

The World of the Early Christians in Carthage Helping People become Christians in an Openly Hostile Environment

I. The Deaths of Perpetua and Felicitas (March 7, 203)

- In 203, Roman emperor Severius forbade any new conversions to Judaism or Christianity for fear of upsetting the goddess Isis who he thought was more profitable to the Roman Empire.
- Perpetua was a young, aristocratic woman with a small child. She spoke Greek, was educated, and had a young child.
- Her family was pagan and her father bitterly resisted her desire to become a Christian and take several household slaves with her, especially Felicitas.
- An account of her martyrdom, written by her friend and mentor Saturus:
 - Coliseum in Carthage is the setting. Leading into it were two entrances: the gate of death for those facing death and the gate of life (for the victorious gladiators).
 - March 7th was the birthdate of Severius' son and he decreed that there should be games involving the shedding of blood in his honor – a libation to the state gods and in this case to Isis.
 - Perpetua and Felicitas were to be one of the “sacrifices” for this occasion and they were going to be attacked by a very hungry cow with sharp horns. They were stripped naked and covered with nets. This was found offensive so they were dressed in loose robes.
 - They survived the cow and were taken over to stand by the gate of life (irony) where they were received by Rusticus who was a catechumenate who was not yet baptized (so he wasn't facing death).
 - She spoke to the other Christians and encouraged them to stand fast and face their coming martyrdom with courage.
 - When the sword missed her carotid artery, she took matters into her own hand and guided the blade to finish the job.

II. The Growth and Spread of the Christian Movement

A. Some Numbers (Rodney Stark, *Cities of God*, 67...at 3.4% p.a. from 33 CE)

50	1,397
100	7,434
150	39,560
200	107,863
250	1,120,246
300	5,961,290

B. Jews and "God-Fearers" (Concentric Circles from the Synagogues)

See Map for Extent in 300

C. Classes: Proletarians, Merchants, Aristocrats

D. Carthage in 200 AD: Squalor, Crowding, Disease, Fire

Tenements (3-5 stories) closely packed, "streets" less than 10 feet wide
Residential buildings: wood frame, plastered over (frequent collapse)
1 residence in 25 an aristocratic palace of stone (atrium, fountain etc.)
Tenement Apartments: charcoal cooking, no chimneys, frequent fires
Water: piped in by aqueduct but stored in public fountains (in hot sun)
 Women carry water home in jugs
 No spare water for washing, no soap (public baths for top 3%)
 Fountain water stagnant, infested
Food - wheat/barley bread for 97% of population, some rotten meat
Sanitation: A few public latrines, otherwise chamberpots (into streets)

"Tenement cubicles were smoky, dark, often damp, and always dirty. The smell of sweat, urine, feces and decay permeated everything: dust, rubbish and filth accumulated, and finally bugs ran riot" (Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 154).

Water and food-born diseases endemic: dystentery, intestinal parasites
Infectious diseases in 100 AD: malaria, mumps, flu, diptheria
Half of children die before 2 years
Life expectancy at birth 25 years (at age 25 maybe 60?)

Frequent ethnic riots, fires, earthquakes, famines
Average: One major disaster every 15 years per city on average

- Description of Carthage: Carthage was not a pleasant place to live in the early 3rd century. Most city populations lived in 3-5 story islands – apartment blocks – and the streets were densely packed and very narrow (about 10 feet). The buildings were wood frame and stucco covered and thus always collapsing. Families lived in one room apartments. No chimneys for charcoal cooking so frequent fires. The only real attraction of living there was jobs.
- Life expectancy at birth was 25 years if you made it to age 2 years old. If you made it to 25 you may make it to 60. Most children died before the age of 2. Really bad sanitation, disease and insect infestation was rampant.
- This is the environment of Christianity in the 3rd century. A community of mutual care like Christianity would be highly attractive in such a setting. By the middle of the century the movement worked its ways into the villages and towns. Prior to this it was largely an urban movement.

