question that their religious training began at home, followed by the elementary school, the high school, the academy or college. And Jesus himself later approved of their methods of teaching as we see, and so does St. Paul II. Tim. 3, 14-17. But of much greater importance became the catechumenate in the New Testament.

### II. The History of the New Testament Catechumenate.

It goes without saying, as shown above, that a formal or regular catechumenate did not exist in the Old nor in the New Testament during the early decades. The Apostolic Church was too busy with missionary work, as they went every where preaching the Word especially to the Jews, who had Moses and the prophets. Even Jesus had ever "taught in the synagogues every Sabbath," and the attendants in the synagogues were not ignorant concerning the religion of God. Most of them came in contact with John the Baptist, Jesus, or some of the apostles. So the chief aim of religious instruction was to convince them that Jesus was the promised Messiah. See M. Keu Catechetics page 12.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles gives us a clear picture of the missionary work the apostles did. At Pentecost all who believed Peter's preaching were baptized. So the preaching of Philip result in a great number of baptisms in Samaria. It was instructing, but really not catechizing in the modern sense. Cornelius, the jailer, Lydia, and others were baptized after they had accepted Christ, and further instruction followed as a matter of course. The congregations were edified and instructed in the Scriptures, in private and public, especially by means of the letters of the apostles.

The contrast between believers and unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles, became more and more marked. So the Christians were compelled to formulate



their doctrine more clearly, in order to defend themselves and their doctrine against enemies. This then brought about a certain system of teaching, and by the end of the first century the need of a Christian catechumenate was keenly felt.

John the Baptist had been a national teacher, and Jesus Himself, at the age of twelve became a "child of the Law," and was frequently found in the temple both hearing His teachers and asking them questions. His mother, undoubtedly taught him in the elementary branches, and then He increased in wisdom and knowledge with God and men, preparing Himself for His mission work. And then He went up and down in the Holy Land teaching and preaching on the highways, at sea shore, in the boat and other places to make men wise unto salvation. Very prominent as a preacher and teacher was also St. Paul, using the apperceptive method, as we clearly see from Acts 14, 14 ff. And his catechetical method we see even clearer in his epistles. I. Cor. 3, 1-2.

There can be no question that the catechumenate as we have it in the church is based upon the commission of Christ given on Mount Olivet just before He ascended into heaven, according to Matth. 28, 18-20. This reads, as translated by H.A.W. Meyer's verbal translation of the New Test. as follows: "Jesus trat hinzu, und redete zu ihnen: verlienen ist mir alle Herrschermacht im Himmel und auf Erden. Genet, schaffet mir aus allen Nationen Schueler, taufet sie auf das Bekenntniss des Vaters und des Sohnes und des heiligen Geistes, und lehret sie, Alles zu befolgen, was ich euch geboten habe. Und siehe, ich bin alle Tage mit euch bis an das Ende dieses Weltalters." Upon this foundation the catechumenate as a divine institution is built. This then includes first of all the children of the Church, then the activity of the preachers and teachers toward those expressing their desire or intention to become active members, assuming the full responsibilities of actual or major members,



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as well as the duties of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. Here we clearly see that the Apostles in their missionary labor among Jews and Gentiles were satisfied when their converts knew and believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world; and then they were baptized. And then after baptism they gave them further instruction as Christ commanded them to do. And we have in this commission the principle clearly laid down for the later formal catechumenate. So the formal catechumenate grew out of its necessity. But some elementary instruction always preceded baptism which admitted to the fellowship and communion of the Church. It can not be denied that the missionaries had to begin with the adults, just as our missionaries do in heathen lands; and of course the opposers of infant baptism stumble over these facts. Although adults were instructed and baptized first, the children were self-evidently included. "This promise is unto you and unto your children." So God Himself had instituted infant baptism in the Christian Church. Children are not naturally born into the kingdom of God, they must be made disciples by means of baptism. The loving Shepherd does not only say: "Feed My sheep," He also says: "Feed My lambs." As to adults, personal faith was connected with baptism and served as an incentive to lead a godly life. This self-evidently required religious instruction for all who were able to be instructed and as soon as they were able to learn. To acquire this, certain men were needed and also certain facilities and so the catechumenate came into existence, and we find it in some form at all times.

There can be no doubt that the instruction of the young is essential in the Church as a divine institution. Just as essential it is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the adult members, and the Seelsorge in special cases. After the Church has succeeded in touching the hearts of some individuals by means of the Gospel preached to the multitude, she begins with those who express their desire or willingness to receive



catechetical instruction. It is self-evident that there is a difference between the work concerning the adult members and the children. In the first class it means to maintain and cultivate souls, and in the second place it is to plant and establish, with the aim in view that their faith may be founded and based upon Christ as the Rock of Ages. To accomplish this, much patience, endurance, and wisdom is required; as it means a daily growing in sanctification, without which no one shall see the Lord. Knowing and doing, living and believing, must go hand in hand in this matter, or the aim will be too remote to be reached. It must consist in the church,

When a catechumen declared his willingness to enter the catechumenate he implicitly entered the church and accepted her confessions, as much as he knew about them for the time being. Then it becomes the duty of the Church by means of her teachers and preachers to make the catechumen acquainted with the confessions proper, so they become conscious facts to him, and thus be enlisted in the Church.

Baptism had always played an important part in this process, due to the fact that some were baptized as children and others as adults. This makes it evident that the history of the catechumenate may be divided into several distinguished categories, namely, the proselyte catechumenate and the children catechumenate. While the first mentioned was found predominantly in the ancient Church, the children catechumenate was practiced in the Middle Ages and since the Reformation of the 16th century. In the Apostolic Church the catechumenate usually had Baptism as his aim, but since infant baptism was generally introduced in the church, the catechumenate depends upon conditions as to how long and how short it may be. To understand the practice of the Church as to the catechumenate, we must go step by step and see how it originated, developed, and finally came to us.

It goes without saying that little catechetical work was done in the Apostolic as well as in the Patristic age. The preparation of the



proselytes for Christianity usually was of short duration, and, as a rule, of a private nature. The real instruction took place after baptism, according to Justin Martyr. Clemens Romanus says that he was baptized after having been instructed for only three months, and some candidates received even less instruction. See *Ordering*, p. 57. There was, however, a difference between Jews and Gentiles as to baptismal instruction. While man had to believe that Jesus was really the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of the world, and the Savior and King of all nations, the Gentiles' faith in<sup>h</sup> had to be planted first, so the acceptance of Christ and a holy life were required. This common foundation we see in the Letter to the Hebrews 6, 1. And undoubtedly the *Diascane*, some eschatological elements and some precepts according to I Thess. 4, 3-8 were required. The meaning of baptism, Biblical History, the Lord's Supper, and the Lord's Prayer were explained. And Dr. Neu is correct when he states that when Christ called his disciples "fishers of men", He did not only expect to catch them with the net of the Gospel, but to lead them, namely to teach them to observe all these things He had commanded them. In sending them out to preach the Gospel, he gave them little practice, and despite their failure during his suffering, when they all left him, Judas betrayed him, Peter denied him, and the other disciples had fled, He re-constituted them into office, assigning the whole world as a mission field to them, and gave them, besides the Gospel, baptism and all kinds of miracles to accomplish that which they were sent for. But their chief work was to teach and preach the Gospel of Christ.

Historians do not agree whether the catechumens were divided into three or four classes. We quote from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* ~~the~~ the following facts. "Catechumens were usually divided into four classes. The first class appears to have been those who were still in the condition of inquirers, - those who had been sufficiently impressed by, that they had heard of Christianity to wish for more complete instruction. It would seem that this first instruction was, from motives of prudence, given



privately and not in the churches. The second class consisted of those who, having thus instructed, were found worthy of being admitted to the churches, not, however, to take any part in the holy mysteries, or even, as it would seem in the prayers of the faithful, but for the hearing of the sermons and exhortations, and the reading of the Gospel. These were accordingly called audientes, -hearers. They left the church when the reading of the sacred Scriptures and the sermon had been concluded. The third class consisted of those who had formally demanded baptism, and placed their names in the list of the catechumens. These were called prostrati or geneflectentes, -those who snared in the prayers of the congregation. The fourth class was the electi or competentes, or those who had completed the period of their probation, and were deemed ready to receive baptism, and only to do so on the first occasion, that is to say, at the following Easter or Pentecost. Vol.V.p.220.

Quite a change took place in the catechumenate in the time of Origen. Due to the fact that more and more apostates were found among the Christians on account of the severe persecutions, but also on account of the State showing itself benevolent toward the Church sometimes, many declared their desire to join the Church out of impure motives; and as a precaution the Church had to organize the catechumenate into strict classes, and under well trained teachers. Origen was a great promoter in this matter. So the candidates were not only hearers in the second class, but as stated above, were permitted to attend divine services to prove their integrity before they were baptized. Special notice was taken as to their conduct in every-day life, and to get genuine information, certain supervisors were appointed, who had to watch them and give a report.

The catechumenate is said to have reached its height in the fourth century; there the Apostolic Constitutions were added, and the catechumens were divided into different classes, concerning the participation of service.

