

Pieter Veerman

Learning to Pray

The Heidelberg Catechism's Teaching on Prayer in its Sixteenth-Century Context



Reformed Historical Theology

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Pieter Veerman

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on Prayer in its Sixteenth-Century Context

Translated by Lyle D. Bierma

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Preface

“Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1)

Learning to pray has an important place in the lives of many believers. That prayer requires instruction is evident already in the request of the disciples to Jesus in the verse above. This study is about the teaching on prayer in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). My deep interest in history and in sixteenth-century spirituality served as a powerful motivation for writing this book. In recent years, I have discovered more and more that the HC is a solid spiritual teacher of prayer—a little sixteenth-century textbook that contains the necessary tools for believers looking for instruction in prayer more than 450 years later. The HC seeks to teach believers to pray and to give thanks from a committed heart. In this book, I engage in a series of listening exercises, illuminating the distinctive character of the HC’s teaching on prayer by comparing it with that of contemporaneous Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic catechisms. In this way, we get a clearer understanding of the theological profile of the HC in relation to other catechisms of its time.

This book is an English-language edition of the dissertation with which I obtained my doctorate at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam. Several people were closely involved in the development of this project, and without their help and advice I would never have been able to complete it. First and foremost, I thank my supervisor, Professor Dr. Gijsbert van den Brink, from whose expert correction and critical evaluation of earlier drafts of this work I learned a great deal. I also thank my second supervisor, Professor Dr. Lyle Bierma, who displayed a great interest in the topic right from the start and whose suggestions and thorough knowledge of current catechism research were invaluable. He also undertook the English translation of this study, which was originally published in Dutch. Finally, I am grateful to Professor Dr. Wim Verboom for instilling in me a love for the HC. His knowledge and involvement helped me in the first phase of my research to follow the right path in exploring the theme of this study and to write the first chapters.

Pieter Veerman

1. Prayer in the Heidelberg Catechism

1.1 Introduction

Reflection on prayer and the practice of prayer both occupied an important place in the Magisterial Reformation. Many Reformation and Catholic¹ catechisms treated prayer in connection with the catechetical element of the Lord's Prayer. In the Heidelberg Catechism (hereafter HC), instruction on prayer plays a prominent role, too, so much so that the entire catechism has been characterized as a prayer book.² For generations this prayer instruction in the HC has served as training material for Reformed believers.³ The subject of this study is the theological distinctiveness of this teaching on prayer in the context of other sixteenth-century catechisms. This focus on *catechisms* provides a closer look at how believers of that day lived out their faith since it was from these little instruction manuals that "people in the pews" received their training.

The way in which the HC begins its section on prayer indicates immediately that we are dealing with a significant theme in the instruction as a whole:

Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray contin-

1 I am using the term "Catholic" both for the church before the Protestant reformations and for that part of the church that did not go along with the Protestant reformations up through the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563. In German literature, this latter category is often designated as *altgläubig*. Strictly speaking, the various strands of Anabaptism also belong to the Protestant reformations, but they remain outside the purview of this study. Anabaptist texts are simply too diverse for me to select a representative sample from which clear conclusions related to my research can be drawn. Therefore, I am left to consider particularly the Lutheran and Reformed reformations, or Magisterial Reformation, that is, those streams of the Protestant reformations that cooperated with the magistrate or other secular authorities. I am using the plural "reformations" here because in addition to the Lutheran and Reformed reformations, there was also the aforementioned Anabaptist Reformation, as well as reforms in the Catholic Church.

