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Catechisms
by Mary Jane Haemig

Printed Catechisms have been durable and persistent media of religious transfer. The reformation era brought them to particular prominence. Luther's Small Catechism set a standard, in terms of content and appeal. Other prominent catechisms, including the Heidelberg Catechism, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and Canisius' catechism, sought to express their theological insights in language as simple, clear, compelling and memorable as Luther's. Catechisms have been one of the popular forms of religious literature in Europe. The most prominent were often translated and were sometimes supplemented or edited when moved to new contexts.

Introduction

Printed catechisms have been one of the most durable and popular media of religious transfer since at least the 16th century. "Catechism" has meant several things: a course of instruction in the Christian faith, the content of that instruction, and a written text that contains that content. "Catechism", as a course of instruction, could be carried out orally, without the aid of written materials. When referring to content, "catechism" is understood as a summary of the basic elements of the Christian faith. "Catechism" also may mean a written or printed text containing catechetical content. The most influential catechisms have presented the Christian faith in simple, clear, compelling, and memorable language. This article, though focused on printed catechisms, also will recognize other means of transmission of catechetical content.

▲ 1

Catechisms have fulfilled several functions within the Christian church. In early centuries instruction in the basics of the faith (catechesis) and knowledge of those basics were prerequisites for baptism. Later, catechisms were used to instruct those baptized as children and prepare them for confirmation and/or reception of the Lord's Supper. Knowledge of a catechism was often viewed as a necessary step toward full membership in a Christian community.

▲ 2

Early and Medieval Catechisms

Written catechisms have been available since at least the 4th century. Augustine's *Enchiridion ad Laurentium* (423) (➔ Media Link #ab) and *De catechizandis rudibus* (399–400) (➔ Media Link #ac) are evidences of early catechetical efforts. The Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer have been used since the early centuries to instruct adult converts. In the high and late middle ages, catechisms expanded in both content and use. They were considered an aid to the sacrament of confession and so came to include the Ten Commandments and other devices to help identify sins. Medieval catechisms also contained various other elements of medieval piety such as the Hail Mary. One prominent example of a late medieval catechism is Dietrich Kolde's (1435–1515) (➔ Media Link #ad) *A Fruitful Mirror or Small Handbook for Christians* (*Kerstenspiegel*) (➔ Media Link #ae), first printed in 1470.[1] Its 46 chapters summarize the medieval Christian's faith and life. Beginning with the Apostles' Creed, it continues with the Ten Commandments as well as other commandments and presents a number of ways of cataloging sins, for example, seven deadly sins, nine alien sins, openly discussed sins and mute sins and six sins against the Holy Spirit. Sections on repentence, confession, and satisfaction are followed by instructions on "How to hear mass with fervor" and "How to pray with fervor and devotion" and a variety of prayers including the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Later chapters focus on life and death: how to conduct oneself at meals and when going to bed, seven works of mercy, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, how one should die, and finally "Concerning the Five Signs By Which One Can tell a Good Christian". The arrangement of Kolde's catechism reflected medieval theology. Beginning with faith (understood as knowledge of the Apostles' Creed) the catechism implicitly led its users through how one could form that faith through avoiding sin and doing good works. The reward for this faith formed by love would be salvation. As Kolde stated at the end, "Any person who follows this humble instruction and lives by it will become holy and will be saved, no matter what his station in life is."[2]

▲3

Luther's Catechisms: Development and Content

Martin Luther (1483–1546) (➔ Media Link #af) began preaching on parts of the catechism early in his career as a reformer (➔ Media Link #ag). His sermons on the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Penance, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper all were published before 1520. Some have seen his *Little Prayer Book* (*Eyn bett buchlin,* 1522) (➔ Media Link #ah) as an early catechism. In its foreword Luther made clear that the "total content of Scripture and preaching and everything a Christian needs to know is quite fully and adequately comprehended in [the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and Lord's Prayer]".[3]