Any person desirous to be instructed was examined and told what it



means to join the Church. By means of the laying on of hands and the sign of the holy cross he was received into the Church as "cristianus." He had now to attend church services punctually and regularly and was added to the class. But this hearing of the sermon was not all; special instruction was given to the Gentiles for two or three years and to the Jews usually only eight months. In their catechetical instructions we find a regular course of study such as: the doctrine of God, of man, creation, and finally the doctrine of Christ. The first term was usually of a short duration, and the entrance into the second class soon followed. Here the initiation was a little more complicated, namely in the laying on of hands, prayer, and the receiving of salt, as a symbol of purification. The candidates had now become catechumens proper, or in the narrow sense of the term and were permitted to participate in prayer, but silently and on bended knees. Here again they were closely watched as to their conduct, meekness and reverence and they could now bless themselves with the sign of the holy cross. It is self-evident that the number of candidates for Baptism increased in proportion to the spread of the Church. But this does not mean that the catechumenate came to an end when the majority of the population had accepted Christianity. The children of the Christian parents, who were not old enough, or not yet enough instructed to be admitted to the Lord's Supper became catechumens, and put under the instruction of a catechist. But special caution was practiced as far as proselytes were concerned. And even among those that were instructed queer ideas were found sometimes, such as the wrong conception of Baptism itself. Great numbers of persons, who were fully persuaded of the truth of Christianity and who were prepared for Baptism, put off the Sacrament often until they found themselves in the presence of death.

Some historians combine the third and fourth classes. But be that as it may, the third class was the most important one. In the third class of the catechumenate we find the so-called enlightened (illuminati, or



faithful ones. Here they could also witness, but not yet participate of the Lord's Supper, for about three or four weeks. After this term they were prepared for Baptism. This instruction consisted in the symbol of faith, the Lord's Prayer, the essence of Baptism, and the rite of Baptism. But besides these facts here mentioned, more was required, such as examination, confession, liturgical acts, such as the denunciation of the devil, and a complete surrender to Christ, the act of Baptism proper, making the sign of the holy cross, the laying on of hands, and finally the exorcism. One week before Baptism the catechumens were introduced into all kinds of secrets. But the chief power and its blessing is said to have been found in the self-dedication of the candidates, but also the individual Christians in their daily walk of life had a great influence upon the Gentiles. These and many other facts show that the Church took care of her sheep and lambs.

Toward the end of the second century we find some noteworthy changes in the catechumenate. Due to the fact that the Christians multiplied rapidly, persecution began too, and special targets were the catechumens, and thus the graded catechumenate became a necessity, not only as far as the applicants but also as far as the material offered them was concerned. But it is remarkable just the same that the graded catechumenate developed in the early Church during a period of severe persecution and was then kept up for 150 years. And after this time we have very good documents such as "De catechizandis rudibus," by Augustine.

As stated above, the catechumens who desired to be baptized had to announce their intention to the bishop at the beginning of Lent. If they were matriculated, an important stage in life began. For three sets of influences were demanded: the ascetical, educational, and the liturgical. A confession was required since apostolic times, but <sup>in the</sup> enumeration of all sins. Fasting was also required; and the catechumens were not to attend theatres, or banquets; on the other hand, daily prayers, reading of the Scriptures and the giving of alms was to be practised. Such strict



admonitions were absolutely necessary in those days, because the moral standard of the people in general was quite low. Augustine says in one of his catecheses: "Do not withdraw your hand from the plow! Away from the world! Be God's own!" See *Reu Catechetics* p.37. Considering these facts we can easily understand why the etical side was emphasized so much. Quite a number became those mysteries connected with baptism, because the priest became the magician and only mediator between God and man. Due to the fact that baptism as well as the Lord's Supper were described as incomprehensible mysteries, they were performed usually at night. And with baptism all kinds of questionable initiations, oaths, secret signs, and symbols were connected. And we can easily understand why some heathen husbands, and especially enemies of the Church, accused the Christians of all kinds of inhuman acts done in connection with baptism. When a catechumen entered the second grade, he received a new name which was entered in the roster of the congregation.

Therefore we can stress the fact not too much and too often that the catechumenate was greatly endangered when Jews and Gentiles came in great numbers into the church, and quite often due to improper motives, such as getting a better position in life, obtaining a better stand in the community etc. Especially when the time of baptism and thus the preparation for baptism was cut down from eight months to twenty days, and a few formulae were all that was required, the catechumenate rapidly deteriorated, and soon was buried under the many scrutinies. For even those who were baptized in infancy received very little instruction. And a spiritually sterile church, poisoned by a hierarchy, tried to uphold with its emphasis on mystic theurgic acts, was unable to subdue the inner and outer evils even not with the help of the State. See *Reu Cat.* p.45.

Of course baptism was and remained the conclusion of the catechumenate proper. At first Easter Sunday was the only day for baptism, but soon Pentecost and many other days were used. Due to the fact that



Baptism took place at night, special baptisteries were built, and used for this purpose. Although immersion was the general mode of baptism, or to baptize, it was by no means the only one. The 3000 converts could possibly have been baptized on Pentecost Day. And the Didache allows other forms such as stated in the ch. 7: "Baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in flowing water. Having no flowing water, use other kind, if the weather is cold, use warm water. If you have neither, pour upon the head water three times, in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost." See Reu Catechetics.

It cannot be denied that Baptism in the early Church was a simple act, but it soon developed into a complicated ritual. Reports from the fourth century state as follows: "When the last scrutiny was completed on the great sabbath the baptismal act started, about 3 p.m. In solemn procession the whole group marched to the church; here the candles were consecrated, symbolizing the (Photismos) and several prayers and Scripture lessons were read, generally concluding with the 42nd Psalm. Now the procession moved to the baptistery. In the mean time night had fallen, and frequently the whole city was illuminated for the occasion. The candidates for Baptism entered the vestibule of the baptismal chapel and took their position on the West side, stretching both the hands, they then renounced the devil and all his works and his dominion. Now they shifted to the East side of the chapel and confessed, one by one: "I believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and in the one baptism for repentance." Reu Catechetics p. 48. After the separation of sexes, the candidates proceeded into the baptistery proper, divested themselves of their garments, and were anointed from head to foot with sacred oil (in the West only upon certain parts of the body.) Then the baptismal water was consecrated by means of invocation of God and the sign of the holy cross, and they were then baptized by immersion. The baptizer saying: God the Almighty Father who regenerated thee of water and the spirit and forgave thee all thy sins, anoint thee unto life



eternal. In some instances they were anointed once more in a special room by the bishop. The newly baptized were arrayed in white garments as the symbol of purity and innocence; at these times a mixture of milk and honey was given to them as a concluding act to indicate that at last they had arrived in the Church as the true Canaan. Of course the climax of all acts was the first communion. Then they were allowed to attend on Easter Sunday the missa fidei with the whole congregation, and then received holy communion. See neu p.49.

But we would go wrong if we would believe and teach that the early Church took care of her adult members only, some care was also taken of the children. As stated before, the children were baptized in their youth, yes, in their infancy, and then instructed after baptism. Dr. Neu states in this connection that whether the apostles baptized children, or not, is not explicitly recorded, due to the fact that the early Church was a missionary Church, and just as our missionaries in foreign lands must win, instruct, and baptize the adults first and then the children, so did the apostles. But its practice was known even to the opposers of infant baptism. Of great importance is the testimony of Irenaeus in his "book Against heresies" II.100-102. He says in this connection: "Christ came to save all, all I say, who are regenerated of God: sucklings and children and boys and young men and old people." In the same manner speaks Tertullian, and Origen, and all the delegates of Carthage in 416 A.D. when the question came up, whether children were to be baptized the eighth day or before. In the Constitutions of the Apostles the injunction is found: "Moreover baptize your children and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!" Neu p.53. Under Gregory the Great parents were punished by law if they did not baptize their children. On Monday after Oculi parents had to announce their children for baptism on Easter Sunday. Then the sponsors brought the children to the church, and after their names were registered, the church doors were opened, and then the sponsors



moved in with their God-children lining up in two rows, and then they were baptized. It can, however, not be denied that the main training of the children in the early Church, was assigned to the home. As Paul says to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Scriptures." II. Tim. 3, 15. And Origen was also instructed from a child, or rather from childhood in the Scriptures. He says that his father made him to commit to memory ~~some~~ passages of the Bible each day. And in the Apostolic Constitutions we read: "Teach your children thoroughly the word of God and place in their hands every book of the Holy Scriptures. neu p. 56.

The foolish idea that sins committed after baptism were more difficult to forgive than those committed before baptism, was spread almost over the whole church as stated before. They usually argued that since baptism washed out all previous sins and could be had only once, it was clearly expedient that it should be received as late in life as possible. Due to this notion some remained catechumens all their lives. And we find this foolish idea not only among those who were quitting paganism for Christianity; it was also common among those of Christian parents. Guilty of this sin were not only common people, but some men of high standing, such as St. Ambrose, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Augustine, Constantine the Great, Theodoric, Valentinian etc. The abuse of baptism became so great toward the end of the fourth century that the Church had to take a stand against it.

As stated before, the important churches appointed special catechists who instructed the catechumens in special rooms. In the church of Alexandria we find a celebrated school of catechumens under the supervision of such great men as, St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen. A similar catechumenate we find in Carthage.

Some historians also state that the catechumens of the third category were present in the more distant and inferior part of the church assigned



to them, during all that part of the service of the mass which precedes the offertory. Then they were dismissed. For it was not permitted to them so much as to see the Lord's Supper being distributed to the communicants. But in order that there may be a bond of some kind of special communion between them and the body of the faithful, bread was blessed and given to them, and this bread was then called *Panis Catechumenorum*. See *Encyclo. Brit.* V. V. p. 221. Taking all these facts in consideration it is no wonder that outsiders were somewhat suspicious about the Christian Church in her dealing.

