

of babes. Every child, as soon as he was able to learn, was taught the law until he was ten years of age; after that period, if he was tolerably versed in the Pentateuch, he was instructed in the Talmud until the age of fifteen, when he entered upon the interpretation of the more difficult or disputable passages of the sacred Text. At the age of thirteen he was publicly examined in a place of worship before an assembly of ten persons. Before this all offences that he might have committed were imputable to his father, but from this period he himself was held responsible for his own conduct and answerable for his own sins. This catechetical examination some have supposed our Saviour underwent in the Temple when he was twelve years of age, when his parents found him "sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions—and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers."

From this practice of the Jews, we are informed, by a Father of the Church who lived in the fourth century, that the early Christians derived the custom of catechising children. In the first age of the Church, children born of Christian parents were commonly baptized in their infancy, and admitted into catechetical schools as soon as they were capable of learning the first rudiments of Christianity. In process of time, however, it was thought expedient to catechise the children in the churches in the presence of the congregation. Both these practices were almost universally neglected for some time previous to the period of the Reformation, when the latter custom was revived. A very little reflection is sufficient to shew us that since the establishment of Sunday Schools both the practices already alluded to are combined in the present mode of giving religious instruction to children. It is not our intention, nor can it now be necessary to shew the coincidence between our catechism and the most ancient forms extant, it will be sufficient just to state that like the rest of our liturgy it is compiled from those which were found by the English Reformers to be the most scriptural.

Having premised thus much we shall now proceed to the examination of the Catechism itself.

The Catechism begins with the familiar questions of asking the name and who gave the name, which naturally leads the persons catechised to make mention of their baptism, the time at which our names are usually given us—not that giving the name is any necessary part of the Sacrament of Baptism, but because it was the custom of the Jews to name the child when it was circumcised, and the first Christians imitated the practice. And although it may be considered of no value in itself, yet it might be a most useful custom, were we but to remember what it tends to remind us of—that we were dedicated to Christ when our Christian name was given us—that the most solemn promises were then made for