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Child-directed speech in catechisms for the religious education of children under the age of three in early modern Germany and the Dutch Republic

Abstract

This article presents three early catechisms for the religious education of children under the age of three, printed in Germany and the Netherlands. Two of them were best- and long sellers on the book market, while one of them was a commercial failure. Catechisms were influential reading primers. The children's catechisms written by Jacobus Borstius, Johann Cyriacus Höfer and Nikolaus von Zinzendorf contained questions for children who were too young to read the texts themselves. Therefore, these catechisms had to be performed in the form of interactive read-alouds. Höfer, Borstius, and Zinzendorf used child-directed speech in their catechisms: short and foreseeable answers and a basic vocabulary to facilitate the understanding and the pronunciation of words in the process of language acquisition and the deliberate introduction of new religious vocabulary. Whereas the catechisms of Borstius and Höfer reckoned with pedagogical laymen and chose standardized questions and answers, Zinzendorf proclaimed an ideal of Socratic intercourse, enthusiasm and aesthetic-poetic affirmation – an ideal that exceeded the capabilities of average teachers and parents.

Keywords: infant catechisms, early childhood religious education, child-directed speech, religious pedagogy

The catechism, which was introduced during the course of the Reformation as a 'piece of public religious practice' ('Stück der öffentlichen Religionsausübung'), became a 'part of domestic devotional practice' ('Teil der häuslichen Frömmigkeitspraxis') as early as the sixteenth century.¹ Initially, children were not addressed specifically by writers of catechisms. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the general market for books aimed at the first years

1 Werner Jetter, 'Katechismuspredigt', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 17 (1988), 744-786: 750. All quotations and English titles are my translations.

of human life was dominated by handbooks of midwifery and infant care.² This changed in the seventeenth century. From the middle of that century onwards, catechisms began to appear that were directed at very young children. Historical research on childhood notes a 'shifting interest in the child' ('sich verändernde[s] Interesse am Kind') during this time.³ A new, empiricist look at children led to innovations in the book market. Theologians and teachers began to organise Christian religious content in a didactic way, for example with illustrated Bibles or by integrating popular literature such as fairy tales and fables. We even find – according to my thesis – traces of child-directed speech (CDS) in toddlerhood, such as question-oriented teaching, training of target words, a minimal and restricted vocabulary and a simple syntactic structure. This is true for catechisms for early religious family education. An investigation of catechetical literature of the time may revise current research opinions. Even in research articles devoted to pre-Enlightenment parental love, the opinion is perpetuated that the child was not a subject of interest in education during this time: 'A child-centred pedagogy is certainly not found before the eighteenth century' ('die Kindzentrierung der Pädagogik ist mit Sicherheit nicht vor dem 18. Jahrhundert zu finden').⁴ This is contradicted by the fact that within the framework of catechesis there was a visible attempt to start from the needs, interests and cognitive abilities of the children. Children were not a mere object of education, but were taken seriously as religious actors and as the subject of their salvation.

The great reform educators of the seventeenth century took up the catechetical tradition which went back to the days of early Christianity. They attempted to reform its didactic approach. In *Christianopolis* (1619), the earliest Protestant literary utopia, Johann Valentin Andreae sketched the ideal of a Christian community and paid special attention to education, including early childhood education.⁵ Johann Amos Comenius, in his *Informatorium der Mutterschul* (1633), understood the young child from birth as a learning subject.⁶ The

2 Edmund Hermesen, *Faktor Religion. Geschichte der Kindheit vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*. Köln: Böhlau, 2006.

3 Martina Winkler, *Kindheitsgeschichte. Eine Einführung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.

4 Claudia Opitz-Belakhal, 'Pflicht-Gefühl. Zur Codierung von Mutterliebe zwischen Renaissance und Aufklärung', in: Ingrid Kasten, Gesa Stedmann and Margarete Zimmermann (eds.), *Kulturen der Gefühle in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Querelles, Jahrbuch für Frauenforschung, 7). Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 2002, 154-170: 158.

5 Friedrich Schweitzer, *Die Religion des Kindes. Zur Problemgeschichte einer religionspädagogischen Grundfrage*, habilitation thesis Gütersloh 1992, 86.

6 Kühlmann, 'Pädagogische Konzeptionen', 171.

catechetic tales and catechism dialogues of the Lutheran writer Philipp Adolph von Münchhausen (1593–1657) show an early interest in the religious education of children. Münchhausens' *Kinder Gespräch zweyer Brüderchen, Johann und Heinrich, vom Catechißmo* (1652) has children as protagonists: children catechise children. According to the text, children have a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and doctrine than theological experts when they imagine God as a loving Father.⁷ Standard works such as the six-volume *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* date the emergence of a child-specific literature to the last third of the eighteenth century.⁸ The vernacular popular literature paints a different picture; especially in the genres of compendia of prayers, postils, meditative literature and catechisms.

Catechisms and guides for catechetical instruction tailored to the phase of early childhood have aroused very little interest. The catechetic writings of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf have received little attention and were not reprinted until 2008.⁹ Recent studies have demonstrated that catechisms are a genre that provide useful insights into the religious life of past societies. Paula McQuade elaborates that women had an essential role as authors of catechisms and as agents of domestic catechesis. Karen E. Carter's book gives an insight into the dominant role of catechesis in Catholic primary education in France at the time of the Counter-Reformation.¹⁰ A quantitative analysis of catechism titles could be used to pursue a variety of questions: To what extent do catechisms differentiate their audience by age groups and social status? To what extent do they show that Christian knowledge is pluralising? Can a dynamic of the loss of value of catechisms (as an ephemeral genre) be discerned in the numerous new editions?

From the immense abundance of catechetical literature, protestant catechisms for the domestic instruction of infants and very young children were selected for analysis in this article. They date from the mid-seventeenth century

7 Philipp Adolph von Münchhausen, *Kinder Gespräch | Zweyer Brüderchen/ | Johann vnd Heinrich / | Vom | Catechißmo*, in: *HaussBuch / Einfältig Gläubiger Chri= | sten (...) Ander Theil. | Zerbst / Durch Andream Betzeln Gedruckt | Im Jahr / 1652, 267-270.*

8 Theodor Brüggemann, Otto Brunken (eds.), *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Vom Beginn des Buchdrucks bis 1570*, 4.

9 Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, *Lautere Milch der Lehre von Jesu Christo, Das ist Gar einfältige und nach dem Begriff junger und kleiner Kinder eingerichtete Frage-Stücke* (1723), critical edition: *Nikolaus von Zinzendorf: Katechismen*, ed. Dietrich Meyer, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2008, 17-26.

10 Paula McQuade, *Catechisms And Women's Writing In Seventeenth-century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017; Karen E. Carter, *Creating Catholics. Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France*, Notred Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011.

to the early eighteenth century and were published in North and Central Germany and in the Netherlands. In the Protestant territory, this is the phase in which Comenian reform schools were founded in Lutheran and Calvinist territories. Catholic catechisms are outside the scope of this study, although they played a crucial role in Jesuit Mission.¹¹ Works dealing with catechisms from a pedagogical perspective usually focus on primary education.¹² This study analyses three infant catechisms for elementary education, instead. It also concentrates on catechisms with regard to language acquisition and early religious literacy, focussing in particular on child-directed speech. CDS has been well studied for its influence in the phase before active language acquisition (from birth to the age of around one years old), but the use of CDS in the context of reading books in early childhood is a new area of empirical research.¹³

Catechisms and child-directed speech in catechesis

Children's catechisms were intended for religious instruction at home, church, and school. These social systems overlapped: catechisms were used parallel at school, at home, and in the church as part of the catechism-exams on Sunday afternoon. They were both teaching aids (textbooks) and books in pupils' hands (schoolbooks). Children used to read them and memorise them. Catechisms were influential reading primers along with ABC books and fables.¹⁴ Children often acquired the knowledge of God alongside with the knowledge of letters.