2 Locher: 1963, 173: "Aber man kann fast den ganzen Heidelberger beten."

3 The HC has been especially significant in the northern Netherlands, but its influence has extended beyond Europe as well. Cf. Van der Pol: 2013, 123–133; Beeke/Bristley: 2013, 135–145; Selderhuis: 2013, 19–28; Hart: 2013, 16–32.

ually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them. (HC 116).⁴

The HC describes prayer here as “the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.” Such a characterization accords an important place to prayer in the HC, but it immediately raises questions as well. Where did this wording come from? Why is this characterization not used for the other part of thankfulness, namely, the law, which at first glance would seem much better suited to such a description? Ethical behavior seems an odd context in which to bring up the doctrine of prayer, since it is not a natural fit with other classical ethical themes.⁵

This study, therefore, will focus on the theological distinctiveness of the teaching on prayer in the HC (1563) and the place of this teaching in the theological and spiritual landscape of previous catechetical works as far back as Luther’s *Small Catechism* of 1529. I will compare the HC’s teaching on prayer with that of a representative selection of Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic catechisms. In order to work with catechisms that are comparable to the HC, I have used as one of my selection criteria the languages in which they were published. With a few exceptions (for reasons that will later become clear), I am including only catechisms that were originally published in the vernacular and that therefore, like the HC, were intended for the training of laypeople unfamiliar with Latin. Latin catechisms had another audience in mind and stood at greater remove from the HC.

In section 1.5, I will delineate the catechisms and theological themes that constitute the focus of this research, but first we must look at the current state of scholarship and clarify the research question and methodology.

1.2 The State of Scholarship

Despite the important place that prayer occupies in the HC and the many questions that it raises, relatively little scholarship has been devoted to the background and content of the HC’s teaching on prayer. Some studies only touch upon the place of prayer in the HC (Huijgen: 2013, 303–311; Huijgen: 2015, 206–224; Locher: 1963, 171–185; Verboom: 1996, 299–330). In-depth research exists on, among other things, the HC’s treatment of the sacraments (Beyer: 1965; Bierma: 1999; Neuser: 1967), providence (Den Hartogh: 1999), predestination (Bartels: 1931), and

4 The English translation of the Heidelberg Catechism used throughout this book is found in *Our Faith: Ecumenical Creeds, Reformed Confessions, and Other Resources* (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013), 69–117.

5 Berkhof: 1990, 494: “The nature of prayer happens to be such that its place in the study of the faith is uncertain and therefore varying.”

atonement (Metz: 1970), but prayer lay outside the purview of those studies. Other research has been broader in scope and treated prayer as just one topic alongside others in the HC. This latter scholarship has certainly produced valuable results: the HC's teaching on prayer appears to go back to Lutheran and Reformed sources more or less equally and can be read as the climax of what was said earlier about good works performed by believers in thankful fulfillment of God's law (cf. Bierma: 2013b, 109f). But the broad scope of these studies meant that prayer received only limited treatment. What is still lacking, therefore, is a detailed study of the doctrine of prayer in the HC that fleshes out and refines the older research. This deficiency is also true of catechism scholarship in general, considering the important place of prayer in every catechetical document.

A study of the HC's doctrine of prayer can build upon earlier scholarship on the catechetical and dogmatic sources that were used in the composition of the HC.⁶ First of all, there were the *Catechesis minor* (1561 or 1562) and *Catechesis major* (1562), both of which very plausibly came from the hand of Zacharias Ursinus (see Bierma: 2005a, 137–140). In the production of the HC, Ursinus, as part of a team of theologians and ecclesiastical officers, played a leading role as the person primarily responsible for the final draft.⁷ In addition to Ursinus and the *Catechesis minor* and *Catechesis major*, there were other reformers and catechisms in the picture that served as literary and theological sources as well. The older scholarship of Gooszen and Lang pointed to the influence of Jud, Bullinger, Calvin, à Lasco, Micronius, Bucer, and Zell, a list that could be supplemented with the names of Luther, Melancthon, Brenz, and Beza.⁸ Little has been done or demonstrated, however, on the degree to which these influences extended to the doctrine of prayer. There is a need, therefore, to systematically examine this topic in order to understand the HC's doctrine of prayer in its original theological and spiritual context.

Besides the sources mentioned above, which are all better-known catechisms, there are also lesser-known catechisms from the sixteenth century to which past scholarship has paid little attention.⁹ Many of these were collected and published

6 For a recent overview of the research on these sources, see Bierma: 2005a, 75–102; Bierma: 2013a, 193–201; Bürki/ Opitz: 2013, 203–211.

