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# MARTIN LUTHER'S SMALL AND LARGE CATECHISMS



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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE CATECHISMS

God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. . . . Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching?

—Martin Luther (LC Preface 16)

### Echoing the Truth: What Does *Catechesis* Mean?

The term *catechism* comes from the Greek word *katecho*, which literally means to “sound back and forth.” (The word *echo* also comes from this Greek word.) Thus the “catechetical” method of teaching is rooted in classical Greek and Roman educational methods and was used throughout the Middle Ages down to Luther’s time: The teacher asks a question; the student responds with a fixed and set answer, and so it goes, echoing back and forth. Repetition and recitation

of the material is used to instill in the student the words, phrases, and concepts being taught. An explanation is also added, according to the student's level of understanding. In this way, the Christian Church taught, or *catechized*, the faith. The students learning the faith are known as *catechumens*, and they receive careful and thorough *catechesis* (instruction) in the Christian faith.

### The Catechism in the Middle Ages

In Luther's day there were any number of catechisms and catechetical materials. They were often extremely extensive and required the young people to memorize not only the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, but also a list of seven spiritual gifts, seven cardinal virtues, the seven Sacraments, seven words of mercy, the eight beatitudes of God, and on and on and on. Luther cleared away the medieval clutter and retained the core texts of the catechisms: The Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. He then added explanations to Baptism, Absolution, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Instead of prayers to Mary and the saints, Luther provided prayers for the beginning and end of the day, and also prayers before and after meals. Luther's goal with his Small Catechism was to provide something that was much shorter, easier to

teach and to learn, memorable, and to the point. The Large Catechism was designed by Luther to provide more information and further material both for teachers and learners. Luther's hope was that students who had mastered the Small Catechism would move on to the Large Catechism.

### The Origin of the Catechisms

Martin Luther was first and foremost a Bible professor at the University of Wittenberg, but he was also a parish preacher who served at both the city and castle churches in Wittenberg. In 1516 Luther preached a thorough sermon series on the Ten Commandments. In 1517 he preached a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer and wrote a short explanation of the Ten Commandments to help the members of the parish confess their sins. In 1518 Luther published his exposition of the Ten Commandments. In the next two years he published other short tracts based on his catechetical sermons. In 1520 he gathered these resources together and had them published under the title *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer*.

Luther wanted this book to serve the laypeople. While Luther built on catechetical customs, his work stood out as a clear departure from much of medieval catechesis. There were three

key reasons for this: First, Luther removed a lot of the additional materials that had accumulated throughout the Middle Ages and focused primarily on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, urging that if these three things were learned well, the most important truths of Christianity would be known. Second, Luther very intentionally arranged the catechism so that the Commandments would be first, then the Creed, then the Lord's Prayer. Third, Luther divided the Apostles' Creed into only three parts, not the traditional twelve parts. Luther wanted to focus clearly on the three persons of the Holy Trinity and their respective saving work. Luther's little 1520 book was the foundation for his later catechetical work.

In 1525 Luther formally commissioned what he called the "children's catechism" (*catechismus puerorum*), using the term *catechism* for the first time. He directed his colleagues Justus Jonas and John Agricola to do this work. Luther felt he was too busy to do it himself, but as it turned out, Jonas and Agricola also did not do the job to Luther's satisfaction.

Luther continued preaching each year on the basic parts of the catechism and added sermons equally clear and simple on the Sacraments:

Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. In 1528 he again took over catechism instruction in the parish church in Wittenberg and preached three series of sermons that year—in May, September, and December—each containing about ten sermons. These thirty sermons would serve Luther well a year later, in 1529, when he finally wrote the catechisms.

What ignited Luther's passion to put the catechisms in writing was a visit he had made to Saxony at the urging of its Elector. Luther was horrified to see how bad things were in the Saxon churches. He realized how essential it was for him to get to work on his catechisms. Here is what he said:

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people . . . have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors are altogether incapable, and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians. . . . Yet they cannot recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live like dumb brutes and irrational swine. (Bente, 156)

Luther finished the Large Catechism in March 1529, and in mid-April the first copies were in print. The title was simply *German Catechism, Martin Luther*. He finished the Small Catechism in May 1529. Its title was *The Small Catechism for Ordinary Pastors and Preachers. Martin Luther. Wittenberg*. It was an instant best-seller, printed and reprinted many times in Wittenberg and other cities throughout Germany. In early 1529 Luther also had large posters printed containing the chief parts of the catechism. These posters were hung up on walls in churches, schools, and homes for the people to recite together.

#### Marriage and Baptismal Booklets

After the first printing of the catechisms, Luther added a few things, such as a short form for Confession, and orders for baptismal and wedding services. The main portions of the Small Catechism, first produced in 1529, were never essentially changed.