III. Greco-Roman Attitudes

A. The Greco-Roman Worldview

The Universe Is Geocentric, Chaotic ("Matter Is the Matter"), Hostile, Unfixable
The One High God (If Any) is Infinitely Distant, Pure Spirit, Inert, Impassive
Human Beings Are Souls Trapped in Bodies, Victims, Shamed
Salvation Means the Soul's Escape at Death (Individualistic, Chancy)
Ethics - Imperial Law, Rigid Self-Control for Top 2%, Dog Eat Dog
History Is Cyclic, No Goal or Purpose or Meaning, No Story-Teller or Overall Story

B. The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers: "Hunker Down"

C. The State Gods: Ritual Without Relationship

The Roman Imperial Deities: Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus etc.
Carthage: The Phoenecian Heritage (Baal Hamon and *Dea Caelestis*)
Topheth in Carthage: 20,000 Graves of Sacrificed Infants

D. The Oriental Mystery Cults: The Hope of Immortality

Attis and Cybele: dervish mania, eunuch priests
Isis and Osiris: "I conquer Fate and Fate obeys me"
The New Military Cult of Mithras: "Climb the Ladder, Men!"

- What kind of hope did people have in Perpetua's level of society? There was access to education and philosophy which taught you that the best you can do is hunker down and not care. Don't get your emotions involved in this world, you'll only be disappointed. Just achieve apathy. For the elite as well as the masses, there was a great temptation to hedge your bets and to get as much help as you could to get out of this cosmic septic tank at least after death. The roman gods were seen to be celestial beings within the universe (Paul called them principalities and powers). They were impersonal and there was only ritual, ceremonial connection in appeasing them.
 - Child sacrifice: babies were sacrificed to appease the Ashtereth (female consort of Baal) and Baal. Carthegian religion and its effect on Carthegian Christianity.
 - Isis and Osiris from Egypt promised "I conquer fate and fate obeys me" meaning all the principalities and powers and all human empires are at her bidding.
 - Mithras was an offshoot of Zoroastrianism. It grew out of a local hero cult. Mithras was a great warrior who performed great feats on behalf of the human race. At death he was taken up to the sun and celebrated a divine banquet with the sun. They practiced baptism in blood which ensured imbibing the life force of Mithras which ensured you would escape at death.
- Catechesis becomes extraordinarily indispensable in people transferring from this world with those assumptions to the Christian world with its assumptions.

IV. Christian Attitudes

A. The Christian Worldview

The Universe is Geocentric, Created Good, Rebellious ("Matter Not the Matter"), Fixable
 The One High God Acts in History and Is "Personal," Active, Loving
 Humans Are God's Image, Souls/Bodies, Sociable and Accountable, Rebellious
 Salvation Means Resurrection and Glory, Pardon, New Life in Community Beginning Now
 Ethics - The Character of God, Law and Grace, Power of the Spirit
 History Is an Arrow Not a Cycle, Goal/Purpose/Meaning, Story-Teller and Story

- The Christian mind-set: believed that the universe is not the problem. It is in disarray but it's not the source of the problem. Father Son and Holy Spirit live in a community of active love and they wish to share this community with conscious and rational and self-determining creatures (people who choose to be in relation with them). God called His creation good and therefore it is fixable. History is not an eternal cycle, it's an arrow and God intervenes in history at crucial moments. God is "personal". Human beings are not victims but by God's designation, we are God's icons in the universe. We have honor and dignity because we are created in His image. It's so counter-intuitive to the "shame culture" of the day. The hope of the resurrection of the body also flew in the face of the worldview that all matter was bad and to be escaped. There is a rationale for ethics (which doesn't exist in the pagan world). It's found in the life of the triune God. There was no reality in the pagan world that "agape" could express. [Les is helping us understand how opposed these two world views were in that day.]

B. Social Attractions of Christianity: Mutual Care and the Status of Women

- One characteristic of Christianity which was particularly attractive was the aspect of mutual care: During the plagues, Christians stayed rather than fleeing to the country. Simple nursing care and hydration which the Christians provided not only for their immediate family but for their community greatly increased the chances of survival.
- Another social attraction of Christianity was the status of women: Any city would have a garbage dump outside where daily, babies in general and girl babies in particular would be disposed of. Many families didn't want to raise more than one girl because of the expense of the dowry. Female infanticide was taken for granted. Christians tried to get out to the dumps and retrieve these girls, take them home and raise them. Abortion was also forbidden in the Christian community which was almost always father induced and very dangerous. Also, the practice of 25 year old men taking 12 year old "wives" to serve as basically brood mares was not acceptable among Christians.

