



# Luther's Catechisms-450 Years

Days Commemorating the Small and  
the Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther

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Essays Commemorating the Small and  
Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther

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Concordia Theological Seminary

Fort Wayne, Indiana

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## **Luther's Catechisms — 450 Years**

### **Essays Commemorating the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Notes on the Authors, Page ii**

**Foreword, Page iii**  
David P. Scaer

**Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism, Page 1**  
Ulrich Asendorf

**The Evangelical Character of Luther's Catechism, Page 8**  
Edward C. Fredrich

**The Layman's Bible: The Use of Luther's Catechisms in the German Late Reformation, Page 16**  
Robert Kolb

**Baptism and Faith according to Luther's Catechisms and other teachings, Page 27**  
Uuras Saarnivaara

**The New Translation of Luther's Small Catechism: Is it Faithful to Luther's Spirit?, Page 32**  
David P. Scaer

**The Large Catechism: A Pastoral Tool, Page 41**  
James L. Schaaf

**Forerunners of the Catechism: A view of Catechetical Instruction at the Dawn of the Reformation, Page 47**  
N. S. Tjernagel

**Luther's Use of Scripture in the Small Catechism, Page 55**  
James W. Voelz

**Early Christian Catechetics: An Historical and Theological Construction, Page 64**  
William C. Weinrich

**Notes, Page 74**

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# FOREWORD

The years 1977, 1979, and 1980 are jubilee years for Lutherans in which they can reflect on their confessional heritage in celebrating the anniversaries of the Formula of Concord (1577), the Small and Large Catechisms (1529), the Augsburg Confession (1530), and the Book of Concord (1580). Of all of the specifically Lutheran Confessions none has been as influential as the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther. Its words have been committed to memory by children in preparation for confirmation and prayed by the dying. Its phrases have been recited from pulpits to punctuate Biblical truth and incorporated in prayers and hymns as responses by worshipping Christians. Luther's Small Catechism is the very material from which the devotional life of the Lutheran Church is constructed. Just as small children recite its words, theologians reflect upon its concepts. In the history of western theological thought, it has earned its place as a milestone. In its articulation of the Lutheran faith it remains unsurpassed in its 450-year history.

The Second Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions sponsored by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, in January 1979 commemorated by its essays the 450th anniversary of both the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther. In point of time they are

the earliest writings among the historic Lutheran Confessions though they were only fully recognized as confessional after Luther's death. Since the Small Catechism is used chiefly in the education of the youth, its theological depth and profundity is not always fully appreciated. The essays offered at the symposium were given to highlight the theological importance of both Catechisms and to awake a renewed interest in their theology and message. Participants in the symposium included clergymen from The American Lutheran Church, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Church of Finland (Lutheran) and the Church of Hannover (Lutheran). Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, is grateful to all the participants for their essays and to Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal benefit society, for making their publication and distribution possible among a wider audience.

David P. Scaer  
Editor

# **Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism —**

**The Continuing Struggle:  
The Catechism's Role as a  
Confessional Document  
in Lutheranism**

*by Ulrich Asendorf*

Before going into details, some fundamental differences between the Book of Concord and the Calvinistic Confessions should be mentioned. There are two definite differences. First, the Book of Concord is the basis for Lutherans all over the world, whereas the Calvinistic Confessions have their validity in certain regions. The other difference is the tendency of Calvinism to address confessions to new situations as they occur. Therefore there is a tendency in Calvinism constantly to formulate new confessions, similar to the Barmen Confession of 1934, which nowadays is published as an appendix to the Heidelberg Catechism in some Calvinistic areas. An example is the small Calvinistic church in Lippe. In Calvinism there is a tendency especially in unionistic German churches also to include the Barmen Confession within the list of confessions.

Some other remarks concerning the history of the Heidelberg Catechism should be mentioned. First, some information about its author. Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583), born as a Lutheran in Breslau, was a Wittenberg student, the first among the disciples of Philip

Melanchthon to turn from Lutheranism to Calvinism. But he did this in his own way, therefore the Heidelberg Catechism lacks certain characteristics of Calvinism. This can be shown on three points: a) the covenant is not mentioned; b) its teaching of law is similar to the Lutheran conception, as according to Questions 3 and 4, the knowledge of man's misery comes from the law; and c) double predestination is not mentioned. Therefore to some extent the Heidelberg Catechism is nearer to the Lutheran traditions than the normal type of Calvinistic confessions. Nevertheless the Canons of Dort explicitly approved the Heidelberg Catechism. Therefore the Heidelberg Catechism is to be understood as part of Melanchthonian tradition as a document of a German Calvinism, not of Geneva. It is a link between Wittenberg and Geneva. Later on we shall have to discuss what that means especially in the modern situation.

The Heidelberg Catechism was officially published in 1563 for the former electoral principality of the Palatinate. The catechism was taken over by the Dutch parishes on the lower

Rhine and was later accepted by Calvinists in Prussia, Moravia, Hungaria, Transylvania, Poland and South Africa. This was untypical of Calvinism which usually develops a special confession for each region. The Heidelberg Catechism was also accepted in the United States, and the 300th anniversary of this occasion has been recently celebrated. The United Church of Christ, which was formed in 1957, also saw this catechism as important.

Here some remarks should be made in respect to unionism in the nineteenth century and the role played by the Calvinists. Calvin himself subscribed to the Augsburg Confession. Documents establishing unionism during the nineteenth century, as a rule, also referred to the Augsburg Confession, i.e. the Variata. The Heidelberg Catechism presented dangers for the Lutherans as it in some respects deviates from the ordinary Calvinistic traditions and therefore could subtly promote the tendency towards unionism between Lutherans and the Reformed. The Heidelberg Catechism represents the Melancthonian version of Calvinism and thus bears a Lutheran imprint. From here it was quite easy for Calvinists to offer themselves as true ecumenical Christians of the modern type. In their wake come all sorts of confessional troubles. On the other hand, it is understandable for strict Calvinists to feel uneasy about losing their unique confessional identity. At least in Europe the Calvinists are more frequently in the minority than are the Lutherans except in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Scotland.

At this point, the organization of the Heidelberg Catechism should be mentioned. If you look at Question 2, three headings are mentioned: man's misery (Questions 3-11); man's redemption (Questions 12-85); and finally man's thankfulness (Questions 86-129).

## I. Law and Gospel

1. As mentioned before, there are some roots leading back to Lutheran traditions. Question 3 states that knowledge of the human misery comes from God's law. This is derived from Mt. 22:37-40, the double commandment to love God and thy neighbor as thyself. Similar to Luther's summary of the Ten Commandments, the wrath of God is mentioned in Question 10. So far both catechisms are the same, but this is not the whole story.

2. As set forth in Luther's Small Catechism, everyone would expect the explanation of the commandments to follow. But there is a difference in the organization of the text as a whole. The explanation of the commandments follows in the concluding third part and is placed under human thankfulness. The sections on the commandments and good works are combined as

well as are the sections on the commandments and conversion (Question 88). Here the commandments relate to death and resurrection of the old and new man. This seems to be similar to Luther's statement in the Small Catechism IV (4), the drowning of the old Adam. In fact Luther knows quite well that God's law has the function to kill the old man until we attain the full righteousness on the day of judgment.

3. At first it seems that there is hardly a difference between the catechisms. But if you look more carefully there are different presuppositions. Luther begins with the revelation of God according to the First Commandment, including both Law and Gospel. Luther's view is theocentric. The Heidelberg Catechism on the contrary is anthropocentric, as the first question deals with man's misery.

This leads to another fundamental difference between Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism. Luther combines the powers of destruction as law, conscience and death on the one hand and Christ, Gospel and eternal life on the other. Luther deals with law in an extremely negative way. It destroys, leads to death and reveals sin. Luther teaches the predominant use of the Law as a mirror. For Calvin the Third Use of the Law is the pre-eminent one, resulting in a tendency to legalism in Calvinism as a whole. This is responsible for the Puritan way of life. Stemming from this is Calvinism's inability to distinguish Law and Gospel. The consequence is that the Gospel is falsified and turned to a new law.

An example of this within the German context after the war was the upstart of a new sort of fanaticism under the title of what Karl Barth and his disciples called "the royal rule of Christ" instead of Luther's distinction of the two kingdoms.

## II. Christology

1. The first remarkable fact is the Anselmianism in Questions 12-18 as a basis for Christology. These traditions are of course present in Lutheranism, but not exclusively so for Luther himself. There has been a controversy since Gustaf Aulen's investigations on the three main types of the theology of atonement. He pointed out that Luther was much closer to the Greek fathers and their mirabile duellum between God and Satan. Aulen saw Luther more in the line of eastern theology of the resurrection, than Anselm and his understanding of the atonement as satisfaction representing the western type, based on Good Friday. Finally the modern view of atonement, i.e., the subjective one, is represented by Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Meanwhile Aulen was corrected by O. Tiilila and H. Alpers. Both pointed out that there was indeed the satisfaction



view in eastern theology, which Aulen denied. There can be no doubt that the Anselmian type is present in Luther's theology in his teaching about sin and grace. But Luther differs from Anselm. Cross and resurrection are for Luther always combined. This can be clearly shown in his exegesis of Rom. 4:25 and the Gospel of St. John. The details are discussed in my book, Gekreuzigt und Auferstanden. Moreover the combination of cross and resurrection is important in the ecumenical respect. For the Heidelberg Catechism has the Anselmian concept without the victory motif. This is not the case with Luther.

2. The other question is about the two natures in Christ. Here the so-called extra Calvinisticum must be mentioned as it is clearly brought out in Questions 47 and 48. On the one hand the Heidelberg Catechism teaches clearly the two natures in Christ, but with all restrictions coming from the extra Calvinisticum. Question 47 says that Christ is both true man and God. According to His human nature He is no longer on earth. Only according to His divine majesty, with His grace and Spirit, He does not move from our side.

Similar is Question 48. According to His divine nature Christ is present everywhere. His divine nature exists outside of the humanity assumed at the incarnation, but it nevertheless exists within the human nature according to personal union. A perfect contradiction! On the one hand the traditional context of the two natures is to be found; but on the other both the natures are not really joined because the logos is not totally in Christ. This is the old question of finitum capax and finitum non capax infiniti. One modern scholar who has dealt with this question is Werner Elert. He says that there is Nestorianism not only in Zwingli, as Luther quite clearly saw, but also in Calvin and Calvinism.

If we compare Questions 47 and 48, there is communicatio idiomatum, but only in a partial sense. Therefore, the incarnation is imperfect, because it does not enclose the vere Deus as a whole. Calvin tried carefully to avoid the mistakes of Zwingli, but he was unable to extricate himself from the finitum non capax infiniti. Therefore I quote here the pertinent section of the Institutes: "Another absurdity which they obtrude upon us — viz. that if the Word of God became incarnate, it must have been enclosed in the narrow tenement of an earthly body, is sheer petulance. For although the boundless essence of the Word was united with human nature into one person, we have no idea of any enclosing. The Son of God descended miraculously from heaven, yet without abandoning heaven; was pleased to be conceived miraculously in the Virgin's womb, to live on the earth, and hang upon the cross, and yet always filled the world as from the beginning." (II, 13, 4). Calvin pretends to keep the Chalcedonian middle

road. But he deceives himself by means of the extra Calvinisticum. The Heidelberg Catechism uses the same road. A spiritualized Christology is the result.

Therefore the Lutheran rejection of the extra Calvinisticum in FC, Ep VIII, 34 should be mentioned: "That in spite of Christ's express assertion, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,' and St. Paul's statement, 'In Him dwells the whole fullness of deity bodily' (Col. 2:9), Christ, according to the human nature, is wholly incapable of omnipotence and other properties of the divine nature." As mentioned, Calvin tries to teach the communicatio idiomatum, but without ubiquity. He wants to follow Peter Lombard: "Although the whole Christ is everywhere, yet everything which is in Him is not everywhere." (Inst. IV, 17,30). Thus O. Weber (in RGG<sup>3</sup>, I, 1595) states that Calvin is above all interested not in the person of Christ, but in His work. This is one of the roots of modern functionalism especially in the teaching about the Holy Sacraments. Ignored are all ontological statements. Ontological truths dissolve into functionalism.

4. For comparison Luther's Christology should be set forth as far as the Small Catechism is concerned. The "true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity" takes the lead. The line goes from heaven to earth, not from earth to heaven as it is usually put forth in modern Christology. But when Luther deals with Christology in that way, he wants to have Christ as true God everywhere. That is why the line of resurrection can always be found in his theology. Zwingli struggles with the unio personalis in context to unio sacramentalis. The total union of God and man in Christ can be found in its entirety in the theology of the Lord's Supper. In Luther's theology, God is hidden within the creature. The same motif is in The Bondage of the Will especially in the cooperatio Dei. God does His work by means of man. Even Luther's concept of the two kingdoms can hardly be understood without holding to the concept that God's will is carried out by men, whether they know it or not. Therefore, the certainty of redemption depends on the simple fact of God's presence in the man Jesus Christ. Here Calvinism fails, because it is unable to formulate what incarnation means. Spiritualism is one of the means, where the validity of faith is lost, especially in modern times. In this Calvinism is a forerunner of modernism.

This leads us to another remarkable observation. According to the traditions especially of the Greek fathers, the "happy exchange" is one of the leading motifs in Luther's theology as a whole. Examine, for instance, those famous parts 12-14 in The Freedom of the Christian. Luther describes the mystery of salvation by using the comparison

with matrimony. As in matrimony both partners share all, so Christ shares with one who believes in Him. Christ takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. Another comparison is the iron hot with fire, which comes from John of Damascus as well as other Greek fathers. Luther explains here what justification means and why Christian liberty is rooted in justification. This wonderful transaction cannot be found in Calvinism with its extra Calvinisticum.

Very instructive is the difference between Calvinism and Lutheranism on the understanding of the Ascension of Christ. In Question 49 the Ascension of Christ is discussed in this way. First, Christ our advocate is in heaven. Secondly, that as we have our flesh in heaven as a security, so He as the head will take us up as His limbs. Thirdly, He will send down His Spirit as a counter-security, by which we seek what is in heaven, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. We are not to seek what is on earth. Here it is clearly shown, all is laid into a sort of spiritual presence.

6. From here we go to the next question. All that is said about the Holy Sacraments corresponds with Christology. Christology is the prelude to the teaching about the Holy Sacraments.

### III. The Holy Sacraments

#### A. Baptism

1. If we look at the texts there is a parallel between Baptism and the Lord's Supper. According to Question 69, Baptism has a double function, to remember and to assure the benefits of Christ's sacrifice to every person. This is pointed out in this way. Christ has ordered this external bath. Just as we are cleansed by water from uncleanness of body, we are simultaneously washed from all sin and impurity with His blood and Spirit.

2. According to Question 69, Question 72 asks whether it is the external bath that brings about the cleansing from all sins. This is denied, because only the blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit can cleanse us from all sins. The same cum-tum, the same metaphorical parallelism, i.e., parallel but necessarily connected actions, is repeated in Question 73. There is indeed one addition. The security, the sign or mark (pignus) assures us, that as we have been cleansed by water, our sins have been taken away. The parallelism is never clearly defined, which is characteristic of Calvinism. The baptism of the children is in the following question subsumed under the sign of the covenant. Nevertheless Question 74 speaks of the incorporation of the Christian church.

What the Heidelberg Catechism says about the

Lord's Supper sheds light on its understanding of Baptism.

The differences with Luther's Small Catechism, are especially two points:

a) Luther's words in the beginning of the second question in 4,2 are: "What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow? It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare." First mentioned is the efficacy of baptism. The forgiveness of sins really happens when water, the Word of God and faith are joined together. In my opinion, it is most important for modern faith to get back sacramental realism. Modern man amidst all sorts of skepticism needs to be made certain in his faith by means of the Holy Sacraments, especially Baptism. The first step in a Christian life comes from God, not from us. As Christ Himself called His disciples to follow Him, so He does this with us by means of Baptism. Therefore as the fathers said, the Holy Trinity baptizes, while the minister is only the instrument.

Christ works in our life in three ways: first by forgiving our sins; secondly, by redemption from death and Satan; and thirdly, by giving us His eternal life. Because modern man is fatalistic, it must be taught that faith rescues from the power of death and Satan. Here some remarks about the German situation should be made. Among modern philosophers, Martin Heidegger plays an important part, especially through the theology of Rudolph Bultmann. His famous book Sein und Zeit published in 1927, formulated the modern situation by describing human existence as living for death (das menschliche Dasein ist ein Sein zum Tode). Death does not exist only in the medical sense of the word, but expresses itself throughout life as anxiety and guilty conscience. We remember that Luther says that Adam after his fall in paradise, was frightened by a falling leaf. Kierkegaard's book about anxiety should also be mentioned. This means that modern man lives in a world of sorrow and fears. But God has given us His divine remedy, as we were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For me there can be no doubt, that Luther's words are more apropos to our own times than Calvinism with its Heidelberg Catechism.

b) Another important theological point should be mentioned here. There is not a single line in the Heidelberg Catechism about the necessity of Baptism. Thus it has been part of western theology since Saint Augustine and his fight against Pelagianism. From here he constructed his doctrine of original sin. Of course, there can be no connection between this tradition and the Calvinistic tradition which sees no efficacy in Baptism. Baptism is the sign of the new covenant,

but it works nothing. All is done by the Holy Spirit. For Calvinism there are in a strict sense no instruments of grace as there is for Lutheranism. Let us now have a look to the other question.

## B. The Lord's Supper

1. Here we find a similarity to Baptism. Question 75 states that the Holy Sacrament is given to remember and assure communion with Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The question is answered in the following way. "As certainly as I see with my own eyes that the bread is broken and the chalice is given to me, so Christ's body was sacrificed and broken and His blood was shed. As I receive from the hands of the minister the bread and chalice, given to me as certain marks of the body and blood of Christ, so He feeds and gives me drink for eternal life." Here is the same cum - tum i.e., unrelated parallel action we mentioned above.

Luther's Small Catechism differs considerably. Nothing is said of the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord in His Holy Sacrament, according to the Heidelberg Catechism there is neither body nor blood, but only their marks. Luther's comments are both short and striking: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and drink as instituted by Christ Himself." The Heidelberg Catechism knows nothing of Christ's real presence in His sacraments, but only marks, signs and hints. There may be the trace of grace, but nobody knows what really happens.

This line of skepticism of Erasmus contrasts with the assertive theology of Luther as he says towards the end of the first part of Bondage of the Will. The skeptical Erasmian spirit continues in Calvinism as a whole and is not limited to Zwingli. In Calvinism and in the Heidelberg Catechism there may be some progress insofar as both go beyond memory and signification. But there is no real difference between Calvin and the Heidelberg Catechism on the one side and Zwingli on the other, except that there is some interest in the action and the spiritual presence. But Calvin and Luther are as far apart from one another as fire and water, and heaven and earth. It is therefore of no use when so-called compromises like the Leuenberg Concord try to persuade modern readers that the older differences no longer exist. Here theology and politics are confounded.

2. Question 76 asks: "What does eating Christ's crucified body and drinking His shed blood mean?" The answer is given in two parts. This means not only accepting all of the suffering and dying of Christ with a faith-filled heart, and receiving from this forgiveness of all sins and eternal life; but, also obtaining this by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us as in Christ Himself.

Therefore we are increasingly united with His blessed body so that we, although He is in heaven and we are on earth — become flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones, ruled by one Spirit living eternally, just as the limbs of our body are ruled by the soul.

As mentioned above there is no sort of real presence of Christ. There is moreover no necessity for sacramental presence when all happens by means of the Holy Spirit. The extra Calvinisticum can be found quite easily in this question. There is a marked difference between heaven and earth. One could question whether Christ is really present or not. Of course a Calvinist ascribes this to the Holy Spirit, thus there is no necessity of the sacraments, to say nothing of Christ's own words. The presence of Christ evaporates. Christ is in heaven and we are on earth. His body and blood are not the connection between Him and us, but the Holy Spirit is the connection. The presence of Christ in the Spirit is of course held by the Calvinists and Lutherans. Speaking about the Holy Spirit instead of the Sacrament of the Altar makes the difference. It is at the root of the continuing struggle as well. Long before the Leuenberg Concord and Arnoldshain Theses were published, the Evangelical Church in Germany established a special commission on this subject. Some scholars were of the opinion that the progress of modern exegesis could be helpful in overcoming the trouble. But this became increasingly delusive because they were not willing to listen to the clear words of the Lord. Modern hermeneutics based on Rudolph Bultmann made the Word of God more insecure. It was more the spirit of the scholar, not the Holy Spirit that was working here.

We may be too severe in our judging the texts, however Question 78 shows quite clearly that we are not wrong in our interpretation. The question is: do the body and blood of Christ really come from the bread and wine? Like Baptism the elements have only the quality of assurance and marks. The text states explicitly that in the sacrament bread and wine are not the body and blood of Christ itself. It is only custom when the phrase of "the body of Christ" is used. This sort of presence can only be a spiritual one, not a real one.