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Throughout the 1520s Luther hoped that someone else would supply the evangelical movement with a catechism. In his introduction to his *German Mass* (*Deutsche Messe,* 1526) (➔ Media Link #ai) Luther noted the need for a good catechism. A number of his followers attempted to write such a catechism during the 1520s; none achieved wide resonance and lasting effect.[4] Luther was finally prompted to write his catechisms by a series of events in the mid to late 1520s. His participation in the visitations of parishes around Wittenberg in rural Saxony in 1527 and 1528 convinced him that both laypeople and pastors were ignorant of even the most basic claims of the Christian faith. A dispute among Wittenberg theologians posed a question which would recur among Luther's followers: what role (if any) does the law have for the Christian now that the gospel had been re-discovered? Finally, Luther had to preach on the catechism three times in 1528. In Wittenberg the custom was to preach through the catechism at four times during the year. In 1528, Johannes Bugenhagen (1485–1558) (➔ Media Link #aj), who usually did such preaching, was away and the task fell to Luther. He used materials from these sermons in both his *Small Catechism* (*Eyn kleiner Catechismus*) (➔ Media Link #ak) and his *Large Catechism* (*Deütsch Catechismus*) (➔ Media Link #al), which were published in early 1529. The *Small Catechism* was intended to provide basic instruction in the Christian faith. The *Large Catechism* was for all Christians, and particularly for clergy, who wished to explore such topics further.

▲5

Luther used common elements from the catechetical tradition of the Western Church but arranged and explained them in new and innovative ways. He also used a simple question and answer format. His catechisms had five chief parts – the "Ten Commandments", the "Apostles' Creed", the "Lord's Prayer", "Baptism", and the "Lord's Supper" – arranged in the same way in each catechism. Barely a year after initial publication, he inserted a section on "Confession" between "Baptism" and the "Lord's Supper". His ordering of the chief parts differed from that of most medieval catechisms. The Ten Commandments reflected God's law and were God's demand for all people. Thus, they came first, rather than being regarded merely as guidance for Christians who needed to do good works to form their faith and help them gain salvation. Luther made clear that the commandments mandated what must be done as well as what must be avoided. For him, they diagnosed the human illness, exposing human sin. Luther explained the "Apostles' Creed" in three parts, rather than the twelve parts used in the medieval pattern. He thought that God's work as expressed in the creed should be discussed in terms of three basic moves – creation, redemption, and sanctification. In each, the Christian confessed what God had done for him, not merely what God had done generally. Thus, the creedal explanations became a personal declaration of faith, rather than a general statement of facts about God. Luther placed the "Lord's Prayer" next, after the "Creed", seeing it as a response to what God has done for man. Rather than being a good work, prayer was conversation in relationship with God. The Christian prayed for faith and the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments. Luther had no section titled "sacraments" in his catechisms but rather sections on "Baptism" and the "Lord's Supper." The section on "Confession", added later, greatly simplified it and emphasized the word of absolution rather than the work of confession. Luther also included morning, evening and table prayers, and a "Table of Duties" ("Haustafel") in the *Small Catechism*. Many editions of the *Small Catechism* also included his *Marriage booklet* (*Traubüchlein*) and his *Baptismal Booklet* (*Taufbüchlein*).

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Luther's Catechisms: Spread and Success

Luther's *Small Catechism* was a great publishing success. After declining in popularity after Luther's death in 1546, the *Small Catechism* again became important for Lutheran practice in the 1570s and was included, along with the *Large Catechism,* in the *Book of Concord* (*Concordia*, 1580) (➔ Media Link #am),[5] the collection of confessional writings that came to define what it is to be Lutheran. Luther's *Small Catechism* spread in its German editions throughout Europe. Many church and school orders mandated its use. Translations into Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were used for school instruction. Translations into other European languages accompanied or spurred on the spread of Luther's reform in Scandinavia (➔ Media Link #an) and Eastern Europe (➔ Media Link #ao).[6] As it was reprinted and translated for different contexts, Luther's *Small Catechism* was often supplemented and expanded, most often with Bible verses and additional questions and explanations.[7]