Children in the Dutch Republic from urban families with a sufficient socio-economic status went to school for at least three years, from the age of four or

11 Antje Flüchter, Rouven Wirbser (eds.), *Translating Catechisms, translating Cultures. The Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

12 Carter, 'Creating Catholics'; John Exalto, 'Alphabet, Bibel, Katechismus: Das ABC der vormodernen Grundschule in den Niederlanden', in: *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 15 (2012), 65-77; Jürgen Oelkers, 'Was bleibt und was geht verloren? Wissensdynamik in historischen Lehrmitteln für Kinder, ausgehend von Katechismen', in: Anja-Silvia Goeing, Anthony T. Grafton [et al.] (eds.), *Collectors' Knowledge. What is kept, what is discarded. Aufbewahren oder wegwerfen. Wie Sammler entscheiden*. Boston, Leiden: Brill, 243-281

13 Annemarie H. Hindman, Jean M. Farrow, Kate Anderson, Barbara A. Wasik and Patricia A. Snyder, 'Understanding Child-Directed Speech Around Book Reading in Toddler Classrooms. Evidence From Early Head Start Programs', in: *Frontiers in Psychology* 09.12.2021, original research article, online publication, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.719783>.

14 Lee Palmer Wandel, *Reading Catechisms, Teaching Religion*, Leiden: Brill, 2016.

five onwards.¹⁵ Alternatively, parents from the upper class or nobility hired home tutors from this age. This was the same in the German territories. The children in this present study were even younger than this, and too young to read the texts themselves. Therefore, the printed catechetical questions and answers had to be performed in the form of interactive read-alouds. This was critical, as most educators at school were laymen rather than professional catechists, while the instructors teaching the children at home were usually the parents – father or mother – or the maids.

The children's catechisms by Johann Cyriacus Höfer (c. 1605–1667), Jacobus Borstius (1612–1680) and Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760) were intended to inculcate the transfer of basic religious knowledge in very young children. These titles – one Lutheran, one Calvinist, one Herrnhutian – provided simple and practical support to children's catechesis. With the guidance of these books, children were catechised within the family from an early age, as soon as they acquired the ability to speak. While the vast majority of existing catechisms exceeded the capacity of the young and illiterate, these works were attuned to the cognitive abilities of children under the age of three. These catechisms could be used at home with children before they were sent to school. They can be compared meaningfully with each other because they consider the linguistic abilities of young children. In this they differ from the broad mass of catechisms. Although infant catechisms are not transcripts of real instructional situations, Zinzendorf's catechism is known to have been tested in practice before going to press.

Catechetical media are interesting sources to investigate pedagogical culture, especially so because they shaped children's conception of God.¹⁶ Catechisms for children in the sensitive phase of language acquisition (between the ages of one and three) guided parents and other adult caregivers on how to modulate verbally children's faith from its inception. The texts introduced a religious vocabulary that focused primarily on the difference between good and evil. A catechesis that takes the child's language acquisition into account must try to manage without abstract terms. A young child does not understand terms like "holy" or "Godlyness". It has been established that children do not understand abstract terms until the age of four.¹⁷ The aim of catechesis was therefore to build up a child's religious vocabulary. The catechism, with its

15 Exalto, 'Alphabet, Bibel, Katechismus', 68.

16 See Friedrich Kittler's remarks on ABC books in his habilitation thesis *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, München: Fink 1985, 47.

17 Jürgen Dittmann, *Der Spracherwerb des Kindes. Verlauf und Störungen*. München: C.H.Beck, 2000, 44–45.

question-and-answer structure, provided an appropriate opportunity for this. The shared book-reading through catechesis in early infancy and toddlerhood helped to develop vocabulary skills and early religious literacy.

During a research stay at the Herzog-August-Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel in October and November 2020, fifty printed catechetical educational media were analysed, four of which were subjected to an in-depth textual analysis. In the course of this analysis, five strategies of ‘making belief’ were identified, namely: conditioning, exhortation, scriptural evidence (this includes references to canonicity, seemingly rational arguments for the truth of what is believed), the pedagogical relationship and aesthetic-poetic affirmation.

Let us now look at the three titles and their presence in the historical book market in comparison with the canonical reference work par excellence: Martin Luther’s *Kleiner Katechismus* (1529). In the sixteenth century, Luther’s *Kleiner Katechismus* was extremely popular and remained so in the following centuries.¹⁸ This had an impact on printing as well. One of the interesting textual features of seventeenth-century catechisms was that some of them were graded according to the age of children. That is, they reflected the emergence of modern pedagogy. The late seventeenth-century re-issue of *Martini Lutheri Katechismus* (1695) takes the developmental differences between children into account and prepares the material according to age:

Das Erste[.] Hält in sich / für die gar kleinen Kinder / von drey / vier / fünff Jahren / die blossen Worte des Catechismi. Das Andere[.] Verfasset in sich / für die mittlern Kinder / von sechs / sieben und acht Jahren / neben Wiederholung der vorigen Worte die Auslegung deß Herrn Lutheri. Das Dritte. Begreiff in sich / für die Kinder / so stärker von Jahren sind / und für alle andere junge und einfältige Leute / die fernere Erläuterung der besagten Auslegung.¹⁹

The first (...) contains, for the very young children of three, four and five years of age, the simple words of the catechism. The other (...) contains, for the middle-aged children of six, seven and eight years of age, in addition to the repetition of the previous words also the interpretation of Luther. The third comprehends

18 Walter Pape, ‘Der Mythos vom Katechismus als Volksbuch’, in: *Buchhandelsgeschichte* 2 (1986), 41–50: 44.

19 *Doctoris | MARTINI LU- | THERI | Katechismus/ | Für die Kirchen und Schu= | len der Fürstenthümer Zelle | und Grubenhagen / auch der Unter= | Graffschafft Hoja und Graff= | schafft Diepholt. | Mit Ausdrückung der angezo= | gen Schrift=Sprüche. | Mit Fürstl. Braunsch. Lüneb. Durchl. | Privileviis. || Zelle / | Bey Andreas Holwein/ | Anno 1695, fols. A vr-Avv.*

in itself, for the children who are older in years, and for all other young and simple-minded people, further explanation of the said interpretation.

