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The Catechism in the Christian Home

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die nicht neueren Ursprungs ist, sondern wesentlich aus der altfutherischen Zeit stammt: „Ist das euer aller aufrichtiges Bekenntnis, daß ihr eure Sünden herzlich bereuet, an Jesum Christum glaubet und den guten, ernstlichen Vorsatz habt, durch Beistand Gottes des Heiligen Geistes euer sündhaftes Leben forthin zu bessern, so bezeuget es mit einem lauten Ja!“ (Schluß folgt.) F. H. Engelder.

The Catechism in the Christian Home.

Luther and his faithful colaborers in the work of Reformation owed their success, next to the grace of God, to the fact that they used the only means whereby a reformation of the Church could possibly be effected, the preaching of the pure and unadulterated Word of God in simple, straightforward manner. The simple truths of the Catechism, those basic facts laid down in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, were reintroduced by these men of God into church and home and school. Luther insisted that the truths of the Catechism, nothing more, but also nothing less, be preached in every public service. In order to teach the Catechism to the people, he inaugurated special series of sermons on week-days or during the so-called Catechism seasons, in the spring and the fall of the year, and introduced the custom of a public recital of the Catechism by the children in public worship. Helpful and beneficial though these efforts proved to be, Luther readily perceived the necessity of enlisting the Christian home in the noble work of teaching and indoctrinating young and old in the fundamentals of the Christian religion. And not a little of the marvelous success of the Reformation is to be ascribed to the untiring efforts of Luther and his assistants to make use of the opportunities which the home afforded in teaching the Catechism, to remind Christian parents of their solemn obligation to their children, to the Church, and to their God and Savior, to provide the parents with proper educational material for the Christian training of their children and the other members of their household. A brief review of these efforts will not only prove interesting reading, but will stimulate renewed interest in this phase of a Lutheran pastor's work and give him a livelier sense of his duties and obligations in this respect.

As early as 1519, in his sermon on the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Epiphany, Luther told his congregation some truths which hold good to this day and which every pastor ought to tell his people time and again. He says: "Married people should know that they can do no better work and be of no greater benefit to God, to Christendom, to the world, to themselves and to their children than by training their children well. To make pilgrimages to Rome, to

Jerusalem, to St. James, to build churches, to pay for masses, or what other work may be named, is nothing compared with this one work, that married folk train their children. . . . Again, hell is not more easily earned than by one's attitude toward one's own children. Neither may a more harmful work be done than that of neglecting children, permitting them to curse, swear, learn shameful words and songs, and living according to their own will. . . . There is no greater harm to Christendom than neglecting the children. For if Christendom is to be helped, one must forsooth begin with the children, as was done in former times. For this reason it is necessary that every married person regard his child in a more thorough, deeper, and more diligent manner than merely as that flesh which has issued from him. Rather should he regard his child no less than as a precious, eternal treasure, which God has entrusted to him to keep it, so that the devil, the world, and the flesh may not steal or kill it." (St. L., X, 643 f.)

From this passage we gather that, when Luther preached to his congregation, he was interested in the welfare not only of the adults, but of the children as well. And when he later had his sermons on the various parts of the Catechism printed and published, he again did this not merely with the intention of giving the older members of his congregation an opportunity to read and study and ponder them. It was his purpose that what they had well learned they should teach to their children, so that they also might grow in the knowledge of the Word and will of their God and Savior. This purpose was well served by the custom of those days of having brief summaries of the Christian doctrine printed on charts or placards that were hung on the walls of the home or attached to the doors or the covers of the large family chests. Such charts, or tables, were sure to rouse the curiosity of the children, cause them to ask questions, and thus offer to the parents an opportunity, yes, almost force them, to make some explanation of, give some instruction on, the contents of these tables. It seems that Luther's *Kurze Auslegung der Zehn Gebote Gottes* (*Brief Exposition of the Ten Commandments of God*), first published during Lent of 1518, was originally printed in the form of charts. (Cohrs, *Die evangelischen Katechismusversuche*, p. 1, quoting the Weimar edition, I, 248.) Hence, when Luther preached his sermon on the Second Sunday after Epiphany, 1519, he may have had in mind just these charts of his as an aid to be used by the parents in instructing their children. In 1519 he also published his *Kurze Form, das Paternoster zu verstehen und zu beten, fuer die jungen Kinder im Christenglauben*. In the introduction he explains this term as including "all who are so simple that they do not know what the words of the Lord's Prayer comprise or what they ask for, wherefore they speak the words coldly, carelessly, without due reverence." Still a man who could preach like Luther on that Second Sunday after

Epiphany certainly did not mean to exclude children from the number of those to whom this booklet was dedicated.