C. A Cognitive Minority, "Atheists," Hence Persecution

64-249 CE:	Sporadic, Local, Reactive (viz. Tacitus, Suetonius), <i>Religio Illicita</i>
249-258:	Deliberate, Empire-Wide, Crisis-Related (Emperors Decius, Valerian)
258-304	Two Generations of Peace
304-311	The Great Persecution
312	The Conversion of Constantine

V. Early Christianity in Carthage

Carthage a Large Port (Grain to Rome) with 100,000+ Population in early 200s
 Significant Jewish Community (Jews/Christians Share Cemetery)

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (9.14) Mentions North African Christians by 150 AD
House Churches of Christian Immigrants by Geographical/Linguistic Origin
Spread to Small Towns Outside Carthage by 180 AD (Martyrs of Scillium)
North African Christianity Independent of Rome

- When the empire was collapsing in the mid 200's, there were 29 emperors in the last half of the century. During the rules of two of them, it was decided that everyone MUST worship the Romans gods and this sparked the first empire-wide persecution of Christians. There was then a generation or two of peace and then came the great persecution.
- More characteristics of Carthage and its Christian Community: Carthage was a city of about 100,000. It was closed within walls which packed the people in such a way as to rival Bombay today. Dense population. There was a significant Jewish community. Christians and Jews shared the same cemetery. The literate class was only 2-3% of the population. House churches were organized probably by geographic or linguistic origin. There are no church buildings. North African Christianity is independent of Rome.

VI. Influences on Christianity in Carthage

A. The Phoenecian Heritage (Think Philistine)

Domination of Semitic Baal Hamon in North African Paganism: Angry Old Man
Dea Caelestis: The Compensatory Mother Goddess (Ecstasy, Drunkenness)
Human Beings as Slaves Owing Sacrifice (Human?) to Gods
Atmosphere of Fear, Power-Differential, Hence Rigid and Extreme Religion
Legal Perfection and Martyrdom as Norm in North African Christianity

In Phoenicia, humans were considered slaves of the gods. Shamed, owing human sacrifice to the gods, etc. In this religion there is a huge sense of anxiety and power-differential between us and the gods. You have to appease the gods just so or they will retaliate. Extreme religion that costs a lot (like a baby) because the gods are so angry. It's an obsessive-compulsive religion and this influence has to be tempered in North African Christianity.

B. The Jewish Heritage

Likelihood of Jewish-Christian Competition Still in 200 (Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*)
Jews in Carthage Call Christians "Nazarenes" Not *Christiani*: Rival Synagogues?
Importance of Law and Ritual Cleanliness in Carthaginian Christianity

Jewish Heritage: Jewish/Christian competition existed. Proselytizing went both ways. And yet they shared the same cemetery! Some may have framed Christianity as the alternative synagogue and speculatively, the importance of law and ritual cleanliness in early Christianity may have had something to do with the close connection of the synagogue.

C. The Montanist Movement (Asia Minor 172 AD)

Montanus, Maximilla, Priscilla in Hierapolis
 Millenarianism: New Jerusalem to Descend in Pepuza Very Soon
 "New Prophecy" Claims to Supplant Jesus and Apostolic Writings
 Rigid Moralism and Urge to Martyrdom
 Claim to Be the True Church
 Christian Communities Around Mediterranean Take Time to Evaluate
 Montanist House Churches Coexist with Others in Carthage in 200
 ("Great Church" Eventually Rejects Montanism: Canon, True Church Claims)

The Montanist movement: They talked about 3 ages in God's salvation history. The age of the Father (OT), the age of the Son (Jesus up until the conversion of Montanist) and the age of the Spirit (these latter days). We're in a 3rd and new dispensation. They believed their new prophecy supersedes the revelation of Jesus Christ. This, along with Marcion, helps give the impetus to the recognition of the Christian Canon of Scripture. Also rigid moralism and an urge to martyrdom. They produced more martyrs per capita than any other group within the 2nd century church. They also claimed to be the "True Church." In Carthage, there was a powerful influence of the Montanist movement. Montanist house churches co-existed with other house churches well into the 200's.