3. The same theme runs through Question 79. The terms are always the same: visible signs, pledge, mark. All of these are the assurance of what Christ has done for our salvation. The Lutheran "IS" is always missing. The parallelism of sign and Christ is dominant, as there is no real interest in the elements, except in their function as signs. The action of the sacrament and not the elements are center stage. In the same way modern confessions such as Arnoldshain and Leuenberg accent the functionalistic side, just as

Melanchthon did in the Variata Edition of the Augsburg Confession X.

4. Even today Calvinism and modern unionism do not shy away from calling Lutherans 'sacramentalists' and 'confessionalists'. Seldom noticed is the Heidelberg Catechism's not so subtle criticism of the Lutherans in Question 80. This question deals with the differences between the Lord's Supper and the papistic mass. The Papists' daily sacrifice the mass, is called "eine vermaledeite Abgötterei", i.e., blatant paganism. But the Roman Catholics are rejected, as are the Lutherans. The text explicitly denies that Christ is under the form of bread and wine. The choice of words clearly refer to the classic Lutheran designation of "under" in Small Catechism V,1.

Question 81 seems to come closer to the Lutheran position, because it is said that the impenitent are eating in preparation for their final judgment. But there is no reference to Christ's real presence in the altar's sacrament. The Biblical designation of the body of Christ is not even mentioned.

In summarizing, something must be said as to how Calvinists view the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the sacraments. Calvinists like to say that Lutherans with their understanding of the real presence of the Lord in both sacraments are referring to what Calvinism designates with the Holy Spirit. If this is true, it seems that everything depends on the effect. The Holy Spirit is actually doing for Calvinists what the Lutherans attribute to the sacraments. But this interpretation is not correct. There is a contradiction in Calvinistic thinking. Why does the Heidelberg Catechism deal with the sacraments if they are in fact not necessary to salvation? The answer can easily be given by the Biblical traditions. However if spiritualism is predominant as in Calvinism, the sacraments have no real meaning.

Calvinism leads to another very important consequence. I refer to the road from Calvinism and spiritualism to intellectualism, much the same as from Erasmus and early humanism to the Age of Enlightenment. No less than Wilhelm Dilthey, son of a Protestant parson, endeavors to show the line from the left wing of Reformation towards the philosophy of German idealism. In some respect this may be true. Calvinists have always been very proud of their modernism in comparison with the Lutherans whom they regarded as secret Papists. This tendency runs through all types of modern unionism because there is always an embarrassment about the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. The phenomenon of Protestantism moreover blurs the clear and distinct lines. In some ways the Lutherans from their traditions are closer to Roman Catholicism than to the Calvinists.

In conclusion a few generalizations are necessary to characterize the differences between both the Lutheran and Calvinist catechisms. The Small Catechism has its place in the Book of Concord. There is no parallel to the Heidelberg Catechism and the traditions of the Calvinistic confessions. Therefore, the Heidelberg Catechism must be considered as an isolated document.

This is not the only difference. In formal respect there are variations that render more difficult the comparison between both of the texts. The Heidelberg Catechism, not in its format of questions and answers, but in its length is comparable to the Augsburg Confession. The Small Catechism in its form is far more popular than the Heidelberg Catechism. In former times the Small Catechism was learned by heart by every Lutheran child at school. This would be quite impossible in the case of the Heidelberg Catechism. Therefore only parts of the text are really familiar to the Calvinist laity. The popularity of the Small Catechism is also deeper rooted. What I mean can be illustrated by a letter I received from Propst Hukka from Helsinki in Finland, the director of the Finnish Lutheran Mission, where he was traveling through Africa on a journey to the missionary stations in Pakistan. He wrote that he once found Luther's Small Catechism in a Roman Catholic missionary station in Africa. When he asked one of the fathers what they were doing with it, he was told that they were using it for their own missionary purposes to teach people. After an astonished question by Propst Hukka, he added they did so because Hans and Grete, i.e. everybody, could understand the text. This cannot be said of the Heidelberg Catechism.

However, there are still other differences. The Small Catechism is often recited in services, sometimes Part Five, as a preparation before the Sacrament of the Altar. The Heidelberg Catechism does not have this quasi-liturgical function. The same can be said in respect to the care of souls. For instance, I have often recited the explanation of the second article of the creed with sick persons to help them in the fight against death: "Who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature . . ." Here is a spiritual intensity that is far above that of the Heidelberg Catechism, even considering the impressive overture in the first question. As a whole the Heidelberg Catechism is a typical product of a scholar. Luther speaks with the authority of his charisma. Therefore his words are striking and classical far beyond comparison. Here is a mastership of language rarely reached. Only the stupidity of modern scholars could produce such a miserable linguistic confusion as the so-called "Luther New Testament-1977" in Germany, destroying Luther's incomparable language.

Even Bert Brecht did not feel embarrassed to declare that his only lingual model was Luther's Bible. In the early twentieth century when one of our Berlin newspapers asked whose literary style he followed, he answered by postcard: "Probably you may laugh — Luther's Bible". However some Lutherans in our country know better.

I mention this because there is a direct connection between Luther's Bible and the Small Catechism. Lutherans have an incomparable introduction to the Scriptures through the catechism, as the catechism marks the main roads in the Bible. Contemporary alienation from the Bible comes partly from neglect of the catechism. Even Thomas Mann's famous novel Buddenbrooks begins with the recital of Luther's explanation of the first article of the creed. Everyone was familiar with this text. The connection of Bible and catechism should be intensified in our own times. Luther's Small Catechism has by no means exhausted its value.

There is another question we should finally discuss. Theological modernism is literarily productive, not only in theological essays, books or tracts, but even in the form of homemade confessions substituted for the Apostles' Creed. These are born not from spiritual experience, but are being manufactured on typewriters. Some of them look nice and chic, suited for modern man, as they are styled in a sort of streamlined design. At first glance most of the words seem to be correct, however under closer scrutiny much is missing causing confusion. If you compare these contemporary texts with Luther's clear and impressive words, you can do what the Scriptures call 'discerning the spirits'. This is what we need everywhere. Because of its spiritual vitality, Luther's Small Catechism is very necessary and helpful.

Finally there is the ecumenical aspect. Since the last war especially, Roman Catholic scholars have discovered Luther. There is continual progress in this direction, with Joseph Lortz and his disciples in Germany leading the way. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger from Munich has proposed that the Augsburg Confession be acknowledged by the Roman Catholic Church. Another step in this direction was the dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics in the United States. No one knows how things will progress and what the concrete results will be. Luther's Small Catechism belongs, of course, to the ecumenical texts of highest rank, because what is intended by the Augsburg Confession could in the same way be said about the Small Catechism. The ecumenical value of the Small Catechism is demonstrated by the word "Christendom" in the explanation of the third article of the creed. Christendom shows quite clearly that the program of Luther's Reformation was intended

not only for one of the churches, but for the Church as a whole. Everyone knows that Luther by no means proposed establishing a new church. The Small Catechism brings out that his was a responsibility for the Church as a whole.

Often mentioned is that the term "justification" is missing from the Small Catechism. Though this is the center of Luther's teaching, he never thought it was a special doctrine only for Lutherans. However, if the word "justification" is not mentioned, the concept is always present, from the explanation of the First Commandment to the doctrine about the Lord's Supper. Moreover, in the explanation of the second article, Christology is explained in terms of justification. Justification gives the key for understanding the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Sola gratia runs through the first article as well as through the third. Since this is true, as it can be shown from the text itself, the center of Luther's theology is enclosed in the few pages of the Small Catechism. This is a true gift from God to His church. It is our task to translate the catechism in the context of modern life. I am sure that the same cannot be said about the Heidelberg Catechism. Here then is the difference and the continuing struggle.

# The Evangelical Character of Luther's Catechism

*by Edward C. Fredrich*

There are many reasons why the 450-year-old textbook we are honoring at this Congress is still in business as a textbook after all those years. One could point to the importance of the author and the desire of the church that bears his name to be faithful to his memory and to his message. One could mention the matchless skill of the Catechism in presenting the greatest and deepest truths in the clearest and simplest terms. One could praise the brevity which makes possible verbatim recall for the young learner and the veteran reviewer. One could emphasize the positive approach that shuns the polemical and lets the unnamed error be refuted by giving its opposite total way and sway.

All that would be true but it would not be the whole truth. The main reason for the amazing longevity and the eternal youth of the Catechism as the Lutheran Church's chief teaching tool is indicated in the title of this paper. It is its Evangelical Character. The adjective is to be understood, of course, not in a derived sense designating some specific denomination or theological tendency within a denomination, but

in the original meaning developed from the noun evangel or gospel.

The term evangelical may seem to give very specific direction and delimitation to the writing. It does in one sense. In another, as it touches on the heart issue in which our religious existence lives and moves and has its being, this concept evangelical opens before us a large vista that cannot be comprehended by any single treatment. If each of us were to develop the assigned theme, we would in all likelihood present finished products that differed widely from one another in specifics, but would fulfill the assignment adequately in their own individual way.

At the same time it is quite unlikely that anything radically new would be disclosed by such a variety of treatments or could be presented by this paper. For four and one-half centuries Luther's Catechism has survived just because its evangelical character has been appreciated and acknowledged. The praises sung to this aspect of the Catechism could fill volumes. At this late date and at best, about all that can be added is another



testimony, dated 1979, another witness of someone who with St. Paul believes that there are some things so precious that their repetition is less an occasion for trouble and grief than for safety.

From this viewpoint several of the familiar wordings of Luther's Small Catechism are being viewed in this paper for their gospel import. Companion writings in the Large Catechism are being drawn on for emphasis and elucidation. The first of such wordings is:

I

der mich verlornen und verdamnten Menchen  
erlöst hat

"who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature"

In his Large Catechism commentary Luther points up the meaning of these cherished words when he, using the familiar question-answer technique, writes:

What do you believe in the Second Article of Jesus Christ?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord.

But what is it to become Lord?

It is this, that He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death and all evil.<sup>1</sup>

As conclusion to the Second Article discussion in the Large Catechism Luther supplies this summary paragraph:

Ay, the entire Gospel which we preach is based on this, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rest, and which is so rich and comprehensive that we never can learn it fully.<sup>2</sup>

For the whole Catechism Luther, as he says, supplies a Gospel foundation when he declares of Christ: "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature." This truth undergirds and permeates all else in the Catechism's teaching and in the Christian's life of faith.

As every good storyteller or photographer or painter knows, there is nothing like contrast to heighten effect. Here we have the ultimate contrast: "who has redeemed" over against "me a lost and condemned creature." On the one hand — the Lord, Son of God and Mary's Son, the Incarnate Eternal Word; on the other — the creature, not just a creature but a lost and

condemned creature, not just creature in the abstract but creature in the most individualized and personalized form possible, first person singular.

The Bible begins with a startling contrast: on the one hand — God who was the I-Am before the beginning; on the other — heaven and earth seen for the first time in new light. The link is the verb created with its overtones and undertones of love. The Catechism is summed up in another startling contrast: on the one hand — the God-man and on the other — the sinful creature. This time the link is the verb redeemed that sounds and resounds the love motif, not in undertones or overtones but clear as a bell and as the trumpets of eternity.

This is the Reformation's sola gratia spelled out simply as "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature." The angry God does not become the propitiated God because of anything else but His grace and His Son's merits. The lost and condemned creature had nothing of his own to bring, nothing of his own to offer, nothing of his own to trust. God in His grace effected redemption. It sounds simple. It was simple. But it turned the world upside down. It saves you and me.

One to whom temptation was no stranger makes his own personal confession when he says: "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature." In the "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings" he describes how the gift of a God-given appreciation of the truth of redemption proved the hinge event in his theological development and in Reformation history:

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God . . .

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'." There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith.<sup>3</sup>

Luther's personal confession, "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature," has remained the great confession of the

Lutheran Church for four and one-half centuries. That Church has stood for sola gratia. It has endeavored to win and keep redeemed sinners in the Redeemer and Savior by proclaiming to them the heart-truth of the explanation of the Second Article.

Unfortunately in our day there have been instances, at Helsinki, for example, and elsewhere, where this confession has been blurred and blunted. The fault is not with Luther and his Catechism. The remedy is a return to them and to their clear confession to the truth of justification by grace through faith in Christ's meritorious and substitutionary work of redemption.

Most important of all, these words, "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature," remain the personal, heart-felt conviction and confession of you and me, living or dying. Pastors in the gathering who have ministered at the deathbed of a believer know what comfort and joy these words "who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature," can occasion, even when only dimly heard or barely murmured. These words present to the believer the pure gospel and promise him eternal life. The link between the benefits this gospel word offers and the redeemed creature is of course faith.

## II

denn das wort "Für euch" fordert eitel gläubige Herzen

"for the words, 'For you,' require only believing hearts."

This Catechism statement applies obviously in the first instance to the Sacrament of the Altar. It occurs in the last section of Luther's treatment of the Sacrament of the Altar dealing with worthy reception. After noting the value of "fasting and bodily preparation" Luther emphasizes the basic Bible truth that it is faith and faith alone that makes the always efficacious sacrament efficient in the individual case.

The same truth, however, prevails in the case of the other sacrament, Holy Baptism. When Luther in his Catechism explains how the great blessings of the Sacrament of Baptism are effected, he is careful to point out that "it is not the water that does them indeed, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word of God in the water." Again, it is faith that lays hold of the promises and blessings offered in the Sacrament of Baptism.

That same role is played by faith when these promises and blessings are presented in the gospel word without visible sacramental

elements. The proper response to a sincere confession of sins is, as the Catechism teaches, the declaration: "Be it unto thee as thou believest." Absolution is to be pronounced because the believer has grasped in faith the merits of the Redeemer.

When the Catechism treats of the benefits and blessings presented in the Means of Grace, it reminds us that for them to become ours "requires believing hearts." This description of faith as receiving blessings but not earning them, as essential for salvation but not in itself meritorious looms large in the Catechism and establishes its evangelical character beyond a shadow of doubt.

In this the Catechism is adding its voice to the Reformation testimony that sola gratia is properly emphasized when it is linked with sola fide. The gospel of free grace is proclaimed in truth and purity without strings attached when it is said to effect only one reaction, to call for only one response, to supply and meet only one requirement — the believing heart. And that is the very essence of an evangelical character.

We who have been bequeathed the long heritage of Scripture truth presented in the Catechism tend to take for granted the declaration: "for the words, 'For you,' require only believing hearts." A cursory glance at the extensive rejection of an ex opere operato view of the Sacrament in the Apology indicates that the matter was by no means all that obvious and easy 450 years ago.<sup>4</sup> The sacramental system that had been built up for centuries had amounted to an inordinate increase in quantity accompanied by a deplorable decrease in quality. With one bold stroke Luther put things back on the right track with his: "for the words 'For you,' require only believing hearts."

At once emphasis moved from what man was doing to win blessings from God to what God had done and was doing to bless man. Instead of the old concern about what was demanded of the believer, attention could now shift to the truly evangelical matter of the promises that were offered to faith and accepted by it. The first and foremost of these promises is the forgiveness of sins.

## III

in welcher Christenheit er mir und allen Gläubigen täglich alle Sünden reichlich vergibt.

"In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers"

In his own commentary Luther sums up this



truth in the following words:

Everything, therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain there nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sins, the Holy Ghost does not allow them to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with, and help each other.<sup>5</sup>

In this discussion of forgiveness, as well as in other treatments of the theme, Luther is so eloquent and so evangelical because in the matter of God's forgiveness of sins "to all believers" he always thinks of himself in the first instance. "To me" stands in the forefront when forgiveness of sins is praised. This one pearl of great price that Luther had sought for so long was finally thrust upon him by the Spirit through gospel words he heard and read. He treasured it daily thereafter for the rest of his life.

The truth of the forgiveness of sins runs through the whole Catechism like an evangelical thread, drawing the parts together into a harmonious whole. The Ten Commandments are concluded with God's own assurance of "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." The Creed provides the opportunity to confess that the Holy Ghost in the Christian Church "daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." In the Fifth Petition the believer is taught to plead that "our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins" as he prays, "Forgive us our trespasses." Baptism, we are instructed, "works forgiveness of sins." The Ministry of the Keys is defined as "the authority of the Church, given by Christ to His Church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners unto them . . ." Confession is to conclude with the minister's declaration: "I, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, forgive thee thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In the last chief part Luther instructs us that, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins," signifies "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."

This evangelical occupation and preoccupation of Luther's Small Catechism with forgiveness of sins more than anything else endows it with its abiding relevance and its evangelical stance. Bible promises, Catechism texts, author's explanation are all so woven together that the

resultant lesson aims at meeting the learners' greatest needs, the forgiveness of their sins. Here and there one hears in the church that bears Luther's name suggestions that the time has come to replace the Small Catechism with an instructional medium more suited for learning and living in a come-of-age world. If the suggested replacement maintains or improves on the old in the matter of thematic treatment of the forgiveness motif, one might be willing to give such suggestions a hearing. Previous experience, however, indicates that it is just at this sticking point of evangelical presentation and penetration of the heart doctrine that the replacements fail to achieve the standard Luther set 450 years ago when he said, "In which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers."

This recurring emphasis on the forgiveness of sins was surely on Luther's mind when he wrote his well-known comments on his own daily praying of the Catechism. While the comments apply to other Catechism truths as well, they are especially meaningful when heard in this connection. Lecturing on Psalm 126 Luther states:

I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scriptures through various dangers. But I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting the Catechism, that is, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer and meditating on them with an attentive heart. I do not merely pass over the words hurriedly, but I carefully observe what the individual words mean. And really, if I do not do this but am preoccupied with other business, I feel a definite loss because of the neglect. For God gave the Word that we should impress it on ourselves, as Moses says (Deut. 6:7) and practice it. Without this practice our souls become rusty, as it were and we lose ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

Luther stresses this truth of the forgiveness of sins, not only for its own sake and for its own gospel value, great as this might be. He enlarges the evangelical thrust of his Catechism by relying on the truth of the forgiveness of sins as the impulse and source of the life of faith and the life of prayer. To these points attention now turns. The next Catechism words to be highlighted are:

#### IV

Wir sollen Gott fürchten und lieben dass wir . . .

"We should fear and love God that we . . ."

Which one of the chief parts generally given

place in Catechisms seems to offer the least opportunity for evangelical treatment and afford the unwary most opportunities to stray on byways tending in the opposite direction? To this question most of us would promptly reply: The Ten Commandments. It is, however, just in his handling of the first main part of his Catechism that Luther's evangelical approach is so much in evidence. In summary, without ever minimizing sin and its effects, Luther presents the Ten Commandments as the goal of the believing child of God, eager to do the loving Father's will. God's law in Luther's Catechism, not only points ahead to the need of the sinner for the Savior presented in the gospel, but also points from that gospel to the life that conforms to God's will and is pleasing to Him.

This is said in full knowledge that there has been an old battle raging between those who insist that Luther mainly intended the first part of the Catechism to serve as a mirror for sinners and those who argue that the chief purpose was to present a rule for life. Within the latter group can be discerned two contending camps, one declaring that Luther was trying to keep all men on the pathways of outward decency and order, while the other emphasizes that the Reformer's first concern was the life of faith in the Christian. Involved also is the contention of some that the tertius usus legis is an invention of the post-Luther church and was not acknowledged by him.

It is obvious that a brief treatment of a large theme will find it impossible to enter fully into all these debates with all their ramifications. Our purpose will be sufficiently served, however, by calling attention to the key words, "We should fear and love God that we . . ." The crux of the matter is the meaning of "fear." Is the basic connotation an afraidness which would rule out an evangelical motivation for doing God's will or is the proper synonym to be a reverence born of faith and expressing itself in a willingness to keep God's commandments?

No one could deny that the unbeliever has reason to be altogether afraid of God's wrath and punishment. We all know that our abiding old man is hindered in his evil intentions when he is made afraid of God and His commandments. Everyone in this gathering confesses that he sees his sin in the mirror of the law. These points are beyond dispute in this or in any other connection.

It can, however, be emphatically stated that Luther's treatment of the Ten Commandments in his Small Catechism is evangelically based. Ten times we encounter the deliberate juxtaposition of fear and love and cannot forget that the latter is born of faith and casts out the fear that has torment.<sup>7</sup> In the First Commandment the trilogy of fear and love and trust stands as identification of

what is in the heart of the believing child of God. "It is the intent of this commandment," says Luther, "to require true faith and trust of the heart which settles upon the only true God, and clings to Him alone."<sup>8</sup>

In the explanatory sections the "Thou shalt not" and "Thou shalt" have become the "We do not" and "We do" that simply describe the life of faith promoted by the gospel. The sum of the whole matter, the concluding word of the first chief part, "willingly do according to His commandments," strikes a positive, evangelical tone. It pulls together all that has been previously said in the several commandments by way of describing how a child-like faith busies itself in activities of love, such as, "call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks"; "hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it"; "honor, serve, and obey them and hold them in love and esteem"; "help and befriend him in every bodily need"; "lead a chaste and decent life and each honor and love his spouse"; "help him to improve his property and business"; "put the best construction on everything"; "help and be of service to him."

