
Learning Christ: some thoughts on the recovery of evangelistic catechesis

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One of the more encouraging developments in recent years has been the recovery of the ancient practise of evangelistic catechising. Although not known as such, inquirers courses such as the *Alpha*, *Christianity Explained*, *Christianity Explored*, *Coming Alive* and others are in effect contemporary forms of the evangelistic catechising that earlier generations of Christians used with great effect. The purpose of this article is to explore biblically, historically and practically the significance of this development and to suggest ways in which the practise of catechesis in the past can inform our practise of catechesis in the future for the advance of Christ's kingdom.

What is catechesis in general and evangelistic catechesis in particular? Catechesis is simply instruction in the essentials of the Christian faith. The word is derived from the Greek word *katecheo*, to instruct, and embraces the whole range of Christian instruction, both of believers and non-believers. Conceptually catechesis overlaps with the ideas of preaching and teaching which can be catechetical, but is distinguished by its more structured and systematic nature. The word 'catechesis' is more commonly used in Roman Catholic circles, but the related word 'catechism' is more familiar among Protestants and means a manual, usually brief, of basic Christian instruction.

But what is *evangelistic* catechesis? Historically three forms of catechising can be distinguished. First, there is family or household catechising. This is the form that is most familiar to Protestants even if it is little practised today. In this form children and households were instructed in the essentials of the faith. Second, there is congregational or pastoral catechising. In this forms individual members or whole congregations are instructed in the faith. Perhaps the most famous catechism in the English-speaking world for achieving these first two forms of catechesis is the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism. Catechisms such as the Larger Catechism were designed to help ministers and catechists do this. The third form of catechesis is evangelistic catechising. In this form non-Christians or new Christians are instructed in the basics of the Christian faith. Such catechesis is related to but different from the public preaching and teaching of God's word and it is my argument that, while never totally neglected, this form of catechising is being revived with potentially great effect.

Some Biblical reflections on evangelistic catechesis

It is evident in the New Testament that evangelistic catechesis was practised by the early church. The verb *katecheo* is used eight times, four by Luke and four by Paul. In Luke 1:4 Luke informs Theophilus that he is writing that he 'may know the certainty of the things you have been *taught* (*katechetes*). While Theophilus could have been taught as a Christian, it seems more likely that he was taught the faith so that he might become a Christian. In Acts 18:25 we read of how Apollos had been '*instructed* (*katechemenos*) in the way of the Lord' albeit inadequately. Priscilla and Aquila sought to rectify this situation by teaching him more adequately. In Luke 21:21,24 the verb is

used in the sense of to report or inform. The word is used four times by Paul. In Rom.2:8 it is used in relation to instruction in the law, but in the other texts (once in 1 Cor.14:19 and twice in Gal.6:6) the meaning is instruction in the Christian faith. While we must be careful not to read back into the NT use of the word later understandings of catechesis, nevertheless the basic idea of instruction in the faith is there. It is significant that as early a document as Second Clement uses the word in the sense of instruction given to inquirers and candidates for baptism. K. Wegenast sums up the NT use of *katecheo* by saying that it 'supplied the early Christians with a specific word for an essential aspect both of their evangelistic work and of their church life: teaching the saving acts of God'.¹

However evidence for evangelistic catechising is not restricted to the usage of the word *katecheo*. The practise of Paul also reveals that he not only publicly proclaimed the gospel, but that he also spent time instructing both inquiring non-Christians and new converts. A number of words are used for Paul's communication of the gospel and he used a number of methods, but in all of them he instructed people in the essentials of the faith. When he spent longer periods in cities such as Corinth or Ephesus he taught the word of God (Acts 18:11; 19:9–10). That this instruction was a standardised pattern is evidenced in expressions in his letters such as 'the form of teaching' (Rom. 6:17) or 'the pattern of sound teaching' (2 Tim. 1:13). The 'faithful sayings' of the pastoral letters indicate a form of memorable teaching as do some of the hymnic passages such as Phil. 2:4–11. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul reminds his readers that they 'did not learn Christ that way' (4:20), which seems to indicate that what he wrote in that letter, and others like it, was the substance of what he had taught them before and after their conversions.