But we must say more about the admittance into the main class of the catechumenate. If a person wished to become a catechumen, an investigation was made as to his former life and conduct. Great caution was taken to find out what really moved him to become a Christian, because the Church experienced quite often that people sneaked into their midst out of impure motives. If the examination as to his life and conduct turned out satisfactorily, the candidate's name was formally entered on the roll of the catechumenate. The liturgical forms as to the reception of a catechumen to be admitted varied in the different churches. It would, however, be sufficient to know how the church in Rome took up the catechumens for Baptism. Seven examinations were held during Lent, or in the week preceding Easter as to the character and conduct of the respective candidate. Some of these so-called scrutinies were very peculiar. The first one consisted in this: The priest blessed the ashes, and then sprinkled it on the catechumen. And then he touched his ears and his nostrils with saliva and said: *aphatha, this means, be opened to the odour of sanctity. But thou, devil, flee hence, for the judgment of God is approaching.*" See *Enclo. Brit.* Vol. V. 221 And then it closed in asking the candidate, if he would renounce the devil and believe all the doctrine of the faith. Then the priest would blow on his face, saying, "Go out from him, thou unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit of the Paraclete;" and then he concluded in



maxim, the sign of the holy cross on his forehead, accompanying the action by the words, "In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sanctus." Encl. Brit. Vol. V. p. 221. At the third scrutiny the Creed and the Lord's Prayer were given to the catechumen that he might commit them to memory, for the discipline of the "Arcanum" expressly forbade that he should be allowed any cognizance of these at an earlier period of his novitiate. Then the catechumens were assembled in the church, the bells were rung, and the church doors closed. The bishop preached them a sermon, reciting the Creed twice, once in Latin and once in Greek; explained it and gave a copy to each catechumen. Then followed the setting of a certain day, for Baptism, and the catechumens were dismissed, and when the day came they were baptized in the name of the Triune God. Encl. Brit. Vol. V. p. 221.

Somewhat different do we find the catechumenate in the Middle Ages. Due to the fact that Christianity conquered over heathendom, the great number of Gentiles turning to Christianity who would not take time enough to be thoroughly instructed before baptized, and finally the clerus overpowering the respective congregations brought not only a change in the catechumenate, but finally a total doom. The children's catechumenate put the proselyte catechumenate out of existence. Thanks be to God, we have a little of it in our catechetical instruction. Before Charlemagne little or nothing was done as to the instruction of the children in the Church as such. The priests and the sponsors were made responsible for the spiritual welfare of the children. So the sponsor institute became quite prominent for a while in the Church. The sponsors were looked upon as the watchmen and guarantors of the children, and this not only as far as the church was concerned but also as far as the home came in consideration. At the age of seven, the Church examined the children to find out how well the sponsors had fulfilled their duty. The children were usually examined in the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, the sins



unto death, good works, and finally the Decalog was added. Charlemagne recognized the necessity of a systematic catechetical instruction, and soon councils and synods saw it too, and it was then resolved that "Whoever neglects his baptismal grace, must give an account for it at the last day; therefore let every Christian endeavor to learn the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, in order to teach those whom he calls his God-children. This then made more or less the home a school, where usually the mother acted as teacher. And this is why we are as a church not as powerful any more, because the children are not taught in the home any more but in Christless schools. Nothing could ever, and will ever, take the place of the Christian home; as we see in the case of Timothy, who knew the Scriptures from a child. The convents, at least at the beginning, served a good purpose in teaching the youth. Then another worthwhile custom existed in the apostolic Church, and also down to the Middle Ages, namely private confession. And the Roman Catholic Church to this day has really no catechumens, but an inquisition, as she keeps her communicants under the man of auricular confession as long as they live. And it is due to the confession the hierarchical character, and the clergy, that the congregations soon vanished into a class of hearers and prayers only, for the Church concentrated more and more into the priesthood. The instruction became more and more a compulsory character; the Decalog was demanded, in competition to the Apostolic and Patristic Church, where the Creed and the Lord's Prayer predominated all other facts. This of course had to work out a detrimental factor, it worked repulsive, yet it proved to be a means for the reformation of the 16th century. But the Roman Catholic Church holds to this day fast to her confession as a sacrament of spiritual education. Of some better vision and knowledge in the instruction of the youth, Zeszewitz mentions Gerson, who plainly saw the evils in the Church.

Outside of the Roman Church we naturally find different tendencies,



as for instance among the Cathares, Waldenses, and the Bohemians, as well as the Nicholaites. All these branches of the early Church recognized a systematic instruction of the youth. It is true, none of these can be compared with Luther and his catechisms, but they made at least an earnest effort to teach their youth. This we can plainly see in Luther's Large Catechism, when he states that before his time, little was done for the youth. And Melancton affirms this statement when he says in his Apology: "Bei den Widersachern, ist kein Katechismus, da doch die Kercher von reden." And the real value, responsibility and benefit of the endeavor of home and school toward children, Brenz states in the introduction to the translation of Melancton's Catechism. He says: "Daurch, dasz unsere Vorfahren den Dekalogus, das apostolische Glaubensbekenntniss und das Vaterunser auch zu Hause hersagen lieszen, hat Gott in der furchtbaren Finsternis, womit bisner die Religionslehre bedeckt gewesen, als durch einen Hauskatechismus sich eine Kirche erhalten."

As a summary to what we have said so far about the catechumenate in the early Church, we would like to mention a few more facts, to make it clearer. The first distinction in the catechumenate in the early Church was made by Justin Martyr in his great Apology when he says: All who were convinced and believe what we teach, and promise to live according to our teaching, are carefully instructed and directed to cry to God with prayer for the forgiveness of their sins, while we pray and fast with them. Then we lead them out to a place where there is water where they are born again as we ourselves were. After the candidate has confessed his faith and has received baptism, we lead him back into the congregation of our brethren, where earnest prayers are offered for him, for ourselves, and for the scattered brethren, that we have received a knowledge of the truth, that they might be diligent in good works in observing God's commandments, and to receive the salvation of our souls. After these prayers we greet each other with a holy kiss. The bread and wine are



brought to the leader of the brethren, and a cup of wine mixed with water. The leader offers praise and thanksgiving in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, who has made us meet to receive this heavenly gift. After this the deacons hand to each one present the bread and the wine and water which have been blessed. This feast we call the Eucharist. No one is permitted to partake of it but he who accepts what we teach and has the new birth in baptism and lives according to Christ's commandments." See Gerberding The Lutheran Catechist page 57.

The next witness we find in Tertullian, a presbyter in Carthage, who died in the year 220. In his time the candidates for baptism were called "catechumenoi."

From the Apostolic Constitutions we learn that the catechumens were instructed in the doctrine of God, His personality, His trinity, creation and the final judgment. The more advanced were taught the mysteries of the incarnation and the person of the Savior. The time of instruction depended on the qualification of the candidate.

It seems to us that at first any one able to teach could teach the candidates, but a school for the catechists was soon established. The <sup>one</sup> in Alexandria was known far and wide for its Christian character and the teachers for intellectual power, erudition and ability. We like to mention here only three far outstanding men: Pantaenus; Clement of Alexandria; and Origen. But this school soon grew out to be a theological seminary, for it forged weapons to combat Greek Philosophy, Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, and Manichaeism. Here the students learned to meet the opponents on their own ground. But the Bible was the great text-book, and thus well grounded men, who were fearless to ~~go~~<sup>go</sup> out and catechize,

Origen's Apology Against Celsus, gives us much material to our study. He says: "We Christians carefully prove those who desire to be admitted to our assembly, and only after they give satisfactory evidence that they lead a virtuous and orderly life do we admit them after our custom."



As to the false conception of baptism stated above we would like to add to the above mentioned a few quotations from Chrysostom to a catechumen who had delayed his baptism: "How will you pledge yourself to lead a Christian life when life is at hand? You will be like a soldier who offers himself for service when the war is about to end." Berberain, p.63.

After Constantine had become nominally and officially a Christian, nearly every citizen wanted to be a professed Christian and the catechumenate began to decay, due to the fact that it was considerably shortened, and soon we find those mass-baptisms.

Of course men like Charlemagne with the assistance of his cultured and brilliant prime minister, Alcuin, revived and established the schools, he even furnished text-books and catechisms for the catechumens.

But the ways of God are wonderful, this we see that he turned the missionary adult catechumenate of the early Church into an institution for children. For infant baptism came into the early Church as naturally as it has come into every foreign mission field. As true as it is, that the first instruction of the children in God's Word was left to the Christian parents, for they were to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, the martyr Church conscientiously observed this, as we see from Emilia, mother of Basil the Great; Anthusa, mother of Chrysostom; and Monica, mother of Augustine, the lack of a proper catechumenate made the terrible hierarchy and the dark ages even darker until the dawn began to return. The decay of proper catechizing made a reformation necessary.

Since the Reformation of the 16th century the catechumenate has changed in so far as justification by faith was emphasized more than the objective faith of the church. Luther made this his special aim, namely to lead the children to the knowledge of the Savior. This he laid down for all times in his introduction to the Small Catechism, namely the deplorable ignorance of the people in general, especially of the children



and then the necessity of Christian schools and able teachers. In a masterful way he explains the necessity of such schools in his letter "To the Counselors of all the Cities in Germany."

In 1510 we find him busy explaining the Decalog, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed. An able helper Luther found in Brenz. It was found that a foundation had to be laid for a Christian education and this had to be started at baptism and had to come to a certain aim before the first communion was given to the child. And the examination of the child's faith was especially practised by Spener. Due to the fact that no one should receive Christ's body and blood unworthily, a sound foundation had to be laid and a good knowledge was necessary. As true as it is that the first confession was considered as the chief aim of the catechumenate, and consequently a continuation of study of the essential parts of the Christian religion was necessary, because prior to every communion an examination was held. Luther emphasizes this chiefly in his arguments against Carlstadt and the Bilderstuermer and Lichtstuermer. So finally in 1531 it came to an agreement, per Bugenhagen, that no minister should allow any communicant to the Lord's Table, except he was examined first whether he knew the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the content of Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Here we can plainly see that the apostolic catechumenate was re-established, although it was carried out in a different way and order. The chief aim was to educate and rear a youth conscious of the heritage of their fathers and the treasures laid down for them in the Holy Scriptures, which must be accepted in faith. And this was not to be an emotional act, as we find it among the "heavenly prophets," in Zwikan, but a conscientious self-determination after a systematic and thorough instruction. Luther had his co-laborers and they had to oppose not only the heretics, such as Carlstadt and Buentzer etc., but especially erroneous conceptions of the sacraments as "Firmung" for confirmation, which is considered as such in the Roman Cath.