7 The authorship of the HC has long been a matter of dispute. Verboom: 1996:15f provides an overview of various theories of the origins of the HC. More recent research (and this is Verboom's view as well) largely agrees that Ursinus was the primary author. My own research will not deal with the authorship question separately but concurs with the current state of scholarship as recently described in Bierma: 2005a, 49–74; Bierma/Gunnoe: 2013, 73–83; Boerke: 2009, 62–88.

8 Hollweg: 1961, 124–152 detects the influence of Beza's *Confessio christianae fidei* in the characterization of prayer as the most important part of thankfulness.

9 These catechisms are analyzed by Haitsma: 1968, but only with respect to the doctrine of the church.

by J.M. Reu (1904–35). An analysis of the teaching on prayer in these catechisms will shed light on the theological distinctiveness of the instruction on prayer in various German catechisms (to which Reu limits himself).

The relationship between the teaching on prayer in the HC and that of sixteenth-century Catholic catechisms has remained entirely outside the scope of previous scholarship. Catholic catechisms, however, constitute a significant body of material that needs to be examined in any consideration of the theological distinctiveness of the HC in the context of sixteenth-century teaching on prayer in and around Germany.

1.3 The Question

The central question to be answered in this study is: What is the theological distinctiveness of the HC's instruction on prayer, and what place does this instruction have in the spiritual landscape of previous sixteenth-century catechisms going back to those of Luther in 1529? Based on the survey above, this can be divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What theological teaching does the HC provide regarding prayer, and what place does it have in the catechism as a whole? What form does the HC give to this teaching?
2. What is the relationship between the HC's teaching on prayer and that of previous Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic vernacular catechisms going back to Luther's Small Catechism?
3. How does the content and place of the HC's teaching on prayer compare with that of certain Latin-language sources of the HC, namely, Beza's *Confessio christianae fidei* and Ursinus's *Catechesis minor* and *Catechesis major*?

The first of these subquestions will be dealt with in chapter 3, the second in chapters 4, 5, and 6, and the third in chapter 7.

1.4 Methodology

The research methodology of this study will be predominantly historical-theological, involving an analysis of primary sources that is supported, where possible, by secondary literature. I will try as much as possible to let the sources speak for themselves and to compare them systematically with each other. It is difficult to clearly trace the sources of the HC because protocols related to the construction of the text were destroyed. What I can do, however, is conduct a comparative study of

a number of similar writings and in this way highlight the distinctiveness of the HC.

Methodologically, I am aligning myself with Bierma's important work, which has set the tone for this field of scholarship. In his *The Theology of the Heidelberg Catechismus* (2013), Bierma employs a method in which he compares the HC with contemporary sixteenth-century writings from a variety of (Protestant) traditions. This approach produces the results necessary for understanding the theological distinctiveness of the HC and provides insight into the catechism's theological sources. A premise of Bierma's method is that the authors of the HC paid serious attention to the different theological parties in the Palatinate. The HC sought to find common ground among the various Protestant factions that were seeking to gain the upper hand (Bierma: 2013b, 5–12). Ursinus, the primary author of the HC, seemed the appropriate person to realize this goal since he was well acquainted with both the Lutheran and Reformed traditions and had been a student of Melancthon's (Bierma: 2013b, 11). In this study, it is my goal to investigate both the extent to which these various traditions become transparent in the HC's teaching on prayer and the choices that were made that determined the distinctive character of the HC. In addition, I will be looking at the question of how the authors dealt with earlier catechisms as far back as Luther's Small Catechism of 1529. Of particular interest will be how the text of HC 115–129 is constructed and how it relates to other similar texts. Unlike Bierma, I am also giving Catholic catechisms a substantial place in this research project, which will show how much of a Protestant profile the HC's teaching on prayer actually has.