All this seems to indicate that evangelism in the NT was not only a matter of public preaching, but also a matter of systematic instruction in the Christian faith. Especially when dealing with pagans or new Christians from pagan backgrounds, Paul saw the need to instruct them since, unlike Jews, they would have been ignorant of biblical revelation.

What early church history can teach us about evangelistic catechesis

When we turn to the church history we see that during periods of significant advance the church practised evangelistic catechising. I will illustrate this from three key periods in church history.

The *early church* has much to teach us about evangelistic catechesis. It is well known that during the first three centuries of the Christian era Christianity grew rapidly. Rodney Stark estimates that that from a few thousand around 40 AD the number of Christians in the Roman Empire grew to about 34 million or 56.5% of the population by 350 AD.² What accounts for this rapid growth? There were many factors that could be mentioned, but one of them was the missionary nature of the early churches. As Stark puts:

Christianity did not grow because of miracle working in the market places (although there may have been much of that going on), or because Constantine said it should, or even because the martyrs gave it such credibility. It grew because Christians constituted an intense community, able to generate 'the invincible obstinency' that so offended the

younger Pliny, but yielded immense religious rewards. And the primary means of its growth was the united and motivated efforts of the growing number of Christian believers, who invited their friends, relations and neighbours to share the 'good news'.³

Alan Krieder agrees. In an intriguing booklet entitled *Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom* Krieder makes the point that the early church grew not only as the result of public proclamation, which in any case was often restricted, but also because of their quality of life which itself was shaped by their corporate worship. Pagans were attracted to these communities and when they were they both heard the preaching in the worship and were catechised. Initially this was an informal process with Christians instructing their inquiring friends, but later it became a more formal process. By the second century there were four stages of initiation into the Christian faith. The first was the inquiry stage which was relatively short and involved teaching the essentials of the faith and weeding out the serious inquirers from those who were merely curious or had baser motives. The second stage was what became known as the catechumenate when the candidates underwent a long period of instruction that could last from between three to six years. During this period catechumens could attend the church services but had to withdraw before the Lord's Supper. The third stage was the forty-day period before Easter when candidates prepared for baptism. The fourth stage was the period of instruction after baptism. It was quite an arduous process and yet seemingly millions went through it before the advent of Christendom in the late third century. Through it all the candidates were learning what it meant to be followers of Christ, both in terms of belief and behaviour. This process was intended 'to reform pagan people, to resocialize them, to deconstruct their old world, and reconstruct a new one, so that they would emerge as Christian people who would be at home in communities of freedom'. Early catechesis sought to replace the 'mythico-historical mix' of paganism 'by an alternative narrative, by the history of salvation as recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures which culminated in the person and work of Jesus Christ and which continued in the life of the transnational church and the sufferings of the martyrs....The pagans undergoing catechism needed to be rehabilitated so that they would react to situations of tension and difficulty in a distinctive way, not like pagans, but like members of a Christian community, and ideally like Jesus.'⁴

Understood that way, early church catechesis embraced something far wider than what I mean by the expression evangelistic catechesis. It embraced the whole process of making of disciples, but within this process was the initial contact, explanation and response that is involved in evangelism in the strict sense of the word. Nevertheless the close connection of evangelism and the later stages of discipleship, or better the placing of evangelism within the context of discipleship, is an important one to note and one to which we will return.