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The success of Luther's catechisms did not discourage other followers of Luther from writing their own catechisms. Dozens were produced in the 16th century and, although most survive only in libraries, they are evidence that catechesis was considered important and that the search for appropriate materials continued.[8] One of the most reprinted catechisms (➔ Media Link #ap), popular in Southern Germany, was that by Luther's follower Johannes Brenz (1499–1570) (➔ Media Link #aq).[9] Catechetical sermons (not always oriented to Luther's *Small Catechism*) were popular and frequently printed in 16th-century Germany.[10] One of the most-reprinted sets of catechetical sermons (➔ Media Link #ar), which used Luther's catechetical explanations, was that by Andreas Osiander (1498–1552) (➔ Media Link #as).[11]

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Luther's *Small Catechism* appeared as a poster and as a pamphlet or small booklet. It was included in many works such as hymnals, prayerbooks, and even Bibles. Lutherans sang catechetical hymns and learned catechetical rhymes. Pictures of Bible stories were used to illustrate parts of the catechism and to aid instruction. Luther and his followers used a variety of forms to further catechetical instruction. Not only did they write catechisms, they also wrote catechetical hymns, catechetical sermons (➔ Media Link #at), and even prayers focused around parts of the catechism.[12] These were intended for a variety of settings: worship services, schools, homes, and even the pastor's study. Diverse means of transmission were meant to heighten the likelihood that the content would be learned. In

Luther's time, a significant number of those learning the catechism were illiterate. Therefore, instruction was oral and used frequent repetition to impress the text on the learner. Memorization was required, with the expectation that it would produce a deep, active engagement with the Christian faith rather than a superficial, parrot-like recitation of catechetical content.

▲ 9

Luther and his fellow reformers believed that both laity and clergy should study and learn their catechisms for several reasons. They saw the catechism as a summary of scripture or introduction to scripture. In Luther's first series of catechetical sermons (1528) he said that in the first three parts of catechism all scripture is contained.[13] By focusing on the central salvific message, the catechism gives listeners an introduction and guide to reading scripture. Luther also emphasized that after people have learned catechism they should be led further into scripture.[14] Luther thought that the catechism was the identifying mark of the Christian. Those who do not know it should not be counted among Christians.[15] This involved a deeper sense of identity than merely intellectual knowledge. Luther compared the Christian who does not know his catechism to the artisan who does not know his craft.[16] Just as a craftsman's knowledge defines his existence, so too does knowledge of the catechism define the life of the Christian. The catechism was a guide for life. The whole catechism (not simply the Commandments) was seen as shaping the Christian life. Luther and his fellow reformers also saw the catechism as a weapon in the ongoing fight against sin, the devil, and heretics. In a "Preface" to the *Large Catechism,* Luther commented:

▲ 10

Nothing is so powerfully effective against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy one's self with God's Word, to speak about it and meditate upon it…For this reason alone you should gladly read, recite, ponder, and practice the catechism, even if the only advantage and benefit you obtain from it is to drive away the devil and evil thoughts. For he cannot bear to hear God's Word.[17]

The Catechism was a useful summary of doctrine and a measure for judging other teaching. Knowing the catechism empowered the laity to distinguish between true and false teaching, to judge what was being preached and taught to them. It thus theoretically enabled laity to perform the task of ecclesiastical oversight, a task traditionally assigned to a hierarchical church structure.[18]

▲ 11

Other Catechisms in the Reformation Era

Luther's catechism and the Lutheran emphasis on catechesis had profound resonances in Europe. His catechism influenced both form and content of subsequent catechisms. While his use of the question and answer format was not revolutionary or unique, his use of it did set the pattern for subsequent catechisms. Further, Lutheran emphasis on systematic instruction of laity in the faith helped produce a similar emphasis in other confessions. Other confessions also took up the diverse forms of catechetical instruction – sermons, oral teaching, books, songs and hymns, rhymes, and theater – used by the Lutheran reformers. Various Christian confessions came to see catechetical knowledge as a way to defend their adherents from the inroads of other confessions. Some churches made catechisms a formal part of their confessional writings, definitive of how they understand their Christian faith.