When the Book of Concord was prepared in 1580, there were disagreements about what to include with the Small Catechism. The Marriage and Baptismal Booklets had, early on, been included in editions of the Small Catechism and were particularly well liked by the Saxons and

others in Northern Germany. Therefore, in the first drafts of the Book of Concord, the Marriage Booklet and the Baptismal Booklet were included as part of Luther's Small Catechism. However, Jacob Andreae explained that their inclusion was the result of an editorial mistake, perhaps by a proofreader at the printer. Andreae removed them, leaving only a bit of the liturgical service (but not the doctrinal portions of those documents). Because Andreae left a portion of the Marriage and Baptismal Booklets in the book, Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel noticed and expressed his concern. Prince John George of Brandenburg also wanted them included, insisting that the Small Catechism be printed in the Book of Concord "without truncation." While the Saxons and others in Northern Germany wanted both of these little booklets included in the Small Catechism, Lutherans in Southern Germany did not. They regarded them as non-essential to the unity of the Church and expressed concerns about the exorcism in the baptismal rite. Additional concerns were expressed about mandating a precise liturgical order for Baptism and marriage and also for making a precise liturgical order mandatory and part of the Lutheran Church's formal Confessions.

Martin Chemnitz was able to resolve the disagreements by suggesting that the official copies of the Book of Concord deposited in the princely courts and libraries not contain the Marriage and Baptismal Booklets. Instead, the official copies would include blank pages where these could be inserted if a Lutheran territory wanted to have them as part of its church order. For example, two of the three official copies of the 1580 Book of Concord deposited in the state archives of Saxony, in Dresden, do not include the Marriage and Baptismal Booklets. Soon the Book of Concord was printed without the blank pages to mark where the Marriage and Baptismal Booklets would be in the Small Catechism. For these reasons, they were not included in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* or this compilation of the catechisms, even as they were not included in the *Concordia Triglotta*.

The text of the Small Catechism in this work is the 1986 translation. The text of the Large Catechism is from the 1580 German edition of the Book of Concord, which was the base text for the catechisms in the *Concordia Triglotta*.

## TIMELINE

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- 1516 Luther preaches sermon series on Ten Commandments
- 1517 Luther preaches sermon series on Lord's Prayer; posts Ninety-five Theses
- 1521 Luther excommunicated by papal bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem*; appears before Diet of Worms; refuses to recant, stating, "Here I stand"
- 1524 Peasants' War begins, led in part by Thomas Münzer
- 1525 Luther asks Justus Jonas and John Agricola to produce a "catechism"
- Luther marries Katharina von Bora, June 13
- 1526 Diet of Speyer grants German princes right to establish religion in their territory
- Church visitation begins to assess needs of congregations
- 1527 Visitation articles prepared
- Plague strikes Wittenberg; Luther and Katharina turn their home into a hospital

- 1528 Luther teaches catechism instruction at the parish church; preaches three-sermon series on parts of catechism
- 1529 Luther publishes the *Large Catechism* in April and the *Small Catechism* in May
- 1530 *Augsburg Confession* presented to Charles V at Diet of Augsburg, June 25

## OUTLINE OF SMALL CATECHISM

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### Preface

- I. The Ten Commandments
- II. The Creed
- III. The Lord's Prayer
- IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
- V. Confession
- VI. The Sacrament of the Altar

### Daily Prayers

### Table of Duties



**ENCHIRIDION**  
**THE SMALL CATECHISM**



## PREFACE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

*Martin Luther* to all faithful and godly pastors and preachers: grace, mercy, and peace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

- <sup>1</sup> The deplorable, miserable condition that I discovered recently when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple
- <sup>2</sup> form. Mercy! Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages, has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine. And unfortunately, many pastors are completely unable and unqualified to teach. <This is so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it.>
- <sup>3</sup> Yet, everyone says that they are Christians, have been baptized, and receive the holy Sacraments, even though they cannot even recite the Lord's Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments. They live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs. Now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all freedom like experts.

O bishops! What answer will you ever give <sup>4</sup>  
 to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the  
 people and never for a moment fulfilled your  
 office [James 3:1]? May all misfortune run from  
 you! ‹I do not wish at this place to call down evil <sup>5</sup>  
 on your heads.› You command the Sacrament in  
 one form and insist on your human laws, and yet  
 at the same time you do not care at all whether  
 the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the  
 Ten Commandments, or any part of God's Word.  
 Woe, woe to you forever! [See Matthew 23.]