For the 'very young children' ('für die gar kleinen Kinder') the text was printed in big letters, because the catechism was also used to practice reading. This was a new arrangement of Luther's edition compared with the original edition of 1529. A similar reduction of complexity was what had made Johann Cyriacus Höfer's catechism a success. Höfer's *Himmels-Weg* (1646) became a best- and long seller on the German book market. The KVK (Karlsruhe virtual catalogue: a meta catalogue which includes amongst others VD 17 and VD 18) lists 47 titles for the period from 1600 to 1800. The book was first published in Lübeck. The title soon became widely known: reprints and adaptations appeared in neighbouring Lüneburg and Ratzeburg, and numerous others in Leipzig and Frankfurt. In addition, there were printings in Augsburg and Zwickau. As late as 1797, in his story *Das Campaner Thal oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, nebst eine Erklärung der Holzschnitte unter den 10 Geboten des Katechismus* (The Campaner Thal or on the Immortality of the Soul, together with an Explanation of the Woodcuts under the 10 Commandments of the Catechism), Jean Paul considered *Himmels-Weg* to be a well known text.

A comparison of the works of Luther and Höfer portrays a profound transformation in the teaching of the catechism. Luther's catechism focuses on the *what*, the fixing of the dogmatic content. Höfers teaching of children emphasises the *how* in the sense of teaching as effectively and efficiently as possible. His preface gives the housefather, as the educational authority addressed, precise instructions for catechesis, from the design of the learning environment and the positioning of the children in the room to the conduct of the catechesis and the division of the learning material. Such methodological-didactic guidance is missing in Luther's catechism. In the catechisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the didactic instructions are mostly limited to exhorting fathers and mothers to learn the catechism with their children. The catechisms themselves, however, become didactic in that they prepare the learning material in a way that is appropriate for the age and level of the child. This also applies to Jacobus Borstius' *Eenige korte vragen voor de kleine kinderen* (first published as part of his *Kort begryp der christelyke leere*, 1661). It was also widespread at the time of its appearance. The STCN (Short Title Catalogue Netherlands) and the KVK list together 31 editions from 1600 to 2000. The number of editions is almost certainly incomplete, due to the ephemeral character of catechisms

in general. The many reprints and new editions of *Himmels-Weg* and *Korte Vragen* indicate a continuous public demand for the titles in the eighteenth century. The *Korte Vragen* was also a long seller on the book market, as it was still for sale in the twentieth century.

In contrast, Nikolaus von Zinzendorf's children's catechism, the *Lautere Milch der Lehre von Jesu Christo* (1723), was not successful. In its attempt to address children from the age of eighteen months onwards, his catechism became the target of public ridicule. The simplicity of the questions was considered as 'stupid and foolish' ('tumm und thöricht').²⁰ Soon after publication it was barely available on the book market and was reprinted only once during the author's lifetime as part of the collected works *Freiwillige Nachlese* (1735–38, Zehnte Sammlung).

This poses the question why Zinzendorf's catechism did not sell well. A comparison between the titles will reveal pedagogical differences that may give an indication of why his title was not successful. In comparing the three catechisms written for very young children, similarities and differences emerge as to which strategies of instruction the authors use. Due to the young age of children (no older than the age of three), conditioning and exhortation, as well as pedagogical relationship and aesthetic-poetic address, are more useful for religious instruction than scriptural proof, which still exceeded the cognitive abilities of very young children. The analysis of the pedagogical verification strategies used in the texts will offer a possible explanation for the findings why Borstius and Höfer continued to be successful in the eighteenth century, while Zinzendorf's new publication of an infant catechism did not.

Understanding children

Before advancing my argument, I would like to clarify the religious conception of children in the different Protestant confessions studied in this article, which varied considerably. For Martin Luther, the child was innocent throughout the period of early childhood, up to around the age of five.²¹ Sin was considered absent because a child's ability to reason was not yet developed. Jean Calvin, on the other hand, interpreted the child as damned within the framework of

²⁰ Zinzendorf/Meyer, *Katechismen*, 7.

²¹ Edmund Hermesen, *Faktor Religion. Geschichte der Kindheit vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*. Köln: Böhlau, 2006, 120.

the doctrine of original sin.²² Children were therefore to be catechised as early as possible. The Moravian Brothers had a strongly positive understanding of children. The child was particularly close to the divine. Zinzendorf hoped that the child that was filled with the Holy Spirit would communicate divine secrets to the adult. The only prerequisite for this was that the child had the Holy Spirit within him and could communicate in words. This is the reason why Zinzendorf was interested in the phase of first childhood. Zinzendorf was influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the concept of 'Ursprache' (an extinct and unknown parent language of mankind), which led him to be interested in the primordial *religious* language of human beings. These three different religious views on childhood are reflected in the three works discussed in this paper.

Johann Cyriacus Höfer

The Protestant pastor and theological writer Johann Cyriacus Höfer was a country pastor in Kalkhorst, located on the Baltic coast in Mecklenburg.²³ He could rely on his catechetical experience as a home tutor, father and rural pastor. The oldest surviving edition of his *Himmels-Weg* (1654, the earlier edition of 1646 has not survived) is organised as follows:

Title page – dedication – preface to the reader – questions and answers about the contents of the catechism: Ten Commandments; Creed (incl. Creation, Fall, the Birth of Christ, Crucifixion, Easter, Ascension, Four Last Things); Lord's Prayer (including How to pray); Baptism; Confession; Lord's Supper – morning and evening prayer and grace.

Following Luther's catechism in principle, Höfer added the creed of confession and uses the individual articles of the Creed to cover the entire economy of salvation from the story of creation to the Four Last Things.

The printed title of the catechism reads: 'The Way to Heaven. This is how a child can learn in 24 hours how they should escape hell and be saved. It contains 735 questions and answers in which all the articles of the Christian doctrine are briefly summarised. (...) The way to use this booklet properly can be found in the preface'.²⁴ Höfer's title implies that the learning process can be

22 Christine Axt-Piscalar, 'Sünde VII', in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 32 (2001), 400-436: 405.

23 Günter Kruse, 'Höfer, Johann Cyriacus', in: Andreas Röpcke (ed.), *Biographisches Lexikon für Mecklenburg*, vol. 5, Rostock: Schmidt-Römhild, 2009, 174-176.

24 'Himmels=Weg / | Das ist / | Wie ein Kind | in 24. Stunden lernen kan / | wie es sol der Höllen entgehen / | und selig werden. || Begreiff in sich 735. Fragen | und Antwort / darinnen alle Artickel