Nor did Luther change his view in later years. In his masterly dissertation on the order of worship, his *Deutsche Messe*, 1526, he, in connection with the teaching of the Catechism in public worship, devoted several paragraphs to the duty of parents to teach the Catechism at home. We quote from Holman's translation:—

"Let us to it in God's name. First, the German service needs an easily understood, plain, simple catechism. Catechism means instruction, in which heathen who want to be Christians are taught and directed in what they should believe, do, omit to do, and know in the Christian religion. For this reason beginners who were admitted to such instruction and studied the Creed before they were baptized were called *catechumeni*. This instruction, or direction, I know not how to put in a clearer or better way than has been done since the beginning of Christendom and retained to our own day, namely, in these three, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Our Father. These three contain, simply and briefly, about everything a Christian needs to know. This instruction must be given, as long as there is no special congregation, from the pulpit at stated times or daily, as may be needed, and repeated or read aloud evenings and mornings in the homes for the children and the servants if we want to train them as Christians. They should not merely learn to say the words by heart, as heretofore, but with each part they should be asked questions and give answer what each part means and how they understand it. If everything cannot be covered at once, one part should be taken up and the next day another. For if the parents and guardians of youth will not take the pains to do this themselves or secure others to do it, there will never be a catechism, unless it should come to pass that separate congregations were organized, as stated above.

"They should be questioned like this: What do you pray? Answer: The Our Father. What does it mean when you say, 'Our Father in heaven?' Answer: That God is not an earthly, but a heavenly Father, who would make us rich and blessed in heaven. What does this mean: 'Hallowed be Thy name?' Answer: That we should honor His name and keep it from being profaned. How is His name dishonored and profaned? Answer: When we who should be His children live evil lives and teach and believe what is wrong. And so on, what the kingdom of God means; how it comes; what God's will is; what daily bread means; etc.

"So in the Creed: What do you believe? Answer: 'I believe in God the Father,' to the end. Thereafter one part after the other as time permits, one part or two at once. For instance, What does it mean to believe in God the Father Almighty? Answer: It means to

trust in Him with all the heart and with assurance to expect all grace, favor, help, and comfort from Him in time and in eternity. What does it mean to believe in Jesus Christ, His Son? Answer: It means to believe in the heart that we should all be eternally lost if Christ had not died for us, etc.

"Likewise in the Ten Commandments. One must ask, What does the First Commandment mean, the Second, the Third, and the other commandments? These questions can be taken from our *Betbuechlein*, where the three chief parts are briefly explained, or one may follow his own method, until all Christian teaching is summed up for the heart in two portions, two pouches, as it were, which are faith and love. Faith's pouch may have two purses. Into the one we put this, that we believe that through the sin of Adam we are all corrupt, sinners, and under condemnation, Rom. 5, Ps. 51. Into the other purse we put this, that we are all saved through Jesus Christ from such corruption, sin, and condemnation, Rom. 5, John 3. Love's pouch may also have two purses. One shall contain this, that we should serve and do good to every one, even as Christ hath done for us, Rom. 13; the other shall have this, that we should suffer and endure all kinds of evil with joy.

"When a child begins to understand this, it should be encouraged to bring home Scripture-texts from the sermons and repeat them at meal-time for the parents, as was formerly the custom with the Latin lesson. Then those texts should be put into the pouches and purses just as the *Pfennige*, *Groschen*, or *Gulden* are put into the pockets. For instance, let faith's pouch be the golden pouch. Into the first purse this text shall go, Rom. 5: Through one man's sin all men are sinners and have passed under condemnation. Also this one, Ps. 51: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. These are two Rhenish *Gulden* for this purse. The Hungarian *Gulden* go into the other purse, as this text, Rom. 4: Christ was delivered up for our trespasses and was raised again for our justification. Again, John 1: Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth the sin of the world. These are two precious Hungarian *Gulden* for that purse.