This text-oriented approach has a number of limitations. I will not provide a description of the historical context of the HC and will introduce the other catechisms only briefly. For the historical context of the HC, see the *Handboek Heidelbergse Catechismus* (2013) and the *Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism* by Bierma et al. (2005). Knowledge of that historical context might help explain the choices that were made in the HC's teaching on prayer, but approaching the HC's teaching on the basis of the context presents several problems. The dearth of protocols on the production of the HC makes it difficult to identify clearly the theological positions and fronts that played a role in the composition of HC 115–129. Because these protocols are missing, asking questions about the original context of the HC can suggest approaches that are worth exploring, but they remain in large part up for debate. Therefore, I accept Bierma's thesis but, in addition, am adopting a comparative method that places similar writings alongside each other and clearly shows the agreements and differences between the HC and other catechisms.

A second limitation of this research is its focus on catechisms. I acknowledge that other types of writing could also provide insight into the distinctiveness of the HC's teaching on prayer. Once in a while, therefore, I will have reason to depart from my chosen path and include other sorts of writing. However, in this study I

am primarily interested in the distinctive character of the teaching on prayer in the HC in the context of other *catechisms* of the day. I can best address my questions, therefore, by letting these sources speak and by systematically comparing them with the HC. Frequent digressions into other kinds of literature would only detract from the focus of this work, and the amount of source material I would then need to consult is almost endless.

The starting point of this study, therefore, is the HC's own teaching on prayer. I will analyze this teaching with the assistance of a number of relevant commentaries.¹⁰ The picture that emerges of the content and significance of the HC's doctrine of prayer will be compared with other sixteenth-century catechisms, namely, relevant Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic catechisms from Luther's 1529 Small Catechism to the publication of the HC in 1563. As I have already indicated, earlier research has established a connection between the HC and a number of older catechisms. In addition to these better-known catechisms, however, there were also a number of others in circulation. F. Cohrs (1900–1907, 5 vol.) provides a summary and list of editions of catechisms up to Luther's Small Catechism of 1529, and J.M. Reu (1904–1935, 3 vol.) does the same with respect to catechisms in circulation in German-speaking lands between 1530 and 1600. Reu's collection will be the most important source of Reformation catechism texts, and for the Catholic texts, I will be using the collection of Catholic catechisms assembled by Christoph Moufang (1964).

1.5 Delineation of the Catechisms and Theological Themes in This Study

1.5.1 Catechisms

This research project will involve a representative selection of Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic catechisms from the sixteenth century.¹¹ The Lutheran catechisms are as follows:

1. Martin Luther, *Small and Large Catechisms* (1529)
2. Ambrosius Moibanus, *Catechismus* (1535)
3. Johannes Brenz, *Fragstück des christlichen Glaubens* (1535)
4. Philip Melancthon, *Die zehn Gebote, der Glaube, das Vaterunser* (1549)
5. Several German-language catechisms in brief.

¹⁰ These are included in the bibliography.

¹¹ The introduction to each catechism will explain why it is a representative that deserves a place in this study. For more on the selection of these catechisms, see section 1.4 ("Methodology"). As previously mentioned, this research will focus on Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic catechisms; those from the so-called Radical Reformation remain outside my purview.

Because of the large number of German-language Lutheran catechisms that appeared in various cities after Luther's two works of 1529, I have included twenty-nine other Lutheran catechisms in this research besides the four listed above. These will be discussed together in a separate section. An examination of the theological distinctiveness of their teaching on prayer will round out the picture of the Lutheran catechisms' teaching on prayer.

In addition to these Lutheran documents, I will be looking at several Reformed catechisms. Their number during the period we are studying was far smaller, but the selection below does enable us to form a picture of the theological distinctiveness of their teaching on prayer. They are as follows:

1. Martin Bucer, *Kurtze schriftliche erklärung* (1534); *Der kürtzer Catechismus* (1537); and *Der Kürtzer Catechismus* (1543)
2. Leo Jud, *Der Kürtzer Catechismus* (1538)
3. John Calvin, *Instruction et confession de foy* (1536/1537) and *The Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (1542)
4. Johannes à Lasco, *De catechismus, oft kinder leere, diemen te London, in de Duytsche ghemeynte, is ghebruyckende*. Translated into Dutch by Jan Utenhove (1551)