VII. Perpetua and Felicitas Again: March 7, 203

- Famous for : 1) her dramatic death, 2) her aristocratic background (social rank), 3) the counter-cultural relationship between her and her slave girl Felicitas – for her to die alongside a slave girl was outrageous and got people's attention. The question arises – what kind of network of Christian communities can produce a Perpetua and a Felicitas?
- In an explicitly hostile context, how do Christian communities form character that can withstand the ambient environment with all its temptation and its scorn (to be a Christian in North Africa was shameful).
- One of Les' stories about the process of catechesis in Carthage – it was about turning a pagan into a Christian who can withstand the pressure of the day and culture.

Community Formation in Carthage

I. Community Formation: How Does a Persecuted Minority Shape Character?

- Many initial contact points between pagans and Christianity occurred in a sick room and/or after some sort of "**power encounter**" with the Holy Spirit.
- **A "12-step"-like program** -- There was an involved process before one was even allowed to be enrolled as a catechumenate (a "learner"). Had to determine if there was too much static in one's mind and spirit to be able to hear the Word – which would require prayer and exorcisms.

- Examined the individual’s lifestyle, occupation, pastimes. The pre-questions would be, “Why are you interested?” “Have you had any experience of God (felt the power of God in any way)?”
- Addictions are examined (blood, violence, theater – where actual murders and fornication occur on stage, brothels, and other addictive behaviors) – these are addressed with prayer and exorcisms for week maybe even months before they can advance.
- Personal sins are examined (do you beat or rape your slaves). It’s like a good bible-based 12 step program.
- Next they are given **hands-on on-the-job training** – taken on pastoral calls (visiting the sick, prisoners, taking food to widows, etc.).
- **Learning to testify** – tell their story of their encounter with God.
- After these initial examinations, they would begin to **examine basic Bible texts**.
- Next he will be invited to **Sunday worship** and will be allowed to stay until the time for communion.
- There are huge issues of cultural differences: Why don’t Christians attend the games in the arena? Why don’t Christians practice female infanticide?
- The **Godparent** was the character witness for the baptismal candidate.
- Once enrolled as a catechumen, the house church judges whether you are ready to get serious to learn about baptism and the Eucharist. During the great fast (40 days before Easter), those discerned to be ready for baptism begin prayer and fasting in earnest along with exorcisms. Learning the Creed (which is considered sacred, holy) was serious business which could only happen after due diligence in examining the candidate. This is the **stage of mystagogy** – the preparation for the holy mysteries. These were considered potentially dangerous in the wrong hands.

II. Early One Summer Morning in Carthage (200 AD)

III. The Elements of Catechesis

A. Behaving

Initial Scrutiny: Experiences of God?
 Addressing Addictions: Exorcism
 Confronting and Confessing Personal Sins
 Prayer and Mentoring
 Experiencing Practical Ministry (Visiting Sick, Prisoners, Widows etc.)
 Learning to Testify

B. Beginning to Belong: Gradual Inclusion in the House-Church

The Story of God
 Basic Bible Passages

Christian Cultural Critique
Issues in the Congregation (e.g. Class, Gender)
Personal Questions

C. Introduction to Believing

Learning the Creed
Preparing for Baptism and the Eucharist
(Alan Kreider, "Baptism and Catechesis as Spiritual Formation," Andrew Walker and Luke Bretherton, editors, *Remembering Our Future*, Paternoster Press, Milton Keynes, England 2007, pages 170-206...my rephrasing and rearranging with the author's permission)

IV. Catechesis in Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition (215)

The first fourteen chapters deal with such matters as the Eucharist and the ordination of bishops and elders. Chapters 15 through 20 address the process by which inquirers into the Christian faith are prepared for baptism.

15 Those who are newly brought forward to hear the Word shall first be brought before the teachers at the house, before all the people enter. **2**Then they will be questioned concerning the reason that they have come forward to the faith. Those who bring them will bear witness concerning them as to whether they are able to hear. **3**They shall be questioned concerning their life and occupation, marriage status, and whether they are slave or free. **4**If they are the slaves of any of the faithful, and if their masters permit them, they may hear the Word. If their masters do not bear witness that they are good, let them be rejected. **5**If their masters are pagans, teach them to please their masters, so that there will be no blasphemy. **6**If a man has a wife, or a woman has a husband, let them be taught to be content, the husband with his wife, and the wife with her husband. **7**If there is a man who does not live with a woman, let him be taught not to fornicate, but to either take a wife according to the law, or to remain as is. **8**If there is someone who has a demon, such a one shall not hear the Word of the teacher until purified.