"Let love's pouch be the silver pouch. Into the first purse shall go the texts concerning well-doing, such as Gal. 5: Through love be servants one to another; Matt. 25: What ye have done unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done unto Me. They would be two silver *Groschen* for that purse. Into the other purse shall go this text, Matt. 5: Blessed are ye when men shall persecute you for My sake; Heb. 12: Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. These are two *Schreckenberger* for that purse.

"Let none think himself too wise for this and despise such child's

play. Christ, in order to train men, must needs become a man Himself. If we wish to train children, we must become children with them. Would to God such child's play were widely practised! In a short time we would have a wealth of Christian people, who would be rich in Scripture and the knowledge of God, until they would of their own accord add more of such purses as *locos communes* and comprehend all Scripture in them. Otherwise things will remain as they have been, a daily going to church and a coming away again. For no one thinks that it makes any difference, except for the time it takes. No one expects to learn anything there. A man listens to preaching three or four years and does not learn enough to give answer concerning one article of the Creed; this I know from daily experience. Enough is written in the books, yes; but it has not been driven home to the hearts." (*Works of Martin Luther*, VI, 174 ff.)

When in January, 1529, Luther first published his Small Catechism, he had it printed in chart form, each chart, or table, bearing the superscription "As the head of the family should teach it in all simplicity to his household." While the first chart editions of January and March, 1529, are no longer extant, a copy written by Pastor Michael Stiefel of Lochau has been found in recent years, which contains the superscription over every chief part. This superscription is also found in Bugenhagen's Low-German translation, which was published before Luther's Catechism in book form was put on the market. While there are no more copies of the first edition of Luther's Catechism in book form, the three early reprints, two at Erfurt, one at Marburg, have the superscription over the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Lord's Supper, while in the First Chief Part it was crowded out by the new title, *Ein kleiner Catechismus oder christliche Zucht*. The book is dedicated to the pastors and preachers, who in the preface were admonished to urge the parents to train their children, "showing them their duty in this regard and the greatness of their sin if they neglect it." (*Triglotta*, p. 537, § 19.) To the end of his life Luther did not tire in his efforts to make the homes truly Christian homes, in which the children and all the members of the household were to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Neither did he tire in exhorting pastors and preachers to keep on urging their people to train their household in the fear and love of God.

In these efforts Luther was ably assisted by his coworkers. The *Kirchenordnung* for Hamburg, written by Bugenhagen and adopted in May, 1529, refers in its preface to the Low-German translation of the Catechism as to a "form in which a housefather and house-mother (who are bishops in their home) shall instruct the children and household in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Lord's Supper, and how they shall read the *Benedicite* and *Gratias* at table. If such Christian practise is displeasing

to any one, he has also forgotten what is right and equitable." (Reu. *Quellen*, I, III, 1, p. 574.)*

Melanchthon had published an *Enchiridion* as early as 1523, to be used in his *schola privata* and hence written in Latin. In the very same year a German edition was published by an unknown translator, who dedicated his translation to *the parents* and urged them to use it as a guide-book in the instruction of their children at home. This dedication deserves to be better known, and hence we shall offer it to our readers: —