The third category of catechisms to be discussed are those from the Catholic tradition. My treatment of these will be less comprehensive than that of the Protestant catechisms because my focus is the theological distinctiveness of the teaching on prayer in a catechism that itself came out of the Protestant tradition. The investigation of Catholic catechisms is intended especially to highlight the contrast with the others. For this section of the study, I will rely on a representative selection of Catholic catechisms from Moufang's *Katholische Katechismen des 16. Jahrhunderts in deutscher Sprache* (1881; reprint, 1964). They are as follows:

1. Johann Dietenberger, *Catechismus, Evangelischer Bericht und Christliche Unterweisung der furnehmlichsten Stuck des waren heyligen Christlichen Glaubens* (1537)
2. Johann Gropper, *Hauptartickel Christlicher underrichtung zur gottseligkeit* (1543)
3. Pedro de Soto, *Kurtzer begriff Katholischer Lehr* (1554)
4. Johann Fabri, *Ain Christlicher, rainer Catechismus* (1558)
5. Georg Wicelius, *Newer und kurtzer Catechismus* (1560)

In addition to the catechisms already mentioned, I will also be examining three important Latin works that served as direct sources for the HC:

1. Theodore Beza, *Confessio christianae fidei* (1560)
2. Zacharias Ursinus, *Catechesis minor* (1561 or 1562)
3. Zacharias Ursinus, *Catechesis major* (1562)

1.5.2 Theological Themes

A comparison of the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in various catechisms could be done petition by petition. However, in this study I have chosen an approach that highlights major theological themes. To analyze the distinctiveness of the teaching on prayer in these catechisms, I will first look at the catechisms' structure and form and then at several key theological themes that have an important place in their teaching about prayer.

First of all, I will concentrate on the external form in which each catechism provides its teaching on prayer. There is considerable diversity in the structure of these catechisms and in the ways in which their teaching on prayer is configured. Even though the chosen form and structure seem to be concerned only with the external shape of the catechism, they are often a significant factor in determining the theological distinctiveness of the catechism as well. Authors use structure to underscore and teach certain theological principles, and the design of a catechism also determines the kind of spirituality that is passed on to the students. For each catechism, therefore, I will be asking a threefold question with respect to structure and form. The questions are not exhaustive, but they are a good way to get at the design and content of a catechism. Furthermore, they are penetrating enough to shed light on the differences and agreements among the various catechisms. These three questions are:

1. Where is the teaching on prayer placed in relation to the other main elements of the catechism—the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the sacraments?
2. What form does the teaching on prayer take?
3. What place does the Lord's Prayer have in the teaching on prayer, and when the Lord's Prayer is quoted, what text is used?

In addition to structure and form, I will be focusing on a number of key theological themes in these catechisms that are carried over into their teaching on prayer. Because of the wide range of theological themes to which the teaching on prayer is connected in certain catechisms, some restrictions will be necessary. Thus my analysis will concentrate especially on the following five themes:

1. The nature and definition of prayer
2. The relationship between prayer and commandment
3. The place of Christology in the instruction on prayer
4. The place of pneumatology in the instruction on prayer
5. The certainty that is expressed about prayer being heard

These five themes have been selected because they are sufficiently distinctive and, as will be shown in chapter 3, relevant to the HC's teaching on prayer. Occasionally in

my treatment of a catechism, other theological themes will come up for discussion as well, especially if they are important for helping us understand the theological distinctiveness of that catechism.

1.6 Outline of This Study

In chapter 2, I will provide the historical background for the rest of the book with a brief sketch of catechetical prayer instruction in the early church and the Middle Ages. Chapter 3 follows with a theological exploration of the teaching on prayer in the HC. I then analyze the teaching on prayer in the Lutheran (chapter 4), Reformed (chapter 5), and Catholic (chapter 6) catechisms, where, against the background of the material in chapter 2, it will become clear how catechetical teaching on prayer in the sixteenth century compared with that in the centuries before. In each of these latter three chapters, I discuss the theological themes listed above. Each subsection will follow a strict pattern: a brief introduction to the catechism in view, questions related to the form and content of that catechism, discussion of the five main theological themes that we are focusing on, and finally a few summarizing conclusions.