16 They will inquire concerning the works and occupations of those who are brought forward for instruction. **2**If someone is a pimp who supports prostitutes, he shall cease or shall be rejected. **3**If someone is a sculptor or a painter, let them be taught not to make idols. Either let them cease or let them be rejected. **4**If someone is an actor or does shows in the theater, either he shall cease or he shall be rejected. **5**If someone teaches children (worldly knowledge), it is good that he cease. But if he has no (other) trade, let him be permitted. **6**A charioteer, likewise, or one who takes part in the games, or one who goes to the games, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. **7**If someone is a gladiator, or one who teaches those among the gladiators how to fight, or a hunter who is in the wild beast shows in the arena, or a public official who is concerned with gladiator shows, either he shall cease, or he shall be rejected. **8**If someone is a priest of idols, or an attendant of idols, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. **9**A military man in authority must not execute men. If he is ordered, he must not carry it out. Nor must he take military oath. If he refuses, he shall be rejected. **10**If someone is a military governor, or the ruler of a city who wears the purple, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. **11**The catechumen or

faithful who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God. **12**The prostitute, the wanton man, the one who castrates himself, or one who does that which may not be mentioned, are to be rejected, for they are impure. **13**A magus shall not even be brought forward for consideration. **14**An enchanter, or astrologer, or diviner, or interpreter of dreams, or a charlatan, or one who makes amulets, either they shall cease or they shall be rejected. **15**If someone's concubine is a slave, as long as she has raised her children and has clung only to him, let her hear. Otherwise, she shall be rejected. **16**The man who has a concubine must cease and take a wife according to the law. If he will not, he shall be rejected.

17 Catechumens will hear the word for three years. **2**Yet if someone is earnest and perseveres well in the matter, it is not the time that is judged, but the conduct.

18 When the teacher finishes his instruction, the catechumens will pray by themselves, separate from the faithful. **2**The women will also pray in another place in the church, by themselves, whether faithful women or catechumen women. **3**After the catechumens have finished praying, they do not give the kiss of peace, for their kiss is not yet pure. **4**But the faithful shall greet one another with a kiss, men with men, and women with women. Men must not greet women with a kiss. **5**All the women should cover their heads with a pallium, and not simply with a piece of linen, which is not a proper veil.

19 After the prayer, the teacher shall lay hands upon the catechumens, pray, and dismiss them. Whether such is one of the laypeople or of the clergy, let him do so. **2**If any catechumens are apprehended because of the Name of the Lord, let them not be double-hearted because of martyrdom. If they may suffer violence and be executed with their sins not removed, they will be justified, for they have received baptism in their own blood.

20 When they are chosen who are to receive baptism, let their lives be examined, whether they have lived honorably while catechumens, whether they honored the widows, whether they visited the sick, and whether they have done every good work. **2**If those who bring them forward bear witness for them that they have done so, then let them hear the Word. **3**From the time at which they are set apart, place hands upon them daily so that they are exorcised. When the day approaches on which they are to be baptized, let the bishop exorcise each one of them, so that he will be certain whether each has been purified. **4**If there are any who are not purified, they shall be set apart. They have not heard the Word in faith, for the foreign spirit remained with each of them. (See www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html)

V. Baptism and The Eucharist in Hippolytus

An Order for Baptism

21 At the hour in which the cock crows, they shall first pray over the water. **2**When they come to the water, the water shall be pure and flowing, that is, the water of a spring or a flowing body of water. **3**Then they shall take off all their clothes. **4**The children shall be baptized first. All of the children who can answer for themselves, let them answer. If

there are any children who cannot answer for themselves, let their parents answer for them, or someone else from their family. **5**After this, the men will be baptized. Finally, the women, after they have unbound their hair, and removed their jewelry. No one shall take any foreign object with themselves down into the water.

6At the time determined for baptism, the bishop shall give thanks over some oil, which he puts in a vessel. It is called the Oil of Thanksgiving. **7**He shall take some more oil and exorcise it. It is called the Oil of Exorcism. **8**A deacon shall hold the Oil of Exorcism and stand on the left. Another deacon shall hold the Oil of Thanksgiving and stand on the right.