When we turn to the literature of this period we can see the important place evangelistic catechesis had in the mission of the early church. The very early *Didache of the Twelve* seems to contain instruction given to pagan inquirers. It is in the pattern of the 'two ways', the way of life and the way of death (an early version of *Two Ways to Live?*), which would become a common pattern in later catechetical writings. In his *First Apology* Justin Martyr assumes that those who were baptised had been catechised. Justin was something an evangelist to intellectuals and conducted a catechetical school

in Rome, which was open to inquiring pagans and intended to counter the influence of pagan and gnostic academies. Origen began his teaching career in one such school in Alexandria where he excelled at 'drawing the net' around the pagan inquirers who came to him. Irenaeus's *The Proof of Apostolic Teaching* was written to help catechists do their work. He recommended that they teach the history of redemption with an emphasis on the facts of the gospel. By the time Hippolytus wrote *The Apostolical Tradition* the four stage pattern of initiation had been established. It was the first stage of this process, the pre-baptism catechumenate, that, in the words of Glenn Hinson, 'served as a locus of direct evangelism'⁵

This lengthy catechetical process had begun to shorten by the late fourth century. In part this was due to the recognition of Christianity by the emperor Constantine and the influx of vast numbers of people into the church which the old process of initiation simply could not accommodate. Inevitably this led to a high degree of nominalism and a decline in spiritual life and vitality. Nevertheless catechesis was still widely practised. Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa and Theodore of Mopsuestia, among others, delivered still extant catechetical lectures. For the most part these were of a doctrinal nature and were often based on the Nicene Creed.⁶ By this time infant baptism was becoming more commonplace with the result that, for obvious reasons, basic instruction in the faith took place after baptism rather than before. Catechesis in the Christendom context after Constantine gradually lost its evangelistic impetus and eventually declined until revived at the Reformation.

Augustine of Hippo: a great evangelistic catechist

Early Christian catechesis reached its apogee with Augustine, bishop of Hippo. Augustine was very concerned that his congregation was thoroughly instructed in the faith. To this end not only did he preach, but he also took pains to instruct inquirers and new Christians. Two works stand out. The best known is *The Enchiridion ad Laurentium* (423) that was written as a handbook of catechetical instruction. But it is his *De Catechizandis rudibus* (399) or *The First Catechetical Instruction* that gives us the most insight into early church practise. Augustine wrote the book in response to a request from a friend for some help in teaching Christianity to inquirers. Deogratius was a deacon in Carthage who had been given the job of instructing inquirers, but he needed help, as he explained to Augustine, in order to know what to teach and how to do so more effectively. He found himself talking too long, having little enthusiasm and feeling that he was wearying his hearers. In response Augustine deals first with how Deogratius should catechise. With pastoral sensitivity to a discouraged fellow worker Augustine tells Deogratius not to be disturbed if his discourses seem to him 'worthless and wearisome' since it may not seem that way to his hearers. 'For my part', he writes, 'I am always dissatisfied with my discourse'. Like many a teacher he could not always find the words with which to say what he wants. The key thing is for Deogratius to enjoy his teaching since 'people listen to us with much greater pleasure when we ourselves take pleasure in the same work of instruction. The thread of our discourse is affected by the very joy that we ourselves experience and as a consequence is delivered more easily and received more gratefully'. But it is not an easy task and in the end the cheerfulness on the catechist depends on God's mercy. As to the hearers themselves, Augustine advises Deogratius to make sure they are comfortable by inviting them to be

seated and allowing them to ask whatever questions they may have. He is not to be disturbed by interruptions, but on the contrary Deogratius is to encourage the inquirers to express their opinions by asking questions of them, a practise that Augustine had learned from being catechised by Ambrose. He is also to keep his discourses short so as not to weary his hearers or himself. It is preferable for people to be dealt with one-to-one, especially if they are educated and have many questions. Interestingly he advises Deogratius to handle people who have a little knowledge but think they know much (the type is still with us) by putting them firmly in their place. But he is not to despise simple ordinary people, but rather he should imitate Christ in accommodating himself to their capacities in seeking their salvation. It is very important to make the discourses interesting and when someone yawns to inject 'some lively comment'.⁷

What is Deogratius to teach his inquirers? Augustine's advise is to begin at Genesis 1:1 and to teach the history of redemption in the form of a rapid survey. This is his own practise. He writes:

But we ought to present all the matter in a general and comprehensive summary, choosing certain of the more remarkable facts that are heard with greater pleasure and constitute cardinal points in history...so to speak and spread them out to view, and offer them to the minds of our hearers to examine and admire.