▲ 12

Reformed Catechisms

The Reformed tradition (➔ Media Link #au) recognized early the importance of catechisms. In 1537 John Calvin (1509–1564) (➔ Media Link #av) wrote his children's catechism, *Catechism or Institution of the Christian Religion.*[19] As a summary of his theology, it proved too long for use with children. Calvin's *Geneva Catechism* (1541) offered the reformer's theology in 374 questions and answers.[20] Its sequence of topics was different from Luther's: faith (including

the Apostles' creed), law (including the Ten Commandments), prayer (including the Lord's Prayer), and Word and Sacraments. Arranged as a dialog between master and scholar (pupil), the questions were sometimes leading and the answers sometimes lengthy. Its first question, "What is the chief end of human life?" and answer "To know God by whom men were created" echoed the opening section of Calvin's *Institutes* and presaged the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.[21]

The Heidelberg Catechism (*Catechismus oder christlicher Underricht*, 1563) (➜ Media Link #aw)[22] is one of the most important reformed catechisms.[23] The author Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583) (➜ Media Link #ax), with some help from Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587) (➜ Media Link #ay), attempted to produce a catechism that could be used by Zwinglians, Calvinists, Melanchthonians, and Lutherans (➜ Media Link #az) in the Palatinate. The catechism was first published in 1563 and became important in both German and Dutch reformed churches. It was divided into three parts. The first part, "Of Man's Misery" ("Von des Menschen Elend"), discussed the human fall into sin; it is comprised of eleven questions and answers. The second part, questions 12 – 85, "Of Human Redemption" ("Von des Menschen Erlösung"), contained explanations of the faith, the Apostles' Creed, and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The third part, "Of Thankfulness" ("Von der Dankbarkeit"), discussed good works in terms of the Ten Commandments (questions 86 – 115). The Heidelberg Catechism's first question and answer became known even beyond Reformed circles: "What is thy only comfort in life and in death?" ("Was ist dein einziger Trost im Leben und im Sterben?") "That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ" ("Dass ich mit Leib und Seele, beides im Leben und im Sterben, nicht mein, sondern meines getreuen Heilandes Jesu Christi eigen bin"). Revised by the Synod of Dort (1619) (➜ Media Link #b0), the Heidelberg Catechism became the standard for Reformed Churches in Central Europe.

English Catechisms

Over 1043 new catechisms or catechetical works were published in England between 1530 and 1740.[24] Some continental catechisms were translated into English and some English catechisms emulated continental models. Though influenced by continental catechisms, including their question and answer format, England came to have its own distinctive catechetical tradition.[25] Of lasting significance was the catechism of the Church of England included in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549). Originally, it consisted of only a few pages and contained the baptismal covenant, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. In 1604 baptism and the Lord's Supper were added. Another important early English catechism (1570) was that of Alexander Nowell (ca. 1507–1602) (➜ Media Link #b1). Longer than the Prayer Book Catechism (176 quarto pages in its original form) and embodying a moderate Calvinism, it was designed for more advanced catechumens.[26] Both of these catechisms were reprinted frequently. In a second phase of English catechetical development, from the 1570s to the 1640s, a surge of new catechisms appeared. These supplemented the official catechisms and provided alternatives for those who found the Prayer Book Catechism too short and Nowell's too long. Many of these were designed for older catechumens.[27] A third phase, from the 1640s to 1740, produced a number of catechisms, including some Baptist and Quaker Catechisms. The most significant development, particularly for Reformed Christians in the English-speaking world, was the adoption of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* by the Westminster assembly in 1648. Endorsed by the Scottish Presbyterian General Assembly, this catechism came to define the Presbyterian tradition and was also used extensively by other English Christians. It was very influential in North America. As a shortened version of the *Westminster Larger Catechism,* it contained 107 questions. After a description of creation and redemption, it covered the Ten Commandments, sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), and the Lord's Prayer. Neither the *Shorter* nor the *Larger Catechism* included the Apostles' Creed, instead it appears as an appendix. Particularly after the Restoration mandated again the use of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Prayer Book Catechism* was reprinted numerous times. Other catechisms appeared, some seeking to supplement and expand the *Prayer Book Catechism* and others seeking to make the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* shorter and more easily learnable. As the use of Nowell's catechism was dropped, the *Prayer Book Catechism* was seen as the major or sole alternative to the hardline Calvinism of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.[28] English

catechisms between 1530 and 1740 avoided contentious issues and exhibited continuity with tradition and convergence between different types of Protestantism.[29] In the mid-18th century John Wesley recognized the need for catechesis in the burgeoning Methodist movement and commended his *Instructions for Children* for this purpose.[30]