Church even to this day. It is queer how such errors crept into the Church, as for instance, here in this matter. In place of the recitation symbol of the ancient Church, as a real, true confirmation, the Church had substituted "firmitas," as sacrament. Luther and his co-laborers took especially three main parts in confirmation, as examination, a confession, and finally a promise to remain faithful to God and the Church unto death. Although in our time and age we find many educators, yes, even some prominent Lutherans, who emphatically oppose this last part in confirmation, namely the promise to remain faithful unto God and the Church as long as she abides with the Scriptures. We personally can not see anything wrong in this matter, but we must say more about this matter when we speak of confirmation proper in our time and age. Chemnitz combines the confession in the confirmation with the baptismal covenant. How much could be said as to this, but we are waiting till we speak of confirmation proper then we will say what we think of all these expressions such as: renewing the baptismal covenant, to make one firm in his faith etc. The education and instruction as to this examination for confirmation was partly laid upon the parents and partly upon the teacher, but last and not least it was the duty of the Church to see that it was done. Luther always emphasized the fact that the five chief parts ought to be learned.

It is self-evident that not all educators agree with Luther, this we plainly see from the fact soon after Luther had cleansed the Church from all those heathen errors and had set up the foundation of the prophets and apostles, where Jesus is the chief corner-stone, new foolish ideas came up in the minds of some supervising men, some were related to the old heresy, Luther had swept out of the Church, and some were of a new type. Such ideas we find in "Pietism." There can be no question that pietism had its good, it stressed the instruction of the youth and the preparation for confirmation, but in other ways as to the objective factors of the church, pietism helped paving the way for the coming rationalism. As an opposing



factor we find pietism toward private confession, and consequently it became impossible to educate communicants as to a worthy preparation and finally to the practice of church discipline, for all these things were really made impossible. In pietism we find as chief aim of confirmation a conclusion of all catechetical instruction. This then undermined the pastoral work after confirmation, and to this day we have quite a struggle against the idea that children after confirmation are no more under the supervision of the pastor, "Sie sind aus der Schule genommen," and usually, "auch aus der Kirche." This foolish idea we find among many German people, especially among those who are pietistically inclined. In pietism confirmation as attestation and consolation on the part of the church by means of prayer gave way to confirmation as an attested act of the children themselves, confirmands became confirmants. Although Spener did not adopt the conception of confirmation as a sacrament, he nevertheless saw the main aim and object in the pledge and oath. It can, however, not be expected differently, because pietism failed to see the difference between renewing and regeneration, and thus as a matter of fact they expected as a chief feature conversion in confirmation, and a clear declaration of the confirmand as to his conversion the day of confirmation. This did, as cannot be expected otherwise, change the catechumenate, or at least was called then, catechetical instruction from the educational to the devotional, or edificational basis. Their chief aim was really not a confirmation in doctrine and faith, but more or less a revival; true to the maxim, "the head must be brought to the heart." To accomplish this the emotional faculties were overstrained in order to bring about a conversion. The same must be said about the Moravian Church, yes, they went even much farther, as they stressed emotion beyond all faculties of the soul. And whatever was attributed to confirmation was subtracted from Baptism in denying regeneration in baptism they sought in vain for a conversion in confirmation. The same must be said as to the Lord's Supper, for pietism



had no full understanding of the Holy Communion. Due to the fact that conversion was a requirement of pietism the notion could not be avoided that by means of conversion a ecclesiastical in ecclesia came into existence, according to their conception. This entire movement deprived catechetical instruction of its objective character and gave it an exclusive subjective character. See Neu Catechetics page 130.

As a logical consequence when pietism was exhausted moralism prevailed, and the fundamental principles of the catechumenate were lost. But on the other hand, and according to their conception and understanding, much effort and time was spent in preparing the catechumens for confirmation and conversion. And here we find Spener unfatigued and untiring teaching and advising now to obtain this aim. As his right <sup>hand</sup> we must mention A. N. Francke, who had instituted a model catechetical school in Halle in which the Holy Scriptures, and Bible history were taught and explained. And it must be said that they required not only recitations of the chief parts of the catechism, but real instruction. And due to their effort and endeavor the influence was felt in the home the school and the church. Although one-sided but zealous, and thus kept the catechumenate alive.

If pietism did bring a shallow conception of Christian education, rationalism exterminated the catechumenate entirely; because the leaders left more and more the objective principles of the church and built up a system purely rationalistic. The objective foundation of the Church, baptism, the Holy Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, and justification by faith were made shallow, meaningless, and none essential, and finally dropped them entirely. And to keep the name, a certain morale was retained. A queer conception came up, and this was fostered for quite a while. In using the Socratic method, which is not wrong in itself, but to be recommended, the teachers foolishly tried to establish a system of doctrine collected by means of asking the children, and the answer received, to be used as doctrinal basis. Revelation was replaced by natural religion. Even Pestalozzi



is guilty of this perversion in reducing religion to a means of mental instruction. Of course now and then reactions occurred, but did not last.

Due to erroneous conceptions and deviations in our time of all religion and all religious instruction, education and life, in direct opposition of all powers of darkness, we must not only retain but develop the Christian catechumenate, in the home, school and church. As far as the catechetical material is concerned, we must require that the catechetical instruction embrace the entire "Heilsrat," according to the history of his doctrine; this means scriptural, and in accordance with with the doctrine of the Ev. Lutheran Church. It is therefore absolutely necessary to establish a clear-cut form of catechetical instruction in our congregations. In direct opposition to the pietistic, but also to the materialistic methods. And this can never be accomplished by means of a church degree a demand of the pastor, but only by a combined co-operation of the home, the school and the church. Our generation has forgotten the real meaning of baptism, sponsorship, and "Hinderstube." The great majority sees in baptism a mere sign, and to some extent a duty to have their children baptized. The sponsorship has been reduced to a mere custom where you do a favor to an acquaintance in showing him your appreciation of favor in asking him to function as sponsor. Our here in the Wild West we have quite a time to make it clear to our people that sponsors are to be more than witnesses of baptism, for they are there to confess the Creed for the child, and see to it that as much as lieth in their power, that the child be brought <sup>up</sup> in the faith or creed in which it was baptized. The Christian home, including the sponsors, is obligated to watch over the child at least the first seven years that it be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A baptized child is not only there to be admired and educated, but above ~~all~~ all it must be brought <sup>up</sup> in prayer to the Lord daily, and must be taught as soon as it is able to learn, how to pray. So it can be said of the child what Paul says of little Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the



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Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." II. Tim. 3, 3-15. As true as it is, that a child does not understand the words and expressions used in prayer or in a conversation, it gains some benefit just the same, because besides God's grace it relies on its fancy. You cannot help but tell the child that God is in heaven, that heaven is a place above us, and that God sees everything we do and say, and thus you bring it up in prayer to God. That God is invisible but present just the same, we are developing the child's fancy, but teach the truth nevertheless. To accomplish something worthwhile in this matter we may use a Bible with pictures, especially those where Jesus blesses the children. Such pictures create love for Christ in the child's heart and soon his little hands will fold in prayer. Then we can go on and teach him the Lord's Prayer and other little prayers; and finally the Ten Com. And above all we must create in our children love for the church services. Something which is lacking in many of our homes and congregations. Parents usually keep their children at home "Till they understand something, and while we are in church their children are in the streets and make use of what they understand.

The second step in our modern catechumenate usually is taken when children get to <sup>the</sup> seven and more years old. Here again nothing can and will take the place of the Christian home, co-operating with the church.

#### B. II. The Lessons of the Catechumenate.

The question as to what was taught in the catechumenate in the Old and New Testament, the apostolic, the Patristic time and the Middle Ages, as well as in the time of the Reformation of the 16th century and in our time, is quite important.

One fact, however, we must always bear in mind, whether we use old or new methods, and this fact is, that the truth, and nothing else but the truth must be taught. As our soul needs the truth for the truth shall make us free. And this truth which our soul needs, we find in the Bible which is



the inspired Word of God. But how must the Bible be taught? Numerous and various are the ways the Bible is taught. Let us bear in mind that God gave to every man a mind and with this man God expects us to dig out and arrange and then use the best possible methods. Here we must feed milk to the babes and strong meat to the mature. Gerberding Catechist p.70.

The Old Testament and the Apostolic Church did not have graded lessons, nor Luther's Small Catechism, but she taught the truth in the best possible way. Better methods we find in the New Testament Church. We have seen that Justin Martyr shows how the candidates for baptism were instructed in the rudiments of evangelical teaching. And as material for teaching we find the Bible as the best text-book. But even as early as Justin the Martyr we find other material such as the Catechetical Sermons of Cyril of Jerusalem, and in the Apostolic Constitutions, we find the range of teaching enlarged considerably. And as early as 202 we find a complete form of a creed like the Apostolic Creed for catechumens, according to Irenaeus. See Gerberding Catechist page 71. Tertullian wrote an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, and advised his hearers and readers to be fervent in prayer. Gerberding page 71. And likewise Augustine explains the Symbolum Apostolicum, with frequent references to the Ten Commandments. These as well as other facts show to us how the Church Fathers tried to teach their catechumens, at least in the essential parts of Christian doctrine such as: the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed. And as a matter of course, they were instructed in the doctrine of baptism and the Lord's Supper before they were admitted.