Chapter 7 forms a prelude to the comparison with the HC, for here, in addition to Beza's *Confessio christianae fidei* (1560), I scrutinize the two catechisms by Ursinus, the primary author of the HC. These two catechisms provide important background for understanding the HC itself. Finally, chapter 8 will bring back again to the teaching on prayer in the HC. There I will draw some conclusions from a comparison of the HC's teaching on prayer with that of other sixteenth-century catechisms and answer the question about the theological distinctiveness of the HC's teaching on prayer in the context of these other catechisms.¹²

12 A relevant follow-up question that lies outside the scope of this study is that of the reception history of this teaching in the Reformed churches. Verboom: 1996, 319–328 provides some initial impetus for this research with a brief discussion of several explanations.

2. Catechetical Prayer Instruction Prior to the Protestant Reformations

2.1 Introduction

Catechetical teaching on prayer at the time of the Protestant Reformations was preceded by a long period of instruction on prayer going back to the early church. In this chapter I will provide a brief historical overview of that instruction before the Protestant Reformations as well as some historical background for the chapters that follow.¹ In section 2.2, I will discuss pre-Reformation catechesis and in the next section explore in greater depth the Lord's Prayer as the basic text for teaching about prayer in the ancient and medieval church. In the following section, I will focus on several important components of medieval instruction on prayer—breviary prayers, prayer books, and other literature promoting piety—before moving on in section 2.5 to the related question of who was providing catechetical instruction on the eve of the Reformations. Section 2.6 will deal with the connection between prayer and the fear of judgment in the Middle Ages. Finally, I will draw a number of summary conclusions that help to clarify the background against which prayer instruction in the sixteenth century took place.

2.2 Catechesis in the Early Church and Middle Ages

From the time of the early church, the Lord's Prayer, along with the Apostles' Creed, was a basic element of catechesis (Cohrs: 1900–1907, 4:269; Weidenhiller: 1965, 17ff), and catechumens had to learn both texts in the period before their baptism (see Hammerling: 2008b, 169). A work that should also be mentioned in connection with early Christian catechesis is the *Didache*,² which was used as a textbook in the Christian church and contains numerous instructions for Christian living (see Jones: 2013, 18–19). We must keep in mind, therefore, that in addition to instruction on the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, catechetical education

1 This will not be an extensive theological account of the teaching on prayer in the early church and Middle Ages. An examination of the five theological themes outlined in chapter 1 in early Christian and medieval literature is beyond the scope of my research even though there is certainly a gap in this area of research.

2 For the Greek text and several English translations, see "Didache," Early Christian Writings, accessed May 13, 2021, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>.

in the early church also involved training in a Christian lifestyle (Bast: 1997, 3).³ A further example is the church father Augustine (354–430), who wrote a little book entitled *De catechizandis rudibus* containing didactic methods of catechetical training.⁴

The Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer held a central place in catechetical instruction in the early Middle Ages. In the eighth century, Emperor Charlemagne exhorted his bishops and priests to provide basic instruction on these two texts, and similar orders were reiterated in the centuries that followed (Adam: 1976, 7f). As the Middle Ages progressed, basic catechetical material was expanded to include a variety of other topics. A later development, which achieved final form in the thirteenth century, was the addition of the Ten Commandments (Troelstra: 1903, 3, 19; Weidenhiller: 1965, 19). The so-called confessional mirrors⁵ helped to accelerate this process (De Kock: 2011, 111). The Ten Commandments were viewed as a good summary of God's moral will, and so far as confession was concerned, the law functioned now especially as an indicator of sin (Troelstra: 1903, 20; Weidenhiller: 1965, 20). As such, in medieval instruction the Ten Commandments had an additional function besides the training in the Christian life that we saw in the early church. That does not mean, however, that medieval teaching on the Ten Commandments was less occupied with the promotion of morality.