Therefore, I beg you all for God's sake, my <sup>6</sup>  
 dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preach-  
 ers, to devote yourselves heartily to your office  
 [1 Timothy 4:13]. Have pity on the people who  
 are entrusted to you [Acts 20:28] and help us  
 teach the catechism to the people, and especially  
 to the young. And let those of you who cannot  
 do better take these tables and forms and impress  
 them, word for word, on the people [Deuter-  
 onomy 6:7], as follows:

In the first place, let the preacher above all be <sup>7</sup>  
 careful to avoid many versions or various texts  
 and forms of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's  
 Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, and such. He  
 should choose one form to which he holds and  
 teaches all the time, year after year. For young

and simple people must be taught by uniform, settled texts and forms. Otherwise they become confused easily when the teacher today teaches them one way, and in a year some other way, as if he wished to make improvements. For then all effort and labor <that has been spent in teaching> is lost.

<sup>8</sup> Our blessed fathers understood this well also. They all used the same form of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Therefore, we, too, should <be at pains to> teach the young and simple people these parts in such a way that we do not change a syllable or set them forth and repeat them one year differently than in another.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore, choose whatever form you please, and hold to it forever. But when you preach in the presence of learned and intelligent people, you may show your skill. You may present these parts in varied and intricate ways and give them as masterly turns as you are able. But with the young people stick to one fixed, permanent form and manner. Teach them, first of all, these parts:  
<sup>10</sup> the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and so on, according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same way after you and commit it to memory.

But those who are unwilling to learn the cat- 11  
 echism should be told that they deny Christ and  
 are not Christians. They should not be admitted  
 to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at Bap-  
 tism, or practice any part of Christian freedom.  
 They should simply be turned back to the pope  
 and his officials, indeed, to the devil himself  
 [1 Corinthians 5:5]. Furthermore, their parents 12  
 and employers should refuse them food and  
 drink, and notify them that the prince will drive  
 such rude people from the country.

Although we cannot and should not force 13  
 anyone to believe, we should insist and encourage  
 the people. That way they will know what is right  
 and wrong for those among whom they dwell and  
 wish to make their living. For whoever desires to  
 live in a town must know and observe the town  
 laws, because he wishes to enjoy the protection  
 offered by the laws whether he is a believer or at  
 heart and in private a rascal or rogue.

In the second place, after they have learned 14  
 the text well, teach them the meaning also, so  
 that they know what it means. Again, choose the  
 form of these tables or some other brief uniform  
 method, whichever you like, and hold to it. Do 15  
 not change a single syllable, as was just said about  
 the text. Take your time in doing this. For it is not 16

necessary for you to explain all the parts at once, but one after the other. After they understand the First Commandment well, then explain the Second, and so on. Otherwise they will be overwhelmed, so that they will not be able to remember anything well.

- <sup>17</sup> In the third place, after you have taught them this short catechism, then take up the Large Catechism and give them also a richer and fuller knowledge. Here enlarge upon every commandment, <article,> petition, and part with its various works, uses, benefits, dangers, and injuries, as you find these abundantly stated in many books
- <sup>18</sup> written about these matters. In particular, urge the commandment or part that most suffers the greatest neglect among your people. For example, the Seventh Commandment, about stealing, must be strongly urged among mechanics and merchants, and even farmers and servants. For among these people many kinds of dishonesty and stealing prevail. So, too, you must drive home the Fourth Commandment among the children and the common people, so that they may be quiet and faithful, obedient and peaceable. You must always offer many examples from the Scriptures to show how God has punished or blessed such persons [Deuteronomy 28].

In this matter you should especially urge magistrates and parents to rule well and to send their children to school. Show them why it is their duty to do this and what a damnable sin they are committing if they do not do it. For by such neglect they overthrow and destroy both God's kingdom and that of the world. They act as the worst enemies both of God and of people. Make it very plain to them what an awful harm they are doing if they will not help to train children to be pastors, preachers, clerks, and to fill other offices that we cannot do without in this life. God will punish them terribly for this failure. There is great need to preach this. In this matter parents and rulers are now sinning in unspeakable ways. The devil, too, hopes to accomplish something cruel because of these things.

Last, since the tyranny of the pope has been abolished, people are no longer willing to go to the Sacrament, and thus they despise it. Here again encouragement is necessary, yet with this understanding: We are to force no one to believe or to receive the Sacrament. Nor should we set up any law, time, or place for it. Instead, preach in such a way that by their own will, without our law, they will urge themselves and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament.

This is done by telling them, “When someone does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is not a Christian, just as a person is not a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel.” For Christ did not say, “Leave this out, or, despise this,” but, “Do this, as often as you drink it” [1 Corinthians 11:25], and other such words. Truly, He wants it done, and not entirely neglected and despised. “Do this,” He says.

- 23 Now, whoever does not highly value the Sacrament shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell. In other words, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them up over his head and his ears and is doubly the devil’s own. On the other hand, he needs no grace, no life, no paradise, no heaven, no Christ, no God, nor anything good. For if he believed that he had so much evil around him, and needed so much that is good, he would not neglect the Sacrament, by which such evil is remedied and so much good is bestowed. Nor would it be necessary to force him to go to the Sacrament by any law. He would come running and racing of his own will, would force himself, and beg that you must give him the Sacrament.