In giving this survey Deogratius is to keep in view the central theme of the history of redemption, namely the love of God. For 'what greater reason could there be for the Lord's coming than that God might manifest his love for us and ardently recommend it'. The Old Testament as well as the New Testament is necessary for understanding this and at this point Augustine famously writes: 'In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed'. In the second part of the book Augustine gives an example of how he would teach the history of redemption to an imaginary ordinary man. After welcoming the man he would question him as to his motives for wanting to be instructed. Beginning with creation he would then teach the story of redemption by working through the life of Abraham, the history of Israel, the exile, the prophets, the person and work of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the history of the church up to the present time and end with the coming judgement, baptism and the Lord's Supper.⁸

Evangelistic catechesis in later periods of church history

During *the medieval period* evangelistic catechesis went into decline. Of course during the period of Europe's evangelisation there was evangelistic preaching that included instruction in the faith. Patrick in Ireland and Boniface in Germany, to cite two notable examples, were careful in instruct those who wanted to become Christians. In his preaching Boniface emphasised the emptiness of idolatry, God as Creator, the person and work of Jesus Christ, Christian practises, the creed, the Lord's Prayer and the commandments. But catechesis as understood by the early church was not practised. Because of the mass or forced conversions that were often involved there was little attempt to instruct people. There was little if any systematic instruction of children and adults were expected to learn the faith in church. In the later medieval period there was some movement towards renewing catechesis. The theologian John Gerson advocated systematic instruction of youth after trying to teach the essentials of the faith to teenage boys in Paris. In the 8th and 9th centuries a number of manuals of instruction were

produced, including a notable one by Alcuin, Archbishop of York. Many of these were written in the question and answer format that characterised later catechisms. On the eve of the Reformation confessional manuals became popular means of devotion, but these were more lists of vices and virtues to aid confession than manuals of instruction.⁹

With *the Reformation* there was an explosion of catechesis, so much so that Patrick Collinson has called it 'an age of catechising'.¹⁰ Luther was very conscious of this, writing that 'among us the catechism has come back into use, as it were by right of recovery'.¹¹ Significantly Luther spoke of a 'catechism', a manual of Christian instruction. The recent invention of the printing press enabled catechisms to be put into the hands of the common people with the result, as Steven Ozment has pointed out, they were one of the most effective means of spreading the Protestant message, especially in the cities of Europe. Catechisms, he writes, were 'detailed guides, doctrine by doctrine and practise by practise, to the reformed religion'. Their virtue was their simplicity 'that eliminates the typical catalogue of sins, vices and virtues, turns the catechumen away from the minute self-examination... and makes the communication of religious certitude, especially at the point of death, the highest priority'.¹² Of course the Reformers were working within a Christendom context in which virtually everyone was baptised and belonged to the church, but nevertheless they used catechising to evangelise the Christianised peoples among whom they ministered.

Martin Luther was not the first Reformer to make use of catechisms, but he was the most successful in using them. Within his own household he began to use charts and questions and answers to teach the essentials of the faith. By 1520 he had devised a brief form consisting of ten questions and answers as well as the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments. But it was the Saxony Visitation of 1528 that revealed the widespread ignorance of people of the gospel that convinced Luther of the need of a popular catechism. The result was his *Small Catechism* of 1529. Luther's aim was to equip parents with the tools for teaching the faith to their children and servants. It began with the Ten Commandments, went on to the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer and ended with sections on baptism, confession and the Lord's Supper. It was very short and simple (not always or usually a characteristic of later catechisms) and soon became immensely popular, selling 100,000 copies within 40 years and being translated into 17 languages. Not only parents, but also Lutheran pastors used it as a basis for their preaching. With only a little exaggeration he could say, 'I have brought about such a change that nowadays a girl or boy of 15 knows more about Christian doctrine than all the theologians of the great universities used to know'.¹³