"To all parents God's grace and peace. Amen. Dear brethren and sisters in Christ. You undoubtedly are aware to what an extent the common schools are partly deteriorating, partly even already closed, for no other reason than that by the grace of God in these gracious times of the Holy Gospel of God you have come to the understanding that the so-called spiritual order (*die vermaindt gaystligkayt*) is before God no greater, more meritorious, nor salutary order than that of the lowliest laborer or peasant, just as though no one should learn or know the Scriptures of God except the so-called priests, monks, and nuns. Therefore our beloved brother in the Lord Philip Melanchthon in Christian love has recently compiled the present book and had dedicated it to all your children. With the aid of God I have undertaken to translate this book into our German language, with the good intention that from it you, together with your children, may the better learn what to do or not to do. Hence this is my sincere and faithful request that you would faithfully consider and diligently teach to your children the said faithful, Christian, pious instruction of Melanchthon and accustom them as children to the doctrine and Scripture, especially in view of the fact that through the divine Holy Scripture we must seek and find Christ. For these are the swaddling-clothes into which Christ Jesus, our pious Lord and Savior, was wrapped by His dear mother, the Virgin Mary. This is the very temple of God in which Christ in His twelfth year was again found sitting in the midst of the doctors, Luke 2. This is the real true holy sepulcher, which through the Jews, that is, through false prophets and deceiving teachers, has for so many centuries been guarded, yea, suppressed by human laws, opinions, and so-called worship that Christ with His holy, gracious Gospel might never again rise for us poor human beings. Your children may nevertheless learn some trade or other Christian occupation in order to earn their living in an honest, good, and Christian manner. Else if only priests, monks, and nuns were to learn, know, and teach the Scriptures, they would tear the living Word of God out of our mouths and hearts just as surely as it has been done for several centuries. Therefore consider for God's sake that Christ so diligently urges and directs us to search Holy Scripture when he tells the Jews: John 5, 39. 40. Therefore

gladly receive as a New Year's wish this kind admonition in Christ Jesus and never forget the advice of our dear brother Melancthon, yea, of our Lord and Savior Christ, always keeping in mind the passage from the living, eternal Word of God found Prov. 8, 35.— Given on Saturday, the Day of Stephen, the first martyr, A. D. 1524* (1523 our style, since in the age of the Reformation the new year began on Christmas Day).

Bugenhagen, preaching to his congregation in Wittenberg, 1532, referred to the chief parts of the Catechism and continued: "To this state [to live according to these chief parts] you fathers and mothers must accustom your children and household, so that they may know and understand them, *lest our public preaching be useless*. For you are the bishops in your homes; that [duty] you cannot escape. For the training of the young in the discipline of the Lord is a great and arduous matter. If pious parents have properly educated one son or daughter, a pious progeny will be established, and from such progeny good will result to the whole world, both to the Church and to the State. So great a blessing can issue forth from so humble an origin, from the instruction of a pious father and mother."

Spangenberg, in his introduction to his catechism to be used at Nordhausen, writes as follows: "What is this Christian doctrine called? Are these parts necessary? Who shall put these questions? Every housefather shall accustom his children, when they arise in the morning, when they go to the table, when they go to sleep at night, to recite these parts one after another, in good orderly manner, and shall not give them food or drink unless they have recited them. In like manner masters and mistresses shall inquire at least once a week of their household, servants and maids, what they know or learn of these matters; and if they do not want to know or learn them, they should not keep them in their service." (Reu, I, 2, p. 224.)*

Moerlin's second edition of *Luther's Catechism Explained*, published 1562, gives practical hints to the parents, advising them first to teach their children "*den reinen Text*," the simple text, *i. e.*, the texts of the five chief parts without Luther's explanation; then the explanation; finally, after this has been done, they shall, "in the present or some other form further explain to their children the rich meaning according to God's Word"; also practise Catechism hymns with their children. (Reu, I, 3, 1, p. 891.)*

The *Order for Hessa*, adopted 1566, prescribed special sermons on the Catechism and a thorough instruction in the chief parts on Sunday and specified week-days, with the remark added that "by this method it could be ascertained whether the parents exercise the proper diligence and seriousness in instructing their children in the Catechism at home." (Reu, I, 2, p. 425.)*

Such quotations could easily be multiplied; but these will suffice

to show that during the age of the Reformation, pastors were alive to their duty of reminding parents of their solemn obligation to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord by training them at home and teaching them the Small Catechism.