It might not be amiss to mention in this connection how that same evangelical approach to the believer's life of sanctification is in evidence in other sections of the Catechism. The "fatherly divine goodness and mercy" of the Creator and Preserver is the reason why it is our "duty to thank and praise, and to serve and obey Him." The redemption motivates the believer's confession: "I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness." When we are nurtured by the true, pure Word of God, then "we as the children of God lead a holy life according to it." The gift of the Fourth Petition leads "us to appreciate and to receive with thanksgiving our daily bread." We who have received forgiveness from the Father in heaven will "surely also heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us." Baptism "signifies . . . that again a new man should daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

This procedure in teaching sanctification, which is consistently followed throughout the Small Catechism from the first to the last part, is the truly evangelical way. There is no need for the old Catechism lists and classification of sins and virtues and virtuous works. There is no room for the unevangelical imposition of long-outdated ordinances or of newly invented human regulations upon free, justified believers. These believers are rather encouraged to let their faith express itself and their justification produce sanctification, quite naturally and inevitably. Good works are expected to abound, not because they are necessary and meritorious in earning

salvation, but simply because good works are produced by faith.

This evangelical teaching of sanctification is nowhere more clearly in evidence than in Luther's use of the Catechism word under consideration, "We should fear and love God" to introduce the explanation of the Third Commandment: "that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

With clarity and facility the man who had been taught to live by the gospel moves from what he refers to as the Commandment's meaning nach dem groben Verstand to the all-important and abiding expression of God's inimitable will for His children, namely that they hear and learn His Word.<sup>9</sup> In one simple statement Luther surmounts all the obstacles and overleaps all the pitfalls that have brought so many others, some even in the Lutheran Church, to a doctrinal fall into sheer legalism or flagrant violation of evangelical freedom.

Sabbatarianism obviously would find no room in Luther's theology. He is equally concerned, however, that more subtle misinterpretation of the Third Commandment should not re-enslave those whom Christ has made free and reshackle the gospel with unevangelical bonds. Luther stands firm on the principle that the New Testament believer in Christ is free of all requirements save God's abiding will for His believers.

The Third Commandment therefore, Luther declares, "according to its gross sense, does not concern us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament, which were attached to particular customs, persons, times, and places, and now have been made free through Christ."<sup>10</sup> "In the gross sense" there may be no great issue at stake, for both the legalist and the free Christian may well go to church on Sunday. In the essential matter, however, Luther wants to be understood as espousing churchgoing that is evangelical, not legalistic. It is to be regretted that some Lutherans have not been willing to abide by this soundly evangelistic teaching that flows naturally out of Luther's Ten Commandment theme, "We should fear and love God that we . . ."<sup>11</sup> Another Catechism word with deep evangelical import is:

## V

Auf dass wir getrost und mit aller Zuversicht ihn bitten sollen wie die lieben Kinder ihren lieben Vater.

"That we may with all boldness and confidence ask Him as dear children ask their dear father."

The effort to espouse evangelical instruction in

Bible truth encountered great difficulty also in the third main part of traditional catechetical instruction, the Lord's Prayer section. Some insight into Luther's problems in this area can be gained from his own testimony. In his writing of 1522 on praying he feels compelled to complain:

Among the many harmful books and doctrines which are misleading and deceiving Christians and give rise to countless false beliefs I regard the personal prayer books as by no means the least objectionable. They drub into the minds of simple people such a wretched counting up of sins and going to confession, such unchristian tomfoolery about prayers to God and His saints! Moreover, these books are puffed up with promises of indulgences and come out with decorations in red ink and pretty titles, one is called Hortulus animae, another Paradisus animae, and so on. These books need a basic and thorough reformation if not total extermination. And I would make the same judgment about those passionals or books of legends into which the devil has tossed his own additions.<sup>12</sup>

Pre-Reformation aberrations in the teaching of the Lord's Prayer will certainly be detailed in other presentations to this gathering. In the interest of avoiding duplication, let just one point be emphasized here: an evangelical direction in prayer doctrine and practice had to be charted and Luther did just that in his Catechism.

Because prayer is both the beginning and end of the observable manifestation of the life of faith in the believer and because evangelical prayer looms so large in the Reformation heritage of the universal priesthood, we tend to take the whole matter almost for granted. Always and again we need to refresh our grasp of two key terms as the basis of all evangelical praying. They are "dear Father" and "dear children."

What Luther really meant and felt when he said, "dear Father" can best be seen by what he himself tells us about his early conceptions, rather misconceptions, about the God he endeavored to approach in prayer.<sup>13</sup> This was an angry deity so intent on His judgments that the sinner dared not approach Him directly. A byway was safer. A mediator like Mary or Anna might provide an "in." If the count in the prayer totals passed the minimum requirement so much the better. One had to work at the task of approaching and appeasing God. This is the "unchristian tomfoolery" that hampered the prayer life of the troubled Luther in the early years. This "tomfoolery," one might add, perpetrated that incalculable loss in heavenly blessings effected by

the tragic misdirection of so many prayers that never reached the throne of grace on high during long centuries before the Reformation and also afterward.

The truth revealed to Luther that God in heaven had been reconciled and had become the "dear Father" enabled him to imbed in his Catechism and in those who would learn from it an evangelical prayer theology revolving around the simple words, "as dear children ask their dear father."

In this prayer theology the way to the throne of grace is open. The Father who raised the Son is reconciled. The believer has a "dear Father" whom he as a priest in his own right can approach in prayer. The result was for Luther an exemplary, heroic prayer life and for the adherents of his Reformation "a wall of iron" that saved their cause on more than one occasion.<sup>14</sup>

The evangelical note struck in the term, "dear Father," is matched by the companion term, "dear children." As such, the believers are encouraged to make their petitions with all boldness and confidence. There is no need to set up all sorts of stipulations regarding number of prayers, kinds of prayers, places for prayers and the like. Luther's way of inculcating the right prayer attitude and practice is simply to remind those praying of the status as God's "dear children." This gospel-based approach, Luther is certain, will produce the desired result: boldness in prayer, confidence in prayer, sincerity in prayer, perseverance in prayer, loving concern in prayer, spirituality in prayer, submission in prayer, gratitude in prayer and whatever else is pleasing to our true Father and in the prayers of His true children.

The content of the prayers can and will vary widely according to time and circumstance. Luther, however, following ancient practice, deemed it advisable to include in his Catechism instruction in the Lord's Prayer. In his explanation of the very first of its petitions, "Hallowed be Thy name," Luther supplies the final Catechism word which will be employed to underscore its evangelical tone. That word is:

## V

Wer aber anders lehrt und lebt, denn  
das Wort Gottes lehrt, der entheiligt unter  
uns den Namen Gottes; da behüte uns  
vor, himmlischer Vater!

"He that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches, profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!"

This is the one utterance in the Small Catechism that verges on the polemical and almost reminds one of the damnant and salvus esse non poterit of other confessions.<sup>16</sup> Even though the final utterance is a fervent prayer of deep personal concern, "From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!" there might be those who would consider the explanation of the First Petition the least evangelical section of the Catechism. Quite the contrary! This essayist does not hesitate to include this material in a select list of choice evangelical expressions of the Catechism.

It is not unevangelical for Luther and for every believer to name conduct contrary to God's will what it is, a profaning of God's Word. In this age which places a premium on the doing of one's own thing and has developed a system of situation ethics to provide a halo for the things that result, no matter what they are, there will be objections to the view that living contrary to the teaching of God's Word is nothing else but profaning God's name.

Be that as it may, we here who appreciate the heritage of the 450-year-old Catechism will regard it as an evangelical fruit of our faith that we abhor living contrary to what God's Word teaches and that we react to all such sin with the plea, "From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!" The thrust of Luther's explanation of "Hallowed be thy name" is unmistakable. The sin of others is a profaning of God's name, indeed, but what is of prime concern is that such profaning should not mark and mar our lives. That is an evangelical concern, born of a realization of the cost of redemption that the Second Article teaches, and committed to a daily drowning of the old Adam that baptismal grace fosters.

Likewise, it is not unevangelical to mark each and every doctrinal deviation from what God's Word teaches as a profaning of God's name. The old designation of union churches that strove to harbor and harmonize false and true doctrine as "evangelical" does violence to the honored meaning of the term. Luther is right, and most evangelical, when he makes it crystal clear in the First Petition explanation that deviation from the doctrines of God's Word is always a profaning of God's name. The gospel truth is precious. The Word that provides it must be held inviolate. Any damage to the Word, does damage to its evangelical content. "From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!"

It is part and parcel of Luther's evangelical approach that in his love and concern for the gospel he minces no words when he scores and scorns false doctrine. He makes no subtle distinctions between doctrines that matter and doctrines that can be sold down the river.

“Profaning” is the blanket label for everything and anything that falls short of teaching God’s Word in its truth and purity.

In his evangelical concern for the Word of God Luther has taught us to react to deviation from the truth and purity of the Word with the immediate recognition of the profaning that is involved and with the prompt heartfelt plea, “From this preserve us, Heavenly Father.” Those who pray thus will on their part shun all such profaning like the plague. They will have no spiritual fellowship with it and will be convinced, as Luther and by Luther, that this is what being evangelical is all about.

Luther’s own commentary on the First Petition in the Large Catechism is worth noting and quoting:

We ought by all means to pray without ceasing, and to cry and call upon God against all such as preach and believe falsely and whatever opposes and persecutes our Gospel and pure doctrine, and would suppress it, as bishops, tyrants, enthusiasts, etc. Likewise also for ourselves who have the Word of God, but are not thankful for it, nor live as we ought according to the same. If now you pray for this with your heart, you can be sure that it pleases God; for He will not hear anything more dear to Him than that His honor and praise is exalted above everything else, and His Word is taught to us in its purity and is esteemed precious and dear.<sup>16</sup>

To sum up this presentation on “The Evangelical Character of Luther’s Catechism” Luther’s own evaluation of this aspect of his catechetical endeavors may well be employed. Writing in 1531 his “Warning to His Dear German People,” he declares:

Our gospel has, thanks be to God, accomplished much good. Previously no one knew the real meaning of the Gospel, Christ, baptism, confession, the sacrament (of the altar), faith, Spirit, flesh, good works, the Ten Commandments, the Our Father, prayer, suffering, comfort, temporal government, the state of matrimony, parents, children, masters, manservant, mistress, maidservant, devils, angels, world, life, death, sin, justice, forgiveness, God, bishop, pastor, church, a Christian or the cross. In brief, we are totally ignorant about all that is necessary to know. All of this was obscured and suppressed by the popish asses. They are, as you know, just that — great, coarse, ignorant asses in Christian affairs. For I too was one; and I know that I

am telling the truth in this matter. All devout hearts will bear witness to this; for they would gladly have been instructed about even one of these items, but they were held in captivity by the pope as I was and could gain neither the opportunity nor the permission to be instructed. We did not know otherwise than that priest and monks alone were everything, and that we relied on their works and not on Christ.

But now — praise be to God — it has come to pass that man and woman, young and old know the Catechism. They know how to believe, to live, to pray, to suffer and to die. Consciences are well instructed about how to be Christians and about how to recognize Christ.<sup>17</sup>

It is this gospel treasure in the Catechism and the blessings it brings that should make us all eager teachers and learners of this old, old textbook that is still so relevant after 450 years. Even those in our midst who can like Luther claim, Ich bin auch ein Theologe, should be willing with him to pray and to ponder daily the Catechism and its blessed “Evangelical Character.”<sup>18</sup>

# **The Layman's Bible: The Use of Luther's Catechisms in the German Late Reformation**

*by Robert Kolb*

Just as the best, most experienced alchemist draws forth the quintessence, that is the core, power, sap, and pith of a thing, so God in his great mercy has prepared in the precious catechism an extract, an excerpt, a brief summary and epitome of the entire Holy Scripture for people who are thirsty in spirit and hungry for grace. In the catechism he has brought together in clear, distinct words which everyone can understand everything a Christian needs to know and to believe for his salvation. If a teaching agrees with the precious catechism, every Christian may accept it in good conscience.<sup>1</sup>

Writing from his study of Meiningen in March 1573 the local ecclesiastical superintendent, Christoph Fischer (1520-c.1597), introduced his explanation of the catechism to his readers with this assessment of its worth. Fischer had studied under Luther and Melanchthon at the University of Wittenberg in the early 1540s. His expression of high regard for the catechism as an instrument of the Holy Spirit and as a handy guide to the central

truths of Scripture is typical of the opinion of German Lutheran pastors in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The word "catechism" for Fischer still referred to the basic elements of the Christian faith as comprehended in the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments; "the catechism" had not yet, for him at least, become simply the equivalent of Dr. Martin Luther's exposition of the medieval catechism even though throughout his own explanation of the catechism Fischer's deep respect for Luther's texts is evident. For many Lutheran theologians in the years between Luther's death and the acceptance of the Book of Concord the catechism had not yet become exclusively Luther's comment on what the Middle Ages, too, had regarded as the heart of Christian doctrine. Yet because of the central place which the catechism played in Luther's own program for Christian instruction and the life of the church, his followers ascribed first to the traditional parts of the catechism, and then to Luther's own comment upon them, a central place in their own plans for

ecclesiastical life. This study surveys the role of the catechism, above all of Luther's catechisms, in the program for Christian teaching and living reflected in the writings of prominent German Lutherans of the Late Reformation period.

Because these authors regarded the catechism as the Bible of the laity,<sup>3</sup> a faithful extract of and guide to the teaching of Scripture, they could make rather extravagant claims for it, as did Fischer in the preface to his interpretation of the catechism. At the onset it is important to note, however, that the catechism, in general or specifically Luther's, did not assume in and of itself some independent authoritative status. It was universally regarded as no more and no less than the human words which, like streams from a fountain, convey to simple people the meaning of divine words which are set down in the Holy Scripture so that they may understand what pertains to true knowledge and worship of God and to salvation.<sup>4</sup> Tilemann Hesshus (1527-1588), Melancthon's student, a pastor and professor in several places, summarized the factors that made the catechism useful to the church and to the individual believer. It can be used for prayer, against sin, and in all trials and troubles, for it contains in a few words powerful and rich instruction on God, His gracious will, and eternal salvation. Secondly, the catechism indicates what form the basic structure of the entire Christian faith takes. Thirdly, a knowledge of the catechism makes it possible to benefit greatly from reading the Scripture and listen to sermons with greater understanding. Finally, the catechism helps the Christian evaluate what he is taught.<sup>5</sup>

Luther's catechisms were not the only expositions of the chief articles of the faith available to late sixteenth century Lutheran pastors; for example, that of Johann Brenz (1499-1570), the Swabian Lutheran reformer, was widely used in south Germany and prescribed occasionally alongside Luther's, in ecclesiastical constitutions and mandates.<sup>6</sup> Other Lutherans developed more detailed or more advanced catechetical treatments of basic Scriptural teaching, facilitating what Luther himself had envisioned in the preface of the Small Catechism: the use of more advanced treatises for those who would master the basics which he was setting forth. Still others expanded on the text of Luther's Small Catechism in sermon form or with extended questions and answers.<sup>7</sup> One of the more frequently published examples of the latter genre was the Small Corpus Doctrinae of Matthaeus Judex (1528-1564), composed shortly before his death. Judex had studied under Luther and Melancthon, helped compile the Magdeburg Centuries, and served as pastor and as professor at Jena. Planned as an exercise book for catechetical instruction in school or home, Judex's work followed a simple format. Questions

on topics ranging from God, creation, angels, sin, law, God's Word, gospel, justification, etc. through the Antichrist, adiaphora, offense, the cross, marriage, death, and the resurrection were answered very briefly. Next, the reader of the catechism was instructed to say, "Recite a passage on this," and a suitable Scripture reference was provided. The section concluded then with the question, "Where is this doctrine to be found in the catechism?" and the answer was given, directing attention to one or more of the chief parts or specific elements therein. The Small Corpus Doctrinae concluded with suitable catechetical references for opposing the heresies of the "papists, sacramentarians, Anabaptists, interimists, Osiandirans, Majorists," and others. Judex provided pastors and lay people with a finely honed tool for building upon catechetical knowledge and introducing the young to the Scriptural basis of the doctrine stated and implied in the catechism itself.<sup>8</sup>

Judex was one among many publishing catechists. Cyriacus Spangenberg (1528-1604), a Wittenberg graduate and a polymath of great intellectual stature as exegete and historian, felt compelled to defend his issuing yet another "catechism" — his own sermon form expansion of Luther's text — because of complaints that there were already too many. Spangenberg explained that the catechisms of Luther, Melancthon, Brenz, Rhegius, Corvinus, Aquila, Huberinus, Morlin, Gallus, Chytraeus, and his own father, Johann Spangenberg, were indeed all one catechism; just as there is but one gospel even though there are four gospels, so all those who treated the catechism — presumably also in print — were performing a commission entrusted to them by God as they sharpened the catechetical understanding in children and the common people.<sup>9</sup>

As the century wore on, ecclesiastical officials more frequently prescribed that Luther's catechisms, or often specifically the Small Catechism, be used exclusively in their churches. The appearance of the Wittenberg Catechism of 1571, a Latin catechism designed for use in secondary education, undoubtedly heightened the consciousness of a need for this specific prescription, as it is found, for instance, in the electoral Saxon constitution for the church written in 1580. The Wittenberg Catechism had been composed as a device whereby the so-called "crypto-Calvinist" wing of the Saxon Philippist party could spread its spiritualizing view of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and related Christological doctrine as well.<sup>9</sup> In reaction to this the new Saxon constitution directed that pastors "should present no other catechism to the people in the church, nor permit any other to be taught in the school, than that which was published by the highly enlightened man, Dr.



Martin Luther, of blessed memory, and is incorporated into his works."<sup>10</sup> It should be noted, however, that already in 1568, three years before the Wittenberg Catechism was issued, the problem of adulterated versions of the catechism appearing under Luther's name had drawn the attention of Johann Tetelbach (1517-c.1598), a Wittenberg graduate ill at ease with the Philippist direction of electoral Saxony's churches.<sup>11</sup>

Within the Lutheran churches of the second half of the sixteenth century few if any would have disagreed with a strong emphasis on Luther's catechisms, for in general Lutherans regarded not only "the catechism" but specifically Luther's catechisms as special gifts of God. To Luther's former student, who became superintendent in Braunschweig and bishop in Prussia, Joachim Mörlin (1514-1571), Dr. Martin of blessed memory was not only a holy, noble instrument of God but also a "pious little bee who had drawn forth noble saving honey from all the roses and lovely flowers of God's paradise and poured it into the tiny jar of his Small Catechism."<sup>12</sup> Hieronymus Mencil (1517-1590), Wittenberg graduate and pastor in Mansfeld, was convinced that the Holy Spirit had set Luther to the task of composing his catechisms, and Johann Wigand (1523-1587) concurred. While a professor at the University of Jena, between pastorates, this Wittenberg graduate published a textbook for pastors on catechetization, which contained an oration on Luther's catechetical work. Luther's catechisms served three vital functions, Wigand believed: nothing had proved more useful than Luther's catechism for preserving faith and morals, for bringing consolation and the hope of eternal life to those undergoing trials, and for preserving the teaching of the church in Thuringia, the land in which Wigand was serving. Its clarity, brevity, and eloquence commended it as a superb teaching device. Some might accuse him of praising Luther's catechism excessively, Wigand suspected, but he had a ready answer. He was not praising Luther's person but rather a work of God, and he felt that he was reflecting the judgment of God's church. For the rich fruits which that book was producing daily in Christ's church gave proper testimony to its excellence and superior worth.<sup>13</sup> One of Luther's first biographers, Johann Mathesius (1504-1565), agreed. If Luther had done absolutely nothing else of value than bestow his two catechisms upon homes, schools, and pulpits, the world still could never thank him or repay him sufficiently, Mathesius asserted at the end of his treatment of the development of Luther's catechisms. By the time he first preached his biographical sermons on Luther's life (1562-1564), Mathesius noted, more than one hundred thousand copies of the Small Catechism had been printed.<sup>14</sup> In an age in which few published works were issued in runs of more than a thousand, that

figure alone testifies to the importance of Luther's catechetical work.