Therefore, you must not make any law about <sup>24</sup>  
this, as the pope does. Only set forth clearly the  
benefit and harm, the need and use, the danger  
and the blessing, connected with this Sacrament.  
Then the people will come on their own without  
you forcing them. But if they do not come, let  
them go their way and tell them that such people  
belong to the devil who do not regard nor feel  
their great need and God's gracious help. But if <sup>25</sup>  
you do not urge this, or make a law or make it  
bitter, it is your fault if they despise the Sacra-  
ment. What else could they be than lazy if you  
sleep and are silent? Therefore, look to it, pastors <sup>26</sup>  
and preachers. Our office has now become a dif-  
ferent thing from what it was under the pope. It  
has now become a serious and saving office. So it  
now involves much more trouble and labor, dan-  
ger and trials. In addition, it gains little reward <sup>27</sup>  
and thanks in the world. But Christ Himself will  
be our reward if we labor faithfully [see Genesis  
15:1]. To this end may the Father of all grace help  
us, to whom be praise and thanks forever through  
Christ, our Lord! Amen.



## I. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

AS THE HEAD OF THE  
FAMILY SHOULD TEACH THEM IN  
A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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GIVING OF THE COMMANDMENTS  
(EXODUS 19)

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## The First Commandment



WORSHIP OF THE GOLDEN CALF  
(EXODUS 32)

**You shall have no other gods.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

## The Second Commandment



THE SON OF SHELOMITH IS STONED  
FOR BLASPHEMY (LEVITICUS 24)

**You shall not misuse the name  
of the LORD your God.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

## The Third Commandment



HEARING AND DESPISING  
PREACHING AND HIS WORD  
(NUMBERS 15)

**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

## The Fourth Commandment



HAM DISHONORS HIS FATHER,  
NOAH  
(GENESIS 9)

**Honor your father and your mother.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

## The Fifth Commandment



**CAIN KILLS ABEL**  
**(GENESIS 4)**

**You shall not murder.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

## The Sixth Commandment



DAVID AND BATHSHEBA  
(2 SAMUEL 11)

**You shall not commit adultery.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honor each other.

## The Seventh Commandment



ACHAN THE THIEF  
(JOSHUA 7)

---

**You shall not steal.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

## The Eighth Commandment



BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST  
SUSANNA (SUSANNA 34-41)

**You shall not give false  
testimony against your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

## The Ninth Commandment



JACOB COVETS LABAN'S FLOCK  
(GENESIS 30)

**You shall not covet your neighbor's house.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

## The Tenth Commandment



JOSEPH FLEES POTIPHAR'S WIFE  
(GENESIS 39)

**You shall not covet your  
neighbor's wife, or his manservant  
or maidservant, his ox or donkey,  
or anything that belongs to your neighbor.**

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

[The text of the commandments is from Exodus 20:3, 7, 8, 12–17]

## The Close of the Commandments

What does God say  
about all these commandments?



Answer:

He says, “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (Exodus 20:5–6)

*What does this mean?*

Answer: God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

## II. THE CREED

AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD  
TEACH IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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THE HOLY TRINITY

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## The First Article



### Creation

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

*What does this mean?*

Answer: I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.

All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

## The Second Article

### Redemption

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.



CHRIST CRUCIFIED  
(JOHN 19)

*What does this mean?*

Answer: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord,

who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death,

that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness,

just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

## The Third Article



### Sanctification

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*What does this mean?*

Answer: I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and to all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

### III. THE LORD'S PRAYER

AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH  
IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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#### The Introduction

**Our Father who art in heaven.**

*Our Father in heaven.*



JESUS TEACHES THE  
DISCIPLES TO PRAY  
(LUKE 11)

*What does this mean?*

Answer: With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

## The First Petition

**Hallowed be Thy name.**

*Hallowed be Your name.*

*What does this mean?*

Answer: God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

*How is God's name kept holy?*

Answer: God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!



## The Second Petition

**Thy kingdom come.**

*Your kingdom come.*



*What does this mean?*

Answer: The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

*How does God's kingdom come?*

Answer: God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

## The Third Petition

**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

*Your will be done on earth as in heaven.*

*What does this mean?*

Answer: The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

*How is God's will done?*

Answer: God's will is done

when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come;

and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die.

This is His good and gracious will.



## The Fourth Petition

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

*Give us today our daily bread.*



FEEDING THE FIVE  
THOUSAND (JOHN 6)

*What does this mean?*

Answer: God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

*What is meant by daily bread?*

Answer: Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

## The Fifth Petition

**And forgive us our trespasses as  
we forgive those who trespass against us.**

*Forgive us our sins as we forgive  
those who sin against us.*

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.



THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT  
(MATTHEW 18)

## The Sixth Petition

**And lead us not into temptation.**

*Lead us not into temptation.*



THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST  
(MATTHEW 4)

*What does this mean?*

Answer: God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we

pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

## The Seventh Petition

**But deliver us from evil.**

*But deliver us from evil.*

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.



**For Thine is the kingdom and the power  
and the glory forever and ever.\* Amen.**

*For the kingdom, the power, and the glory  
are Yours now and forever.\* Amen.*

*What does this mean?*

Answer: This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means “yes, yes, it shall be so.”

\*These words were not in Luther's Small Catechism.

## IV. THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH  
IT IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST  
(MATTHEW 3)

First

*What is Baptism?*

Answer: Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.

*Which is  
that word of God?*

Answer: Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

## Second

### *What benefits does Baptism give?*

Answer: It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

### *Which are these words and promises of God?*

Answer: Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)



## Third

### *How can water do such great things?*

Answer: Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water,

rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.” (Titus 3:5–8)

#### Fourth

*What does such baptizing with water indicate?*

Answer: It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

*Where is this written?*

Answer: St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4)

## V. CONFESSION

### HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE TAUGHT TO CONFESS

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#### *What is Confession?*

Answer: Confession has two parts.

First, that we confess our sins, and

second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.



CONFESSION AND  
ABSOLUTION  
(JOHN 21)

#### *What sins should we confess?*

Answer: Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

### *Which are these?*

Answer: Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

### **A Short Form of Confession**

[Luther intended the following form to serve only as an example of private confession for Christians of his time. For a contemporary form of individual confession, see *Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 292–93.]

### *The penitent says:*

Dear confessor, I ask you please to hear my confession and to pronounce forgiveness in order to fulfill God's will.

I, a poor sinner, plead guilty before God of all sins. In particular I confess before you that as a servant, maid, etc., I, sad to say, serve my master unfaithfully, for in this and that I have not done what I was told to do. I have made him angry and caused him to curse. I have been negligent and allowed damage to be done. I have also been offensive in words and deeds. I have quarreled with my peers. I have grumbled about the lady of the house and cursed her. I am sorry for all of this and I ask for grace. I want to do better.

*A master or lady of the house may say:*

In particular I confess before you that I have not faithfully guided my children, servants, and wife to the glory of God. I have cursed. I have set a bad example by indecent words and deeds. I have hurt my neighbor and spoken evil of him. I have overcharged, sold inferior merchandise, and given less than was paid for.

[Let the penitent confess whatever else he has done against God's commandments and his own position.]

If, however, someone does not find himself burdened with these or greater sins, he should not trouble himself or search for or invent other sins, and thereby make confession a torture. Instead, he should mention one or two that he knows: In particular I confess that I have cursed; I have used improper words; I have neglected this or that, etc. Let that be enough.

But if you know of none at all (which hardly seems possible), then mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness upon the general confession which you make to God before the confessor.

*Then the confessor shall say:*

God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.

*Furthermore:*

Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?

Yes, dear confessor.

*Then let him say:*

Let it be done for you as you believe. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.

A confessor will know additional passages with which to comfort and to strengthen the faith of those who have great burdens of conscience or are sorrowful and distressed.

This is intended only as a general form of confession.

*What is the Office of the Keys?\**

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

*Where is this written?\**

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (John 20:22–23)

*What do you believe according to these words?\**

I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.

\*This question may not have been composed by Luther himself but reflects his teaching and was included in editions of the catechism during his lifetime.

## VI. THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

AS THE HEAD OF A FAMILY  
SHOULD TEACH IT IN A  
SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

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### *What is the Sacrament of the Altar?*

Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

### *Where is this written?*

Answer: The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples

and said: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

*What is the benefit of  
this eating and drinking?*

Answer: These words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” show us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

*How can bodily eating  
and drinking do such great things?*

Answer: Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.”

*Who receives this sacrament worthily?*

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.

## DAILY PRAYERS

HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY  
SHOULD TEACH HIS HOUSEHOLD TO PRAY  
MORNING AND EVENING

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### *Morning Prayer*

*In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:*

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend

myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

*Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.*

### *Evening Prayer*

*In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:*

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:*

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

*Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.*

HOW THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY  
SHOULD TEACH HIS HOUSEHOLD  
TO ASK A BLESSING AND RETURN THANKS

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*Asking a Blessing*

*The children and members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:*

The eyes of all look to You, [O LORD,] and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15–16)

*Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:*

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### *Returning Thanks*

*Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently and with folded hands say:*

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good. His love endures forever. [He] gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the LORD delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love. (Psalm 136:1, 25; 147:9–11)

*Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:*

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## TABLE OF DUTIES

CERTAIN PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE FOR  
VARIOUS HOLY ORDERS AND POSITIONS,  
ADMONISHING THEM ABOUT THEIR DUTIES  
AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### *To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers*

The overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (1 Timothy 3:2–4)

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. (1 Timothy 3:6)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:9)

### *What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors*

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:14)

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:6–7)

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (1 Timothy 5:17–18)

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13)

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

### *Of Civil Government*

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:1–4)

### *Of Citizens*

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. (Matthew 22:21)

It is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (Romans 13:5–7)

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we

may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior. (1 Timothy 2:1–3)

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. (Titus 3:1)

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (1 Peter 2:13–14)

### *To Husbands*

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. (1 Peter 3:7)

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh will them. (Colossians 3:19)

### *To Wives*

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22)

They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him

her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (1 Peter 3:5–6)

### *To Parents*

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

### *To Children*

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and your mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” (Ephesians 6:1–3)

### *To Workers of All Kinds*

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. (Ephesians 6:5–8)

### *To Employers and Supervisors*

Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him. (Ephesians 6:9)

### *To Youth*

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5–6)

### *To Widows*

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. (1 Timothy 5:5–6)

### *To Everyone*

The commandments . . . are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Romans 13:9)

I urge . . . that requests, prayers, intercession

and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” (1 Timothy 2:1)

*Let each his lesson learn with care,  
and all the household well shall fare.*





**CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS  
WITH THEIR ANSWERS**



## CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS WITH THEIR ANSWERS\*

PREPARED BY DR. MARTIN  
LUTHER FOR THOSE WHO INTEND  
TO GO TO THE SACRAMENT

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After confession and instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the pastor may ask, or Christians may ask themselves these questions:

***1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?***

Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

***2. How do you know this?***

From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.

***3. Are you sorry for your sins?***

Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

\* The "Christian Questions with Their Answers," designating Luther as the author, first appeared in an edition of the Small Catechism in 1551.

***4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?***

His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. See Romans 6:21, 23.

***5. Do you hope to be saved?***

Yes, that is my hope.

***6. In whom then do you trust?***

In my dear Lord Jesus Christ.

***7. Who is Christ?***

The Son of God, true God and man.

***8. How many Gods are there?***

Only one, but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

***9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?***

He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

***10. Did the Father also die for you?***

He did not. The Father is God only, as is the Holy Spirit; but the Son is both true God and true man. He died for me and shed His blood for me.

***11. How do you know this?***

From the holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.

***12. What are the words of institution?***

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

***13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?***

Yes, I believe it.

***14. What convinces you to believe this?***

The word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

***15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His blood, and in this way receive His pledge?***

We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

***16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?***

First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins. Only Christ, true God and man, could do that. Second, so we may learn to be horrified by our sins, and to regard them as very serious. Third, so we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

***17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?***

His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2; and Ephesians 5.

***18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?***

That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.

***19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?***

First, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord. Second, his own pressing need, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.

***20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?***

To such a person no better advice can be given than this:

first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7.

Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15–16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.

*Note:* These questions and answers are no child's play, but are drawn up with great earnestness of purpose by the venerable and devout Dr. Luther for both young and old. Let each one pay attention and consider it a serious matter; for St. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter six: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked."





## THE LARGE CATECHISM



## THE LARGE CATECHISM

### PREFACE

A Christian, profitable, and necessary preface, and faithful, serious encouragement from Dr. Martin Luther to all Christians, but especially to all pastors and preachers. They should daily exercise themselves in the catechism, which is a short summary and epitome of the entire Holy Scriptures. They should always teach the catechism.

- 1 We have no small reasons for constantly preaching the catechism and for both desiring and begging others to teach it. For sadly we see that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this matter and slight both their office and this teaching. Some neglect the catechism because of great and high art (giving their mind, as they imagine, to much “higher” matters). But others neglect it from sheer laziness and care for their bellies. They take no other stand in this business

than to act as pastors and preachers for their bellies' sake. They have nothing to do but to «spend and» consume their wages as long as they live, just as they used to do under the papacy.

They now have everything they are to preach and teach placed before them abundantly, clearly, and easily, in so many helpful books. These truly are “Sermons That Preach Themselves,” “Sleep Soundly,” “Be Prepared,” and “Thesaurus,” as they used to be called. Yet these preachers are not even godly and honest enough to buy these books or, even when they have them, to look at them or read them. Oh, they are completely shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies. They are more fit to be swineherds and dog tenders than caretakers of souls and pastors.