Roman Catholic Catechisms

Roman Catholics also produced catechisms during the reformation era. Their production and use was at least partially in response to the popularity of evangelical catechisms. Surveys of Roman Catholic priests revealed that evangelical catechisms were present in their libraries. Roman Catholic authorities complained of the influence of evangelical literature in Roman Catholic areas. A catechism by Erasmus (1469–1536) (➜ Media Link #b2) had little lasting impact; Georg Witzel (1501–1573) (➜ Media Link #b3) and Michael Helding (1506–1561) (➜ Media Link #b4) also wrote catechisms. Other Roman Catholic catechisms were more influential. Peter Canisius (1521–1597) (➜ Media Link #b5), a Dutch Jesuit who spent most of his career working in Bavaria, produced three catechisms.[31] *Catechismus minimus* (1556) was written for children. Originally it was only about 20 pages. *Parvus Catechismus catholicorum* (1559) (➜ Media Link #b6) was written for adolescents and was the most popular of the three. *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* (*Compendium of Christian Doctrine,* 1555) (➜ Media Link #b7) was intended for priests, teachers, and advanced students.[32] It also used marginal references to the Bible, the church fathers, and councils.

Each of Canisius' catechisms used the same arrangement of topics. The learner could move from small to medium to large, each time adding content and understanding. Each catechism had two major parts, "Wisdom" and "Justice". In part one, "Wisdom", three subparts contained the content of the Christian faith: "Faith" ("Apostles' Creed"), "Hope" ("Lord's Prayer", "Hail Mary"), and "Love" ("Ten Commandments", "Precepts of the Church"). The seven Catholic sacraments were the link between parts one and two. Part two, "Christian Justice" or "Righteousness", discussed vices and virtues using a number of medieval elements such as the capital sins and the cardinal virtues. The second part concluded with the "Four Last Things": death, judgment, heaven, and hell. This arrangement of topics followed a traditional Roman Catholic approach. Faith is seen as knowledge of facts (Creed, Prayer, Commandments). Faith is not enough but must be supplemented or formed by hope and love. Love includes the works of justice, works enabled by the grace of the sacraments. Canisius' heavy stress on good works in the second part was intended to oppose explicitly Luther's doctrine of justification by faith. He also devoted considerable attention to the five sacraments rejected by Protestants.

Though containing a different set of topics and organized differently from Luther's, Canisius' catechisms recognized the efficacy of the catechetical form and the threat the evangelical catechisms posed in Catholic areas. Canisius' catechisms taught the basics of Roman Catholic doctrine in cogent ways and sought to counter Luther's catechisms. Sensitive to Canisius' German context, early editions said little about the primacy of the Pope. This desire to downplay the role of the Pope changed after the Council of Trent and later editions treated the primacy of the pope more fully. Canisius wanted to withdraw his catechism after the Council of Trent issued a catechism; he ultimately did not and his catechism remained in use in Germany and elsewhere for centuries.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566), known as the *Roman Catechism,* was intended primarily for clergy and appears to have been little used by laity. Another influential Roman Catholic catechism was that of Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) (➜ Media Link #b8) *Dottrina christiana breve da imparsi a mente (A Brief Christian Doctrine to Be Learned by Heart*, 1597).[33]

Anabaptist Catechisms

Anabaptists also used and produced catechisms. The first Anabaptist catechism may have been a 1526 catechism by Balthasar Hubmaier (1485–1528) (➜ Media Link #ba).[34] Many of its topics are traditional: sin, law, repentance, prayer, gospel, faith, fruits of the Spirit, the Apostles' Creed, baptism, the church, the ban, the Lord's Supper, Sabbath, Mary and the Saints, the hearing of the word, the call to faith, and good and evil works. It also emphasized distinctive Anabaptist teachings on believers' baptism. A widely used Mennonite catechism from the 18th century onward was the Elbing catechism, published in 1778, and used in Prussia, Russia, and North America among both Mennonites and Amish.[35]