Its importance is also reflected in the position which his catechisms, particularly the Small Catechism, occupied in the weekly rhythm of church life in the later decades of the sixteenth century. The catechisms were, first of all, standards of doctrine for the newly formed Lutheran churches of Germany. In 1554, as Luther's close friend Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565) and his colleagues in the church of ducal Saxony prepared to make an ecclesiastical visitation, they insisted that every pastor must be in command of the catechism. In the decades following Lutheran churches throughout Germany included the catechisms among their confessional standards as they drew up *corpora doctrinae*, culminating in the Book of Concord.<sup>15</sup> Not just pastors but also teachers, sextons, acolytes, and midwives were required to know the catechism to assume and to continue in their responsibilities in certain areas.<sup>16</sup>

The catechism served as an important element of the worship services as well. It was to provide the subject matter, the text, for regular sermons — often at an early morning or vesper service on Sunday, occasionally at a regular midweek service, or in some areas during Lent or in series twice each year.<sup>17</sup> The prescription of the electoral Saxon constitution of 1580 reflects universal practice among sixteenth century German Lutherans: "Because there is no more necessary preaching than that on the holy catechism . . . pastors and ministers shall employ special diligence in commending and presenting this preaching on the catechism to the common people."<sup>18</sup> The ecclesiastical constitution of Pomerania composed in 1569 prescribed punishment for pastors who neglected catechetical preaching, and this was apparently at least occasionally a problem. Heinrich Salmuth (1522-1576), superintendent in Leipzig, observed — on the same page on which he stated that knowledge of the catechism is necessary for salvation — that the very importance of catechetical preaching causes the devil to entice preachers away from this task. Those who succumb and are ashamed to preach on the catechism will receive judgment, Salmuth threatened.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these sermons, many agendas prescribed the reading of the catechism as a regular part of certain worship services. In Amberg in the 1550s this reading was to come from Luther's Large Catechism. Apparently in Wolfstein both the reading of the Large Catechism and the recitation of the Small Catechism were integral parts of Sunday activity, for Thomas Stieber's *Instruction*, composed in 1574 for the principality, permitted omission of the reading of the Large Catechism — but not of the recitation of the Small Catechism — on days when it was extremely cold.<sup>20</sup>



Formal catechetical instruction was also universally prescribed. The ignorance of the people which Luther discovered in the Saxon visitation of 1527 had moved him to compose the catechisms, Mathesius reported as he urged his hearers to exercise diligence in promoting catechetical instruction. Wigand stressed the necessity of using Luther's introduction to Biblical teaching in building the foundations of Christian knowledge so that the children might be prepared to understand more weighty matters.<sup>21</sup> In the church building itself, particularly in the villages, catechetical instruction was given by the pastor in most areas each Sunday after the main service, or in some cases, at Sunday Vespers, or at Vespers on Wednesday and Friday. In Braunschweig-Grubenhagen in 1581 this instruction was transferred from a weekday service to one on Sunday because more people attended the Sunday service. Pastors were to conduct reviews of Luther's Small Catechism on summer evenings as well as each Sunday in the county of Wertheim. In most areas parents were required to have children and servants in church and in school for catechetical instruction on a regular basis. Pastors in electoral Saxony were instructed to visit the homes of the illiterate and others about whom they had suspicions to examine the children on the catechism. In the agenda issued for Mansfeld in 1580 specific hymns were prescribed for use in catechetical review, and the regular use of these hymns was to be a matter of concern in the visitations of the congregations.<sup>22</sup>

Schools were to be established in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel specifically for the purpose of catechetical instruction — among other reasons. In setting forth an ideal curriculum for schools the University of Jena theologian, Johann Friedrich Coelestin (d. 1578), suggested this core: God's Word, the Scriptures; the precious catechism; foreign languages; and all worthwhile subjects. Coelestin's profile of the ideal school teacher included that he know the catechism, that he pray diligently, that he teach his pupils the catechism and chief articles of the Christian religion purely and clearly without any error in a most diligent and faithful fashion, and that he hold his pupils to prayer. That this ideal profile was not fulfilled by every schoolmaster is indicated in Salmuth's sermon on the catechism; he criticized those teachers who believe it is enough to instruct their pupils in languages and the liberal arts but who neglect catechetical instruction.<sup>23</sup>

The catechism was not just to be learned; it was supposed to be remembered. In the Palatine country of Neuburg a yearly examination of catechetical knowledge was prescribed for everyone in the congregation, "so that the common people will not be afraid but be attracted to and be made enthusiastic over this teaching."

Knowledge of the catechism was the subject of public examination of the young throughout German Lutheran churches. The electoral Saxon constitution of 1580 offered pastors guidance on conducting a formal examination of their young people on the Sundays of each Lent. Each quarter of the town had its Sunday on which its young publicly submitted to examination. This could be a frightening experience, so the authors of the constitution urged pastors not to shame the boys and girls or scold them harshly but rather to talk with them in a friendly, fatherly manner, "so that they may look forward to the examination with heartfelt desire and joy rather than fear." The examinations were to be conducted solely on the basis of Luther's catechism. More rigor was necessary in the examination of those with whom the pastor was less familiar; those whom he knew from school — if they had there exhibited a good command of the catechism — might be called upon simply to display what they could do with a few good examples. The constitution strongly suggests that parents attend these examinations, not just so that they may see how their children and servants answer but also so that they may be motivated to be more diligent in reviewing the chief articles of the catechism and their explanations with the young people in their own homes.<sup>24</sup>

A firm command of the catechism, a successful examination of this sort, constituted the essence of confirmation and was required for the formal ceremony in electoral Saxony. In some areas continued participation in the Lord's Supper required continued demonstration of an understanding of the catechism, as Luther had urged in the preface of his Small Catechism, and to that end catechetical examination became a part of private confession. In Mansfeld sponsors were required to know the catechism, again as Luther had advised in his preface to the Small Catechism.<sup>25</sup> Several late sixteenth century ecclesiastical constitutions also required bridal couples to demonstrate their knowledge of the catechism before the church laid its blessing on their marriage. Cyriakus Spangenberg supported this requirement when he wrote of the qualifications for marriage: those who wished to marry should diligently avoid and flee evil company, bad language, lascivious behavior, bad books and songs, and all such wantonness, and instead they should listen to and cling to God's Word, learn the catechism and the table of duties thoroughly, and pray God for purity.<sup>26</sup>

The catechism's usefulness for the bridal couple was just beginning, however, on the wedding day, according to their pastors. Above all, the catechism was supposed to serve as an instrument for carrying out Christian vocation in the hands of the lay people. It was a Bible for lay people, that is, the Word of God digested for lay

use. In two areas particularly the catechism provided support and aid for the lay exercise of Christian responsibility. It assisted lay people in determining the correct theological solution for the controversies which were plaguing the German church in the three decades after Luther's death. Furthermore, the catechism assisted parents in raising their children according to the command of the Lord.

Treatises of several genres which dealt with marriage at least alluded to parental responsibilities for training children. As Luther noted in the preface to the Small Catechism, parents were commanded to teach the Word of the Lord diligently to their children. The citation of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:4 most often supported this admonition. In the legal treatise which formulated society's marriage law after the abolition of canon law's jurisdiction; in the theological treatise, both learned and popular, on the essence of marriage; in the catechism prepared for the secondary school; and in the collection of wedding sermons, Wittenberg graduates mentioned this parental obligation — sometimes briefly, taking it for granted, sometimes in some detail.<sup>27</sup>

Frequently, specific references to parental use of the catechism in the instruction lent concrete form to the detail which these authors provided. In some cases these references did not prescribe Luther's catechism but made general comments on the core curriculum of parental instruction: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. In a massive collection of wisdom on holy marriage Erasmus Sarcerius (1501-1559), a student of Luther's and Melancthon's who ended his ministry in the superintendencies of Mansfeld and of Magdeburg, cited a passage which urged parents to be sensitive to their own children's development as they determined the point, around age five or seven, when the child's mind could grasp the significance of prayer, the Commandments, the Creed, his own baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Such catechetical instruction should continue to the twelfth year and beyond. Perhaps Sarcerius and certainly many of his readers were thinking of Luther's Small Catechism as they read this passage even though Sarcerius was citing the words of the Reformed theologian of Zurich, Zwingli's successor, Heinrich Bullinger.<sup>28</sup>

Luther's Small Catechism was intended for home use in the suggestions and prescriptions of visitation programs and ecclesiastical constitutions which described the ideal Lutheran family program of education. First, parents were to see to it that their children learned their catechism through attendance at catechetical instruction in school and church. Beyond that, some official prescriptions urged that parents

read and review the catechism with their children and servants. The electoral Saxon constitution of 1580 suggested that pastors urge fathers and mothers from the pulpit to examine the young in their homes on the catechism and to set aside certain hours in the week, particularly after meals or before bedtime, for the recitation of the catechism.<sup>29</sup>

Individual writers expressed their conviction that catechetical instruction should begin at a tender age. "As soon as your little feet could take a few steps and you began to talk, your parents led you diligently to pray," the beginning of the process that resulted finally in the study of the catechism, Bartholomaeus Wolffhart told his pupils in the preface to his question and answer guide to Luther's Small Catechism.<sup>30</sup> Spangenberg agreed, urging that children begin learning the basic articles of faith as soon as they could begin to grasp them and then be taught Luther's explanations to the chief parts.<sup>31</sup> Spangenberg set forth five reasons why parents should take seriously their calling to teach the catechism to their children and servants. First, God has commanded them to do so. Their children, created in God's image, must be led to know God and His word, and God has appointed parents to begin this instruction. Cattle are fed daily, Spangenberg lamented, but nobody thinks the whole week long about feeding children with the Word of God. Parents are concerned that their children have money, property, and other temporal blessings, but they pay little attention to instruction in the faith and to provision for divine comfort. Without such instruction children cannot perform their most important function: the praise of God. Secondly, the gracious promises and assurances which God connects with catechetical instruction should encourage parents to perform this duty. Thirdly, the child's need for this knowledge should move parents to give catechetical instruction. A sick person needs to know what illness he has, where medicine and treatment for the illness are to be found, and how to obtain the medicine. The Ten Commandments diagnose the sinner's illness; the Creed points him to his heavenly physician; and the Lord's Prayer teaches him how to ask God for healing. Fourthly, the benefits of knowing the catechism motivate parental instruction, for such knowledge enables lay people to judge what they are taught. Fifthly, parents should teach the catechism for the fun of it. It is regarded as a great thing if someone is a very important person who can lead a magnificent parade, but how much more pleasure is there for parents to lead their children, to care for them, and to proclaim to them what they need to hear. Finally, the grace of the Holy Spirit arouses parents to teach their children the catechism.<sup>32</sup>

Christoph Fischer echoed Spangenberg when

he wrote that children do not really belong to parents but are God's gifts, who must be taken care of not as parents please but as God pleases. Thus, they should daily recite the chief parts of the catechism and its wonderful, noble explanation by the precious man of God. Dr. Luther, and parents should lead them and assist them in this recitation. For, Fischer believed, parents are truly bishops in their own homes. What the preacher is for the church, every father should be for his own house. Because he was exercising such responsibilities over his family, Abraham was privy to God's plans for Sodom. Asaph commanded that parents not withhold from their children the story of the Lord's glorious deeds as they had heard them from their fathers (Psalm 78:4), and Paul recalled the example of Lois' and Eunice's instruction of Timothy as a pattern for parents to follow in passing on their faith to their children.<sup>33</sup> The concept of parents as pastors is found also in Jakob Andreae's sermonic studies of the catechism, which he designed to aid fathers in carrying out their office as preacher in their own homes. A graduate of the University of Tübingen and still pastor and superintendent in Goppingen when he wrote these sermons, Andreae (1528-1590) shared Spangenberg's and Fischer's conviction that parents must instruct their children in the catechism because God has commanded them to do so. Furthermore, he reasoned, in an age when universally the complaint was raised that children would not let their parents raise them properly, the Biblical pattern of parental instruction commended itself to the Christian parents' use. If they wanted to enjoy honor, happiness, fortune, and a sense of well-being, they should raise their children in the fear of the Lord, training them both by examples and by instruction in God's Word. To facilitate that, Andreae composed his book of catechetical sermons.<sup>34</sup>

Neglect of this responsibility by parents would have dire results, Spangenberg warned: without instruction in God's Word and the catechism children would be liable to grow up wild and wanton. Parents earn hell for their children when they fail to teach them God's Word, the Gospel, and do not make them learn the catechism and how to pray.<sup>35</sup> But great are the benefits of proper catechetical instruction. Caspar Huberinus (1500-1553) suggested that the catechism provides the basis for discipline and the maintenance of order within the household. Andreae noted that children who have learned the catechism can give account of their faith and cannot be misled into error — even if they can neither read nor write. Mathesius offered an example of the benefits of knowing the catechism. He observed that those who had been taught the catechism by their parents and who kept it firmly in their hearts would always know how to live the Christian life and die a blessed death, even if

caught under the papacy or the Turk. Such was the case of a young man who was led into captivity in the first siege of Vienna. During the second siege of the city he sent his parents a letter, which a Turk threw over the city wall. In it the captive child confessed his faith as he had learned it from them and promised his parents that he would remain steadfast in that hope of eternal life through crucified Jesus Christ in his imprisonment.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting to note that theologians provided relatively few concrete suggestions for the process of worship and instruction in the home alongside their encouragement and admonition that parents should exercise these responsibilities. In a manuscript prepared for publication — but never actually printed — Nikolaus von Amsdorf commented on the proposition, "that God has commanded that parents repeat and explain at home the sermon which they have heard in church to their children and servants." Amsdorf did not weave catechetical instruction on the basis of Luther's texts into his outline for weekly meditation. Following Luther's advice in the preface of the Large Catechism, Amsdorf urged fathers to examine children and servants on the content of their pastor's sermon, repeating the main points of the sermon so that he might review in their minds its essential message. Each sermon would have two essential points, Amsdorf believed. It would first remind its hearers of God's wrath against their sin, and it would then apply grace and mercy, forgiveness for Christ's sake, to the sorrowing and repentant hearer. Amsdorf suggested that parents drive home these points by amplifying them with Scriptural examples, such as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or of Jerusalem, and Christ's compassion for Peter, Mary Magdalene, and the thief on the cross. From this regular instruction children should learn to live in hope as God's children and as brothers and co-workers of Christ in their daily lives. Review of the Word of God should extend beyond just the review of the sermon, however, according to Amsdorf. He urged that parents conduct a time of meditation morning and evening. Before retiring in the evening the Christian should use the Ten Commandments as a guide to confession and then pray for forgiveness and for strength in sanctification. Each morning again he should confess his sinfulness and pray for God's grace, help, and support during the day.<sup>37</sup> Christoph Fischer, too, urged a review of the sermon be conducted at home along with catechetical review, and he suggested that parents refuse food and drink to their children until they could remember what the pastor had preached. Wittenberg graduate and superintendent in Weimar and Regensburg, Bartholomaeus Rosinus (1520-1586), also suggested a program for instruction and worship

in the home as he introduced his question and answer explanation for the Small Catechism. Rosinus' questions and answers were designed to be used by parents as they conducted the morning review of Luther's catechism. In the evening Rosinus recommended a program of prayer from David's catechism, the Psalms, joined with the singing of specified catechism hymns. He further recommended that God-fearing families should pray from Judex's Small Corpus Doctrinae and from other psalms and should daily reach a chapter of the Scripture. Fischer agreed that parents should use catechism hymns in training their children, considering them an excellent alternative to the love songs that young people like to sing. Spangenberg composed an entire volume on Luther's catechismal hymns and urged their use in the home as well as anywhere a Christian might go.<sup>38</sup>

Jakob Andreae urged that the worship and instruction in the Christian home include a review of the sermon, in which parents sharpen for children and servants the concepts on which the pastor preached. They should also use the catechism to aid their charges in recognizing their own sins through proper use of the Ten Commandments, which serve as a mirror to show them how dirty they are and how to avoid getting dirty. Then the Creed should be used to show them the true water which cleanses from sin. Andreae urged parents to practice the catechism with their children, that is, to ask them what the catechism's various parts mean and how to apply its meaning to their lives. During such reviews parents should not permit the young to gape about and day dream but rather help them concentrate on the text. For the goal of such training and meditation is not simply the memorization of the catechism but rather a pious and God-fearing life. Echoing Luther's comments in the preface to the Large Catechism, Andreae noted that in such a life that catechism never grows old or too familiar; it always offers something more to those who use it. It is a source of continual learning for the Christian; it is a fountain which cannot be drunk dry.<sup>39</sup>

Luther had composed the Small Catechism in an effort to create such a scene: the pious family gathered around this digest of Biblical teaching, praying and studying it together in preparation for daily service to God. He had included as part of the catechism orders for family prayer and the table of duties. His students continued to take also these parts of the Small Catechism seriously; for example, both Spangenberg and Fischer touched upon them in their treatments of the catechism.<sup>40</sup>

Luther had created in the text of the Small Catechism not only a summary of Christian doctrine but also a pattern for Lutheran piety. To what extent was Luther successful in imprinting

upon his followers this way of life? It is clear that both in official regulations and in the writings of theologians this pattern of piety received strong support. However, the theologians also suggest that sixteenth century Lutherans had some difficulties in practicing this idea in their homes. Writing in his seventy-eighth year, the naturally pessimistic Amsdorf said flatly that he was moved to compose his admonition on parental review of the sermon because there was not a father left in Germany who was carrying out his God-given responsibility of instructing his children. Fischer shared Amsdorf's concern. Many parents were raising their children not for the Lord but for the devil, he lamented at the conclusion of a passage in which he had stressed the catechism as one means by which children are raised for the Lord. Spangenberg, too, regretted parental apathy over instructing their children, contrasting this apathy with their concern for their children's temporal welfare. The same complaint was voiced by Salmuth. In the absence of statistical reports it is not possible to assess precisely how effective the call for worship and instruction in the Lutheran home of the later sixteenth century actually was. That some parents in Amsdorf's Eisenach or Salmuth's Leipzig were neglecting their roles as pastors and teachers for their children within their home is clear, but the question of how seriously to take a clergyman's complaints about the sins of his own people must be raised. Gerald Strauss takes those complaints quite seriously — although he recognizes the methodological problem involved in the interpretation of such clerical complaints — and he links these complaints with the pessimistic reports of Lutheran ecclesiastical visitors at the end of the sixteenth century and in the early seventeenth century to conclude that both at home and in school Lutheran catechetical instruction failed to create pious Lutherans in the vast majority of cases. In spite of the great amount of evidence for his conclusion in both the published works of theologians and in the reports of visitors, it seems likely that many families did practice the pattern of piety which Luther had laid down in his catechism and which his heirs were urging upon their parishioners and their larger reading public. For such people escape the notice of visitors more often than those who break with the prescribed pattern of piety and the standards of the theologians.<sup>41</sup>

Pious and impious alike were being invited to read the volleys fired back and forth in the several controversies which engulfed German Lutheranism between Luther's death and the composition of the Formula of Concord. Lay people as well as theologians took an interest in these controversies, and theologians suggested that these lay people could determine which side held the correct position by examining the disputed issues on the basis of their knowledge of

the catechism — which the theologian was always ready to interpret for his reader to aid understanding of the issue on which he was writing. In explaining why he was writing his own catechism in sermonic form Nikolaus Gallus (1516-1570) told his Regensburg parishioners that the catechism served as a Loci communes, a basic text of Christian doctrine, by which pure doctrine and proper use of the sacraments could be preserved against the perversions which confronted Luther's followers in the 1550's. Fischer assured his readers that the catechism served as an "accurate scale, touchstone, level, and plumbline, an unerring and certain compass," by which all doctrine could be weighed and judged. For whoever denies or takes offense at the chief parts of the catechism is attacking the first principles of the Christian faith; such a one is an enemy of God.<sup>42</sup> A student of Luther's and Melancthon's who served almost forty years in Frankfurt an der Oder, both as superintendent and professor, Andreas Musculus (1514-1581), composed a catechism of quotations from the church fathers of the first four centuries, the aim of which was to demonstrate that on the law (the Ten Commandments), the Gospel (the Creed), prayer, and the sacraments the Roman church had corrupted Biblical and patristic teaching. That could be determined through an examination of the catechism. A decade later, in 1568, as one benefit of the instruction in the catechism which he was offering, Tilemann Hesshus listed the ability to stand firm against the winds of doctrine blown by the guile and deception of men who would like to sneak up on the Christian to lead him astray. In 1597 John Aumann praised Luther's Small Catechism for jabbing heretics in the eye as it gave even the most simple Christian a secure defense behind the light of truth. For the catechism provides every Christian with a precise, clear primer which can test and refute all error.<sup>43</sup>

In his oration on Luther's catechism Wigand demonstrated that antinomians, synergists, Anabaptists, sacramentarians, papists, and enthusiasts, who deny the efficacy of the external Word, can be refuted from the catechism. Enthusiasts may be proved wrong, for instance, by reference to the explanation of the first petition: God's name is hallowed when his Word is taught purely and truly and we live piously, as befits God's children in accordance with it. Thus, it is mad and destructive blasphemy to disparage and have contempt for God's Word. Such an argument is obviously designed not to assist in personal confrontation with the enthusiast: if he would not trust the Scripture, he would not listen to the catechism. It was designed to strengthen and bolster the Lutheran lay person's faith as he considered the confounding arguments he heard rather than to equip him for offense against heresy. This fact reflects the pastoral concern for

his own people which Wigand felt. Similarly, he argued, papists, including those who were teaching within the Evangelical churches that good works are necessary for salvation, could easily be repudiated on the basis of the Creed or in the Lord's Prayer. For in the Creed the Christian confesses simply, "I believe in Christ as redeemer; I believe in the remission of sins." In the Lord's Prayer he prays, "Forgive us our trespasses." Wigand knew that Georg Major would dismiss immediately as malicious misunderstanding that kind of argument if the two of them had met to discuss Major's proposition, "good works are necessary for salvation," at a theological level. But Wigand also knew that lay people confronted with that proposition would most likely think that it meant they could merit forgiveness. To deal with that threat to their faith, the catechism served admirably, Wigand was convinced.<sup>44</sup>