Last year there issued from the pen of the well-known Marburg catechete Dr. Karl Bornhaeuser a booklet entitled *Der Ursinn des Kleinen Katechismus* (The Real Meaning of Luther's Small Catechism). Bornhaeuser shows that Luther's Catechism was originally intended chiefly for the Christian home. He dedicated his book to all evangelical housefathers and pleaded with them to make their homes truly Christian educational centers by teaching Luther's Catechism to their household. We quote: "The home, after the heart of Luther, is not a silent home, as so many Christian homes of our day are . . . and unfortunately even such homes whose members claim to be Christians and would resent the charge of belonging to the opponents of 'religion.' When are the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or the words of institution of Baptism and the Lord's Supper once heard in these homes? That may happen if one of the children goes to school and must learn them for the course in religion and mother must see to it that the child knows the lesson given it. Perhaps the mother will sigh because so much memory work is demanded by the school and by her attitude create unwillingness in the child. Where are morning and evening devotions or prayer at table regarded as a self-evident custom? And where are they conducted in the manner suggested by Luther? In the days when people followed Luther's advice, the Lord's Prayer was prayed, and prayed aloud, by individuals and by the whole family. That was done at least five times a day, so frequently that we Christians of to-day, sluggish as we are in prayer, would be tempted to say that that was almost too much of a good thing; perhaps we would even regard it as a 'Catholic' custom, approaching the abuse of the Lord's Prayer in the rosary. Twice a day the Creed was to be spoken. Is not in our day the Creed relegated to public worship and religious instruction, so that it is heard in the homes only on the occasion of private baptisms? And the Ten Commandments, when are they ever uttered in our homes except in connection with school-work? Even in public worship they are no longer heard. And especially Christ's words of institution of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Does one call them to mind, does one speak of them and about them prior to baptisms and partaking of the Lord's Supper? Is it surprising under such conditions that there are to-day many who are called Christians, who demand that they be called so, and who in spite of school and confirmation instruction soon do not even remember them [these chief parts of the Catechism] exactly, much less have the 'sense' of them? . . . But if they would hear the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Commandments daily or almost daily, the exact wording would soon be impressed upon

their minds, and impressed so surely and indelibly that they could never forget it, and that without the disagreeable task of memorizing." (Pp. 19. 20.)

Does this description not fit many a home in our own circles? What are we pastors doing to remedy this sad situation?

In a different connection Bornhaeuser says: "Untold havoc has been wrought by making the school, . . . as is done so often, the substitute for the home in religious instruction. In the task of aiding the coming generation to become Christians (and not merely 'religious'), there dare not and there cannot be a substitute for the home. . . . No one was more firmly convinced of the indispensable and unsurpassable importance of the home with its living associations for becoming and remaining a Christian than Luther, whom certainly no one can charge with underestimating the school. Even the preacher of the Gospel cannot take the place of the home and its influence nor render it superfluous." (P. 163 f.)

We close with Luther's plea, addressed to all pastors in the preface of his Small Catechism: "Especially should you here urge civil rulers and parents to govern well and educate children for service in schools, showing them their duty in this regard and the greatness of their sin if they neglect it; for by such neglect they overthrow and destroy both the kingdom of God and that of this world and show themselves to be the worst foes both of God and man. Dwell on the great harm they do if they will not help to educate children for the ministry, clerkships, and other offices, etc., and on the terrible punishment God will visit upon them for it. It is necessary to preach of these things; for parents and rulers sin unspeakably in them, and the devil has a horrible object in view."

T. LAETSCH.

Der Gottesdienst in der alten Kirche.

Wenn David Ps. 27, 4 von „den schönen Gottesdiensten des Herrn“ redet, bezieht er sich ohne Zweifel auf die öffentlichen Versammlungen, die nach Gottes Ordnung in der Stiftshütte abgehalten wurden, zunächst in Verbindung mit dem Morgen- und Abendopfer, dann aber besonders bei Gelegenheit der großen Feste, namentlich des Passahfestes, des Pfingstfestes, des Laubhüttenfestes und des großen Veröhnungstages. Alle diese Gottesdienste waren wesentlich Opfergottesdienste, nicht nur, weil in ihnen das Opfern verschiedener Tiere die Hauptsache bildete, sondern auch, weil die sakrifizielle Seite dieser Gottesdienste in Psalmen und Gebeten besonders stark hervortrat. Allerdings hatte der Gesangsvortrag gewisser Psalmen durch den Tempelchor auch eine sakramentale Seite, da durch diese inspirierten Gesänge eine Belehrung der Gemeinde erzielt wurde; aber diese Seite des Gottesdienstes trat in der Regel sehr gegen den Opferkultus zurück.