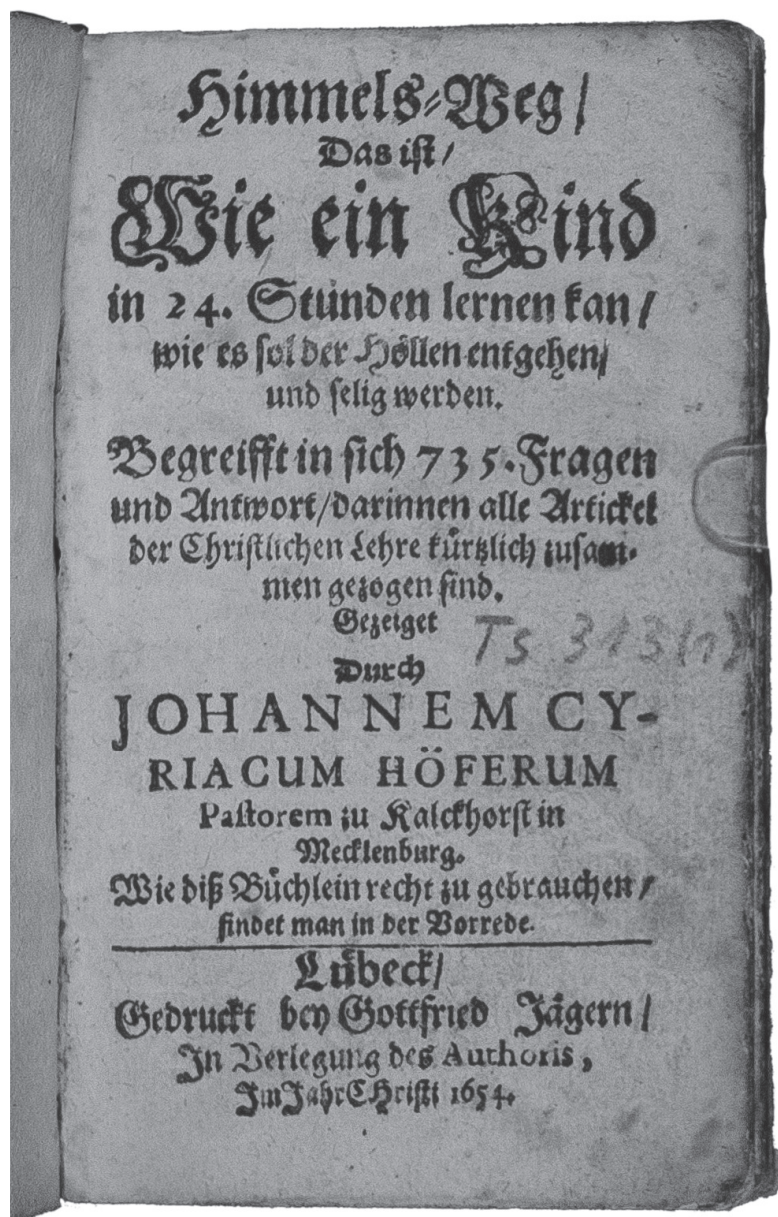


Figure 1. Title page of Johann Cyriacus Höfer's *Himmels-Weg* (1654) ©Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (<http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/ts-313-1s/start.htm?image=00007>)

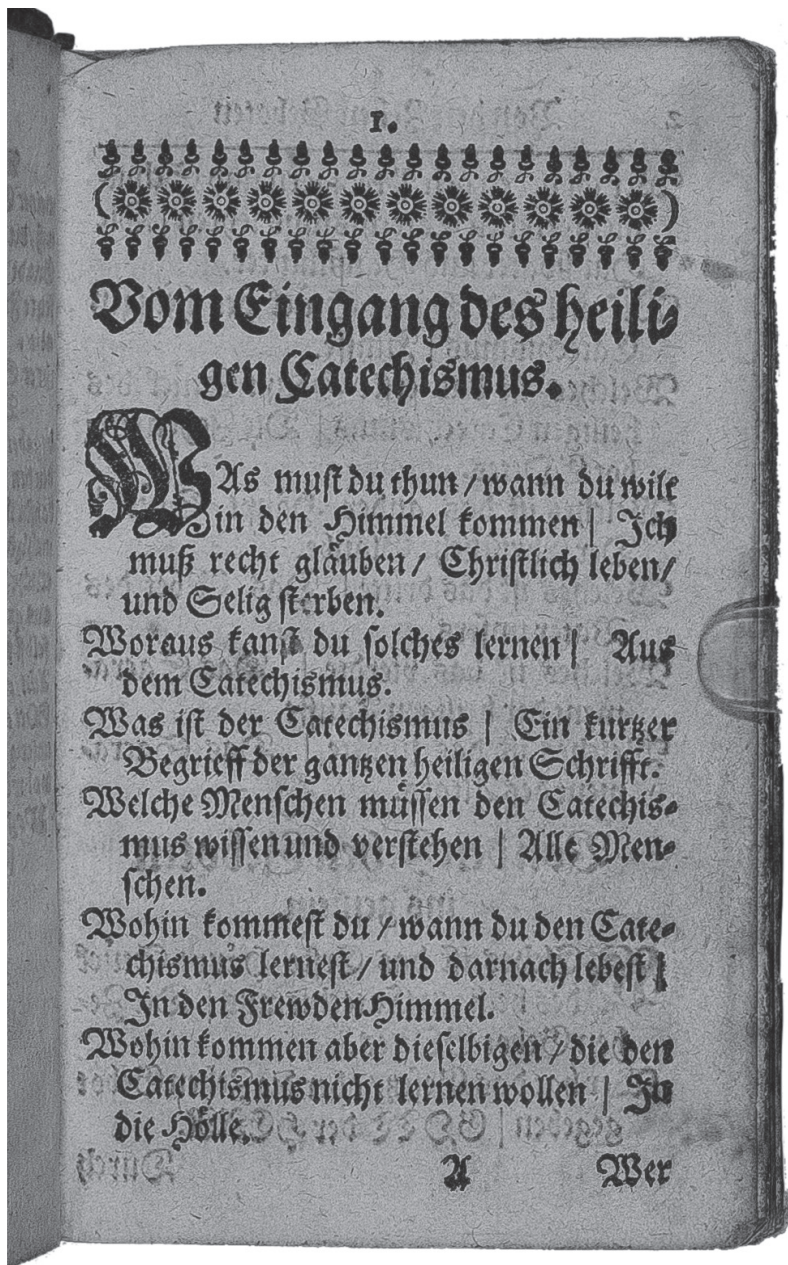


Figure 2. Beginning of the main text of Johann Cyriacus Höfer's *Himmels-Weg* (1654)
 ©Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (<http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/ts-313-1s/start.htm?image=00019>)

finished in twenty-four hours. He promised a miraculous method for all those who want to complete the teaching of the catechism as quickly as possible.

The fact that *Himmels-Weg* filled a gap in the market is shown by its wide circulation. In the preface to his later work, the *Frag-Bibel* (1666), the author commented on the success of his *Himmels-Weg*: 'For although I had quite a lot of copies printed at the beginning / namely in 1646 and also later in 1654 / they were nevertheless very widely bought / that the *Himmels=Weg* was soon afterwards reprinted not only in Leipzig / but also in Hamburg and Colberg'.²⁵ A preface by the Lübeck superintendent August Pfeiffer to Höfer's *Frag-Bibel*, which was written shortly before Höfer's death, shows that *Himmels-Weg* was indeed used as a teaching aid for children aged three years and younger when their spoken vocabulary had developed. Pfeiffer wrote that parents had the responsibility 'that as soon as the children can talk and use their minds a little / they are taught the first letters of the Divine Words'.²⁶ Höfer helped parents, because 'in his so-called Himmels=Weg / the first letters of the Christian words [can be learned] / through easy questions / since the answer is given almost at the same time in the mouth / a project by God's grace here and there well begun'.²⁷

In the compilation of his work, Höfer reckoned with a general teacher who was highly inexperienced in the field of pedagogy and needed help when dealing with the most basic methodological and didactic problems. Höfer suggested exactly how often a particular catechism question and answer should be repeated; where the instructor should start; when he should turn the pages; how often each part should be repeated (three times by the instructor and twice or – if there are many children – once by the children), as well as how long the learning units are (three sheets per teaching unit). He even introduced the idea of how the instructor should articulate and intonate the questions and answers, as well as how the children should respond. The author anticipated problems and prescribed every action for the person teaching.

| der Christlichen Lehre kürztlich zusam= | men gezogen sind. (...) Wie diß Büchlein recht zu gebrauchen / | findet man in der Vorrede.'