Andreae gave detailed instruction by way of example to parents regarding how to use the catechism to examine doctrinal propositions. Andreae voiced the layman's assertion: "I am stupid; I do not understand all these things. I cannot read or write. How can I judge what is preached?" "You can if you have learned the six chief parts," Andreae replied. If a preacher were to proclaim that it is a sin to eat meat on Friday or on fast days, the Christian could check the Ten Commandments, Andreae pointed out. Since they say nothing about abstinence from meat, that must be the devil's doctrine, as Paul stated in 1 Timothy 4:3. If the preacher would say that making pilgrimages, reciting the rosary, and going to mass frees the sinner from sin, a quick check of the Creed would demonstrate that only the blood of Christ frees from sin, as 1 John 1:7 also states. Similarly, the Lord's Prayer repudiates those who would teach that Christians should pray to the Blessed Virgin or the saints, for it speaks only of praying to God.<sup>45</sup>

During the controversies which erupted within the Wittenberg movement after Luther's death the catechism was occasionally used as basis or support for an argument, particularly by the Gnesio-Lutheran party. In a dispute between Nikolaus von Amsdorf and a number of his fellow Gnesio-Lutherans over the rights of the clergy and the rights of the city council of Magdeburg, Matthaeus Judex offered the people of Magdeburg an evaluation of Amsdorf's criticism on the basis of God's Word and the holy catechism. In the dispute over Matthias Flacius' proposition, "original sin is the substance of man," some pursued the dispute with catechetical arguments. Johann Wigand examined that proposition on the basis of the catechism, and his colleagues at Jena issued a repudiation of the "patchwork" put together by Flacius' disciple, Christoph Irenaeus, because it was contradictory to God's Word and the catechism. Andreas



Schoppe issued a "salvation of the holy catechism from the swarm of new Manichaeans and Substantists."<sup>46</sup>

Another Gnesio-Lutheran, Hieronymus Mencil, in the preface to Spangenberg's explanation of the catechism, affirmed that the catechism can be used to prove false the proposition that good works are necessary for salvation, the practice of invoking the saints, and the rejection of infant baptism. In more detail, he demonstrated this use of the catechism in judging the errors of synergism and "sacramentarian raving." Luther's explanation of the third article shows that the free will has no power in matters of faith because it confesses that we cannot of our own reason or strength come to faith in Christ but must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. Thus, synergism is to be rejected because it deviates from the simple meaning of the catechism and has no basis in Scripture, because it confirms the papist abomination, because it nullifies the doctrine of justification, because it gives honor not just to God but also to our own powers, and because it diminishes the worth of Christ's merits. Mencil was hereby teaching a technique to his readers, leading them from a simple decision made on the basis of the catechism's text into more elaborate common sense arguments which would strengthen their conviction. Similarly, he pointed out that the denial of the Real Presence can be answered simply and squarely by a reference to Luther's first question on the Lord's Supper. What could be clearer than its simple confession, "The sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine," Mencil asked his readers.<sup>47</sup>

When in 1573 Jakob Andreae adopted Gnesio-Lutheran methods for seeking Lutheran concord, offering detailed discussions of the disputed points and introducing specific condemnations of false teaching and false teachers, he also employed catechetical analysis as the plumb-line and compass for demonstrating the correctness of the positions which he was endorsing. The break-through in the impasse which was separating Luther's heirs into hostile camps developed out of Andreae's publication in sermonic form of his evaluation of ten key disputes among the Lutherans. In six sermons he discussed divisions among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession and how to prevent them from becoming an offense to pastors and lay people on the basis of the catechism. Andreae had used the catechism to help lay people evaluate the errors of the Roman Catholics, Zwinglians, Schwenckfelder, and Anabaptists in 1567, and he continued that approach in his Six Christian Sermons of 1573. Again, he had the layman express his inability to decide doctrinal disputes — for example, in regard to the dispute

over Christ's righteousness raised by Andreas Osiander:

I hear that both parties attribute our righteousness in God's sight to the Lord Christ, but they have different interpretations. I hear, to be sure, that both parties cite Holy Scripture. Who will tell me which party speaks correctly or incorrectly about this matter? For I am a simple layman and can neither write nor read. Whom should I believe or follow?<sup>48</sup>

A review of the Ten Commandments points out to the layman that the law's righteousness only accuses him, Andreae stated. But in the Creed he recites, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." That confession gives him the assurance that even as a poor sinner, justly condemned because of his sins, he has forgiveness from God, who will not let him suffer for his sins. The second article of the Creed clearly states why the Christian is righteous in God's sight: it is because of the obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, who atoned for human sins and justified the believer thereby.<sup>49</sup> The absence of any indication that good works play a role in salvation in the second article of the Creed proves the error of Major's proposition that "good works are necessary for salvation." In one of his most dubious lines of argumentation from the catechism Andreae urged his readers to reject Flacius' view that original sin is the substance of man since the first article does not state that God created original sin. It states that he created everything in heaven and on earth, including our body and soul, eyes, ears, etc. — but not our sinfulness. Since Andreae had conducted extensive negotiations with Flacius on the subject of original sin, he knew that he was talking past Flacius' point and ignoring his intention. But Andreae was trying to help the lay person deal with the controversy — and deal with it in such a way that he approved Andreae's own position.<sup>50</sup> The third article was useful for combatting synergism in Andreae's mind, also, and the first commandment clearly forbids compromise even in adiaphora at a time in which confession is called for. In coming to a decision on the proper distinction of law and Gospel, in answer to Johann Agricola's error which defined the Gospel as a call to repentance, Andreae pointed out that a review of each of the six chief parts proves that only the Ten Commandments reprimand and accuse the sinner. Even the communication of attributes is not too difficult for the layman to fathom. The second article confesses one Christ, not two, and it affirms that this one Christ is truly the Son of God, who, as Son of God, was conceived in Mary's womb, was born from her, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, descended into hell, etc.<sup>51</sup>

Andreae's catechetical arguments offered only simplistic solutions to serious and complex theological problems. At times he was guilty of misrepresenting — by oversimplifying or misfocusing — his opponent's position. Helpful as his approach may have been and commendable as his concern for the laity was, his catechetical solutions were not adequate to stem the tide of controversy. Such was the conviction of the theologians of his day as well. Thus, as Andreae, David Chytraeus, Martin Chemnitz, and others worked at revising and reframing Andreae's sermons, the catechetical evaluation of the disputes vanished.<sup>52</sup> But Andreae did not completely discard his catechetical arguments. In November 1577, as the campaign to win support for the Formula of Concord among the people of Saxony was progressing, Andreae preached a sermon in Weimar, the former Gnesio-Lutheran stronghold, on the gospel for the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, dealing with the seductions of the end time. The sermon treated the first eleven articles of the Formula of Concord under the stated purpose of showing how each lay person could make a judgment on the disputes among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession on the basis of the holy, simple catechism for children, that they might thus be protected from all seduction by false teachers. Andreae repeated some of the catechetical arguments which he had used in the *Six Christian Sermons* of 1573 and added others. For instance, against Flacius he argued that since the Ten Commandments distinguish between the sinful creature and his sin, sin cannot be the substance of man. Andreae applied the catechism to the questions raised in Lutheran circles over Christ's descent into hell: Did Christ descend into hell just in his soul, or just in his body, or in both body and soul? Did the descent take place before or after his death? Did he suffer in the flames of hell, or did he proclaim his power over the devil, hell, and damnation without suffering? The catechism teaches, Andreae stated, that Christ descended into hell and that by his descent he secured the Christian's freedom from hell and redeemed the Christian from hell. Since the Creed goes no further, and neither does Scripture, Andreae continued, the layman, too, should be satisfied with that simple confession which offers comfort because Christ overcame the devil and hell and redeemed his people from its prison. In discussing the doctrine of election Andreae was primarily concerned to counter the opinion of the "sacramentarians, who have taught that God has resolved in his eternal counsel that many, the greater part of mankind, must be damned and cannot be saved." When the Christian hears that, Andreae said, he turns to his catechism and finds in its treatment of baptism that Christ commanded the apostles to baptize and teach all people and that whoever is baptized and believes will be saved. Thus, the lay person can see that it is wrong to teach that God does not

want some to be saved but determines in his eternal counsel that they must be damned. The response to this sermon was so great, Andreae claimed, that he was placing it into print, for many urged him to do so to make it available to the reading public as a summary of the catechism.<sup>53</sup>

Two years later Andreae preached a series of sermons on the task of bringing concord to German Lutheranism, the task which he was bringing to a close as the Book of Concord moved toward its first publication. There he referred to the catechism as the true and unerring rule by which Christian government could determine how God's Word should be preached among its people. He defended August's ouster of the crypto-Calvinists from electoral Saxony because — among other reasons — their positions could not be reconciled with Luther's catechism.<sup>54</sup> Andreae continued to believe that the catechisms were vital in the process which had led to the restoration of Lutheran harmony.

Once again, it is difficult to ascertain at this distance just how significant catechetical arguments were in setting to rest the fear and agitation raised in lay people's minds by the controversies which dominated the Late Reformation in Germany. Some lay people in the sixteenth century did take very serious interest in the controversies of their theologians,<sup>55</sup> but we do not know to what extent they read and were influenced by Andreae's arguments. Some of his arguments appear so patently simplistic to the twentieth century reader that it seems the more sophisticated townspeople in his audience would have been capable of more detailed theological reasoning although Andreae was apparently hoping to speak not only to the merchant or artisan of the town but also to his country cousin and the village pastor. Andreae's experiences as pastor, professor, and ecclesiastical diplomat, and his wide travels throughout Evangelical Germany, had given him opportunity to know his brothers and sisters in the faith as well as anyone of his era, and he apparently was certain that Lutheran lay people would be most effectively convinced through this kind of argument based on the catechism. This much can be said for Andreae's efforts: he did not want lay people to throw up their hands in despair when faced with the complex theological problems which were shaping the life of their church. He wanted them to exercise their intellectual faculties in spiritual discernment to the degree that they were able, and he believed that many were able to do this only on a somewhat simple level. Andreae was certain that the catechism was an excellent tool to facilitate their proper examination and understanding of the controversial issues under discussion.

Luther's catechisms commanded the respect of

his students and immediate heirs not because they were precious antiques which recalled the past but because they were found to be useful documents. The leaders of the church in the Late Reformation period recognized their usefulness for preaching and teaching above all for aiding lay people in carrying out their Christian responsibilities. These late sixteenth century theologians believed that Luther's "Bible for the laity" conveyed to the common people what they needed to know to teach their children the fundamentals of the faith and to evaluate the claims put forth by disputing theologians. This respect for and use of Luther's catechisms cut across the party lines of Late Reformation Lutheranism. The Gnesio-Lutherans Wigand and Spangenberg, the Philippists Salmuth and Fischer, the Swabian Andreae, and those not closely associated with any party, such as Mathesius and Huberinus, all agreed that God had given the church a tool which was to be prized highly when He guided Luther to compose his catechisms.<sup>56</sup>

Luther's catechisms won immediate acceptance among Evangelicals; by his death and the advent of the Late Reformation period the catechisms had been established in Lutheran ecclesiastical life. The catechisms have maintained this place over 450 years because of their own intrinsic worth, for they do convey succinctly and effectively the power of Luther's insights through the grace of his formulations of the Biblical message. Yet they have become the possession of the church of the twentieth century through a chain of witnesses and users which extends now over nearly twenty generations. A key link in that chain is the company of Luther's students and their contemporaries who built upon his foundation as they constructed the framework for Lutheran thought and life in the Orthodox period.

It is difficult to imagine the Anglican Reformation without the Book of Common Prayer or the Calvinist Reformation without the Institutes. It is impossible to imagine the Lutheran Reformation without Luther's catechisms. For 450 years they have shaped the understanding of Christian teaching and Christian living for countless people around the world. This is true in part also because the church in the Late Reformation period used and treasured Luther's Bible for the laity.



# **Baptism and Faith according to Luther's Catechisms and other teachings**

*by Uuras Saarnivaara*

In studying Luther's teachings on baptism and faith we have to pay attention particularly to three things:

I. The essence of baptism, or baptism as divine ordinance.

II. The blessings of baptism, and how one becomes a partaker of them.

III. The after-care of the baptized, or what the Church should do in order that the meaning and purpose of baptism would come true in the baptized.

I. Lutheran says in his Small Catechism: "Baptism is not merely water, but it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's word." This command of God and His word is particularly Christ's statement in Mt. 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." But His words in Mk. 16:15f. also belong here: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The cited statement of the Small Catechism is explained more fully in Luther's Large Catechism: "Baptism is of divine origin, not something devised or invented by men . . . What God institutes and commands cannot be useless. It is a most precious thing . . . To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men but by God himself. Although it is performed by men's hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act." In this sacrament, the "central thing . . . is God's word and commandment and God's name." True, it is an external ordinance and act, but so it must be, for "the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation . . . whatever God works in us he does it through such external ordinances." As a Christ-instituted sacred act baptism is valid in itself, when administered according to the command of Christ. This is the first and basic thing.

II. The second thing is the purpose and blessing of baptism. On the first Christian Pentecost, Peter said to people who were pricked

in their hearts and asked what they should do: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The gift of baptism is the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanies it. The new covenant salvation is twofold, forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works faith in the heart, renews man and works in him sanctification and good fruits. The Nicene Creed, which is included in the Book of Concord, states: "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins."

Luther says in his Small Catechism: Baptism "effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the word and promise of God declare", "as Christ said 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned'." But "it is not the water that produces these effects, but the word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the word of God connected with the water. For without the word of God the water is merely water and not baptism. But when connected with the word of God it is a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit . . ."

The basic difference between the Baptistic (or, Anabaptistic, as it was called in the 16th century) and Lutheran views of baptism has been stated briefly and concisely thus: Those who hold the Baptistic view baptize because the person believes, and those who hold the Lutheran view baptize in order that the person would believe.

Of course, it may happen in the sphere of Lutheran work that a person first comes to faith and is baptized afterwards (as was the case of the members of the household of Cornelius, Acts 10:44ff.), but the general rule is that a person is baptized in order that he would come to faith. Luther says in his Large Catechism: "We bring the child with the purpose and hope that he may believe, and we pray God to grant him faith. But we do not baptize him on that account, but solely on the command of God."

Luther means: We do not baptize a child because he believes, on the basis of his faith, but with the purpose and prayer that he would believe, or come to faith. Even if a person, child or adult, would not believe when he is baptized, his baptism remains valid. Luther appeals here to the old principle: "Misuse does not destroy the substance, but confirms it." "When the word accompanies the water, baptism is valid, even though faith be lacking . . . Baptism does not become invalid even if it is wrongly received and used, for it is bound not to our faith but to the word."

The validity of baptism does not depend on faith, but its effect, or the blessing that it brings depends on faith. This is seen from Luther's words in his Small Catechism, already quoted: Baptism "effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the word and promise of God declare." In his Large Catechism Luther says:

" . . . let us observe . . . who receives these gifts and benefits of baptism. This is . . . clearly expressed in these . . . words: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,' that is, . . . without faith baptism is of no use, although in itself it is an infinite, divine treasure. . . . God's works . . . are salutary and necessary for salvation, but they . . . demand faith, for without faith they cannot be grasped. Just by allowing the water to be poured over you, you do not receive baptism in such a manner that it does you any good . . . the heart must believe it. Thus you see plainly that baptism is not a work which we do, but it is a treasure which God gives you and faith grasps . . . we insist on faith . . . as so necessary, that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed."

This means: Baptism does not make us partakers of salvation by its mere performance, ex opere operato, but a personal faith in the Gospel is necessary.

The Augsburg Confession (though not written by Luther, but approved by him) states on baptism:

"It is taught among us that baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too, should be baptized, for in baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him" (Art. 9.)

The necessity of baptism to infants is based on the fact that they are sinful through the original sin and therefore need the redemption and salvation prepared by Christ. As a proof that infant baptism is pleasing to God Luther points to the fact that God has given faith and Holy Spirit to many who have been baptized in their infancy.

In dealing with baptism and faith, Paul illustrates this matter in Romans by grafting. There are two phases in it: First, a branch or bud is attached and bound to a stock according to definite methods. Second, the branch or bud grows together with the stock (stem) and begins to live by the nourishment that flows into it from the stem. However, it happens time and again that the grafted branch or bud does not grow together with the stem but withers and dies.

In baptism a person is, so to speak, grafted to the true vine (or olive tree), Christ and His Church. But the purpose of this grafting is realized and comes true only when the baptized person grows together with Christ, or is united with Him to live by His grace in a personal faith. Paul writes in Rom. 6:3ff: ". . . as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death . . . For if we have grown together (KJV has here falsely "planted together", the Greek symphytoi is derived from syn = together, and phyein = grow) in the likeness of his death, we shall also of his resurrection." A baptized person must grow together with Christ through a personal repentance and faith. When this takes place, the basic purpose of baptism is fulfilled, otherwise not, although it remains valid in itself, and should not be repeated.

Luther writes in his book On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church:

"Baptism justifies no one, neither is it of any benefit; but this is accomplished by faith in the promise which is connected with baptism. It is this faith that justifies and fulfils the meaning of baptism. Faith is the immersion of the old man and the resurrection of the new man . . . The sacraments are said to be effectual in the sense that they convey a sure and effective grace when a true faith is present . . . We should therefore . . . learn to pay more attention to the word than to the sign, to faith rather than the use of the sign. We know that the divine promise requires faith, and that these two, promise and faith, must necessarily go together, for alone each of them is ineffective. It is impossible to believe without the promise, and the promise is not fulfilled without faith . . . for Christ says: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'," (Weimar Ed. 6,532f.).

"Baptism means two things, death and resurrection . . . When we begin to believe, we also begin to die from this world and to live for God . . . Faith therefore truly dies and rises again. This is the spiritual baptism in which we are immersed and raised again" (ibid. p.534.)

Another time Luther says:

"The spiritual birth takes place through God's word, by baptism and faith. If we believe, we already are in this birth during our temporal life" (Weimar Ed. 47,19).

What Luther says in these statements is an explanation of the words of Christ: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the

kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). "Birth of water" takes place in baptism. "Birth of the Spirit" is a Spirit-worked renewal from unbelief to faith, and from disobedience to obedience. Luther says of this spiritual birth:

"The law prepares us for the new birth, which takes place through faith in Christ . . . It is, therefore, faith that makes us children of God" (Weimar Ed. 40,1,539, explan. of Gal. 3:26).

Another time Luther says:

"When the terrified conscience receives peace, consolation and joy from this Gospel, this is called faith; this faith justifies us before God" (Weimar Ed. 26,203, Unterricht der Visitatoren, 1528).

Thus, baptism means forgiveness of sins in the blood of Jesus and a new birth by the Spirit of God, or death to sin and resurrection to a new life to God; but this meaning and purpose of baptism is fulfilled and comes true through a personal repentance and coming to faith. To a person who has been baptized but is not a believer Luther says:

"I say, if you have not believed before, then believe afterwards and confess: 'The baptism indeed was right, but unfortunately I did not receive it rightly'" (Large Catechism, IV,56).

A baptized person who has been in the state of grace may have fallen from grace and become a "prodigal", like the son in Jesus' parable; but like that son, the fallen can repent and return to Christ. Luther says in his Large Catechism:

"Even if we fall from it and sin, we still always have access to it, so that we may subdue the old man. But we do not need that the water is poured over us again . . . Repentance, therefore, is nothing but a return . . . to baptism, to resume and practice again what had been earlier started but abandoned."

Luther illustrated baptism by comparing it to placing one on board a ship. Fall from faith into sin is like falling from a ship into sea. This ship is the kingdom of grace, participation in salvation through Christ. This "ship does not flounder . . . But it may happen that we slip and fall out of the ship." If this has taken place, one should "climb aboard again and stay there . . . if any one falls from his baptism, let him return to it." This return takes place through repentance and forgiveness by faith in the Gospel. The Augsburg Confession says of this (and Luther agreed):

"It is taught among us that those who sin after baptism (Lat. form: who have fallen after baptism) receive forgiveness of sin whenever they come to repentance, and absolution should not be denied them by the Church (Lat. form: the Church should impart absolution to those who return to repentance). Properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror, on account of sin, and yet at the same time to believe the Gospel and absolution, namely, that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ, and this faith will comfort the heart and again set it at rest (Lat. form: Properly speaking, repentance consists of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin, and the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, comforts the conscience and delivers it from terror). Amendment of life and the forsaking of sin should then follow, for these must be the fruits of repentance (Lat. form: The good works, which are the fruits of repentance, are bound to follow)" (12).