Catechisms became one of the hallmarks of the Reformation movement. Huldreich Zwingli produced one in 1523. William Farel's *Sommaire*, subtitled 'a brief description of all that is necessary for every Christian to have confidence in God and to help his neighbour' was written as a handbook of essential doctrine. Like Luther's, Farel's catechism was brief and to the point and focused on faith in Christ.¹⁴ Other catechisms followed. In 1537 John Calvin wrote a catechism described as 'a brief outline of the Christian faith'. This was a summary of the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He followed this up in 1542 with a catechism for the church in Geneva, which was cast in the question and answer format that would become commonplace in later catechisms for which it was a model. John a Lasco produced a catechism in Emden in

1554. By far the most popular and influential continental Reformed catechism was the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563.¹⁵

In the English-speaking world catechisms also proliferated. In Scotland there were, as well as English translations of continental Reformed catechisms, a number of native ones, including Craig's Catechism of 1581, the Little Catechism of 1556 and Craig's Short Catechism of 1592. All these were superseded by the Westminster Shorter Catechism of 1648.¹⁶ Although not strictly evangelistic in purpose, these catechisms were used effectively in teaching successive generations of the Scottish people the Christian faith. Certainly they gave many people a doctrinal framework that provided preachers with well-prepared minds to which they could address the gospel. The Shorter Catechism was in fact largely the work of English Puritan divines, but except for a brief period it was not widely used in England or Wales. From the time of the Reformation hundreds of catechisms were produced, but by far the most important were the official Anglican catechisms. In 1548 Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, composed a catechism based on one by the Lutheran pastor Justus Jonas which was revised and published as the Anglican Catechism the next year. This was included with some revision in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer and became for many generations of English and Welsh Protestants the basis for instruction in the faith. Catechising was one of the chief means by which Britain was made Protestant. Rightly could a later Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, say that 'catechising and the history of the martyrs have been the two great pillars of the Protestant Religion'. Nor is it surprising that at the Roman Catholic Council of Trent it was remarked that Protestants had done great mischief by means of catechisms.¹⁷

With their concern for furthering reformation and vital godliness it is not surprising that *the Puritans* were great catechists. One of the greatest Puritan advocates of catechising was William Perkins. Like most other Puritans Perkins was concerned about the ignorance of so many people regarding the Christian faith. To help remedy this he wrote his *Foundation of the Christian religion gathered into Six Principles*, dedicating it 'To all the ignorant people that desire to be instructed'. Perkins followed the traditional pattern of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, but insisted it was not enough to know them by rote, but also by 'applying them inwardly to your hearts and consciences and outwardly to your lives and conversations'. Fundamental to Perkins's approach was his conviction that 'the mind must have certain basic information before it can think correctly about matters divine'. Perkins also listed the benefits of catechising: (1) it laid the basis of religious knowledge without which one could not be saved; (2) it enabled Christians to have a deeper understanding of the Bible; (3) it prepared them for taking a fuller part in the life of the church; (4) it enabled them to discern truth from error; and (4) it promoted Christian virtue.¹⁸

Another great Puritan catechist was Richard Baxter. Like others he was concerned for the widespread ignorance of people in his parish in Kidderminster. He composed a number of catechisms, but in his pastoral visitation he used a simple one of 12 questions and answers. He preferred to deal with people individually rather than in groups. So effective was this approach that he wrote to a friend, 'We never hit the way of pulling down the kingdom of the devil till now'.¹⁹ His book *The Reformed Pastor*

describes his approach in fuller detail. But Baxter was only one of many. Joseph Alleine also catechised house to house. John Bunyan used catechising as a means of reaching unconverted people in his community. His catechism was published as *A Catechism, called Instruction for the Ignorant* and was dedicated not only to church members, for whom it might be helpful in reminding them of the essentials of their faith, but also to 'all those unconverted, old and young, who may have been at any time under my preaching and yet remain in their sins'. Interestingly Bunyan's catechism is cast in the form of an unconverted person asking questions of a pastor. Through it all Bunyan's concern is that the truth be savingly applied to the learner, as these questions and answers show:

Q. How many gods are there?

A. To the Christians there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things and we of him.

Q. Why is not the God of Christians the God of them who are not Christians?

A. He is their maker and preserver, but they have not chosen him to be their God.

Q. Who is a Christian?

A. One that is born again, a new creature; one that sits at Jesus' feet to hear his word; one that has his heart purified and sanctified by faith, which is in Christ.²⁰