There can be no question that the Church of the Middle Ages had quite a problem to solve; the catechumenate had almost disappeared, and so far no substitute had been worked out. Proselytism grew quite shallow, it consisted chiefly in convincing Jew or Gentile of the foolishness of idolatry and of the superiority of Christianity. As stated above by Charlemagne the Saxons and the Slavonians were driven into the water at



the point of the spear and thus baptized. The confirmation found in some localities was reduced to a mere custom; the pagan forms were kept with the addition of some Christian interpretation. But thanks be to God, soon men of God arose such as Pirmin, Alcuin etc., who instructed their candidates for baptism in the fundamental doctrines. See Kretzmann The Teaching of Religion Vol.V. page 11. Due to the fact that infant baptism was now universal, except in mission fields, conditions changed considerably. In England all children of Christian parents had to be baptized within thirty days under penalty of law. See Rev Catechetics. page 64. Charlemagne fixed the time limit one year. So the question as to baptism was now well settled, but how to take care of the children who were baptized in their infancy was another question. This then led Charlemagne to bar from sponsorship all persons who were not able to recite the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Rev Catechetics page 65. By doing this, the State took over the spiritual welfare of the children and the priests had to conduct meetings with the parents and the sponsors, to teach them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and the Auricular Confession, this then offered a wonderful opportunity to the priests to examine the sponsors and the parents in their faith. For this purpose the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer were translated into German and so the Weissenburg Catechism came into existence. Rev Catechetics page 66.

Here we plainly see that real catechetical works we find first in the Middle Ages. A certain monk of St. Gall in Switzerland, named Kero, wrote an explanation of the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the German language as early as 720. A. D. See Gerberding page 72.

Quite well known to us is the Catechism of Otfried, a monk in the cloister of Weissenburg, in Alsacia, wrote some kind of a catechism, explaining the mortal sins, the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Gloria in Excelsis. See J. T. Eccard in Latin 1713.

And of some note are the following treatises. The dialog of



Gottschalk between a young man and a young lady, representing Christianity and paganism; the ~~was~~ Meland and the Krist, by Otfrid contributed much to the understanding of the Scriptures. And finally the Scholastica Historia by Peter Comestor. See New Catechetics page 60.

In the eleventh century Notker of St. Gall wrote a catechism, and here again we find explanation of the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Song of Zacharias and the Magnificat of Mary. Geroering, page 75. A little later we find the first catechism in the form of questions and answers. This was written by Bruno, Bishop of Liège, a man of noble blood and royal spirit. And finally the "evening star" of the Middle Ages, namely Charles Gerson, who clearly saw the necessity of a revival in the catechumenate, for he delighted in teaching the youth. And here he insisted that the main object in the church and school, must be a living piety. It was his chief aim to have a school in every community, using the Socratic method in the instruction of children. For this purpose he wrote "De Parvulis ad Christum Tranendis," and "De arte Audientia Concessionis." But as a child of his time he did not <sup>give</sup> the liberty to use the Bible in the vernacular. See Geroering Catechist page 75.

A remarkable <sup>change</sup> of conditions came about when Frederick II, of Hohenstaufen took over the land. One of the first things he did, was the restoration of the domestic catechumenate. Parents and sponsors were earnestly admonished to teach the fundamental doctrines of Christianity to their children, beginning at the age of seven. Der Seelentrost, and die Himmelsstrasse emphasized the same facts. Confirmation was separated from the preparation for Baptism, but this finally became a sacrament, because it was performed by the bishop, usually when the child was seventeen years old. Children were requested to attend church services regularly and punctually every Sunday. And they were instructed in the books prepared for this purpose, but also by means of catechetical sermons. But Bible History was so far sorely neglected, and the catechism was not known to many either.



as we learn from the Visitation of the churches and schools in Saxony held 1528-1529.; for there were many parents who did not know the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalog. As to the few books mentioned above, we must say that they were so high in price that only a few rich people were able to buy them. But on the other hand much was memorized, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Decalog, the Ave Maria, the seven carisms, the seven cardinal virtues, the seven sacraments, the seven works of mercy, the beatitudes, the twelve fruits of the Spirit, the Ten Commandments, the crying sins, the alien sins, and the five senses etc., this, however, was only the aim, and very few were able to reach it.

Experience teaches that we always find besides the truth untruth, besides light darkness, and the same must be said about the Middle Ages. The pre-reformation sects came up, who were called evangelical Christians before the reformation. Here we find the Waldensians, the Wiclifites, the Hussites, and the Moravian Brethren. They indeed taught the formal principles of the reformation, the universal priesthood of all Christians, and studied the Scriptures. Here every household was a Christian school. Of special mention is the Morning Star of the reformation, namely John Wiclif, who wrote the "Pauper Rusticus," some kind of a catechism. John Hus wrote a catechism for the Bohemian Brethren and later on added some questions and answers on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Even Savonarola wrote a catechism "for the Christian people," containing expositions of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. It is too sad that Roman authorities gathered and burned the "Threefold Cord," by Huss, because it was too evangelical according to their foolish minds. See Gerocering p.75.

This then brings us to the age of the reformation of the sixteenth century, but we owe it to ourselves in treating the catechumenate of the church to notice briefly the catechisms that appeared before Luther's. For as true as all these above mentioned facts are, real constructive work in the field of catechetics we first find in the reformation period.



It is true, Ænegius wrote an explanation of the Apostles' Creed in twelve parts in 1523, basing his division on the erroneous idea that each one of the twelve Apostles furnished a part of the Creed. A singular feature of this is that the questions are asked by the pupils instead of by the teacher. John Bugenhagen published a "Christenleere" in 1524. In the same year Melancthon wrote his "Handbuechlein": *Wie man die Kindlein zu der Schrift und Lehre halten soll*. It contains an introduction, the Lord's Prayer; the Ave Maria; the sixtysixth Psalm; the Ten Commandments, and some edifying New Testament Scripture passages. Justus Jonas wrote his "Christlicher und Kurzer Unterricht von Vergebung der Sunden und Seligkeit". This is really not a catechism but a series of simple sermons for children. Geroerdig, Catechist page 76.

We must always bear in mind that the Reformers examined and sifted the material found in the Medieval Church to set up a real aim and method, separating the evangelical and biblical material from the traditional and then developed it into a real system. And here as elsewhere, Luther stands far above any man of his age and time, and thus the Small Catechism grew forth from intensive work and catechetical material, for it is the result of thirteen years of strenuous labor. As early as 1516 Luther preached on the Ten Commandments in Wittenberg, and in 1517 on the Lord's Supper. In the same year he also wrote a short exposition on the Ten Commandments as a preparation for confession for his prisoners. In 1518 he had his explanation of the Ten Commandments printed in German and in Latin under the title "Kurze Erklarung der zehn Geote und die Auslagung des Vater-unsers fuer die einfaltigen Laien." *See Catechetics page 64.*

Special praise is due to Luther for his explanation of the Ten Commandments, because "he takes the veil from the face of Moses." The same high praise Luther received for his wonderful explanation of the Lord's Supper. These explanations found grace even in the eyes of the humanists, who usually stood skeptically inclined toward religion and the Church.



beatus Rebanus wrote to Zwingli that this treaty of the Lord's Supper should find room in every home. And the censor at Venice wrote: "blessed are the hands which wrote this; blessed the eyes that read it; blessed the <sup>t</sup>ears that believe the dock and so earnestly call upon God." Neu, 84.

Luther was always on the firing line, from one side the "heavenly prophets" snot at him, advocating their foolish ideas concerning secular things such as pictures, bells, organs, liturgies etc in the churches, and from the other side the Catholics barbarized him with their idolatry, such as mariolatry and saint worship. But Luther did not only work theoretically, as he was also eminently practical, as he did not only write a catechism, he also employed a catechist in Wittenberg, namely Agricola. Of great importance became his little booklet: "To the Councilors of all cities in Germany on the Establishment and Maintenance of Christian-Schools." For this proved to become the starting point of the Christian public school system. After Justus Jonas and Agricola had failed in writing a catechism, Luther wrote one himself. The German Mass appeared in 1526 and served its purpose for quite a while in divine worship. Luther points out in this booklet, that if we are going to teach children we must become children, just as Christ had to become man in order to save men. All catechisms before Luther were insufficient, or Luther would not have spent time and energy to write one. His Large Catechism was published in 1529, at least the first three parts of it, See Neu page vi. But when Luther saw that it became too elaborate for the "crude peasants," he wrote also his Small Catechism for the "pueris et familia," in 1529. It is noteworthy that in the same year Luther also wrote the "Passionale" for the Christian home. So Luther must also be honored as "Father of instruction in Bible History in the Evangelical Church."

It cannot be denied that Luther's Small Catechism is next to the Bible the most read and studied book ever published. Over four hundred years it had served in the home, church, and school as a text-book, and in



the home as a guide of instruction for children, and finally as a small reference work for the average Christian to defend himself against foes in matters of faith, doctrine and practice. In sifting and arranging material on hand and in compiling as well as adding new facts, or subtract less important things, Luther was a genius, of course we cannot always understand him, as for instance the translation: "the resurrection of the flesh," instead of, "the resurrection of the body," but it cannot be denied, that he always gave the correct meaning. But when the pure doctrine was challenged, then Luther was resolute. So he changed the "Un-German Gemein-schaft," der Heiligen, in the Third Article into "Gemeinde" der Heiligen. Here we can plainly see his evangelical understanding of justification by faith. He even omits here and there some minor facts in the Old Testament because most of the statutes were given to the Jews only.