III. This leads us to the third thing that Luther emphasizes in his Catechisms, namely, to use modern terms, the after-care or follow-up work of the baptized. It was for this very purpose that he prepared his Catechisms. In his Large Catechism he teaches the same thing as the quoted statement of the Augsburg Confession: People who have been baptized but are now not in faith should not be treated as Christian believers just because they are baptized church members, if their life does not show that they are in grace. They need to be led to repentance and faith; that is, called and helped to get back on board the ship of God's kingdom. They need to be convicted of their sins and, when they humble themselves to seek grace, be absolved from them by means of the Gospel of forgiveness in the name and blood of Christ, and then to follow Him in the obedience of faith.

In the case of believers, the purpose of the Ten Commandments is to serve in the Third Use of the law, as a guide of their new life and conduct, and in the case of baptized unbelievers, in the Second Use of the law, to lead them to the knowledge and conviction of sins. Luther makes it clear that he does not use the Decalog as a part of the Mosaic law, but as part of the "natural law", the eternal law of God, which in the new covenant is in the form of the law of Christ, namely, His commandments, and the ethical teachings of the New Testament in general. The Decalog is included in the law of Christ, and it is because of this that Luther uses it in the instructions of his Catechisms. It is this law

that in its Third Use is the guide and norm of the life of believers, and in its Second Use works knowledge and conviction of sins both in unbelievers and believers (who need repeated conviction of their sins in order to be led to repentance and renewed grace).

These simple and basic truths seem to have been forgotten by many pastors: They try to make baptized but spiritually dead church members to observe the commandments of Christ and to lead a Christian life, that is, apply the Third Use of the law to unbelievers, although Luther and the Book of Concord in general make it clear that it is for the born-again believers only. This kind of confusion of the law and the Gospel fosters Lutheran pharisaism or self-righteous churchliness, nominal church membership in which people imagine that they are Christians although they are not. Luther and Melancthon severely warned Lutheran pastors of this kind of error in their Unterricht der Visitatoren (Instructions for the visitors of local churches) in 1528, which was a sort of prelude to the Catechisms published the following year. They said that without a true preaching of repentance and leading people to experience the comfort and joy of forgiveness and salvation, proclamation of grace and faith leads to a "painted faith", which is an error worse than all the previous errors, being a gross misuse of baptism and the Gospel.

True faith is a work of the Holy Spirit. As Luther says in the Small Catechism, by our own reason and strength we cannot come to Christ and believe in Him. The Holy Spirit must call us by means of the Gospel, enlighten us through it and kindle faith in our hearts. In his Large Catechism Luther says:

"Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe in Him as our Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit . . . Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by His sufferings, death and resurrection, etc. But . . . in order that this treasure might . . . be . . . put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Spirit to offer and apply to use this treasure and salvation . . . through the Christian Church . . . it is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches the Word, and by it He illumines and kindles the hearts, so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it . . . in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy

sacraments and absolution, as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel." (3rd art. of the Creed).

Sanctification and good deeds are the works or fruits of the Holy Spirit in the baptized and believing members of Christ's body, the fellowship of believers. But because of the old man, or flesh, in us this does not take place without struggle, or the good fight of faith. In its full meaning, baptism embraces this struggle, which covers the whole life of the Christian. Luther says in his Large Catechism that believers are in this life only "half way holy and pure", and therefore they must grow in faith and holiness, continuing to mortify the lusts and workings of their flesh through the Spirit. According to the Small Catechism, baptism implies "that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, shall be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence."

Thus, the significance of baptism embraces both forgiveness and renewal, justification and sanctification. Only as far these become realities in the life of the baptized, its purpose comes true in them.

I summarize:

I. Being instituted by Christ, baptism is in itself a divine and blessed thing, valid and true when administered according to Christ's institution, and should never be repeated, if so administered.

II. The meaning and purpose of baptism is realized and comes true in personal repentance and faith in Christ, which are the burial of the old life and resurrection to new life.

III. The task of pastors and the whole Church is to take care of the "follow-up work" in the life of the baptized — using instruction, evangelism, intercession — that these purposes of baptism would come true in their life, so that they would become believing, sanctified and fruit-bearing living members of the Church.

# **The New Translation of Luther's Small Catechism: Is it Faithful to Luther's Spirit?**

*by David P. Scaer*

## **I.**

### **Introduction**

Translation is a difficult art which is subject to criticism. It must adequately preserve the sense of the original in terms which the readers can readily understand. These purposes can be at odds. On this account there can never be one once and for all translation. The multiple English translations of the Bible in the last thirty years support this view. Dr. Luther's Small Catechism presents special problems in translation. The Small Catechism was originally intended to be an educational instrument first for the clergy and then for children. At the same time it was put into use as devotional material in Lutheran homes. In the Book of Concord (1580) the Small Catechism was included as an official confession of the Lutheran Church. Thus the translation must serve educational, devotional, and confessional purposes. It must be easily understood without complicated or elaborate explanation and still not compromise any article of faith. The Small Catechism is an official document and any

translation put into use must undergo the same type of thorough scrutiny to which translations of government treaties and business contracts must be subject. Unlike long theological treatises and volumes where paraphrasing becomes a necessity for the translator, the Small Catechism is very short. Its brevity becomes especially obvious in comparison with other church writings. As an official document precision is necessary. As a brief official document precision becomes a distinct possibility. The purpose of this critique of the new version of the Small Catechism in English is not to examine the reasons that were offered for producing a new translation, but to judge it according to literary, confessional, and theological merits. A literary examination means comparing the translation with the original. Special attention must be given to the omission of some material and to paraphrasing. The choice of words must also be examined. Confessional examination requires that the final product be judged in accordance with other documents comprising the Lutheran Confessions, especially the content of the original German of the Small Catechism itself. In the Lutheran Church the

German and the Latin versions of the Small Catechism are the official confessional statements. For all practical purposes among Lutheran groups in English speaking countries, the translation serves as a confession. Of all the historic sixteenth century confessions, the Small Catechism is by far the most known and used. Through the Small Catechism the historic Lutheran faith is passed from one generation to another. In the 450 years since Luther wrote the Small Catechism, theology has been developed widely in many directions. A theological critique must also detect what theological influences if any have been incorporated in the translation.

## II.

### A Theological and Literary Critique of The Small Catechism by Martin Luther in Contemporary English<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The First Commandment's explanation presents a minor and insignificant adjustment from "all things" to "anything else," but the older rendering was not really more difficult than the new one.<sup>2</sup>

In the explanation of the Second Commandment the word "superstitiously" is added and the reference to "witchcraft" (*zaubern*) is deleted.<sup>3</sup> Witchcraft is direct and deliberate alliance with Satan and much more serious than superstition. With the rise of the occult, "witchcraft" would have been more appropriate for our times. In the same explanation the Christians are used to call not upon the name of God but God Himself by replacing "it" with "Him". The German does not warrant this kind of change. One can only suspect a theological motive here where the impersonal and objective "it" is replaced by the more personal "Him". But Luther's apparent intention was to focus on the objective majesty connected with God's name itself as do the Old Testament in many places and Jesus in the Lord's Prayer without any fear of impersonalizing God. Luther's phrase "in every need" is also eliminated. Perhaps the translators were broadening the concept of prayer so that praying, praising, and thanking should take place even when Christians were not in need. But perhaps it was Luther's thought that there is no time when the Christian is not in need. He as a depraved sinner stands always as a beggar before God.

In the explanation of the Third Commandment the German word *verachten* is translated with "neglect" instead of "despise".<sup>4</sup> It now reads "so that we do not neglect His Word and the

preaching of it". The German word *achten* means "honor" and *verachten* means just the opposite "dishonor" or "despise". Luther's sharp warning against the misuse of God's word is lost. The German *selig* is translated "holy" instead of the familiar "sacred". Ordinarily the German word *heilig* is translated "holy", as in the "Holy Ghost". Translating two different German words by one English word should be avoided.

The same loss of language forcefulness can be detected in the explanation of the Fourth Commandment. *Wert haben* is given now as "respect" instead of "honor". Even the phrase "hold in respect" would have been preferable. The word "despise", (*verachten*) deleted in the explanation of the Third Commandment, is found acceptable in the explanation of the Fourth Commandment.<sup>5</sup> The inconsistency in translation is not permissible according to the original translation or for pedagogical purposes. The reference to being hurt "in his body" in the Fifth Commandment's explanation is now replaced by the more general phrase "in any way". At first glance this might seem an improvement since it makes the commandment more generally applicable. But the purpose of each commandment and its explanation is to focus in on one area of life. In this case it is the bodily life. Luther sees each of the last seven commandments as uniquely covering one aspect of the bodily life. "Physical needs" replaces "bodily needs".<sup>5</sup> "Physical" is a more difficult word and is capable of various applications. The rendering of the explanation of the Sixth Commandment "that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable" may be considered a creative improvement. Luther's thought preserved in the older wording "that we lead a chaste and decent life"<sup>7</sup> is certainly lost, but here is a case where an issue explicit in society must be explicitly handled.

The rendering of the Seventh Commandment's explanation is deprived of some of its original force when "any dishonest way" is substituted for "false ware or dealing". Luther's German pictures the actual bartering taking place to obtain another's possession.<sup>8</sup> The Eighth Commandment is also submitted to the homogenization of language. The gutsy phrase forbidding a Christian to "speak evil" of the neighbor is simply omitted. The quite familiar "put the best construction on everything" is now substituted with the phrase "explain his actions in the kindest way".<sup>9</sup> What Luther was suggesting in the German is not that we should attribute to the neighbor a quality which is not really there, but that we should look at the positive aspects of his actions and emphasize those. In the Ninth Commandment's explanation many of the original distinctive features are not carried across into English. "Pretending to have a right" to the neighbor's possessions replaces "a show of right". This latter



translation better parallels the German Schein des Rechts, which suggests that the person does indeed have a legal but not necessarily a moral right.<sup>10</sup> The newer translation suggests that the claimant has explicitly broken the law by forging papers or the like. This thought is handled in the Seventh Commandment.

In the Tenth Commandment's explanation the German words abspannen, abdringen, abwendig machen, are simply translated "tempt or coax". Luther's German pictures the actual mental plotting. The newer translation makes the whole matter look too pleasant, as if it just was happening by chance. Felicitous is the omission of enticing away from the neighbor his cattle.<sup>11</sup>

The conclusion to the commandments omits the phrase "not to do contrary to such commandments" in favor of the phrase "not disobey Him". Also "what He commands" replaces "commandments".<sup>12</sup> There is obviously no reason based on style. In fact for memorizing the new rendering is more difficult because it replaces a word with a phrase. The word "commandment" is used throughout this section, so it must be comprehensible. The use of the word "commandment" focuses the attention of the sinner on the particular moral infringement. Yes, God is offended in the breaking of each commandment; however, He is offended not directly but through the breaking of a particular commandment.

## 2.

### THE APOSTLES' CREED

In the explanation of the Apostles' Creed there are a number of changes through substitution and elimination. In the First Article's explanation<sup>13</sup> "all creatures" becomes "all that exists". The word "creature" puts the emphasis on its having been made and primarily refers to the animal kingdom. The substitution "all that exists" is linguistically more clumsy and introduces what might be for some a certain philosophical disposition. For some nothing exists except that which exists for the individual.<sup>14</sup> Eliminated is Luther's enumeration of the parts of the body-soul life: "eyes, ears, and all members, reason and all senses". The replacement may be more efficient but the effervescence has gone out and we are left with the flat phrase "my body and soul with all their powers". It can hardly be said that Luther's original wording is unintelligible. Quite to the contrary! The new word "powers" may in effect be much more confusing and might even conjure images of some space war fantasy. Luther's listing of the parts that make up the body-soul life was not merely useless enumeration, but rather brought into focus the totality of human life as given by God. The word "powers" is a problem in translation and theology. It is clearly a paraphrase

or interpretation and not merely a translation. In what sense theologically, scientifically, or philosophically can the senses be described as "powers" of the body and soul? And in what sense are eyes, ears, and members "powers"? Also abridged is Luther's enumeration of what God gives to preserve human life. The phrase, "clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and child, fields, cattle", is transformed into "He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work and all I need from day to day". But what was the reason for such changes? Lost are the distinctions between hunger and thirst and between the equipping of the feet with shoes and the body with clothing. Any parent who has to put shoes on his child's feet with the cheapest shoes running at least \$20 a pair knows that a financial miracle is frequently required. Luther's phrase, "He daily and richly cares for the necessity and nourishment of this body and life" becomes simply "all that I need from day to day". The God who is extravagant towards us with His rich providence becomes merely the God who meets the budget. Lost in the shuffle is Luther's "body and life". This phrase is simply abbreviated "me". The personal pronoun "me" is certainly not equivalent with "body and life". Luther's "all danger" becomes "in time of danger". Certainly the substitute is no improvement for the child doomed to the task of memorization. The original suggests something concrete, while the substitute points to a fluid situation. The phrase "guards and protects" is now simply "guards". Luther's "guards and protects" has a certain militaristic flavor as the Christian is confronted by Satan.

Luther's "without any merit or worthiness" dissolves into "though I do not deserve it". The change is subtle, but theologically serious. The German Verdienst and the Latin meritis are justification language for the Lutheran Reformation. Both these words are used in Augustana IV, the article on justification.<sup>15</sup> In both this explanation of the First Article and in Augustana IV, the words are used to describe the sinner's standing before God in the matter of justification. The rendering "though I do not deserve it" suggests that the individual may have tried to please God but failed. Sin is thus placed in the person's actions and not in his condition. Thus the rendering, "though I do not deserve it" is an inadequate reproduction of the Reformation anthropology which sees man in a rebellious condition before God.

The older phrase "without any merit or worthiness in me" must be compared with the newer "though I do not deserve it" to determine if this is a real improvement. The words "merit" and "worthiness" are both common in colloquial English. Every school pupil knows the system of merits and demerits. More significant is that the



distinctive Lutheran anthropology in which a man is in such a condition that he cannot and hence does not follow God's will is lost. The newer rendering fits more the Roman Catholic concept of sin according to which a person before he comes to faith is capable of pleasing God and even contributing to his salvation. The generally accepted Protestant concept of sin as something which is done and left undone fits comfortably into the words "though I do not deserve it".

The changes in the explanation of the Second Article are perhaps a bit more striking.<sup>16</sup> In our circles the older rendering has become classical through repetition: "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." There is a certain cadence in this translation which gives the language a beauty all of its own, not unlike the King James Version. The older translation here was not however without fault. The word "begotten" failed to do justice to Luther's understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The word "born" would be preferable linguistically and theologically. Luther following both the theology of the New Testament and the early church saw the relationship between the Father and the Son as that of an eternal birth. Parallel to the birth of Jesus in time from the Virgin Mary is His eternal birth from the Father.<sup>17</sup> Here the translators had an opportunity to make an improvement. The newer phrase, however, "true God, Son of the Father from eternity", is not only not an improvement but a deterioration. Luther's meaning in the original German was the doctrine that the Son coexisted with the Father in eternity and that this existence was to be understood in terms of an eternal birth. Within the Holy Trinity this is the mystery of mysteries. The question which must be faced is whether the proposed phrase, "true God, Son of the Father from eternity", carries Luther's meaning of the Son's eternal coexistence with the Father. The phrase "from eternity" is ambiguous and not entirely clear. The matter would have been clearer if Jesus were described as "the eternal Son of the Father". But what does the phrase "from eternity" mean? Does it mean from the center of eternity or from the edge of eternity where it meets time? The former is Nicene Christology and the latter Arian. The proposed rendering can also allow for the meaning that Christ was chosen to be the Son of the Father in eternity. This would allow for either adoptionism or Arianism. In this sense each Christian may be called "son of God from eternity". The phrase "eternal Son of the Father" would have been preferable. All doubt would be removed by simply translating Luther's phrase "born from the Father in eternity". Here is the picture of that eternal act by which the Father gives birth to the Son in such a way that both may be called God because they share in the same substance. The translation of

this phrase should be precise as it is the one, the only one in the Small Catechism, which specifically addresses our Lord's pre-temporal existence.

Inexplicable is the deletion of the little word "also" from the phrase "also true man". The German here is auch and the Latin idemque. The word accentuates that unlike other human beings Jesus is unique in being both God and man. The word "also" is a subtle defense against any Eutychianism, in modern or ancient form, which would suggest that Christ has one nature only. Luther in his Christology of the explanation of the Second Article certainly does not want to give a history of the Christological controversies of the first five centuries, but his use of language shows that he was totally committed to the ancient and orthodox Christology and wanted to make it part of the devotional and confessional life of the people.

The next section of the explanation deals with the work of Christ. Here there are some significant changes. The phrase "at a great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person" replaces "He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature." The word "saved", which generally translates the German retten is simply not found in the German text. Erworben and gewonnen, which the older translation adequately rendered as "purchased" and "won" are simply excluded. This is not a translation or even a paraphrase but a new theological construction.

The word "saved" is general enough to permit several concepts of the atonement. Luther's German at this point however is quite specific and points to the Anselmic view in which the purchase concept is most prominent. The words erlösen and erworben point to the concept of God's buying something. The Latin translation redemit means literally to "buy back" and should be rendered in this way instead of resorting to the cognate "redeem". In Luther's German the concept of the price actually paid is clear in that the purchase takes place because of the blood, sufferings, and death of Jesus. The use of the words "gold and silver" puts the emphasis on a transaction which is parallel to a financial transaction.

The newer translation offers the phrase, "He has freed me from sin, death and the power of the devil — not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death." This rendering follows the Latin, but deviates from the German. But there seems no valid reason to follow the Latin and surrender the German, as the German is the language in which the Small Catechism was written and still breathes. The phrase, "He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil" can easily fit

into the context of either a liberation theology or Aulen's Christus Victor theory.<sup>18</sup> I do not want to suggest that the Latin translation is inadequate or that its writers anticipated more modern views. The concept of redemption is found in the Latin quite clearly in the use of the word redemit, which should be translated not merely "redeem" but "buy back". Luther's German gives the strong trust to the Anselmic view, however.

Difficulties in the explanation of the Third Article are few.<sup>19</sup> Vernunft previously translated with "reason" now comes across as "understanding". In the explanation of the First Article the word was simply left untranslated and was assumed under the general category of "powers", which was not, as mentioned a translation but a literary creation. The translators in eliminating the word "reason" have abused the inner linguistic unity of the catechism. Luther viewed the reason given in creation (First Article) as so perverted that it cannot without the help of the Holy Spirit (Third Article) accept what Jesus Christ has done for me (Second Article). Amazing is the retention of the words "enlightens" and "sanctifies". Certainly such terms do not fit the description of contemporary language. One cannot avoid the impression of literary arbitrariness in the translation.

### 3.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

In regard to the Lord's Prayer, the critique is essentially linguistic rather than theological. "Tenderly invites us" is replaced by "encourages".<sup>20</sup> The German here is locken. Lieben is translated as "loving" and no longer "dear". The reason for such changes is not obvious. In the famous triad "the world, the devil and flesh" in the Third Petition, "flesh" is transformed into "our sinful self".<sup>21</sup> But is the phrase "flesh" so antiquated that it is without contemporary meaning? In common non-theological usage, "flesh" is understood as man's degenerative nature. "Flesh" is regularly used by Jesus in the Gospels to describe the unregenerate self and is used to describe those who are absorbed with sinful pursuits. The common usage bears thus the Biblical imprint. Luther seems to be aware that some might identify the "flesh" with the bodily or physical part of man, but overcomes this by speaking of "the will of the flesh". Such phrases as "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" and "the world, the devil, and the flesh" are so a part of the common religious language that no linguistic reductionism is required here for intelligibility. In the section on Baptism, the phrase "our sinful self" will be reintroduced not as a translation for "flesh" but for "the old Adam". The same English word should not be used to translate two different German words or phrases. For years the Small

Catechism has been a determinative factor in establishing language usage, but surrendering certain phrases which are now classical, the catechism loses its role as a linguistic and a theological standard.

In the Fourth Petition there is a subtle change with major theological implications. Luther's German was adequately translated by the older form: "God gives daily bread indeed without our prayer, also to the wicked".<sup>22</sup>

The phrase "also to the wicked" now reads "to all people, though sinful". The German phrase is alle bösen Menschen. The German bösen would better be translated "evil" or "bad", because "sinful" translates sündhaftig. Luther's phrase makes a distinction between Christians who acknowledge God as the Giver and unbelievers who refuse to acknowledge God. They are described evil persons, etiam malis hominibus, as the Latin translates the German phrase. Luther makes the same distinction as Jesus does in saying that the rain and the sun come on both the good and the evil, the just and the unjust.<sup>23</sup> The translators for whatever reason deemphasize the distinction between believers and unbelievers and put all people in the category of sinful. One can only conjecture the reason for eliminating the distinction between believers and unbelievers.

Luther's enumeration of the things belonging to daily bread is revised, apparently for the sake of modernization. For example, "pious wife, pious children" become "a devoted family". But the newer translation leaves the question open of to whom they are devoted. The German word frumme and the English word "pious" speak specifically to the religious quality of the family. Even an unbeliever can have a devoted family. Added in this explanation is the phrase "an orderly community", but this approximates no phrase in Luther. The concept of "discipline" (Zucht) is however omitted.