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Scholarly Debates concerning Catechetical Efforts

Over the last 35 years scholars have debated the efficacy of catechetical efforts during the reformation. Gerald Strauss (1922–2006) (➜ Media Link #bb) claimed that German Lutheran catechetical efforts in the reformation era, though extensive and well organized, were basically failures.[36] According to him, both lay knowledge of the faith and conduct of life fell short of those intended by catechisms. Others have argued that, in fact, laypeople did learn their catechism and were able to explain and defend their faith.[37] Much depends on how one measures "success" – whether in terms of knowledge of Christian doctrine, growth in faith, or improvement of life. While most agree that catechisms did not generally improve moral behavior, they continue to disagree on whether catechisms in fact produced a knowledgeable and faithful laity.[38]

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Development and Use of Catechisms after the Reformation

Upon the publication of the *Book of Concord* (1580) and its adoption in various territories, Luther's catechisms were recognized as formal doctrinal standards for Lutheran churches. During the period known as Lutheran Orthodoxy, the Small Catechism "was a central feature of the daily life in churches and homes as well as an important element in worship" and was used in both Latin and German Schools.[39] Lutherans produced many expanded catechisms, some featuring more detailed discussion of doctrinal topics and some adding topics not treated by Luther.[40] Sometimes Luther's catechism was modified in response to Reformed and Roman Catholic alternatives. Heinrich Heshusius (1556–1597) (➜ Media Link #bc), for example, produced a Psalms catechism (1593). While using the five major sections of Luther's catechism, Heshusius added another column to each page and filled it with passages from the Psalms and the New Testament. Heshusius' insertion of psalms into the Lutheran catechism reflected not only his esteem for the psalms but was also a response to Reformed use of the psalter in worship and instruction.[41]

▲22

Pietists found catechisms important in their efforts to produce a warm lay-oriented Christianity. Philip Jakob Spener (1635–1705) (➜ Media Link #bd) published his *Einfältige Erklärung der christlichen Lehre nach der Ordnung des kleinen Catechismi des theuren Manns Gottes Lutheri (Simple Explanation of the Christian Faith according to the order of the Small Catechism of the Worthy Man of God Luther)* (➜ Media Link #be) in 1677. His catechism had several advantages, including its use of Bible passages and its attention to practical Christian living. However, with 1283 questions and answers it was hardly a simplification of Luther. It was nevertheless reprinted over 20 times. In an effort to aid its use, Spener produced *Catechetical Tables (Tabulæ catech.,* 1683) which divided the material into 95 parts.[42] Erik Pontoppidan (1698–1764) (➜ Media Link #bf), Danish scholar and pietist leader, modeled his catechism on Spener's. *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed (Truth unto Godliness)* was first published in Copenhagen in 1737. Popular in Denmark and Norway, it came to North America with Norwegian immigrants in the mid-19th century. Its 759 questions followed the outline of Luther's *Small Catechism* but did not include the "Table of Duties*".* Pietistic laity continued to favor Pontoppidan's catechism, even when rationalistic catechisms were produced and mandated. In Norway, lay preacher Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824) (➜ Media Link #bg) promoted its use*.*

▲23

The European enlightenment produced catechisms reflecting its theological directions. These works had little lasting impact as Western Christian groups tended to return to their catechisms from the 16th and 17th centuries. The 19th and 20th centuries did not see the emergence of major new influential catechisms in Western Christianity. Older catechisms, such as Luther's *Small Catechism,* continued to be used, often in edited and expanded forms.

▲ 24

Spread of Catechisms beyond Europe

In the era of European missions, beginning in the 16th century, Europeans took their forms of Christianity to North America, Latin America, Africa, Australia, and many parts of Asia and Oceania. Catechization was a key part of this enterprise. Sometimes European catechisms were translated into indigenous languages.