It is true Luther is much criticized for his brevity, but no honest man can deny his evangelical harmony with the New Testament. Quite an improvement was the addition of the confession to the catechism, which was ignored in the Middle Ages, and is left out in many catechisms even in our day. Luther could not comprehend an absolution without a confession. Although he abolished that compulsory enumeration of all sins, and gives the advice to confess to the pastor such sins only which are a heavy load and of which the communicant cannot get rid off. And he also took away the sacramental character which had been attributed to it; putting it between Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, where it really belongs.

In the Fifth Chiefpart Luther stands all alone like a rock in the ocean upon the words of Jesus: "This is My body, this is My blood, given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Mattn, 26, 26-28. And he correctly concludes from this that where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. This surely, shows Luther's clear conception of justification by faith. in contrast to the Roman "natural manner", and the reformed "figurative manner."



Sorely neglected, but of the utmost importance are Luther's evangelical hints as to parents, children, masters and servants, government and citizens, prayer and devotion, kneeling and folding hands, and finally the sign of the cross. As a precious treasury Luther's catechisms were taken up in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. As an unparallelled is the explanation of the Second Article, it has been accepted by friends and foes. Especially the words, "who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sin, from death and from the power of the devil." Another gem we find in the explanation of the Fourth Petition. Here an abundance of things are included in the words "daily bread." The next great feature in Luther's Catechism is that we find no trace of polemics; neither pope nor the false prophets are even mentioned. Good works are fruits of faith and no merits of our selves. The pope is simply ignored, and Jesus is the only head of the church, in heaven and on earth. And we must bear in mind when Luther wrote the Fifth Chief Part of the Catechism, the sacramentarians were raging, but not one word was said by Luther, for he always spoke "the truth in love." So his whole Catechism is a breath of life from God.

Although Luther did not write his Catechism to become a standard work in the Church for the future, he was fully convinced of the fact that it would suffice the need of the common people and the children for many years to come. The other catechisms written in that time, and used by some people, were more or less to be used in Latin schools or higher classes. It goes without saying that Luther's Catechism was far superior to all others in excellence, system, logic, and sound doctrine, and finally won the hearts of the people. Even the Heidelberg Catechism had to give way to Luther's because it was biased and for Reformed Churches only. So was the Crypto-Calvinistic Wittenberg Catechism of 1571 revealed, and Luther's incorporated in the Book of Concord. At first it contained the alphabet and served in schools as First Reader. A splendid exposition



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of Luthers Catechism was John Tetelbach's "Gueldene Kleinod," as it was used far into the seventeenth century. Within sixty years Luther's Small Catechism found its way into almost every country. It was translated into Bohemian, Danish, English, Estonian, French, Greek, Hebrew, Icelandic, Italian, Lettish, Lithuanian, Latin, Dutch, Slovenian, Swedish, and Wendish. Neu Catechetica pagello-118.

Although it had found its way into various institutions of higher learning, its real place remained the Christian home, where the house father was to teach the children and his servants its precious truths. But catechetical instruction was also given by means of sermons, lectures, and catechizations. Outstanding are the Nuremberg Sermons for Children, which have been translated into many languages and still are good enough to serve as models even in our day. When the children knew the text of the catechism, an examination was held, called "Katechismusexamen," similar to our examination for confirmation; if the children were found qualified in the Lutheran doctrine, they were admitted to Holy Communion. Regardless of some opposition this endeavor was finally enlarged to a real confirmation, such as the imposition of hands, the vow of obedience to the Christian Church, prayer and the Lord's Supper. Neu page 120.

An institution of even greater blessing was the private confession of adults and children. After the Bible history was taught, more could be expected. Here we must mention the "Historia Sacra" by Fabricius. The Pericopes were introduced in Lutheran schools and explained by the pastor to young and old. Veit Dietrich of Nuremberg collected the first German series 1546. Neu Catechetica page 122. Hymns were memorized and sung in schools, homes, and churches.

Zwingli instituted the "Kinderlehre". Jud adopted Luther's arrangement of the Five Chief Parts in Luther's Catechism and wrote another catechism, and so did Calvin write a French Catechism. After the Heidelberg Catechism had crowded out all other catechisms in the Reformed Church,



it was adopted at the Synod of Dort. Dr. Neu calls it. "A fair statement of the milder type of the reformed teaching, using a good language, but constantly splitting hair, and thus it becomes monotonous." In the Roman Church we find Canisius' Catechism translated into German in 1550. And in 1558 the Catechism Romanus came into existence, this is, however, more or less a manual for priests. Neu Catechetics page 124.

During the period of Lutheran orthodoxy the material was sifted indeed, but hairsplitting was also practiced and even to such an extent that the instruction, catechises, and sermons were lectures for theological students and not for children. Especially the explanation of the Five Chief Parts in the Catechism by Aegidius Junnius, was parrot-like reciting the catechism according to Andrae, who also wrote and published the "Kinderlehre," for the smaller children.

The deplorable conditions of the Thirty Years' War effected the church as well as the school. In fact many schools were closed and consequently instruction sorely neglected until the "Kinderlehrbuchlein" appeared in Nuremberg in 1628 as a means of rescue, but even this booklet was one-sided. As it looked at the Decalog as a mere mirror only. A great number of improvements in catechetical instruction was made by Luke Ernst the Pious of Gotha, as he furnished the books, employed efficient teachers and added to the curriculum arithmetic, natural history, religion, reading, writing, and singing. Later on the Gospels and Epistles were added.

But we would be unfair to us and to others if we would not say more about Luther and his work. Quite frequently Luther is called the Augustine of Protestantism and he surely deserved this title, as he had special gifts to teach, and this qualified him more than any man in his time to write a catechism. And a close examination of this little booklet proves that, although it is so simple, so small, yet so beautiful, and full of heart and soul, for it costs Luther much hard labor. Of course when we read it, all seems so easy, so self-evident, and so fluent, but Luther worked on it



for thirteen long years. The accusation that Luther used Cyril, Cyprian etc., is childish. It is true that he used some of the material found in their writings, but do we not all have to learn one from the other? But as always, Luther tried to improve where ever he could by means of study and prayer, and the same is true as to his catechisms. In the first Wittenberg addition, he added the Morning and Evening Prayers, the Table of Duties, and a Marriage Formula. Later on he added his Taufuecalein, Directions for Confession, and the Litany. In the 1531 addition he left out the directions for confession and put in its place the three questions and answers to Confession proper, and placed them between the Fourth and Fifth Chief Parts of the Small Catechism where they really belong. Then he dropped the Litany and added the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer. The Office of the Keys, was not written by Luther, but taken from the Sermons for Children, which Brenz prepared for "Brandenburg-Muerenbergl."

But, as stated above, we must be very careful in admitting that Luther borrowed from other writings to be used in his catechisms. Let us prove this statement. When the catechism of the Bohemian Brethren was sent to Luther by Bishop Lukas to translate it from the Latin into the German and publish it for Germany. Luther examined it carefully, found much to commend in it, but could not agree with its teaching on the Lord's Supper. He therefore declined to translate it. Gerberding The Lutheran Catechist page 87. And Palmer is right when he says: "The story of the origin and development of Luther's Catechism is an important chapter in his story."

Luther himself prized his catechisms very highly. One time he states: "This Catechism is truly the Bible of the laity, wherein is contained the entire doctrine necessary to <sup>be</sup> known by every Christian for salvation." Gerberding page 85. In the First Chief Part we learn that there is a God, and the Creator and Preserver of all things. We learn about the Savior, as to His person and His office, and how we may be sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and have the remission of our sins and everlasting life.



Thirdly we have the Lord's Prayer, a model prayer indeed, which the Lord taught His disciples. And finally the blessed Sacraments which Christ instituted. And the words of Matthew 23 we must mention in this connection. "If Luther in his whole life had done nothing good except to have brought his two catechisms into the homes, the church, and the schools, the world could never thank him enough." And Justus Jonas says: "This Catechism is a little book. It can be bought for sixpence, but thousand worlds could not pay for it." If the Lutheran Church had brought no other benefit into the world than that she made the Catechism known to the people, she would have done more to build the Church than all the higher schools of learning that have been on the earth." And John Arndt, the greatest theologian in the 16th century, in a sermon on the Catechism says: "The Catechism is a brief instruction in the Christian religion, and includes in itself the doctrine of the law of God, Christian faith, the Lord's Prayer, the institution of Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, which five chief parts are an epitome and kernel of the entire Holy scriptures, for which reason it is called 'little bible.'" See Concerning the Lutheran Catechist page 70.

As stated before, there are some people who criticize the best book and consequently Luther's Small Catechism too, but all that is said against Luther's catechisms is little in comparison to the many recommendations for it, and above all Luther's catechisms are now over four hundred years old and no other book has been found that could equal it as a text-book. Dr. Jacobs says: "It has made its way into almost every living language of the world. It bears its testimony to Christ in every part of the world, from Greenland to Iceland, to India, to South America, and South Africa, in the church, school, and the home, in palaces of the royalty and in the huts of poverty." Concerning the Lutheran Catechist page 111/

When Luther's catechism was used for about eight years, "The Bishop's Book," was framed, largely paraphrased from parts of Luther's catechism, in the reign of Henry VIII of England, Luther's foolish enemy. And



inally in 1548 Bisnop Cramer published his "Catec. ism," based on Luther's sermons. It is queer that such men could not bring about something equal to Luther, and still they were too proud to accept Luther's doctrine based on the Bible, while their doctrine was based on sand.