Catechising continued to be widely practised into the 19th century. *Eighteenth century* Scotland was one of the most literate societies in the world largely because of an education system in which catechising played an integral role. No doubt knowledge of the Shorter Catechism prepared the way for the preaching of the Erskines, Whitefield, the Haldanes and others. In England and Wales there was a movement to establish schools where children would learn the Church of England Catechism among other things. As one historian puts it, the aim of these schools was 'to establish the most simple and rudimentary understanding of the faith and its obligations'. Archbishop Wake said that they were intended to 'combat the gross ignorance of the common people'. This movement involved High Churchmen such as Thomas Bray as well as evangelicals such as Griffiths Jones.²¹ Ironically it was the Nonconformists in England and Wales – the Methodists (Calvinistic and Wesleyan), Baptists, and Congregationalists – who largely benefited from this. As Michael Watts has shown in his history of Protestant Dissent in England and Wales, Nonconformist preaching reaped the harvest sown by Anglican catechising. The Church of England prepared the way for Dissent. In large measure the remarkable growth of Nonconformity from 1790 to 1830 can be attributed to this.²² Nor were Nonconformists themselves inactive in catechising. For example, John Sutcliff, the Baptist pastor in Olney and supporter of William Carey, used a catechism evangelistically. Across the Atlantic Robert Ryland wrote a catechism for the evangelisation of slaves.²³

Some practical conclusions regarding evangelistic catechesis

This survey of evangelistic catechesis in history is relevant for us today. As I indicated at the beginning of this article there has been something of recovery, albeit unconsciously, of an evangelistic practise with an impeccable historical pedigree as well as a biblical basis. Evangelistic catechesis reminds us of the need to be teaching

non-Christians the Christian faith. Like the early church, but also the church in other periods, we live in a time when people are ignorant of the truth. Of course we must try to teach them in the course of our preaching, but there is also much we can do alongside it. Scripture and history teach us the need for systematic instruction of those who express interest in learning more about Christianity. Such catechesis will not take the place of public preaching, but rather supplement it. Of course we need to adapt our approach to our own culture. The lengthy catechesis of the early church would probably be too long today and it is questionable whether baptism and admission to the church should be delayed for such a long time after conversion. Likewise the question and answer format of the Reformed catechisms may be pedagogically inappropriate (although perhaps not for children, but that's another matter). The format of recent evangelism courses shows us how the faith can be taught in a way that makes learning accessible and comfortable (something of which Augustine would approve). But there is also much we can learn from history as to the content of modern catechesis. Like the early church in particular we need to teach both the essentials of the gospel as well as what the Christian life involves. In other words we need to link evangelism and discipleship without confusing them. Non-Christians need to both what the gospel is and how it will work if they become Christians. Also we should take a leaf from Augustine's notebook and develop courses that introduce non-Christians to the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. In a culture that loves stories but has forgot the Big Story is this not a wise thing to do? In my own experience with catechising international students I find that this approach is most beneficial. Not only does this approach give the inquirers a framework in which to make sense of the gospel, but it also provides them with a worldview in which to live should they become Christians.²⁴ In short, what we need to be doing is developing introductory catechetical courses that lead on to further instruction in what it means to be a disciple to Christ. Our mandate from the risen Lord Jesus Christ is to make disciples. Evangelistic catechesis is about introducing people to the Christian life so that when they believe and are baptised they can continue to learn Christ and what it means to be his disciples.²⁵