These pastors are now released from the useless and burdensome babbling of the seven canonical hours of prayer. I wish that, instead of these, they would read each morning, noon, and evening only a page or two in the catechism, the prayer book, the New Testament, or something else in the Bible. They should pray the Lord's Prayer for themselves and their parishioners. Then they might respond with honor and thanks to the Gospel, by which they have been delivered from obvious burdens and troubles, and might

feel a little shame. For like pigs and dogs, they take nothing more from the Gospel than this lazy,  
4 deadly, shameful, worldly freedom! The common people also respect the Gospel altogether too lightly, and we accomplish nothing special, even though we work diligently. What, then, would be achieved if we were as negligent and lazy as we were under the papacy?

5 To this laziness such preachers add the shameful vice and secret infection of security and contentment. In other words, many see the catechism as a poor, common teaching, which they can read through once and immediately understand. They can throw the book into a corner and be ashamed to read it again.

6 Yes, even among the nobility one may find some clowns and penny pinchers, who say (a) there is no longer any need for either pastors or preachers, (b) we have everything in books, and (c) everyone can easily learn it by himself. So they are happy to let the parishes rot and become empty. They let pastors and preachers worry and go hungry, just as crazy Germans are accustomed to do. For we Germans have such disgraceful people and must put up with them.

7 But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher; yes, as learned and experienced as all



THE CREATION; WOODCUT FROM THE FIRST  
ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF THE LARGE  
CATECHISM, 1530, WITTENBERG

the people who have such assumptions and contentment. Yet I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. Every morning—and whenever I have time—I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so. Yet these delicate, refined fellows would in one reading promptly become doctors above all doctors, know everything, and need nothing. Well, this, too, is a sure sign that they despise both their office and the souls of the people. Indeed, they even despise God and His Word. They do not have to fall. They have already fallen all too horribly. They need to become children and begin to learn their alphabet, which they imagine they have long outgrown [Mark 10:15].

9 Therefore, for God's sake I beg such lazy bellies or arrogant saints to be persuaded and believe that they are truly, truly not so learned or such great doctors as they imagine! They should never assume that they have finished learning the parts of the catechism or know it well enough in all points, even though they think that they know it ever so well. For even if they know and understand the catechism perfectly (which, however,

is impossible in this life), there are still many benefits and fruits to be gained, if it is daily read and practiced in thought and speech. For example, the Holy Spirit is present in such reading, repetition, and meditation. He bestows ever new and more light and devoutness. In this way the catechism is daily loved and appreciated better, as Christ promises in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.”

Besides, catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God’s Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God’s Law day and night (Psalm 1:2). Certainly you will not release a stronger incense or other repellant against the devil than to be engaged by God’s commandments and words, and speaking, or think them [Colossians 3:16]. For this is indeed the true “holy water” and “holy sign” from which the devil runs and by which he may be driven away [James 4:7].<sup>10</sup>

Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think, and use these things, even if you had no other profit and fruit from them than driving away the devil and evil thoughts by doing<sup>11</sup>

so. For he cannot hear or endure God's Word. God's Word is not like some other silly babbling, like the story about Dietrich of Berne, for example. But as St. Paul says in Romans 1:16, it is "the power of God." Yes indeed, it is the power of God that gives the devil burning pain and strengthens, comforts, and helps us beyond measure.

- 12 And what need is there for more words? If I were to list all the profit and fruit God's Word produces, where would I get enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God's Word, which drives away and brings to nothing this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? The Word must indeed be the master of more than a
- 13 hundred thousand arts. And shall we easily despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit—we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, not only should we have nothing given us to eat, but we should also be driven out, baited with dogs, and pelted with dung. We not only need all this every day just as we need our daily bread, but we must also daily use it against the daily and unending attacks and lurking of the devil [1 Peter 5:8], the master of a thousand arts.

- 14 If these reasons were not enough to move us to read the catechism daily, we should feel

bound well enough by God's command alone. He solemnly commands in Deuteronomy 6:6–8 that we should always meditate on His precepts, sitting, walking, standing, lying down, and rising. We should have them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant mark and sign. Clearly He did not solemnly require and command this without a purpose. For He knows our danger and need, as well as the constant and furious assaults and temptations of devils. He wants to warn, equip, and preserve us against them, as with a good armor against their fiery darts [Ephesians 6:10–17] and with good medicine against their evil infection and temptation.

Oh, what mad, senseless fools are we! While <sup>15</sup> we must ever live and dwell among such mighty enemies as the devils, we still despise our weapons and defense [2 Corinthians 10:4], and we are too lazy to look at or think of them!

What else are such proud, arrogant saints <sup>16</sup> doing who are unwilling to read and study the catechism daily? They think they are much more learned than God Himself with all His saints, angels, prophets, apostles, and all Christians. God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. He always keeps teaching the same thing and does not

take up anything new or different. All the saints know nothing better or different to learn and cannot finish learning this. Are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine that if we have once read or heard the catechism, we know it all and have no further need to read and learn? Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching? He is engaged in teaching this from the beginning to the end of the world. All prophets, together with all saints, have been busy learning it, have ever remained students, and must continue to be students.