A regulation from the Bishop of Utrecht in 1294 mentions four main catechetical elements: the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the sacraments (Troelstra: 1903, 1). The sacraments too, therefore, were now a fixed part of catechesis (Weidenhiller: 1965, 21f). This involved instruction on the seven sacraments of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction (last rites), priestly ordination, and marriage.

Other topics that recurred with some regularity in catechetical teaching were, for example, lists of sins and virtues (Göbl: 1880, 197–211), the Hail Mary, penitential Psalms,⁶ creation and fall, and “the last things” (see Troelstra: 1903, 1).⁷ Thus a wide variety of material was at times included in the instruction, but these topics

3 Mitchell: 1981: 50ff points to the early Christian treatise *Apostolic Tradition* as evidence of the importance of training in a Christian lifestyle. The *Apostolic Tradition* probably dates from 215 and has traditionally been ascribed to Hippolytus, although his authorship is not undisputed, see Baldovin: 2003).

4 For an English translation, see “On the Catechizing of the Uninstructed,” New Advent, accessed May 13, 2021, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1303.htm>.

5 A confessional mirror was a list of sins that could be consulted in the personal examination of one's life before going to confession. For a confessional mirror with commentary, see Köhne: 1860.

6 In modern editions, these are Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143; in the Vulgate, they were numbered as 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142.

7 “The last things” (*extrema*) was the term for four topics of instruction on the end of life: death, the (last) judgment, heaven, and hell.

never ranked with the four main catechetical elements that emerged in the course of the Middle Ages. With respect to the Hail Mary, we should note that this text, in addition to the Lord's Prayer, grew in influence and played an increasingly greater role in the practice of medieval piety. From the thirteenth century on, church officials provided various incentives for people to learn and recite the Hail Mary (see Göbl: 1880, 160–66; Troelstra: 1903, 167–74).⁸

In catechesis, the Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments were generally treated in a certain order. The rubric that was added last, namely, the Ten Commandments, was also treated last. Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, instruction on the Lord's Prayer was usually first; prior to that, the Apostles' Creed had generally been the first element.⁹ In most catechetical texts, the teaching on the sacraments was not assigned a separate place but was included among the topics that were treated after the main catechetical elements (Weidenhiller: 1965, 21).

2.3 The Lord's Prayer as the Basic Text in Prayer Instruction

From the beginning of the history of the church, the Lord's Prayer was a key text. One can hardly find an author in the early church who does not refer to it. Church fathers from both the eastern and western church comment on it.¹⁰ In the prayer culture of the first centuries after Christ, in which people attached great significance to magical prayer formulae, the Lord's Prayer had a definite impact, for it offered a similar powerful formula for prayer (Dibelius: 1903, 62).¹¹

The Lord's Prayer had a place especially in congregational worship. We hear less about individual use of the prayer until the third century, but it did play a role there as well (Froelich: 2008, 63; Hammerling: 2008b, 223). Cyprian and Augustine indicate in their writings that the Lord's Prayer played a particular role in congregational liturgies for baptism and the Lord's Supper, and patristic texts on the Lord's Prayer were frequently connected to this liturgical context (Hammerling: 2008a, 169f). As a rule, catechetical sermons were preached at baptism. The Lord's Prayer, as I have already mentioned, was also the text, along with the Apostles'

8 Wiel Logister: 1995, 139–180 clearly describes the development of the story of Mary in the history of the church. For more on the history of the Hail Mary, see Franz Courth: 1984, 368–383.

9 This order of catechetical topics is especially important in the context of this research because of the shift that Luther introduced. For references in the secondary literature to this order of topics, see section 4.2.2.

10 For various references to texts from the early church that include commentary on the Lord's Prayer, see Froelich: 2008, 59ff. For the Lord's Prayer in the Greek church fathers, see Dibelius: 1903, 61–70.

11 For more on the Lord's Prayer as a magical prayer formula, see section 2.4.