25 Höfer, *Himmels-Weg*, preface, unpag; cited after the Wolfenbüttel exemplar from 1694, VD17 39:141759R. 'Denn ob ich schon anfänglich / und zwar An. 1646. und auch nachmals An. 1654. ziemlich viel Exemplaria drucken ließ/ sind sie doch sehr hinweg gekauft worden / das gedachter Himmels=Weg bald darauff nicht allein in Leipzig / sondern auch in Hamburg und Colberg ist nachgedrucket worden'.

26 Idem, 5v. 'daß man so bald die Kinder reden und ihren Verstand ein wenig brauchen können / sie die ersten Buchstaben der Göttlichen Worte lehre'.

27 Ibidem. 'in seinem so genannten Himmels=Weg / die ersten Buchstaben der Christlichen Worte / durch leichte Fragen / da die Antwort fast zugleich in dem Mund gegeben wird / beyzubringen getrachtet / welches Vorhaben auch durch Gottes Gnade hie und da wol angeschlagen ist'.

As for the contents, Höfer posed the alternative of heaven or hell right at the beginning. However, he did not do so to scare children. He just informed and very quickly demonstrated how easy it is to escape hell, that is through knowledge of the Word of God.

[Frage] Wohin kommest du / wann du den Catechismus lernest / und darnach lebest [?] [Antwort] In den FrewdenHimmel.

[Frage] Wohin kommen aber dieselbigen / die den Catechismus nicht lernen wollen [?] [Antwort] In die Hölle.²⁸

[Question] Where do you go when you learn the Catechism and live according to it [?]

[Answer] To heaven.

[Question] But where do those who do not want to learn the Catechism go [?]

[Answer] To hell.

The process of conversion and sanctification was left out, along with the subtle steps in between. What is clearly and explicitly stated is the need for the child to learn the difference between heaven and hell, and how each destination depends on whether they know the catechism or not. In order to foster the child's understanding, Höfer established connections between the questions. He used follow-up questions that are easier to process cognitively than outline questions. Borstius used the same strategy, but Höfer went further. Borstius, for example, checked if the child could answer the statement that one God consists of three persons. Only Höfer asked the follow-up question whether this sounded plausible to the child. With regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, he wrote:

[Frage] Kanst du es begreifen / wie in dem einigen GOtt drey Personen sind [?]

[Antwort] Nein / ich kan es nicht begreifen.²⁹

[Question] Can you understand / how there are three persons in the one God [?]

[Answer] No / I cannot understand.

Here there is no attempt to make something that goes beyond sensual perception or imagination comprehensible.

²⁸ Höfer, *Himmels-Weg*, 1.

²⁹ Idem, 26.

Since Höfer tried to depict a real teaching situation, this also involved asking the type of questions that children might realistically ask. This approach is exemplified by the catechism question on the Lord's Prayer:

[Frage] Warumb sagest du: Vater Vnser / und nicht: Vnser Vater[?]

[Antwort] Es ist beydes recht.³⁰

[Question] Why do you say: Father our / and not: Our Father [?]

[Answer] They are both right.

This question does not come to you if you have already prayed the Lord's Prayer very often. It is the typical question of a child for whom the prayer text is still new and who is surprised at the order of the words, which in reality differs from the normal everyday usage. Höfer made this clear: the correct word order was not important – neither in the answers that the child might give, nor even in the Lord's Prayer itself as a holy text. Höfer is pragmatic here. It did not matter whether the child did not pray 'Vater unser' but 'Unser Vater im Himmel'. Both were acceptable. The text is not sacrosanct, nor is the text of the catechism. Here, too, the person teaching was reminded not to be excessively strict in adhering to the wording, but to ensure that the literal meaning is understood.

Höfer refrained from explicit appeals. The person being taught should not be frightened, only informed. The strong emphasis on the prayer is remarkable. This guided the child to communicate directly with God. The predominant pedagogical verification strategies in the text are rational argumentation and habituation. What is missing is the threat of punishment and the use of literary works such as poems or religious songs (apart from the prayers). With regard to child-directed speech, it is noticeable that Höfer preferred one- or two-word sentences as answers and thus accommodated the language competence of children in the second year of their life.

Jacobus Borstius

The Reformed pastor Jacobus Borstius was a minister in Rotterdam, sympathizing with the Puritan movement. One of his best-known devotional works was his catechism for young children. The work was reprinted many times,

30 Idem, 65.

including as part of the appendix of Bibles.³¹ The first known publication of the catechism was in 1661. Several editions followed under different titles. The second edition from around 1665 is digitally available.³² It is organized as follows:

Title page – Foreword – Questions and answers (The revelation of God and the Economy of Salvation (including the Creed); Baptism: Lord's Supper: Conversion; Ten Commandments; Lord's Prayer – Short Questions and answers for the youngest children. The following topics are dealt with in a coherent catechism conversation (without internal subdivision): 1. God as Creator, 2. Consequence: Obedience in the Will of God (Ten Commandments in the new wording according to Matth 22, 37-40), 3. Disobedience, 4. Consequences of Sin / Heaven and Hell, 5. Jesus as Saviour, 6. Salvation through Jesus and true Belief/Obedience, 7. Sacraments: Baptism, 8. Last Supper, 9. Last Judgement, 10. Sanctuation, 11. Lord's Prayer – Historical Questions (Bible) – Three Psalms.

In the preface, Borstius briefly mentioned three principles of infant catechesis. First, no force should be used. The child should be given a reward as an incentive after the lesson. Second, not too much new material should be taught at once. Borstius recommends repetition of the material studied. Third, the child did not have to reproduce the wording but might answer in their own words if they could pronounce the words better that way. The child was also allowed to answer questions even only partially. The idea behind all of these principles is that Borstius took children's cognitive and linguistic abilities into consideration. Borstius further advised, just as Höfer did, that the teacher might need help to fulfil this role. Family catechesis was embedded in the community and was part of the creation of this community.

What is also to be taken into consideration is the visual illustration of the title page. At least in German-speaking countries, cheap school catechisms had no illustrative decoration. The engraving complemented the text since it shows the four evangelists sitting at a table with their holy scriptures before them, apparently caught in the act of inspiration. This illustration closely relates the catechetical text to the Holy Bible. On a visual level, the text works with the verification strategy of spiritual authority by deriving the catechism

31 Willem J. op't Hof, *The Ice Broken. Puritan Influences on the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century*, vol.1, Kampen: Summum Academic Publications, 2019, 42. To Borstius' biography: 40-49.

32 Jacobus Borstius: *Kort begryp der Christelyke leere; nu veel vermeerderd (...) Met eenige kleyne vragen voor de jonge kinderens*, Amsterdam: Gedrukt by J. en G. Borstius, [1665?]: http://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_100031227250.0x000001

directly from divine revelation. However, this argument is not considered relevant in the main text. Similar to Höfer, Borstius immediately asked personal questions that directly affected the child in their day-to-day environment. God was introduced in the very first question, yet not as the creator of the world, but rather as creator of the children themselves. Borstius also built – just like Höfer – the individual questions logically upon one another.

[Vragen] Wie heeft u geschapen?

[Antwoord] God.

[Vragen] Hoe veel Goden zijnder?

[Antwoord] Een God.

[Vragen] Wie is die God?