But Luther's Small Catechism was the first book ever translated into the language of the American Indians, by Campanius, a Swedish Lutheran, in 1646. According page 112. The first edition in America was published by Count Zinzendorf in 1744. Five years later an edition approved by Lutheran pastors appeared from the press of Benjamin Franklin. And since that time hundreds of editions in nearly all languages spoken in our land have appeared in America.

In Germany much work had been done to introduce and teach Luther's Catechism. It was memorized and explained by means of questions and answers and by means of "Kinderpredigten." In this effort we find Spener quite zealous. In the introduction to his "Erklaerungen uer christlichen Lehre nach der Ordnung des kleinen Catechismus, Dr. M. Luther's" he says: "As to the use I would have made of his work, my opinion is not that the main thing is the memorizing of the words and the answers, the meaning must be understood and the scholar must be able to give it in his own words." And there can be no question that the work of Spener and other Pietists did some good in making catechising effective, but experience also teaches that pietism has really not brought anything permanent, and Spener was by no means the first one that stressed religious instruction of the youth, he was merely following the Strassburgers. Besides the fact that Spener secured a real system for confirmation, he did not contribute much to the Christian doctrine, as he found the main fact in the solemnity of the vow instead of the knowledge of God's Word and faith in Jesus Christ. So he cannot be called "a voice in the wilderness," or "the reformer of religious instruction." See Catechetics page 134-135. His catechism is much inferior to others, published long before him. And as stated above,



pietism brought never anything permanent, and it did not take very long and pietism was on dangerous paths, in exalting confirmation at the expense of baptism, in considering baptism the beginning and confirmation the conclusion of regeneration. Expecting then of every confirmation, on the basis of his experiences and his vow a consummation of regeneration. This naturally resulted in emotional jugglery and self-deception, due to the undue stressing of the subjective element in the child. Thus they robbed the assurance of salvation found in the objective act of God, his promise of grace, and faith in Jesus Christ, because they taught the children to trust in the subjective feeling of their hearts. See Catechetics page 136. This is the reason why many pietists ignored Luther's unexcelled Catechism and substituted for it the so-called "Oranungen des Heils."

It goes without saying that Pietism paved the way for Rationalism. As a chief advocator we must mention Wolff, who combined mathematics to settle theological arguments. See page 140. His followers were Loeseke and Baumgarten. Due to the name, rationalism broke away from the church and Luther's Catechism and landed in foolish morality, and only one thing worth mentioning is the use of the "Didactic method," in following Socrates to reveal the germ of truth slumbering in the mind of the child, which had to be skillfully drawn out of him. This method was used till Pestalozzi appeared, who wrote the little book. "How Gertrude Teaches her Children," 1801. See 143. He was greatly assisted by Schwartz of Heidelberg. Scaleiermacher recommended, besides the Socratic the acromatic method. So rationalism did not only destroy religious life in Germany, but ruined also religious instruction of the children. It emphatically denied the old biblical doctrine of sin, as it sees no evil in man, only the seeds and germs of everything that is good are there. These good things are to be drawn out of the child, developed and matured. Hence the Socratic method should be used to draw out of the child the needed truth. And the truth that cannot be drawn out of the child is not worth knowing.



Here Satan surely won a great victory, he made rationalism forget especially forget two things. First, that Socrates was dealing with the natural truth of the natural world as it is revealed in the natural man. Second, Socrates was dealing with mature minds, while the Christian teacher is dealing with immature minds chiefly, and with supernatural truths of the spiritual life of man. And therefore the method failed and the fruitage was inexpressly sad and unsatisfying. Concerning The Lutheran Catechist page 115.

But thanks be to God the better faction soon came back to Luther's Catechism and Spener's method. As a rock in the ocean Luther's catechism stood in the noses and hearts of many thousands of Christians regardless Rationalism and Pietism. And soon God raised up men such as Mitsca, Klaus Harms, Thomasius, Marless, and Loene, the latter did much good in furthering education, the same must be said about Adield, Brenz, Caspari, the latter for his "Geisliches and Weltliches." And Franz Wiedemans "How I tell my children the stories of the Bible," were of great help. See Catechetics, 149.

As to the catechetical instruction in England, Dr. Neu mentions Marsca als Goodly Primer of 1534 as uncompromisingly evangelical for being permeated by the "sola gratia". But when Henry VIII of England died in 1547, Granmer translated Justus Jonas' Latin version of the Nueremburg sermons for Children into the English language, and thus Luther's catechism was made known to England, but Satan would not lose such an easy battle, and he worked on Granmer and finally succeeded to persuade him to accept the reformed doctrine and he then made a catechism called, "Instruction to be learned by every child," in connection with the Book of Common Prayer of 1543, and Luther's unexcelled catechism was pushed aside. The reformed men such as Butzer, who came to England, and Calvin who instructed him, became the chief advisers of Edward, and then Granmer introduced the reformed doctrine into England. See Neu Catechetics page 155-156.

In Scotland John Knox edited his book, "Book of Discipline" in 1560, emphasizing the instruction of children. The Presbyterian used the



Westminster Catechism, similar to the Heidelberg Catechism which was too doctrinal for children and common people. See *New Catechetics* page 157.

Quite a confusion as to catechetical instruction was seen in our own land, because the Germans and Scandinavians brought their Lutheran Catechism along from Europe, while the English speaking people used the book of Common Prayer. The Dutch used the Heidelberg Catechism and the Congregationalists and other sectarians the Shorter Westminster Catechism.

And after the restoration of the Lutheran Catechism in practically the whole world in connection with catechetical instruction we find in Germany and Russia, among the German Lutherans, and many other countries the "Kinderlehre or Christenlehre." We ourselves attended such *Kinderlehr* which is being conducted similar to a good Walter League. This means the catechizations of those already confirmed, by the pastor on a special Sunday, generally in the after noon. The catechism is reviewed and the Bible histories are taught. Then some questions and answers follow. In many instances the whole congregation takes part in it. We do this in one of our mission posts and with good results too. And we are told that this practice dates back to the reformation age, it fell, however, into disuse in the time of dry orthodoxy, and was revived by *Spener*, but degenerated again under the all-destroying influence of rationalism. *Lautenberg* introduced <sup>it</sup> in the churches which he organized and served. And in many German Lutheran Churches it is found even in our day. *Verderberg* page 117. But the question may be justified now did Luther's Catechism become such a much used book in America? Here we must mention the early Lutherans, those from Halle and those from Sweden, who made proper use of the catechism from their very landing on these shores, as they practiced "*Kinderlehre*." We are told that as early as 1693 a Swedish layman, Charles Springer, sent to Sweden from two hundred catechisms and taught the people and children.

But again the Lutheran Church was not as watchful as she should have been as to her treasures inherited from the fathers, of not planting



her own institutions of learning, and thus she again became effected by the evil influence of rationalism and emotionalism that abounded in the Reformed Churches. Luther's catechism fell into disuse and disfavor. Dr. Walther fought many a hard battle against this movement with all his power, energy, and might. The so-called explanations were substituted for Luther's Catechism in many churches. Such a substitute was Quitsman's Catechism, published "with consent and approbation" of the New York Ministerium in 1814. See Gerberding page 119. But due to the fact that it was rationalistic throughout, it moved the very foundations as well as the essence of the faith of the Church of the reformation. Where people were pietistically inclined, revivalism took the place of catechisation. And as a result we saw that, especially English speaking congregations who tried to be modern, went soon entirely out of existence. And to this day we find many congregations where Luther's Catechism is sorely neglected. But thanks be to God, we have also many Lutheran churches that do teach the difference between church and church. Let this be our aim, that the children and our youth be thoroughly instructed in Luther's Small Catechism, for we know that our future is bound up with the proper instruction and training of our youth. Let us teach Luther's Catechism and all will be well with the child and with the congregation as well as with the church at large. Gerberding The Lutheran Catechist page 120.

As material for instruction we find, regardless magazines and other methods and material, the bible, Biblical histories, and Dr. Luther's Small Catechism still superior to all material used in our day and on the market. It cannot be denied, however, that much depends on the teacher. If a teacher is not a devout Christian in word and deed, in doctrine and life, not much can be expected from him. He must be a spiritual father to his pupils in order to influence them, or his instruction will be in vain. For there is great danger that the catechetical instruction becomes stale to both teacher and pupils. And to accomplish something in this



respect, catechumens must under all circumstances regularly and punctually attend church services. And if they do not feel the necessity or obligation to attend church services during the time of their instruction in the catechism and bible histories etc., their confirmation will unquestionably be "ein aus der Schule Gesammten." Experience is the best teacher, this statement has been attested time and again. But what shall a pastor do in such cases, not to accept them at all? or shall he keep them in instruction, and then when the others are confirmed, let them back? We have such cases every year, that some confirmands just refuse to come to church services regularly and punctually. You may admonish them, rebuke them, instruct them, but all is fruitless. What shall a pastor do in such cases? It is true, in our modern inventive age means and ways have been discovered to substitute church services such as Sunday school, services for the youth, where the entire service is turned over to the young people, to make them "do something." And it is true in most cases, they do something, but Adam and Eve did something too in Paradise. We personally cannot consent to such new deal methods, as we feel responsible, to see what is going on in our churches.