Missing from the Fifth Petition's explanation is the phrase "for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them".<sup>24</sup> Throughout the catechism's new translation there is a tendency to weaken the concept of total depravity. The omission of this phrase only further tends to substantiate this hypothesis.

In the Sixth Petition "our sinful self" again replaces the more traditional word "flesh".<sup>25</sup> Strikingly modern is the first phrase of the Seventh Petition which speaks of the Lord's Prayer as an "inclusive prayer". A simple reference to "summary" would have been adequate and less clinical. I pity the poor children who must add to their theological baggage the phrase "inclusive prayer". The phrase "property and honor" is omitted after "every evil of body and

soul" without recognizable reason. Perhaps it was considered baggage left over from a capitalistic society not appropriate from a socialistic perspective. The new translation's description of death in the Seventh Petition does not match Luther's original wording. The phrase "and at our last hour would mercifully take us from the troubles of this world to Himself in heaven" is no match for "when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and by His grace take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven".<sup>26</sup> The new translation eliminates "blessed". "By His grace" becomes "mercifully" and this is neither linguistically or theologically quite accurate. The proposed phrase "troubles of this world" is prosaic and does not catch the picturesque language of Luther's "this vale of tears".

#### 4.

### BAPTISM

The sections on the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper raise certain difficulties. Lutheran theology on the sacraments attained their distinctive features in the polemic with the Reformed. Therefore any possible Reformed interpretation should be assiduously avoided. Such care however does not seem to have been exercised.

The well known phrase, "Baptism is not simple water only" is now changed so that the word "simple" is eliminated, perhaps on the grounds that the words "simple" and "only" are redundant and duplication serves no purpose.<sup>27</sup> But non-Lutheran Protestantism has continued to say that Baptism is simple water only. Luther's original rendition is a clear and sharp polemic against such a view. The new translation's phrase "but it is water used together with God's Word and by His command" is linguistically confusing and theologically inadequate. In both the German and the Latin "command" is mentioned before the "word". In the defense of the baptism of infants, the prime motive for Lutherans has been the divine command. Reversing "command" and "word" is indefensible. The familiar "it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word" is changed into "it is water used together with God's Word and by His command". One suspects that the translators want to understand the word "Word" in the hypostatic sense of John 1:1 as a reference to the Son of God, though it is clear that Luther refers it to a verbal command given by Jesus. This matter demands further discussion below. Equally disturbing is that the newer translation allows for a Reformed understanding of Baptism. In Reformed thought the use of the water may provide the opportunity for the working of the Holy Spirit as a separate and distinct act, but not necessarily connected with the Baptism itself.

Reformed theology insists that the Spirit or the blood of Christ saves from sin, but not Baptism itself.<sup>28</sup> The Reformed would have no difficulty in seeing Baptism as commanded by God not in the sense of providing salvation for the recipient, but as legally required by God. For the Reformed, Baptism belongs to the Law and not to the Gospel as it does in Lutheran theology. Luther's original German and the subsequent Latin translation were amply served by the older translation, "comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word". The German gefasset and the Latin inclusa has the same type of a flavor as the triad "in, with, and under". The meaning is that God's command is tied down to every drop of Baptismal water. The German verbunden and the Latin comprehensa suggest the indissoluble link between water and the word. God's word surrounds Baptism's water as the body of an expecting mother surrounds her child. The newer phrase, "water used together with God's Word and by His command", destroys the depth of Luther's thought. We are faced not with a paraphrase but a theological interpretation which could easily accommodate Reformed thinking.

As mentioned above the German Gottes Wort is rendered "God's Word" with the "w" capitalized. Personal pronouns referring to the Deity are consistently capitalized throughout the translation. The suggestion cannot be avoided that the translators are referring to the hypostatic Word, i.e., the Son of God, in a Johannine sense. Christ rather than a verbal word of God is seen as Baptism's power. No other conclusion seems possible since in the question immediately following the word "word" appears in lower case in the question "What is this word?" The translation here is a totally unacceptable editorializing.<sup>29</sup> For Luther, Matthew 28 was God's word.

The question introducing part two is changed from "What does Baptism give or profit" to "What does God give in Baptism?" The newer rendering is more than just another translation.<sup>30</sup> It is a theological readjustment. The newer rendering certainly fits Reformed thinking which sees God as the only Forgiver while denying that He works specifically through earthly means. The separation between the water and the word so that they become parallel actions, noted in the first section, is perpetuated in the second section. Here it is not only perpetuated but re-enforced because faith is directed to what God "has promised". Luther's thought was not that Baptism should evoke faith in God's general promises, but rather that faith should concentrate on God's activity through the word in the water. The older translation says Baptism "gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare". As Luther follows with a quotation from Mark 16, he is referring to the institution of Baptism as the promise which faith believes and not some other

word of God regardless of its inherent value. Conspicuously dropped is any reference to "words" which is originally used by Luther twice: "as the words and promise of God declare" and "What are such words and promises of God?". In these cases the translators were not able to editorialize these phrases to make them refer to the hypostatic Word, so it seems as if they simply eliminated them. There is a definite detectable tendency to move away from any thought that the Bible or its passages should be equated with the word of God, even though this was Luther's clear intention. This will be shown also in the section on the Lord's Supper. Luther wants the citation from Mark's Gospel to be understood as God's word. By omission this concept is ignored.

Luther chose to refer to those places where he cited Bible passages as the last chapters of Matthew and Mark. Now the children will have to keep the numbers 28 and 16 straight in their heads.

Part III in the new translation perpetuates the divorce between the water and the word already noted in the first two parts.<sup>31</sup> The question about the water's ability to perform great things remains the same. The answer is no longer that it is "the word of God which is in and with the water and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water", but "God's Word with the water and our trust in this Word". The English phrase "with the water" simply does not capture either the German mit und bei dem Wasser or the Latin juxta et cum aqua. With definite purpose Luther used two prepositions instead of one to tie word and water together. The removal of the word "faith" in favor of "trust" is inexplicable. The word "faith" is one of the rallying cries of the Lutheran Reformation and all should be familiar with it. The word "trust" dissolves the inner connection between Baptism and faith. Putting "Word" in capital letters suggests that trust is directed to Christ, while Luther's intention is that faith should be directed to Christ but through the word in the water of Baptism.

Other changes in this section also do not contribute to the best possible understanding of Baptism. The phrase "Water by itself is only water" hardly does justice to the phrase "For without the word of God the water is simple water and no Baptism". Pedagogically the new translation is a disaster. Let's first consider how Luther handled the situation. In answering the question "How can water do such great things?" there are two parts, a negative and a positive: (1) water by itself accomplishes nothing; (2) with the word of God it, i.e., water, becomes a Baptism. Basically it is a repetition of Part I which defines Baptism as water connected with God's word. While Luther repeated the word "Baptism" twice in Part III, the translators have omitted it entirely. While there is

some type of definition here, it is never stated what exactly is being defined. Luther repeated the word "Baptism" twice for sound pedagogical reasons. Since there is no explicit reference to Baptism in this section, the little pronoun "it" in the phrase "it is a life-giving water" stands awkwardly without a clear referent. The definition amounts to saying that water plus the word of God is a life-giving water. But this is tautology. Obviously God's word plus water gives life. Clarity could have been retained by leaving the word "Baptism" in its proper place and then we would have been dealing clearly with a definition.

The phrase "life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit" replaces "a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost". Again the translators have offered a paraphrase with perhaps a different theological direction. "Life-giving water" simply does not handle Luther's ein genadenreich Wasser, a water rich in grace. Lost is Luther's idea that God's gift of salvation to the individual is encapsulated in Baptism's water. Luther's concrete thought is dissolved by being transformed into the dynamic. The phrase "a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit" not only does not reflect Luther's thought, but it presents some theological difficulties. If it is already a life-giving water, it does not need or require a special infusion of grace. Neither would it require an additional act by the Holy Spirit. The new translation moves away from the idea that the Holy Spirit is actually working through the Baptism because of the word. At best the phrase is confusing. Luther put the two phrases in apposition to each other so that one explained the other. The water of life which is rich in grace is the same as the regenerating bath of the Holy Spirit. Luther was directing the learner's attention to his doctrine of Baptismal regeneration. Because the new translation is vague, the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration is vague. The emphasis is placed on Jesus, the hypostatic Word, and the Holy Spirit as the regenerating agents and not Baptism. This also falls comfortably into Reformed thinking. In the citation from Titus 3 the phrase "washing of regeneration" is retained while in the explanation it was dropped. The translators must have felt that the children could still handle the word "regeneration". But since the word Baptism is never mentioned in this entire section, Part III, it is quite possible to follow the Reformed thinking that the topic at hand is simply regeneration and conversion and not Baptismal regeneration.

The question initiating Part IV is changed from "What does such baptizing with water signify?" to "What does Baptism mean for daily living?"<sup>32</sup> The omission of the word "water" in the question makes the answer meaningless. The center of the answer is that in Baptism something is drowned.

But without the mention of "water", the drowning activity loses its punch. Luther as a superb pedagogue used "water" to display graphically the drowning. The word "Baptism" by itself does not conjure up a Baptismal font, either small or large, in which anyone recently has been drowned. In this section Luther's "Old Adam" is replaced by the phrase "sinful self". One would like to quip the "Old Adam" has drowned and the "sinful self" has been resurrected by the translators.

## 5.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER

There is no shortage of difficulties in this section. Completely unnecessary and theologically shocking and unacceptable is the change of the designation of this sacrament from the Sacrament of the Altar to the Holy Communion.<sup>33</sup> Holy Communion is simply not good Lutheran usage and has crept into Lutheranism from Protestantism through the door opened to Anglicanism. The phrase "Holy Communion" is simply not used in the Lutheran Confessions. In the Small Catechism in both the German and the Latin it is called the Sacrament of the Altar. Other phrases used in the confessions include Heilige Abendmahl, Coena Sacra, the Holy Supper, Coena Domini, the Lord's Supper, and Missa, The Mass.

The phrase "Holy Communion" takes the attention away from the altar and places it on the individual recipients who are gathered as a group. The late German Lutheran theologian Werner Elert has done more than perhaps anyone else in recent times to alert us to the dangers of understanding this sacrament as a communal meal among Christians instead of a participating in Christ's body and blood.<sup>34</sup> The Protestant influence always wants to take Christ away from the bread and the altar and wants to put it subjectively into the hearts of people. The phrase "Holy Communion" now regretfully serves Protestant but no Lutheran purposes. In the previous section on Baptism, the translators removed the word "Baptism" twice, both in significant places. Now they have made a substitution for the name of the other sacrament and have even repeated it in the answer, though Luther did not repeat the phrase.

The phrase "Sacrament of the Altar" has an objectivity lacking in the phrase "Holy Communion". "Holy Communion" is something we do. The "Sacrament of the Altar" is something which God does. He is the One sacrificed and from that altar now gives us His body and blood. This Sacrament is not our celebration, but God Himself is the Host and the Food.

In the first edition of the new translation the

word "true" before the words "body and blood" were omitted. The matter was brought up before a Missouri Synod convention and it was restored in later editions of the translation. There is little resemblance between the 1962 and the 1968 versions, but both are unacceptable from a Lutheran perspective.<sup>35</sup> The word "true" was a vital part of the Lutheran heritage and understanding of this sacrament, especially in confrontation with the Reformed, who at times were willing to speak of the elements being symbolical body and blood. The final reading "Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" would be acceptable within certain Reformed churches, as would be the concluding phrase "with bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us to eat and drink". Luther's unter, "under" is replaced with a "with".<sup>36</sup> Though the change may at first glance seem insignificant, there is a history here that cannot be ignored.

In 1536 Luther and Bucer, a theologian who leaned heavily in the direction of the Reformed, committed themselves to the Wittenberg Concord. The document spoke of Christ's body being "with the bread",<sup>37</sup> which was later understood by the Reformed that Christ's body was present spiritually along with the bread. The document was ambiguous on this crucial point of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper and was never considered as one of the significant confessions of authentic Lutheranism. With this history the word "with" should have never been substituted for the word "under". The statement as it stands is acceptable according to Calvinistic understandings.

Any incipient Calvinism that was suspected in the first part becomes only more evident in the second part.<sup>38</sup> The original question of Luther "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?" is changed to "What benefits do we receive from this sacrament?" Please note that the word "sacrament" which was eliminated from the question of part one is introduced here. Luther's German and the older translation was not marked by such inconsistency.

One of the distinctive marks of the Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper is the insistence that who eat and drink receive the Lord's body and blood. This is called the manducatio malorum. Luther's original question focuses the attention on the actual eating and drinking of the body and blood. Apart from this eating there is no benefit. In the new translation the benefits are sundered from the eating and drinking.

The question introducing the third section now hangs suspended in mid air.<sup>39</sup> "How can eating and drinking do all this?" has no previous referent, because the reference to eating and drinking has been removed from the question



introducing part two. Why ask about the saving efficacy of eating and drinking in the third question now that the question about the benefit of eating and drinking has been removed. The new translation removes from Luther's Catechism the very mortar which holds it together. The question of the third part is itself unacceptable. Luther's original question is "How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?" and not "How can eating and drinking do all this?"

The German leiblich Essen and more so the Latin corporalis manducatio, i.e., the bodily eating, are magnificently anti-Calvinistic. The Reformed have always been willing to assert a spiritual eating and drinking, but not a corporal or bodily eating.<sup>40</sup> The phrase as it stands in the new translation is clearly acceptable to the Reformed. The question introducing the concluding section is clearly a paraphrase. The older translation "Who then receives such Sacrament worthily?" more properly reflects the original than does the newer translation's "When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?"<sup>41</sup> The original definitely suggests that some people, for whatever reason, are simply not worthy to receive the Sacrament. The newer translation removes this distinction and merely suggests that for some the time may not be appropos. The answer in the new translation does not respond to Luther's original question about who may receive the Sacrament. The question of time proposed in the new translation's use of the word "when" is simply ignored in the answer. In discussing fasting and outward bodily preparation and training the new translation only says that it "serve(s) a good purpose". The word "outward" is omitted. Therefore the option of whether a real spiritual benefit is derived from fasting is left open.

## 6.

### THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION

One very welcome addition to the new translation is Luther's section on Confession which was replaced by Justus Jonas's section on "The Office of the Keys".<sup>42</sup> The title to Luther's section on Confession is taken from the Latin De Confessione and not the German "How the simple people should be taught to confess their sins". Regardless of the desire to maintain authenticity, here is one place where Luther's original wording can be happily surrendered as being potentially insulting. Debatable is whether the Jonas section on "The Office of the Keys" should have been retained at all. What might be disturbing is that the section dealing with absolution and excommunication in Justus Jonas's section is, however,

eliminated. Absolution is handled, however, in Luther's section on Confession, but excommunication is not. That is a serious omission in the new catechism.

In Luther's Catechism the section on Confession was placed between Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar and not after the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>43</sup> Confession and absolution were sometimes considered as a separate sacrament or as an extension of Baptism in the life of the Christian. It was also considered preparatory to the reception of the Lord's Supper. It should be returned to its proper place.

In the section on what sins are to be confessed there is a subtle switch from concern with one's station to one's relationships. The concrete is replaced with the active relationship. The original of Luther concentrated on the vocation in life as a God-given gift and responsibility. The new translation is more utilitarian and concentrates on whether something works.

## III.

### Summary Critique

The Small Catechism is both a confessional and pedagogical document and therefore presents innumerable problems in translating. It must present the Lutheran doctrine in a way that children, even those without exceptional intellectual gifts, can comprehend it. But in both these points, confessional and pedagogical, the new translation is disappointing. The theology is unacceptable at several crucial points.

1. The translators have a prejudice against understanding the phrase "word of God" as any reference to the Scriptures and frequently apply it to the hypostatic Word, i.e., the Son of God. This is a case of bad theology and deceptive translation.

2. The section on the Trinity, i.e., the Apostles' Creed, does not do justice to Nicene Christology and is extremely weak on the doctrine of the atonement.

3. The sections on Baptism and the Lord's Supper could easily be understood from a Reformed perspective. In fact, the unique Lutheran understanding is lost.

# The Large Catechism: A Pastoral Tool

by James L. Schaaf

In 1979 we observe the 450th anniversary of the publication of a most helpful book, and yet one that is little known by our pastors — the Large Catechism of Martin Luther. Almost everyone, clergy and laity alike, knows its companion volume, the Small Catechism, and for generations catechumens in the Lutheran Church have been *instructed from its pages and required to commit its contents to memory, and still are wherever catechetical instruction continues to follow the tried and true traditional pattern. The Large Catechism, however, has been relegated to the dusty bookshelves of historical and confessional literature where it is seldom noticed and even more seldom taken down and read. In this 450th anniversary year we would do well to take a new look at Luther's Large Catechism and see it for what it was intended to be and still can be today — a pastoral tool.*

That's what I'd like to talk about — The Large Catechism: A Pastoral Tool. It was produced out of pastoral concern, it is filled with pastoral contents, and it is to be used with pastoral care.

## I.

Martin Luther's pastoral concern is evident in many of his writings, not only in the Large Catechism, of course. One does not have to be especially skilled at reading between the lines to see that Luther had a deep love for people and a desire to seek their spiritual welfare. His concern for ordinary parishoners is clear on virtually every page of the many works that came from his pen. *Although he never occupied a pastoral office, Luther the university professor was filled with a pastor's concern for those who were serving as pastors and for the souls in their charge. The Large Catechism grew out of that pastoral concern.*

Abortive attempts to produce something similar to what finally appeared as the Large and Small Catechisms had been made several times during the years preceding 1528. Melanchthon, Jonas, Agricola, and even Luther himself had had the intention to produce a book of instruction for the edification of people in those territories where the evangelical understanding of the faith was



triumphing over the old order. (BK, xxviii) None of these good intentions ever began to bear fruit, however, until Elector John ordered a visitation of the churches and schools in his domain. Teams of lawyers and theologians were commissioned to travel throughout Electoral Saxony, inspecting the churches and inquiring of the pastors how they were teaching the evangelical doctrine. Luther himself took part in some of these visitations. He reports in the preface to his Small Catechism about the sorry state of Christian training among many of the clergy and laity he saw:

The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching. Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments, they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts, and now that the Gospel has been restored they have mastered the fine art of abusing liberty. (BC, 338)

Out of the experiences of these visitations grew the Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony, a document written by Melancthon with an introduction by Luther, and issued by the authorities as a sort of checklist of the things visitors should ensure were being observed in the churches. (WA 26, 195-240) Here the following instructions are given concerning the time and content of religious instruction:

On festival days there should be preaching at matins and vespers, on the gospel at matins. Since the servants and young people come to church in the afternoon we recommend that on Sunday afternoons there be constant repetition, through preaching and exposition, of the Ten Commandments, the articles of the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

The Ten Commandments are to be used so that the people be exhorted to fear God.

The Lord's Prayer is to be used so that the people know what to pray.

The articles of the Creed are to be proclaimed and the people taught

carefully these three most important articles comprehended in the Creed: creation, redemption, and sanctification . . .

If on Sundays we preach on the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, one after the other, we should also diligently preach about marriage and the sacraments of baptism and the altar.

In such preaching we should spell out, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the articles of the Creed, for the sake of the children and other simple unschooled folk. (LW 40, 308)

But even before this official injunction to deliver sermons on the three traditional components of Christian instruction, it had been the practice in Wittenberg to preach series of sermons on these subjects, and Luther had frequently done so since 1516. (Otto Albrecht, Luthers Katechismen,<sup>1</sup>) The immediate forerunner of the Large Catechism, however, is three series of sermons that he preached in the city Church in Wittenberg during 1528, in the absence of the regular pastor Johannes Bugenhagen. Three times, between May 18 and 30, between September 14 and 25, and again between November 30 and December 19, Luther preached on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper to the people of Wittenberg. (WA 30, I, 2-122)

From these sermons, almost verbatim, comes the text of the Large Catechism: The introduction chiefly from the first series; the Ten Commandments, from the second; and the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and sacraments, from the third. (WA 30, I, 480) One might thus say that the Large Catechism was not written in Luther's study or in the library, but was produced in the pulpit by a pastor concerned for his people.

## II.

And not only was this Large Catechism produced out of pastoral concern; it is also filled with pastoral contents. The familiar five chief parts, just as in the Small Catechism, are the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar. However, these were not the traditional contents of pre-Reformation catechetical instruction. There had been numerous catechetical manuals produced before Luther set his hand to the task, and, although their contents had varied greatly, the most common practice was to include the Ten Commandments, the Ave Maria, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. (E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and his Times, 640)

The word "Catechism", incidentally, was never used in the 16th century in its modern meaning of a book in which Christian teaching is explained, primarily in question and answer form. (WA 30, I, 448-49) Since the end of the Middle Ages Catechism meant, as Gustav Kawerau explains,

On the one hand . . . a definite body of material . . . the essentials of which were the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; on the other, the word is used as describing the presentation of materials by means of oral instruction to those who are beginners in Christianity. (WA 30, I, 449; cf. Schwiebert, 641)

Luther used this Greek word, *κατεχίσμος*, and translates it with the German word "Kinderlehre," that is, instruction for children. (WA 30, I, 128; BC, 362) By this he indicates that the reason he has produced this work is a pedagogical one. It is to be used in instructing immature Christians in the essentials of faith.