[Antwoord] De Vader/ Soon/ en H. Geest/ een Godlijk Wezen / en drie Personen.

[Vragen] Hoe heeft God den mensch geschapen?

[Antwoord] Na zijn Beeld goed en opregt.

[Vragen] Welk is Gods Beeld?

[Antwoord] Gerechtigheyd en Heyligheyd.

[Vragen] Heeft de Mensch da Beeld noch?

[Antwoord] Neen: hy heeft het verloren door de sonde.

[Vragen] Wat is de sonde?

[Antwoord] Ongerechtigheyd.³³

[Question] Who created you?

[Answer] God.

[Question] How many Gods are there?

[Answer] One God.

[Question] Who is this God?

[Answer] The Father/ Son and Holy Ghost/a divine Being/ and three Persons.

[Question] How did God create mankind?

[Answer] In His own image good and upright.

[Question] What is God's Image?

[Answer] Correctness and truthfulness.

[Question] Has the human being still got that image?

[Answer] Nay, he hath lost it by sin.

[Question] What is sin?

[Answer] Unrighteousness.

33 Borstius, *Korte Vragen voor de kleyne KINDEREN*, in: Ibid., unpag., fol. C 1^r.

Sin was derived from Adam, and theologically correct, heaven and hell were subsequently introduced by Borstius. Höfer, in contrast, took a more direct route. He had no intention of frightening children. Borstius (according to the Calvinist doctrine) impressively demonstrated that the child cannot be too sure of being saved from hell.

[Vragen] Voor wien?

[Antwoord] Voor de kwade kinderen en alle godloze.

[Vragen] Wat zyn kwade kinderen?

[Antwoord] Di[e] haer Ouders en Meesters ongehoorzaek zijn / ende Gods Geboden verachten.

[Vragen] Wat straffe lijdenze in de Hel?

[Antwoord] Sy branden in het eeuwige vier.

[Vragen] Wilt gy daer zijn?

[Antwoord] Neen: Ik waer geerne in den Hemel.

[Vragen] Wie sal daer in komen?

[Antwoord] Alle goede kinderen en gelovige menschen.³⁴

[Question] For whom [made God hell]?

[Answer] For the evil children and all godless ones.

[Question] What are evil children?

[Answer] Those who disobey their parents and masters/ and despise God's Commandments.

[Question] What punishment do they receive in hell?

[Answer] They burn in the eternal fire.

[Question] Do you want to be there?

[Answer] No. I wish to be in heaven.

[Question] Who will go there?

[Answer] All good children and believing men.

The question discussed hereafter is how one can become a good child. The text rejected the idea that it is enough to say 'I believe'. What was fundamental in fact is conversion and sanctification. The most important thing was the prayer, and accordingly, the Lord's Prayer was placed at the end of the catechism.

While the questions and answers covered the traditional catechetical themes (although the headlines of the sections do not cite them), the questions for small children covered the same field. However, they were interrelated in

34 Ibidem, fol. C^v.

a rational, successive order: because God is our Creator, we must obey him. Because of our disobedience, we must go to hell. Because of Jesus our Savior, we have the chance to go to heaven under the condition that we believe, obey, use the sacramental gifts, and pray. The catechetical sections which were to be memorized were reduced to the Lord's prayer in section eleven. The learning goal was not to memorize a certain text but to grasp the idea of God and the actual state of sinfulness along with the necessity of attaining salvation. The Ten Commandments were reduced to the double commandment of love (Matth 22, 37-40); the problem that God created man good and that man became evil is reduced to the first sin: the Disobedience of Adam.

Comparable to Borstius is the children's catechism of Jacobus Koelman (1631–1695), a Dutch preacher, writer and translator of religious works who sympathized with Scottish Puritan ideas. Koelman connected questions to the daily life and worldview of the child. The content of the catechism was not composed of general statements, but rather questions that related to direct actions that a child could undertake. The answers were by and large one-word sentences. They were suitable for children who still did not have the ability to speak using a large vocabulary.

[Vragen] Als de kinderen bidden / of vraagjens opzeggen / mogen zy dan wel hier en daar kyken / en wat anders denken?

[Antwoord] Neen.

[Vragen] Moet men geern in de kerck gaan?

[Antwoord] Ja.

[Vragen] Mach men in de Kerk wel speelen/ of eeten / of praten?

[Antwoord] Neen.³⁵

[Question] When the children pray / or say the catechism / may they look here and there / and think about something else?

[Answer] No.

[Question] Should one go to church?

[Answer] Yes.

[Question] Should one play / or eat / or talk in church?

[Answer] No.³⁶

35 Jacobus Koelman, *CATECHISMUS*, | *Over de gronden der Christelijke Religie*. | (...) Bevatende de Vraagjens, welke men de kleyneste Kinderen leeren zoude, in: ders., *DE | PLIGTEN | der | OUDERS*, (...) Nevens | Dryderley Catechismus [2nd printing] 1684, 179-180 [Questions No. 145-147].

36 Jacobus Koelman, *CATECHISMUS*, | *Over de gronden der Christelijke Religie*. | (...) Bevatende de Vraagjens, welke men de kleyneste Kinderen leeren zoude, in: ders., *DE | PLIGTEN | der | OUDERS*, (...) Nevens | Dryderley Catechismus [2nd printing] 1684, 179-180 [Questions No. 145-147].

In contrast to Höfer, numerous preconditions were formulated concerning behaviour in order to enter heaven, which is a dogmatic difference between Lutheranism and Calvinism. This fact at hand resulted in different pedagogical instruction. Höfer formulated implicit appeals, whereas Borstius and Koelman formulated explicit appeals through the threat of (otherworldly) punishment. With regard to child-directed speech, Koelman seemed to target even younger children than Borstius, and accepted one-word answers. They could be comprehended by children even about eighteen months old. His examples were taken from a child's everyday life. Borstius demanded answers that concerned abstract dogmas such as the image of God and the Trinity, which presupposed that the child had an inadequate grasp of semantics. The focus was not on comprehension but on learning a religious vocabulary, which can be trained with children at the age of 2; the child will still grasp the meaning of these words as it grows older.³⁷ Typical of teaching child-directed speech are examples of 'godly' behaviour from the child's living environment.

Nikolaus von Zinzendorf

Nikolaus von Zinzendorf's Herrnhutian catechism for small children was entitled *Lautere Milch der Lehre von Jesu Christo, Das ist Gar einfältige und nach dem Begriff junger und kleiner Kinder eingerichtete Frage-Stücke* (1723).³⁸ The printing was realised by Zinzendorf without official approval. The printing of a second catechism, *Gewisser Grund christlicher Lehre* (1725), also produced by the Reimers printing firm in Löbau, was impeded after the church censor of Löbau rejected it. In consequence, Zinzendorf tried to establish a private printing press.³⁹ From a global perspective, Zinzendorf was very influential as the founder of the Herrnhut Mission. He was also active in religious education and catechesis. Zinzendorf's printed catechism was aimed at children aged from about 18 to 24 months to 3 years. Unprecedented in this scope, this catechism addressed explicitly the earliest stages of childhood development. Although Zinzendorf did not write other pedagogical works, numerous statements of his have been handed down concerning religious education and upbringing. In his *Kinderrede* (children's speech), delivered to pupils of the boys' school and

37 Chad Spiegel, Justin Halberda, *Rapid fast-mapping abilities in 2-year-olds*, in: *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 109/1 (2020), 132–140.