- <sup>17</sup> It must be true that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures [Matthew 7:12]. So, in all matters and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters. Such a person must be qualified to sit in judgment over all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever
- <sup>18</sup> else is in the world [1 Corinthians 6:2–3]. And what, indeed, is the entire Book of Psalms but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment? Now I truly know that such lazy “bellies” and arrogant spirits do not understand a single psalm, much less the entire Holy Scriptures. Yet they pretend to know and despise the catechism, which is a short and brief summary of all the Holy Scriptures.



GOD GIVES THE COMMANDMENTS;  
FROM 1530 LARGE CATECHISM

19 Therefore, I again beg all Christians—especially pastors and preachers—not to think of themselves as doctors too soon and imagine that they know everything. (For imagination, like unshrunk cloth, will fall far short of the measure.) Instead, they should daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly use them. Furthermore, they should guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of contentment and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating on the catechism. And they should not stop until they have tested and are sure that they have taught the devil to death, and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints.

20 If they show such diligence, then I will promise them—and they shall also see—what fruit they will receive, and what excellent people God will make of them. So in due time they themselves will admit that the longer and the more they study the catechism, the less they know of it and the more they will find to learn. Only then, as hungry and thirsty men, will they truly relish what now they cannot stand because of great abundance and contentment. To this end may God grant His grace! Amen.

## SHORT PREFACE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER



This sermon is designed and undertaken to be an instruction for children and the simple folk. Therefore, in ancient times it was called in Greek *catechism* (i.e., instruction for children). It teaches what every Christian must know. So a person who does not know this catechism could not be counted as a Christian or be admitted to any Sacrament, just as a mechanic who does not understand the rules and customs of his trade is expelled and considered incapable. Therefore, we must have the young learn well and fluently the parts of the catechism or instruction for children, diligently exercise themselves in them, and keep them busy with these parts.

Therefore, it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism. And if they do not know the catechism, he should keep them learning it faithfully. For I well remember that one finds rude, old persons who knew nothing and still know nothing about these things. Yet

they go to Baptism and the Lord's Supper and use everything belonging to Christians, even though people who come to the Lord's Supper ought to know more and have a fuller understanding of all Christian doctrine than children and new scholars. However, for the common people we are satisfied if they know the three "parts." These have remained in Christendom from of old, though little of them has been taught and used correctly until both young and old (who are called Christians and wish to be so) are well trained in them and familiar with them. These parts are the following:

## FIRST

### GOD'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

- 1 1. You shall have no other gods.
- 2 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
- 3 3. You shall sanctify the holy day.
- 4 4. You shall honor your father and mother ‹that it may be well with you and you may live long upon the earth›.
- 5 5. You shall not murder.

- |     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 6.  | You shall not commit adultery.   | 6  |
| 7.  | You shall not steal.   | 7  |
| 8.  | You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  | 8  |
| 9.  | You shall not covet your neighbor's house.   | 9  |
| 10. | You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is his. | 10 |

## SECOND

### THE CHIEF ARTICLES OF OUR FAITH

- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.   | 11 |
| 2. | And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. | 12 |

- 13 3. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

14 **THIRD**

**THE PRAYER, OR “OUR FATHER,”  
WHICH CHRIST TAUGHT**

Our Father who art in heaven.

1. Hallowed be Thy name.
2. Thy kingdom come.
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Give us this day our daily bread.
5. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
6. And lead us not into temptation.
7. But deliver us from evil. [For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.] Amen.

- 15 These are the most necessary parts of Chris-  
16 tian teaching that one should first learn to repeat  
word for word. And our children should be used  
to reciting them daily when they rise in the morn-  
ing, when they sit down to their meals, and when

they go to bed at night. And until they repeat  
 them, they should not be given food or drink.  
 Likewise, every head of a household is bound to  
 do the same with his household, manservants,  
 and maidservants. He should not keep them in  
 his house if they do not know these things or  
 are unwilling to learn them. A person who is so  
 rude and unruly as to be unwilling to learn these  
 things is not to be tolerated. For in these three  
 parts, everything that we have in the Scriptures  
 is included in short, plain, and simple terms. For  
 the holy fathers or apostles (whoever first taught  
 these things) have summarized the doctrine, life,  
 wisdom, and art of Christians this way. These  
 parts speak, teach, and are focused on them.

Now, when these three parts are understood,  
 a person must also know what to say about  
 our Sacraments, which Christ Himself insti-  
 tuted: Baptism and the holy body and blood of  
 Christ. They should know the texts that Matthew  
 [28:19–20] and Mark [16:15–16] record at the  
 close of their Gospels, when Christ said farewell  
 to His disciples and sent them forth.

## BAPTISM

Go therefore and make disciples of all na-  
 tions, baptizing them in the name of the