9When the elder takes hold of each of them who are to receive baptism, he shall tell each of them to renounce, saying, "I renounce you Satan, all your service and all your works." **10**After he has said this, he shall anoint each with the Oil of Exorcism, saying, "Let every evil spirit depart from you." **11**Then, after these things, the bishop passes each of them on nude to the elder who stands at the water. They shall stand in the water naked. A deacon, likewise, will go down with them into the water. **12**When each of them to be baptized has gone down into the water, the one baptizing shall lay hands on each of them, asking, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?" **13**And the one being baptized shall answer, "I believe." **14**He shall then baptize each of them once, laying his hand upon each of their heads. **15**Then he shall ask, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose on the third day living from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, the one coming to judge the living and the dead?" **16**When each has answered, "I believe," he shall baptize a second time. **17**Then he shall ask, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Church and the resurrection of the flesh?" **18**Then each being baptized shall answer, "I believe." And thus let him baptize the third time.

19Afterward, when they have come up out of the water, they shall be anointed by the elder with the Oil of Thanksgiving, saying, "I anoint you with holy oil in the name of Jesus Christ." **20**Then, drying themselves, they shall dress and afterwards gather in the church.

An Order for Holy Communion

4...Then the deacons shall present the oblation to (the bishop) and he shall lay his hand upon it, and give thanks with the entire council of elders, saying:

3 "The Lord be with you."

And all reply:

"And with your spirit."

The bishop says:

"Lift up your hearts."

The people respond:

"We have them with the Lord."

The bishop says:

"Let us give thanks to the Lord."

The people respond:

"It is proper and just."

The bishop then continues:

4 "We give thanks to you God, through your beloved son Jesus Christ, whom you sent to us in former times as Savior, Redeemer, and Messenger of your Will, **5**who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all, and in whom you were well-pleased, **6**whom you sent from heaven into the womb of a virgin, who being conceived within her, was made flesh, and appeared as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin. **7**It is he who, fulfilling your will and acquiring for you a holy people, extended his hands in suffering, in order to liberate from sufferings those who believe in you. **8**Who, when he was delivered to voluntary suffering, in order to dissolve death, and break the chains of the devil, and tread down hell, and bring the just to the light, and set the limit, and manifest the resurrection, **9**Taking the bread, and giving thanks to you, said, "Take, eat, for this is my body which is broken for you." Likewise the chalice, saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. **10**Whenever you do this, do this (in) memory of me."

11 "Therefore, remembering his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the chalice, giving thanks to you, who has made us worthy to stand before you and to serve as your priests. **12**And we pray that you would send your Holy Spirit to the oblation of your Holy Church. In their gathering together, give to all those who partake of your holy mysteries the fullness of the Holy Spirit, toward the strengthening of the faith in truth, **13**that we may praise you and glorify you, through your son Jesus Christ, through whom to you be glory and honor, Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit, in your Holy Church, now and throughout the ages of the ages. Amen."

www.bombaxo.com/hippolytus.html (slightly edited by LF)

VII. Community Formation in the Early Church

- A. High Contrast Between Community and Hostile Society (Belief, Behavior)
- B. Great Demands on Inquirers
- C. Priorities: Behaving, Belonging, Believing
- D. Vivid Rituals of Commitment and Continuity
- E. Trustworthy Mutual Ministry

Questions

1. Similarities and Differences between Christians in Carthage and Here/Now?

The Church in the West can no longer suppose that the regular schools or the organs of public opinion or the institutions of the arts or sciences instruct people in a way (they recognize as Christian). Rather, we must assume the contrary: that they will inculcate ideological naturalism, moral relativism, and the superiority of all other religions to Christianity. The church's catechetical institutions are in ruins because we have not in practice fully recognized this situation. What we must understand is that we have, in most respects, returned to the situation of the ancient church. Now as then, those to be integrated into the life of the church come from an alien culture; the church's life is a shock and a puzzlement for them; and sharing it is a nearly unsustainable strain. *The catechumenate is again mandated in its original function and intent.*

(Robert W. Jenson, "Catechesis for Our Time," Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, editors, *Marks of the Body of Christ*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999, page 142: italics original).

2. Elements of Catechetical Process Useful for Today?