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**Wandel, Lee Palmer.**

*Reading Catechisms: Teaching Religion.*

Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016. Pp. xxiii, 390. ISBN 978-90-04-30519-9 (hard-cover) €136,00 / US\$189.

In the Reformation era, Christian catechesis underwent an emphatic revival. Printed catechisms proliferated in Europe. Lee Wandel's newest book explains the significance of the proliferation. What she calls codicil catechisms or catechetical codices marked a "fundamental transformation" from medieval to early modern Christianity in the teaching of religion. The mediation of Christian knowledge shifted from "a multitude of objects, performances, enactments, gestures, textures, as well as wine and bread" to a text that through reading and words intellectualized the process of teaching and learning about Christianity (15). "For all catechisms, Catholic and Evangelical," Wandel writes, "words were the focus" (35). Printed words delivered and fixed not only essential Christian knowledge but also Christian identity.

Wandel attaches great importance to what she calls "the spatial logic of the codex." She attends to matters of "spatial organization" (31), great and small: from the taxonomy of catechetical material to the "spatialization of words—on the same line, on the same page, in the same paragraph," for this spatialization "taught different cadences of speaking and different constellations of meaning" (33). Ironically and necessarily, devising a spatial logic for her own codex compelled Wandel to choose for analysis one catechetical taxonomy to the exclusion of others. Although she states that the four central chapters (2 to 5) of her book "follow the logic of no one catechism" (35), her analytical structure—belief, commandments, prayer, sacraments—coincides with Calvin's Genevan Catechism (1542), one of the four catechisms that Wandel principally examines. The other three are the Small Catechism of Peter Canisius (belief, prayer, commandments, sacraments), the Heidelberg Catechism (belief, sacraments, commandments, prayer), and Martin Luther's Small Catechism (commandments, belief, prayer, sacraments).

Wandel's commendable attention to "the visualization of words" (30), richly in evidence through abundant photographs of pages from sixteenth-century catechisms, is not as complete as possible. She begins her analysis of the Ten Commandments in Reformation catechisms with that of Balthasar Hubmaier and observes that "the full text of Exodus" appeared "unbroken by any of the

textual divisions, punctuation, or numbering that had come to shape the teaching of the Ten Commandments” (133). This observation is of the *mise en page* in a twentieth-century English translation. The original *mise en page* of *Ein Christennliche Leertafel* (Nikolsburg, 1526, Bi<sup>v</sup>-Bii<sup>v</sup>) divided the Decalogue into ten paragraphs. Wandel’s claim that in Canisius’s Small Catechism “the Holy Spirit was not what made the Church” (111) is inconsistent with the photograph of a pages from a 1564 edition that she supplies (110). In her translation of Canisius’s exposition of the article of faith in the holy catholic church, she misses the capitalization of the Spirit: “the Church is one, certainly in one spirit of Jesus Christ” (111)—*Ecclessiam esse vnam, nimirum in vno Spiritu Christi Iesu*. This first statement about the article and a subsequent affirmation of the Church’s sanctification *a Spiritu sancto* contradict Wandel’s conclusion. By reconstructing Canisius’s single paragraph into three in translation, she does not reproduce the spatial logic of the exposition. More problems with translating Canisius’s Latin surface here and elsewhere (204, 254).

In chapters 2 to 5, the method of analysis proceeds by generous quotations in translation from the four favoured catechisms with corresponding glosses. This method has advantages and disadvantages. Wandel guides readers through important passages of the catechisms; she points out not only differences but also similarities. While some differences are obvious and significant, such as Luther’s choice to begin catechesis with the Ten Commandments and not with the Apostles’ Creed, others, such as the “different relationships between human beings and God in the separate parts of the Lord’s Prayer” (201), do not yield telling theological divergences. Indeed, despite the many similarities that Wandel reveals within Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed catechesis, she emphasizes difference without exploring the polemical content of catechisms. Even if it is true that “most surviving sixteenth-century catechisms did not engage in polemics, verbal or visual” (327), this rule does not apply to Canisius, Luther’s Large Catechism, or the Heidelberg Catechism, which, in Question 80, condemns the “papal Mass” as “a denial of the unique sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ and an accursed idolatry.” Wandel avoids Question 80.

The main methodological deficit is that the glossing of individual passages from the catechisms does not allow for much penetrating synthesis or a deeper consideration of theological and rhetorical significance. What makes the Christology of the Heidelberg Catechism “distinctive” (106)? What was “distinctive” about its assertion that “Christ’s divinity was ‘in’ his humanity”

(109)? Is such a claim consistent with Chalcedonian Christology? Although Wandel is aware of the differences in numbering the Ten Commandments, she does not relate these to the positions on the use of images in worship of Catholics and Lutherans, on the one hand, and the Reformed, on the other. In the analysis of the Ten Commandments, she twice quotes from the same passage from both Canisius (156, 169) and the Heidelberg Catechism (161–62, 170). A synthetic treatment of idolatry could have prevented unnecessary repetition. The paraphrastic nature of the exposition of the Lord's Prayer in the Heidelberg Catechism, unique among the four catechisms, escapes attention. Quotation from the Heidelberg Catechism's Eucharistic doctrine dwarfs the brief gloss.

Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive treatment of images in catechisms. Images had supplemental value; they did not replace textual teaching. Lutheran catechisms outshone Catholic versions in illustrative material. Images in the former either captured "one moment or multiple moments in the biblical narrative" (324) or modelled "ideal contemporary practice" (325). An illustration (fig. 126) from a 1531 edition of Luther's Large Catechism portrays Jesus carrying the cross, but this is not an image "of Calvary" (314). In a woodcut from Johannes Spangenberg's adaptation of Luther's Large Catechism (fig. 127), is Jesus in Gethsemane "praying to the chalice" (314) or before the chalice? Praying to a chalice suggests idolatry.

Wandel's book successfully underlines the impetus in the catechisms of the Reformation era to render Christian knowledge graphically so as to construct "a Church of specific knowledge" (351–52). Of course, catechisms were also the product of contending Churches of specific knowledge. How they contributed to "the fragmentation of Christendom" (18) while at the same time sharing Christian knowledge deserves to be investigated within a broad scope of sixteenth-century publications. Despite the shift to textual knowledge, we should not be surprised if more research reveals or recalls the persistence of a pedagogy that was not exclusively textual to inculcate Christian knowledge and identity among illiterate or semi-literate learners.

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