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From 1642 to 1646 the Swedish pastor Johann Campanius (1601–1683) (➔ Media Link #bh) worked in "New Sweden", the Swedish colony in the Delaware River Valley of North America.[43] By translating Luther's *Small Catechism* into the Algonquian language of the Delaware tribe, he made the first European attempt to put a Native American language into writing. Campanius used this catechism in his mission, but it was not printed until 1696 in Stockholm. Sometimes European missionaries composed new catechisms to meet the challenges of new contexts. Not only catechetical texts but also pictorial catechisms were used in catechizing the illiterate.[44]

▲ 26

Conclusion

The most successful Christian catechisms sought to convey the basics of the faith in a simple and easily understandable fashion. Generally they avoided the bitter polemics and overt attacks on other religious groups found in some other types of religious literature. Catechisms have shaped the lives and memories of individuals and cultures and have had impacts beyond the religious realm. Catechetical structures and phrases and, in particular, the first lines of catechisms, have become cultural legacies and occur in literary and artistic works. Catechisms persist because they respond to several basic needs. They fill the needs of various Christian groups to have a short summary of their beliefs, suitable for use in the instruction of newcomers to the faith, whether young or old. Catechisms also respond to the human desire to understand and participate. By offering laypeople an introduction to an understanding of their Christian faith, they encourage thoughtful participation in that faith.

▲ 27

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Appendix

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2. ^ Janz, Three Reformation Catechisms 1982, p. 128.
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13. ^ Luther, Werke 1883 (WA) 30/1, p. 2.
14. ^ ibidem, p. 27.
15. ^ ibidem, p. 2.
16. ^ Kolb, Book of Concord 2000, p. 383. "It contains what every Christian should know. Anyone who does not know it should not be numbered among Christians nor admitted to any sacrament, just as artisans who do not know the rules and practices of their craft are rejected and considered incompetent." (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenausschuss, Bekenntnisschriften (BSLK) 2010, pp. 553–554.)
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25. ^ ibidem, pp. 61–62; Jacobs, The Lutheran Movement 1890, pp. 314–332, devotes Chapter 25 "The Anglican Catechisms" to discussing the dependence of early Anglican catechisms on Lutheran sources including Luther, Brenz, and Osiander.
26. ^ McDonald, Christian Catechetical Texts 2011, pp. 423–530, vol. 1.
27. ^ Green, Christian's ABC 1996, provides a fine summary of the development of English catechisms in chapter 2 "The Emergence of the English Catechetical Tradition", pp. 45–92.
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30. ^ McDonald, What shall we do 2008, pp. 177–182.
31. ^ Brodrick, Canisius 1998, pp. 221–252
32. ^ McDonald, Christian Catechetical Texts 2011, pp. 167–310, vol. 1.
33. ^ ibidem, pp. 531–553, vol. 1.
34. ^ Janz, Three Reformation Catechisms 1982, pp. 131–177.
35. ^ Koop, Catechisms 2003, p. 32.
36. ^ Strauss, Luther's House 1978.
37. ^ See for example, Kittelson, Successes and Failure 1982.
38. ^ Green discusses the question of the theory and practice of catechizing in chapters 3, 4 and 5. In his conclusion he specifically speaks to Strauss' conclusions, contrasts his own findings, and calls for further research on catechizing in England: "If the conclusion of this comparison is that catechizing may have had a marginally and cumulatively more positive impact on the population at large in early modern England than in sixteenth-century Germany, not only in getting a large number of young people to the point of being able to repeat a catechism in rote fashion, but also in getting a sizeable minority to progress beyond that point to both greater understanding and greater knowledge, this is not to argue that catechizing was performed as often or as effectively as English idealists wanted. The preliminary conclusions reached in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 above were cautious, and what is needed now is further work to determine whether those conclusions were too optimistic or not optimistic enough." (Green, The Christian's ABC 1996, p. 562)
39. ^ Bode, Instruction 2008, p. 181.

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41. ^ Halvorson, Heinrich Heshusius 2010, chapter 3.
42. ^ Brecht, Spener 1993, pp. 289–290.
43. ^ Skarsten, Johan Campanius 1988; Collijn, The Swedish-Indian Catechism 1988.
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
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
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