Another step in the modern catechumenate is where we find the young people from 15-21 years old. This is the time when youth develops from childhood into manhood or womanhood. Here the church has such a great mission field to work, directly by means of example, and indirectly by the pastor. There can be no question that that part of the Christian catechumenate has its beginning in holy baptism, and its main aim in the first communion. "In the first communion, after the examination in the doctrine of the church, the catechumen assumes his duty and obligation as a confirmed member of the church. The rite of confirmation usually closes the catechumenate, this of course does not mean that the catechumens dare <sup>not</sup> run wild, or the work begun in them would be in vain. They must remain in touch with the church and the pastor as long as they live, for



they must grow daily in sanctification without which no one shall see the Lord. But the regular lessons close after confirmation, It is just too bad, that confirmation is not understood by many people; there we have the Church of Rome on the one side who made a sacrament of it, and the reformed Church on the other side who degraded it to a mere sign. It goes without saying that the rite of confirmation was unknown to the ancient Church, nor was it found in the developed catechumenate of the 4th century; it is rather a peculiar instruction or I should say institution, found in the Christian Church, but had nothing in common with the Catholic "Firmelung." Certain traces of it we find among the Bohemian Brethren in connection with their act of receiving members into their congregations See Kretzmann The Teaching of Religion Vol.V, page 135. and Catechetics 616-624. and Gerberding The Lutheran Catechist pages 123-133.

When Erasmus recommended it, it soon found its way into many congregations. But as soon as the attempt was made by some to change the rite of confirmation again into the Roman "Firmelung," Flacius and other orthodox theologians opposed it so strongly that it was practiced in very few congregations. But when Spener recommended it again and again and gave it a more churchly character, it found its way into many churches again. Nationalism, however, made some kind of a jomastic play of it, and thus destroyed its main aim and character again.

The sole meaning of confirmation lies in the Lutheran doctrine of the Scriptures and the sacraments. We do not believe in the Roman magic act in confirmation, nor do we approve the pietistical, sensational subjective jugglery of feeling. We do not believe in a restoration, completion, attestation nor in any renewing of the baptismal covenant in confirmation; because the first is not possible, and the latter is not necessary. For what God gave us in baptism will last for life time, and to keep what we did receive Christ instituted the Lord's Supper. And this is why we always emphasize the instruction in God's Word.



So this is our conviction: Confirmation contributes nothing to the catechumen, but he now promises personally that he will keep what the sponsors have promised in his name at his baptism and thus he becomes entitled to participate of the Lord's Supper. So we must emphasize the instruction in God's Word and Luther's Catechism, for the catechumen remains a "Beichtkind," as long as he lives. To the Lutheran Church thus in confirmation three chief parts: in the broad sense, 1, instruction; 2, confession; 3, laying on of hands. And in the narrow sense: 1, the examination; 2, the confession; 3, the vow. We mention first the examination, to prove before God and the congregation whether the confirmand is able to examine himself as to his sins and as to a worthy preparation for the Lord's Supper. Secondly, we mention the confession, the confession proper, according to the words of Christ: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, I will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven." Matt. 10, 32. And thirdly, the church added to every act concerning God and man, prayer, for without our prayers and God's blessing, we can not keep our vow. The imposition of hands, does not contribute anything to the confirmand.

This is why the genuine Lutheran conception of confirmation did not see in the rite of confirmation an act of closing catechetical instruction, but more a continued process. There can be no question that the first communion was, is, and remains of great importance in the Reformation Church and also later on, and the examination of the confirmands was considered essential of every Christian. As the Church, the possessor of the means of grace was not only privileged to grant this opportunity to the confirmands, but also obligated to see that the confirmands were able to give an account of their faith, confess it before God, and promise that, with the help of God, they will remain faithful unto death.

As to the meaning of confirmation, much has been written and said. We have mentioned that the Roman and Greek Churches consider confirmation a sacrament. And to make it as impressive as possible the confirmands



are anointed with oil, and the confirming bishop says: "I seal thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the oil of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This then shows that they ascribe special power to confirmation. The effect of the crossing, anointing, and imposition of hands is considered as giving of the Holy Ghost in a sense in which he was not given even at baptism. They even consider the sacramental character higher in confirmation than in baptism. This we can plainly see by the fact that an ordinary, common priest may baptize, but only a bishop can confirm. Gerberding page 124.

And we are very thankful to the Lutheran reformers that they unanimously rejected the sacramental character of confirmation. Honor demands that we mention Luther first. In his "Babylonian Captivity" he said that he would be willing to keep confirmation as a useful ceremony in the church, provided, however, it be freed from all superstition connected with the Roman "Firmelung." But under no circumstances would he consider it a sacrament. And in the Augsburg Confession as well as in the Apology it is called an ecclesiastical rite, consequently no sacrament. Although the Interim of 1548 recommended it, orthodoxy rejected it as such. A thorough instruction in the catechism was always practised in the true Lutheran Church; and an examination, held prior to the first communion, as this was considered the true confirmation. And speaking of Lutheran confirmation, we must mention Bugenhagen as the promoter and advocator of our present form of confirmation into Pomerania. And regardless the recommendations of men like Gerhardt, Hunnius, Hutter and others, it did not meet with universal favor. Gerberding The Lutheran Catechist page 125.

It must be attributed to Spener that he made the act or rite of confirmation popular, even in the Lutheran Church, because he strongly emphasized a thorough catechisation and an impression on the heart and will by the class instruction. This aim was justified and correct, because the failure to obtain this influence had brought confirmation



much disfavor. If only the later pietists would have followed in the footsteps of Opener, but they tried, even more than Opener liked to see, to bring in a certain false and forced emotionalism. Instead of seeing their aim in moving the heart and the will, they sought a certain conscious conversion. This of course was not Lutheran nor even true pietism, but a mere perversion of confirmation. Gerberding page 125.

Even more evident was the unsound conception of the relation of confirmation to baptism, in trying to add something to baptism, where they should have known that baptism as an act of God is completed in itself, and man can contribute nothing to it. Just as wrong as this conception was, was the conception of "renewing the baptismal covenant," because a covenant demands two parties, here God and man, God's part of the contract or covenant cannot be renewed by man. Here one gives, and another receives. And here God and the child are brought into covenant relation with one another. And the child neither renews nor ratifies the covenant.

But when the baptismal covenant was made, the child could not consciously take part. So God could do His part in the contract in full, He could give, and He gives to every one who does not wilfully resist or reject, and the child could not consciously receive. Parents and sponsors had to do the child's part in the contract in promising and covenanting in its place. And after the child is being thoroughly instructed as to the meaning of the baptismal covenant, the child takes upon himself his side of the covenant or contract. The entire catechetical instruction must be an aim to nourish the instilled faith implanted in baptism. The mind of the child is now enlightened, the heart moved, and the will persuaded of the fact that it was made a child of God in baptism, and is now privileged to accept the grace of God and be personally responsible for the future nourishing of that faith in him. The child must now be equipped consciously and intelligently to assume and ratify this part of the baptismal covenant. And in this sense confirmation is related to



baptism. But Zuercher and his followers were by no means the only ones that misunderstood the relation of confirmation to baptism. Zuercher, that unstable creature and opposer of the Augsburg Confession, who was one day on the Lutheran side and the other day on the side of the reformers, gave a Romanizing interpretation to confirmation. He taught, on laying the hands on the child the minister was to say: "receive the Holy Ghost, the safeguard and shelter against all malice, strength and help toward all good, from the gracious hand of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Concerning The Lutheran Catechist page 127.

By the laying on of hands special power was expected by Hieronymus and Vitar who claimed that the laying on of hands gave a magic power to the child. There can be no question that this is unscriptural, Romish, and ruinous to the soul. The foolish idea is based upon the acts of the apostles. As true as it is, that the miraculously endowed apostles could confer charismatic gifts upon individuals by laying on of hands, but their followers could not. So we hold that the blessing which is bestowed upon the confirmands is not by means of the magic or magnet of the pastor, but only, as the hands are aids for the subjective reception of the grace prayed for, promised and confirmed by the word of God. The word of God works here just as any where else, it confers grace where the recipient does not resist or reject, but allows that word to enter into his heart. This is the scriptural, evangelical, and true meaning of the laying on of hands. There is no magical power, and confirmation is no sacrament. And last but not least, it adds nothing, and it can add nothing to the Sacrament of baptism, for baptism is an act complete in itself. See concerning The Lutheran Catechist page 126.

The confirming, strengthening and establishing of the catechumen in grace is effected primarily alone through Christ's own means of grace, the word and the sacraments. In confirmation the previous administration of baptism and the perpetual efficacy of that sacrament are now vividly



recalled and impressed. And this, usually impressive application of the word and sacrament confirms and strengthens the divine life in the catechumen. This and nothing more dare and can be attributed to confirmation. For the means of grace do the confirming, this means, the Holy Spirit does it through these means of grace. The pastor is only the ambassador of Christ who applies His means of grace to the confirmand. Gerverding p. 129.

We can, and dare not claim for the rite of confirmation a "Inus saith the Lord;" and it has consequently no sacramental efficacy, and is not essential to salvation. But we fully believe that it is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the gospel and has bestowed untold blessings upon the individual and the church at large. Because we can find in it all its essential features in the pure age of the Church right after the apostles. For in some form or other it has been practiced in the early Church.

But on the other hand we must also say that like all other good institutions in themselves this also has been abused. In the European state church, it has caused many evils. As it was made compulsory and thus degraded into a mere formality. In some countries it was even necessary to citizenship, and thus exalted or lowered the stand of an individual in his community. And in our land confirmation is often regarded as some kind of a graduation from religious instruction. The child is sometimes promised special presents, and therefore the children are usually eager to over with it, in order to be free from all these tridgeries of preparation for instruction. But if confirmation is free from all these abuses, it is one of the most beautiful and impressive ceremonies in the church. For there can be no more fitting, and solemn ceremony of admitting the children of the church into full communicant membership than confirmation, when rightly conducted. It is a high day in the lives of the children. It must be a great day for every one in the congregation. Let us thus conduct our confirmation, then all will be well. Ah, these confirmation days! Our memory runs back and we hear the chimes of heaven. God grant it. *J. F. Birch*