38 Available as a critical edition in: Zinzendorf/Meyer, *Katechismen*.

39 Paul Peucker, *Herrnhut 1722-1723, Entstehung und Entwicklung einer philadelphischen Gemeinschaft* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Pietismus 67), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021, 93.

the pedagogical college in Herrnhut in 1755 on Matth 21,16 ('Out of the mouths of young children and infants you have given yourself praise'), Zinzendorf asserted that the Holy Spirit already dwells in the unborn child and children already hold a dialogue with God, noticeable in their babbling phase a few months after their birth. In parallel to Rousseau, the child in Zinzendorf's eyes is a subject that sets its own standards and no longer needs to be educated. Although Zinzendorf speaks to pupils, he relativizes institutionalized forms of education and upbringing:

Die schule [des Heiligen Geistes, d. Verf.] recommendire ich euch, die muß in euch immer fortgehen. Was die kleinen, die noch nicht sitzen und stehen können, die noch in den windeln liegen, von Jesushaftigkeit je gehabt haben, das muß bleiben, und sich nur von jahr zu jahr mehr auswickeln: so daß ein Knabe von funfzehn jahren noch haben muß, was er in der wiege gehabt hat; er muß es nur ausgedruckt und ausgesprochen krigen, und es besser heraus sagen können.⁴⁰

The school [of the Holy Spirit, author's note] I recommend to you, it must always continue in you. What the little ones, who cannot yet sit or stand, who are still in their nappies, have ever had of Jesus-likeness, that must remain, and only develop more and more from year to year: so that a boy of fifteen must still have what he had in the cradle; he must only express and pronounce it, and be able to say it better.

Zinzendorf's concern for religious education and upbringing was to articulate the given image of God ('Jesus-likeness'). It is remarkable that Zinzendorf attributed religious perceptions and interaction with God to children as young as a few months old. In contrast, the ability to communicate religious experience verbally was an important pedagogical goal in Zinzendorf's view. Zinzendorf did not believe in original sin. Little children 'are all made blessed by the blood that was shed on the stem of the creed: they cannot be claimed until they first think and will for themselves, and renovate the old covenant with sin; and this no little child can do.'⁴¹ For him, the critical age for becoming sinful was the emergence of explicit ego-consciousness in the so-called defiance or autonomy phase,

40 Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, *Sammlung einiger von dem Ordinario Fratrum während seines Aufenthalts in den Teutschen Gemeinen von Anno 1755 bis 1757 gehaltenen Kinder-Reden*, Barby 1758, Die fünfte Rede, 23-28: 25.

41 Idem, 26. 'sind alle durch das Blut, das am stamme des Creutzes vergossen worden ist, selig gemacht: sie können nicht in anspruch genommen werden, bis sie erst selber denken und wollen, und den alten bund mit der sünde renoviren; und das kan kein kleines kind.'

namely the exact age that correlates with language acquisition. Consequently, Zinzendorf asserted that religious education should begin at the age when children begin to think and want for themselves and are thus, in Zinzendorf's view, at risk of losing their likeness to God. At the same time, children begin to speak at this age and are thus enabled to communicate religious feelings or insights on a basic level. Language – especially poetic language – is the medium given by the Holy Spirit, which becomes communicable. That is why Zinzendorf promoted the language development of young children and religious education at the same time. Consistently and unprecedented in this radical viewpoint, this catechism addressed the early language formation process and the cognitive developmental stage of young children.

Although hidden in the casual way of subsequent questions, *Lautere Milch* contains parts of the typical catechism, together with baptism and decalogue: Title page – dedication and dedicational epistle – instructions for the teaching person – prayer – questions and answers: 1. Heaven and Hell, 2. Sin and Salvation, 3. Baptism, 4. Ten Commandments – Children's song – prayer.

The lesson begins with a prayer: 'In the Name of the infant Jesus, who is the greatest Lord, Amen.'⁴² The prayer formulates the paradoxical Christian idea that the small child Jesus is the Lord of all. By addressing Jesus as 'infant', he is introduced as an identification figure close to the child, to whom a relationship can be established. An intimate tone is developed with the use of the diminutive. The first nine questions are leading questions that introduce heaven and hell, the first of which sets a tone of a casual oral interlocution:

[Frage] Was bist du denn, bist du ein Baum, oder ein Vieh, oder ein Mensch, was bist du?

[Antwort] Ich bin ein Mensch.⁴³

[Question] What are you: are you a tree, an animal, or a human, what are you?

[Answer] I am a human.

Even without prior Christian knowledge, the child can answer the question correctly. Zinzendorf expanded the children's vocabulary and introduced terms that are unfamiliar to them, such as body and soul. The term temple is translated

42 Zinzendorf/Meyer, *Katechismen*, 19. 'Im Nahmen des Kindleins JESU, das der allergrößte HErr ist, Amen.'

43 Ibidem.

into everyday language as 'little church' ('Hüttlein').⁴⁴ The easy language and the frequent answer structure of two-word sentences document the effort to express theologically complex facts for the limited vocabulary of young children. Zinzendorf himself employed the vocabulary of children as young as two years old, and it is clear that he used child-directed speech. He avoided abstract words whenever possible. Questions 12 to 18 are aimed at heaven and hell, and because empiricism fails here, Zinzendorf invoked traditional dogmatic knowledge and used suggestive questions to introduce heaven and hell:

[Frage] Hast du wohl vom Himmel reden hören?

[Antwort] Ey ja, vom Himmel hab ich wohl reden hören.

[Frage] Hast du denn auch von der Hölle was gehört?

[Antwort] Ja auch.

{Frage} Ists nicht schön im Himmel?

[Antwort] Ach ja, im Himmel ist schön.⁴⁵

[Question] Have you heard talk of heaven?

[Answer] Yes, I have heard talk of heaven.

[Question] Have you heard anything about hell?

[Answer] Yes, I have.

[Question] Isn't it beautiful in heaven?

[Answer] Oh yes, it's nice in heaven.

The questions in *Lautere Milch* are not intended towards intimidating children. The positive language attitude is evident, for example, in the reformulation of the Ten Commandments where the biblical 'Thou shalt not' becomes: 'The Lord Jesus likes it when you (...)' at the beginning of each commandment ('Der HErr Jesus hats gerne, wenn du [...]').⁴⁶ The last question (no. 78) in *Lautere Milch* reads:

[Frage] Wenn du nun das alles thun wilt, so must du den lieben GOtt, um seinen Heiligen Geist bitten: willst du denn das thun?

[Antwort] Ja, ich wil den lieben GOtt um seinen Heiligen Geist bitten.⁴⁷

44 Idem, 20.

45 Ibidem.

46 Idem, 24-25.

47 Idem, 25.

[Question] If you want to do all this, you must ask God for His Holy Spirit;
will you do that?

[Answer] Yes, I will ask the dear God for His Holy Spirit.

Zinzendorf offered the children two possible answers. Either a simple 'yes' or a longer answer. This is facilitated, as the words needed are spoken to the children by Zinzendorf in the preceding questions. The question-answer structure with feedback effect as a typical means of child-directed speech helps to build vocabulary and express what children at a younger age still lack the words for.

