

The Decalogue as confession of sin

For his 1534 Liturgy for the Church of Strassburg, Martin Bucer wrote a paraphrase of the Decalogue in the form of an extended prayer of confession. The text is from Bard Thompson's Liturgies of the Western Church, 1961. Some readers may find it helpful in their own examinations of conscience and confession of sin.

I poor sinner confess to thee, O Almighty, eternal, merciful God and Father, that I have sinned in manifold ways against thee and thy commandments.

I confess that I have not believed in thee, my one God and Father, but have put my faith and trust more in creatures than in thee, my God and Creator, because I have feared them more than thee. And for their benefit and pleasure, I have done and left undone many things in disobedience to thee and thy commandments.

I confess that I have taken thy holy Name in vain, that I have often sworn falsely and lightly by the same, that I have not always professed it nor kept it holy as I ought; but even more, I have slandered it often and grossly with all my life, words and deeds.

I confess that I have not kept thy Sabbath holy, that I have not heard thy holy Word with earnestness nor lived according to the same; moreover that I have not yielded myself fully to thy divine hand, nor rejoiced in thy work done in me and in others, but have often grumbled against it stoutly and have been impatient.

I confess that I have not honored my father and mother, that I have been disobedient to all whom I justly own obedience, such as father and mother, my superiors, and all who have tried to guide and teach me faithfully.

I confess that I have taken life: that I have offended my neighbor often and grossly by word and deed, caused him harm, grown angry over him, borne envy and hatred toward him, deprived him of his honor and the like.

I confess that I have been unchaste. I acknowledge all my sins of the flesh and all the excess and extravagance of my whole life in eating, drinking, clothing and other things; my intemperance in seeing, hearing, speaking, etc., and in all my life; yea, even fornication, adultery and such.

I confess that I have stolen. I acknowledge my greed. I admit that in the use of my worldly goods I have set myself against thee and thy holy laws. Greedily and against charity have I grasped them. And scarcely, if at all, have I given of them when the need of my neighbor required it.

I confess that I have born false witness, that I have been untrue and unfaithful toward my neighbor. I have lied to him, I have told lies about him, and I have failed to defend his honor and reputation as my own.

And finally I confess that I have coveted the possessions and spouses of others. I acknowledge in summary that my whole life is nothing else than sin and transgression of thy holy commandments and an inclination toward all evil.

Wherefore I beseech thee, O heavenly Father, that, thou wouldst graciously forgive me these and all my sins. Keep and preserve me henceforth that I may walk only in thy way and live according to thy will; and all of this through Jesus Christ, thy dear Son, our Saviour. Amen.