References

- ¹ K Wegenast, 'Teaching', *International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown (ed.), Exeter 1975, vol. 3, p. 771.
- ² R Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, Princeton 1996, p. 7.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ A Krieder, *Worship and Evangelism in Pre-Christendom*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 21–24.
- ⁵ EG Hinson, *The Evangelisation of the Roman Empire*, Macon 1981, p. 213.
- ⁶ 'Catechesis' in *The Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd edition, Everett Ferguson (ed.), New York 1997, p. 227.
- ⁷ Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus, or, the First Catechetical Instruction*, trans. Joseph P Christopher, Westminster, Md., 1946, pp. 13–14, 17, 30–34, 34, 50.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19, 23, 57ff. Interestingly Augustine's approach is that of little 'catechisms' such as *Two Ways to Live* and is commended by DM Carson in *The Gagging of God*.
- ⁹ D Wright, 'Cartechisms' in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, WA Ewell (ed.), Carlisle 1984, pp. 195ff.; Liam Kelly, *Catechesis Revisited*, London 2000, p. 17.
- ¹⁰ P Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, Oxford 1982, p. 232.
- ¹¹ I Green, *The Christian's ABC, Catechisms and Catechising in England, c. 1530–1740*, Oxford 1996, p. 13.

- ¹² S Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities*, New Haven 1975, pp. 32, 67; *Protestants*, London 1992, pp. 45, 104–105.
- ¹³ Wright, p. 196; Kelly, p. 22; G Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, Baltimore 1978, passim.
- ¹⁴ Ozment, *Reformation*, p. 67.
- ¹⁵ D Janz, 'Catechisms', in *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation*, New York, p. 278; Wright, p. 196.
- ¹⁶ TF Torrance, *The School of Faith*, London 1949, passim. Torrance has an extensive introduction that contains some helpful things on the pedagogy of catechesis. Some of his comments on federal theology are less helpful.
- ¹⁷ Green, p. 1; Janz, p. 278. I have not dealt with the vast literature relating to Roman Catholic catechesis. It is ironic, given who recovered it, that catechesis is today more often associated with Catholicism than Protestantism. However much one disagrees with its content, Roman Catholic catechetical methodology is impressive and has much to teach us. See Liam Kelly, passim.
- ¹⁸ W Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins*, Ian Breward (ed.), Abingdon 1970, pp. 34, 139, 142; Green, p. 26.
- ¹⁹ Green, pp. 223–225.
- ²⁰ J Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan*, vol. 2.
- ²¹ J Welsh, C Hayden and S Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, c. 1689–1833*, Cambridge 1993, p. 71–73.
- ²² M Watts, *The Dissenters*, Oxford 1978, vol. 1, pp. 420, 427; vol. 2, 46, 52, 63, 109.
- ²³ TJ Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts, the study of catechisms in Baptist life*, Amityville, NY, 1998, pp. 21, 25.
- ²⁴ Some the material produced by The Good Book Company (formerly Matthias Media) take this approach. I am thinking of the tracts *Two Ways to Live* and *The Pocket Guide to Christianity* as well as the course *LifeWorks*. I don't think *Christianity Explained* or *Christianity Explored* and even less *Alpha* go near enough in this direction. Another approach which we are developing and testing at East London Tabernacle is a course entitled *The Bible for Beginners* in which we try to teach the story of redemption by introducing the Bible to people with no previous knowledge.
- ²⁵ See William J Abraham's *The Logic of Evangelism*, Grand Rapids 1989. I don't agree with everything Williams says, but he is very stimulating. Williams challenges a number of traditional approaches to evangelism, namely an exclusive reliance on proclamation and a managerial approach to church growth, and proposes instead a greater emphasis on initiation. He doesn't deny the necessity of proclamation or the desirability of church growth, but says that evangelism must return to Jesus' mandate of making disciples and for him that means initiating serious inquirers into the kingdom of God.

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John Calvin on Catechisms in a letter to the Earl of Somerset:

Believe me, Monseigneur, the Church of God will never preserve itself without a Catechism, for it is like the seed to keep the good grain from dying out, and using it to multiply from age to age. And therefore, if you desire to build and edifice which shall be of long duration, and which shall not soon fall into decay, make provision for the children being instructed in a good catechism, which may show them briefly, and in a language level to their tender age, wherein true Christianity consists. This catechism will serve two purposes, to wit, as an introduction to the whole people, so that everyone may profit from what is preached, and also to enable them to discern when any presumptuous person puts forward strange doctrine.