The last question (If you want to do all this, you must ask God for His Holy Spirit; will you do that?) is directed at wishes and intentions. Children have this language competence from the age of 3. The word 'Holy Spirit' is not explained. But further above (question 9) Zinzendorf explained the difference between dead and alive using the word 'spirit': only in the living body is there is a spirit. Zinzendorf introduced the new word 'spirit' by offering the word 'soul' as a synonym. He also explained this word using the example of a living body in comparison with a dead body, because even very young children at that time might know the sight of dead people. Zinzendorf trusted that the children grasp the new word 'spirit' (in the sense of fast mapping) and build up the idea of a 'Holy Spirit' in their mental lexicon. As this example shows, the catechism builds a religious vocabulary in educational communication with very young children. Zinzendorf's infant catechism shows the most sensitive method of the three texts. By means of child-directed speech, he built and expanded the religious vocabulary of the child. The verification strategies of *Lautere Milch* included a pedagogical relationship with free face-to-face conversation, song and prayer as a means of aesthetic authentication. A catechist could not be content with the repetition of answers pre-formulated by adults. He had to bring the child to the point of asking God for the Holy Spirit. When the child was filled with the Holy Spirit, they could have immediate access to divine truths.

Conclusion

Borstius, Höfer, and Zinzendorf were aware of the socio-cognitive development of very young children. All of their catechisms had a similar content: they operate with the basic dualism of heaven and hell, good and evil, and draw ethical conclusions for the child's behaviour. The authors had different social contexts in mind: aristocracy (Zinzendorf), bourgeoisie (Borstius)

and country pastorate (Höfer). They all use child-directed speech: short and foreseeable answers and a basic vocabulary to facilitate the understanding and the pronunciation of words in the process of language acquisition. With that, they base their didactics on empirically observable stages in children's language acquisition. The catechetical question and answer structure is similar to today's methodological approach of "dialogic reading" in kindergarten education. Unlike illustrated children's Bibles – such as Sigismund Evenius' *Christliche Gottselige BilderSchule* (1636) – which were in use only in elite schools, catechisms were widely distributed amongst families and schools. Their language-building potential had a wider reach.

What differs in the catechisms is the extent to which the texts determine their actual performance. While Borstius and Höfer's catechisms were to be performed verbatim as they are written down, Zinzendorf's catechism was to be performed spontaneously. The child-oriented question and answer form used by Zinzendorf (which was to make a career for itself in the course of the century and is still present today as a method of question-developing learning in the classroom) does represent a pedagogical ideal. But such a text, which protocols a spontaneous ideal-typical classroom conversation, can hardly be memorised, reproduced and standardised. What remains in Zinzendorf's catechism as dogmatic doctrine is unfolded in the spiritual song and prayer. Zinzendorf used several pedagogical strategies: touching, singing, telling and interacting. He wrote his text for an enthusiastic teacher. However, a catechism which is performed by non-erudite laymen has to be memorable, plain and standardized. The success of the catechisms of Höfer and Borstius was probably related to the fact that they determined the catechetical communication precisely. Out of the five strategies of verification named above, conditioning, exhortation and scriptural evidence predominate in Höfer's and Borstius' catechisms.

In Zinzendorf's catechism the pedagogical relationship and aesthetic-poetic affirmation is the predominating pedagogical approach. These strategies presuppose the assistance of professional teachers and theologians. Yet professional teachers usually did not engage with children under the age of three. In 1723, *Lautere Milch* was pedagogically too advanced, yet theologically too conservative. The modern religious education of the later eighteenth century was already in the air, but it was to adopt different content: no longer the catechism, but a 'natural religion' ('religion naturelle', as per Rousseau) that opposed Christian revelation. With his Socratic method, Zinzendorf came very close to the new pedagogy of the late eighteenth century. Yet religious

education would gradually evolve in conscious opposition to catechetical instruction.⁴⁸

The catechetical literature published in Germany and the Netherlands around 1700 tailored to early childhood has so far not been studied from the perspectives of book history or the history of education. 'Modern' religious education studies do not begin until the middle of the eighteenth century, in deliberate demarcation from catechetical instruction. As a result, it misses out remarkable sources that show that religious pedagogical concepts stemming from attempts to verify uncertain religious knowledge are older than is commonly known. The importance of language formation to children's catechesis can be explored further thanks to research into pre-eighteenth-century pedagogical methods.

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Zusammenfassung

Katechismen und katechetische Lehr-/Lernmittel sind bibliographisch bislang unzureichend erfasst und erst in Ansätzen digitalisiert, obwohl die massenhaft produzierte und verbreitete Katechismusliteratur des 17. Jahrhunderts das diskursive Umfeld der ‚großen‘ didaktischen Entwürfe jener Zeit darstellt.

50 druckschriftliche Bildungsmedien wurden im Rahmen eines zweimonatigen Forschungsaufenthalts an der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel analysiert, vier davon mittels einer vertieften Textanalyse. Gefragt wurde danach, welche pädagogische Gesamtstrategie der Text anwendet,

um glaubwürdig zu sein und Glauben zu wecken. Fünf Strategien wurden im Textmaterial identifiziert. Die ersten zwei setzen beim Verhalten an durch Verhaltenskonditionierung oder Ermahnung. Die übrigen drei Strategien sind die rationale Argumentation, die pädagogische Beziehung inkl. körperlicher Nähe und die poetisch-ästhetische Ansprache durch Lieder und Gebete. Dadurch sollen die Kinder in die Einstellung kommen, das Gesagte zu glauben.

Im vorliegenden Text werden drei Katechismen analysiert, die Kinder in der Phase der Wortschatzexplosion adressieren (ab 18 Monate bis ca. 2,5 Jahre). Johann Cyriacus Höfer: *Himmels-Weg* (1646), Jacobus Borstius: *Eenige korte vragen voor de kleine kinderen* (1661) und Nikolaus von Zinzendorf: *Lautere Milch* (1723). Die große Mehrheit an Katechismen richtet sich an ältere Kinder und begleitet den *Schriftspracherwerb*. Bei den in diesem Artikel behandelten Texten begleiten die Katechismusgespräche die Phase des *Spracherwerbs*. Alle drei Werke zeigen, dass sie auf Aussprache, Wortschatz und grammatische Fähigkeiten und den Sprachbildungsprozess von Kleinkindern eingehen. Sie weisen damit typische Merkmale für kindgerichtetes Sprechen im Elementarbereich (U3) auf. Unterschiede zeigen sich in der Pädagogik. Höfers und Borstius' Texte rechnen mit einer Unterweisungsperson, die pädagogisch völlig unerfahren ist und bei den basalen methodischen und didaktischen Problemstellungen an die Hand genommen werden möchte. Zinzendorfs Text gibt nur knappe Erläuterungen, ansonsten stellt der Haupttext selbst eine implizite Instruktion dar, insofern er ein ‚best practice‘-Beispiel eines fragend-entwickelnden Lernens im theologischen Gespräch mit sehr jungen Kindern gibt. Der Vergleich von drei Texten aus unterschiedlichen Konfessionen deutet darauf hin, dass sich konfessionelle Unterschiede auf der inhaltlich-dogmatischen Ebene in der Kleinkind-Katechese weniger konturieren, sich dafür aber im jeweiligen pädagogischen Ansatz dokumentieren. Diese Hypothese wäre anhand eines breiteren Textkorpus zu überprüfen.