The medieval practice of catechetical instruction had been associated with the practice of penance. The penitent would be expected to recount his sins to the priest and display a knowledge of the rudiments of the faith; therefore, instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer was essential.

Yet there is a significant difference between the contents of Luther's Catechism and those of the traditional penitential manuals which preceded it. Not only is Luther's work purged of non-evangelical elements, such as the Ave Maria, but to it is also added the treatment of the two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, subjects that in the Middle Ages were not generally considered necessary for the laity to know. All that a penitent might be expected to do would be to name the seven sacraments. (WA 30, I, 444-45) Some of the penitential manuals did indeed contain sections dealing with the sacraments, but these parts seem to have been so neglected in instructing the laity that Luther can say "in the past nothing was taught about them." (BC, 436)

Not so with Luther's Catechism. It might appear, judging from the number of pages devoted to expounding each section, that the subjects of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are far less important than something like the Ten Commandments, the exposition of which occupies half the book, or even the Lord's Prayer, which receives half again as much attention as either the Lord's Supper or Baptism. Such is hardly the case, however, the instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer is rather designed to prepare believers to receive the sacrament of the altar and to present

their children for baptism. In his shorter preface to the Large Catechism, taken from his first catechetical sermon, Luther says:

This sermon has been undertaken for the instruction of children and uneducated people . . . Its contents represent the minimum of knowledge required of a Christian. Whoever does not possess it should not be reckoned among Christians nor admitted to a sacrament, just as a craftsman who does not know the rules and practices of his craft is rejected and considered incompetent.

. . . As for the common people, however, we should be satisfied if they learned the three parts which have been the heritage of Christendom from ancient times, though they were rarely taught and treated correctly, so that all who wish to be Christians in fact as well as in name, both young and old, may be well-trained in them and familiar with them.

. . . When these three parts are understood, we ought also to know what to say about the sacraments which Christ himself instituted, Baptism and the holy Body and Blood of Christ . . . (BC, 362-640)

And, when he has treated the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, Luther continues:

We have now finished with the three chief parts of our common Christian teaching. It remains for us to speak of our two sacraments, instituted by Christ. Every Christian ought to have at least some brief, elementary instruction in them because without these no one can be a Christian. . . . (BC, 436)

In introducing the final section, on the Lord's Supper, he says:

As we treated Holy Baptism . . . so we must deal with the second sacrament in the same way, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All these are established from the words by which Christ instituted it. So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and go to the sacrament should be familiar with them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come. (BC, 447)

That is the function of the pastoral contents of the Large Catechism. It is designed to assist

pastors in their duty of preparing people to come responsibly to the sacrament. Time fails to point out the many passages in it which express the deep concern of its author for the spiritual well being of ordinary Christians. There are passages of instruction, of admonition, of edification, of comfort, worthy to be read and read again. For example, Luther writes about Baptism:

In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life. He always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings — victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts. In short, the blessings of Baptism are so boundless that if timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true. Suppose there were a physician who had such skill that people would not die, or even though they died would afterward live forever. Just think how the world would snow and rain money upon him! Because of the pressing crowd of rich men no one else could get near him. Now, here in Baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men.

To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, "But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body." (BC, 442)

The Christian life is not an easy one, and it is just because of this that the Lord's Supper has been given. Another pastoral word in the Large Catechism relates to this:

. . . While it is true that through Baptism we are first born anew, our human flesh and blood have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint, at times even stumble. The Lord's Supper is given as a daily food and sustenance so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses. Meanwhile it must suffer much opposition. The devil is a furious enemy; when he sees that we resist him and attack the old man, and when he cannot rout us by force, he sneaks and skulks about everywhere, trying all kinds of tricks, and does not stop until he has

finally worn us out so that we either renounce our faith or yield hand and foot and become indifferent or impatient. For such times, when our heart feels too sorely pressed, this comfort of the Lord's Supper is given to bring us new strength and refreshment. (BC, 449)

Words of comfort and encouragement meet us also when we look at Luther's explanation of the traditional three parts of the catechism. For example, can there be found a better explanation of Luther's concept of the distinction between Law and Gospel than in the conclusion to this section on the Creed:

Here in the Creed you have the entire essence of God, his will, and his work exquisitely depicted in very short but rich words. In them consists all our wisdom, which surpasses all the wisdom, understanding, and reason of men. Although the whole world has sought painstakingly to learn what God is and what he thinks and does, yet it has never succeeded in the least. But here you have everything in richest measure. In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the most profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love. He created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. As we explained before, we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

. . . Now you see that the Creed is a very different teaching from the Ten Commandments. The latter teach us what we ought to do; the Creed tells what God does for us and gives to us. The Ten Commandments, moreover, are inscribed in the hearts of all men. No human wisdom can comprehend the Creed; Commandments do not by themselves make us Christians, for God's wrath and displeasure still remain on us because we cannot fulfill his demands. But the Creed brings pure grace and makes us upright and pleasing to God. Through this knowledge we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God because we see that God gives himself completely to us, with all his gifts and his power, to

help us keep the Ten Commandments; the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts. (BC, 419-20)

Words like these are typical of the pastoral contents of this work which was produced out of Luther's pastoral concern. The same contents may still profitably be used by pastors today, 450 years after its writing, in dealing with the souls in their care.

### III.

For the Large Catechism is intended to be used with pastoral care. I do not mean that pastors must exercise caution in how they use it, but rather that it is still a useful tool today in the practice of pastoral care. An essential part of what we often call Seelsorge is education in Christian truth. For this purpose pastors today may find Luther's Large Catechism just as useful as did their forerunners four and a half centuries ago.

Perhaps the need of present-day pastors for something like this Catechism is not as great as it was in 1529. The situation then among the clergy in Electoral Saxony was appalling. The visitors reported that many of the clergy, while calling themselves Lutheran, were ignorant about Luther's teaching and could not, in fact, even repeat the Ten Commandments or the Lord's Prayer, let alone demonstrate any knowledge of the Bible. (Schwiebert, *op. cit.*, 618) Only 94 out of 154 pastors were regarded as satisfactory in 1529, and it seems that their examination was not especially strict. (Schwiebert, *op. cit.*, 612) Certainly pastors must have welcomed the appearance of this work and we can well imagine that it found frequent use by those who felt unqualified to convey the new evangelical teaching to their congregations, perhaps even being read word for word in parishes as were Luther's postils or sermon collections which were also appearing at the time.

Compared with the situation in 1529, however, today's pastor is surfeited with literature on educational techniques, catechetical methods, helps for teaching, and all sorts of books designed for imparting instruction in the Christian faith. This wealth of modern materials, however, may lead us to overlook the riches of the past. Perhaps classifying the Large Catechism with the symbolical writings in the Book of Concord has contributed to its disuse as an educational tool. We must remember that it was not written to be a confession of faith. It originated as a sermon, and it may still find its best use as an exposition of the faith, useful in preaching and teaching and in a pastor's dealing with the needs of the souls in his charge.

Can the 450th anniversary of the Catechism be the occasion for a revival of catechetical exposition? Would there be value in a series of sermons on the catechism, that is, on the essentials of the Christian faith? Would it be helpful as David Scaer suggests in the questions appended to his Getting into The Story of Concord, to read a section of the Large Catechism as the sermon some Sunday? (p. 99) Could a study group benefit from reading and discussing its contents over a period of several weeks? Would it have value for use in membership instruction classes? Might it be used as congregational devotional reading? Are there other possibilities for use of this pastoral tool that come to mind as we contemplate the observance of its 450th anniversary?

Most of you in this audience are pastors or are preparing to be pastors. How have you used the Large Catechism in your ministry? Or what possibilities do you see for putting it to use in your care of souls, perhaps especially in this anniversary year? Our discussion period will give us an opportunity to share ideas on this subject. Together we may be able to discover more beneficiary ways to use this work in our pastoral care.

Whatever else we may do with it, however, I suggest that the most benefit will come from the Large Catechism when it is used as it was intended, simply read and studied anew by each pastor. Those who undertake to thumb its pages for the first time, or for the hundredth, will find themselves edified by its contents, just as I was in preparing these remarks.

But don't take my word for the benefit to be gained from studying the Catechism. Rather take Luther's words:

Many (pastors) regard the Catechism as a simple, silly teaching which they can absorb and master at one reading. After reading it once they toss the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again . . .

As for myself, let me say that I, too, am a doctor and a preacher — yes, and as learned and experienced as any of those who act so high and mighty. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly . . .

Therefore, I once again implore all

Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to try to be doctors prematurely and to imagine that they know everything. Vain imaginations, like new cloth, suffer shrinkage! Let all Christians exercise themselves in the Catechism daily, and constantly put it into practice, guarding themselves with the greatest care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security or vanity. Let them continue to read and teach, to learn and meditate and ponder. Let them never stop until they have proved by experience that they have taught the devil to death and have become wiser than God himself and all his saints.

If they show such diligence, then I promise them — and their experience will bear me out — that they will gain much fruit and God will make excellent men of them. Then in due time they themselves will make the noble confession that the longer they work with the Catechism, the less they know of it and the more they have to learn. Only then, hungry and thirsty, will they truly relish what now they cannot bear to smell because they are so bloated and surfeited. To this end may God grant his grace! Amen. (BC, 359-61)

### **The Large Catechism: A Pastoral Tool**

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*(Summary of a paper read at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, January 4, 1979)*

Because Martin Luther's Large Catechism has often been dealt with as primarily a confessional writing of the Lutheran Church, its original intention may have been neglected. In this 450th anniversary year it is appropriate for us to see it for what it was intended to be and still can be — a pastoral tool.

I. The Large Catechism was produced out of pastoral concern. It was the need for helps by pastors in Electoral Saxony (uncovered in the Visitations) that led Luther to undertake the writing of the Large Catechism. Pastors were required to undertake instruction in the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer and many of them were ill-prepared to do so. The Large Catechism was a reworking of the catechetical sermons Luther preached in 1528 on these subjects, plus Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was produced in the pulpit, one might say, by a pastor concerned for his people.

II. The Large Catechism is filled with pastoral contents. Pre-Reformation catechetical instruction was associated with the practice of penance and numerous manuals had been produced to assist confessors in their task. Luther's work differs from the earlier ones in that it includes sections on Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because he sees the goal of instruction as preparing Christians to come responsibly to the sacrament. The Large Catechism's contents speak pointedly to the spiritual needs of believers, containing passages of instruction, admonition, edification, and comfort, worthy of being read and re-read.

III. The Large Catechism is to be used with pastoral care. An essential part of pastoral care is education, and the Large Catechism may be just as useful for contemporary pastors in their educational ministry as it was to their forebears 450 years ago. Because of the wealth of modern instructional materials we may overlook the riches of the past. The Large Catechism, which originated as a sermon, may still find its best use as an exposition of the faith. But the greatest benefits will come from it when it is used as it was intended, simply read and studied anew by each pastor. Then, as Luther himself testifies, those who do "will gain much fruit and God will make excellent men of them. To this end may God grant his grace!"

# Forerunners of the Catechism:

## A View of Catechetical Instruction at the Dawn of the Reformation

*by N. S. Tjernagel*

Fifty years ago our fathers were engaged in observing the 400th anniversary of Luther's Catechism. There were public celebrations and numerous books, articles, and other printed tributes to Luther's incomparable gift to the church, the Large and the Small Catechisms. Among those who honored Luther and the Catechisms a half a century ago, the literary legacy of one man stands out. His preeminence places him in a role so large that the rest of the commentators in the anniversary celebrations seem quite lost in his shadow. We refer, of course, to Dr. J. M. Reu of Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa. His two books, Catechetics<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Martin Luther's Catechism<sup>2</sup> are a classic exposition standing in the tradition of the theological excellence of Walther's Law and Gospel,<sup>3</sup> Schmauk's Confessional Principle,<sup>4</sup> and Krauth's Conservative Reformation.

As Lutherans we are well schooled in the theology of the Lutheran Reformation. We are appreciative of Luther's creative synthesis of apostolic theology and his clear and cogent exposition of the central doctrines of Holy

Scripture. We may be less than fully cognizant of the revolution, both in educational practice and theological understanding, that took place when Luther asked the question "What Does This Mean?" The question recurs in the Catechism twenty-three times, and the same question, adapted to instruction in the Sacraments, occurs sixteen times. In early times the church had been content with the ideal that Christians, trained only in rote memorization, should know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer from memory. Questions were rarely asked as to what these verbal formulations meant.

The ancient church, to be sure, had the advantage of hearing the exposition of Scripture from the Apostles themselves, and later from the second generation of churchmen who followed them. Candidates for Baptism were normally instructed prior to their reception of the Sacrament. Formal training in the truths of Scripture thereafter were generally limited to the little that could be gleaned from simple homilies.

It is generally conceded that the nature and

character of the Medieval church was not fully realized until the reign of Pope Gregory the Great, whose pontificate extended from 590-604. Regarded as the last of the traditional Doctors of the Church, this man, probably the greatest administrator the church has ever had, was indeed the true father of the Medieval papacy. His support of monasticism and his activity as a missionary pope are well known. His Liber Regulae Pastoralis, 591, translated by King Alfred of England, provided directives for the pastoral office of bishops. It became the text book of the Medieval episcopate for the next thousand years. Though Gregory was a creditable theologian, as is attested by his homilies, letters, and other writings, he was prepared to accommodate himself to the credulity of his age in developing and fostering the doctrine of purgatory and the idea that the pope is the spiritual father of all Christians, and hence the supreme authority in the church. What may sadden us most of all was that he gave up on any prospect for the biblical indoctrination of the primitive and illiterate people of the church, and advocated a veneration of true relics and recommended a religious life based on the pious imitation of the lives of saints and martyrs.

What evolved from this is most important because we are confronted by the fact that the real bible of Gregory's people came to be the legends and histories of the saints. The teaching of the truths of Scripture and even the reading of Bible history was largely ignored. Gregory was content that the people live under the guidance of the example of the saints and that they found a satisfactory worship form in the veneration of saints and relics. Any failing in their lives, any imperfection in their godliness would ultimately be made good in purgatory.

The result of all this was that people in the Middle Ages were nurtured by a hagiographic and devotional literature, rather than by instruction in biblical fundamentals. Therefore, as we shall see, the church felt no real need to instruct its people on the basis of the Bible. It was content that the people based their hope of salvation on lives modelled after the examples of pious saints.

Further, we should remember, the whole character of the Medieval church, its worship and life, was based on the mystery of the Eucharist. The Mass was the sacrifice of Christ in behalf of the present participants. No need to understand the theology of the Mass. A sense of magic and the expectation of benefits to be received ex opere operato was the pervading attitude. To be sure, something was expected of the Christian individual. He must confess his sins before a priest at least once a year. The priest thus became mediator, the dispenser of absolution and the promise of eternal salvation. Confession con-

sisted in the enumeration of sins committed. This was followed by receipt of absolution. No understanding of the basis for the forgiveness of sins was necessary. There was no need to complicate religious life by a study of Scripture. It was enough that the Mass provided a sacrifice and that the priest assured the sinner of salvation. When that was done, the Medieval Christian considered himself home free.

Ideally, as we have remarked, the Christian ought to have memorized the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and possibly even the Ten Commandments. No need to understand them or do anything about them. Therefore it will be seen that it must be difficult to establish any genuine forerunners of Luther's Catechism. That book was to have the objective of instruction, it was designed to help the catechumen understand what Scripture teaches. The devotional manuals and the worship forms of the Medieval world were mere exercises in piety. They did not constitute religious instruction.

Yet, it must be conceded that, given its theological presuppositions, the church, on the record at least, did make formal provision for the young. The problem was that these provisions were not effectively carried out. In Article XV, paragraph 41 of the Apology, "Of Human Traditions in the Church," Melancthon makes the comment that, "with the adversaries there is no catechization of children whatever, concerning which even the canon gives commands." Dr. Reu has shown the nature of those canonical provisions. We summarize his findings as follows:<sup>6</sup>

1. Parental responsibility for the training of children in religion was the presupposition of canon law.
2. Parts of the catechism were to be read regularly in the churches.<sup>7</sup>
3. Priests were to use the confessional as a means for determining whether parents were doing their duty in teaching their children.<sup>8</sup>
4. A catechetical literature was in existence.
5. There were some schools where religion was taught.

If the Medieval religious system, as it developed, did not provide effective means for the training of parish priests, it is not surprising that, as Melancthon complained, the canons of the church regarding its responsibility for the training of children was more honored in the breach than in its effective fulfillment.

After a careful study of religious knowledge in



Saxony before the Reformation Luther said, in 1531 that: "No one knew what was the Gospel, what Christ, Baptism, Confession, Sacrament; what were good works, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer; what was praying, what suffering, what comfort; what government, matrimony, parents, children, lords, servants, lady, maid; what was devil, angel, world, life, death, sin; what was righteousness, what forgiveness of sins, what God, bishop, clergy, church; what was Christian and what the Christian cross. In a word, we knew nothing of what a Christian ought to know."<sup>9</sup> Luther was doubtlessly exaggerating, but Graebner observes that "Erasmus and the authors of Letters of Obscure Men drew an even more vivid picture of ignorance in that age." This appalling lack of religious knowledge notwithstanding, however, the church did exist. Children were baptized. Sponsors promised to teach the Christian faith to their God-children if parents died. Some bishops urged parish priests to attend to the Christian instruction of the young. Some priests tried to do so. Councils of the church had made this duty obligatory.

Reu quotes a sermon of Berthold of Ratisbon (d. 1272) who said: "When the child is seven years old his sponsor shall teach them the Creed and the Lord's Prayer: that is their duty. They are his spiritual parents. They shall say to the parents: 'Friends, you must teach my God-child the Lord's Prayer and the Creed; else he shall come to me and I will teach him. And if he learns the Ave Maria so much the better.'"<sup>10</sup> There are recorded instances where neglect of this duty was referred to in enumerations of sins pleaded in the confessional.

Perhaps we may best observe the ideal of Medieval religious instruction by calling attention to typical examples of teaching materials in circulation since apostolic times. G. H. Gerberding, a study of catechetical instruction in the Middle Ages, has called attention to 23 extant catechetical sermons produced by Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386). Tertullian (d. 220) wrote an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, and Rufinus (d. 410) an explanation of the Apostles' Creed.<sup>11</sup>

The renowned Alcuin of York (735-804), a central figure in the Carolingian Renaissance, came to Europe to serve as religious and educational advisor to Charlemagne. He wrote an explanation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer and prepared a manual of instruction for adult candidates for Baptism.

Four early instructional manuals have an unusual interest because they appeared in the vernacular German. The first of these was produced in 720 by an anonymous monk of St. Gall. It included expositions of the Apostles'

Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Another of these manuals was written by a nameless author at the monastery at Weisenburg. Students have called it the Weisenburg Catechism even though the word Catechism is an anachronism when applied to that time. Reu describes its contents under the following divisions:

1. The Lord's Prayer in German with a brief exposition based on Tertullian and Cyprian, later appropriated by Luther.
2. An enumeration of the mortal sins based on Gal. 5, 19-21, in Latin and German.
3. The Apostolic Creed in Latin and German.
4. The Athanasian Creed in Latin and German.
5. The Gloria in Excelsis.<sup>12</sup>

The Freising explanation of the Lord's Prayer appeared in 802. Notker of St. Gall (950-1022) also produced a German manual. It included an Explanation of the Lord's Prayer and the two Creeds. A little later in the 11th century another monk of St. Gall wrote a manual of instruction explaining the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, with the addition of the Song of Zacharias and the Magnificat. A contemporary author, Bruno, Bishop of Wurzburg, wrote what may be the first instruction in the form of questions and answers. It treated the Creed and Lord's Prayer.

In the centuries we have reviewed, from the post-apostolic period to the 12th century, the outstanding effort toward improvement of both religious and secular education was taking place under the rule of Charlemagne. But the collapse of the Carolingian Empire spelled the end of the Carolingian Renaissance. Religious education deteriorated as apocryphal and legendary material came to intrude more and more in religious instruction.

In what we have seen up to this point the Creed and the Lord's Prayer have been the chief concern of the Medieval church. The Decalog has been conspicuously missing from early Christian pedagogy. After the Crusades (11-13 century) there was a renewed interest in the training of children. Thomas Aquinas, (1225-74) the scholastic theologian, wrote the Expositio Symboli Apostolorum, an exposition of the Apostles' Creed, and Edmund of Canterbury (d. 1240), the primate of England and a former professor at the University of Oxford, produced the Speculum Ecclesiae, the "Mirror of the Church." Laurentius Gallus (d. 1279) wrote a similar manual in the German Language, "Ein Spiegel des Christen Glauben."

Parental responsibility for the Christian training

of children was re-emphasized with the determination that their religious education should begin at the age of seven. The minimal requirement remained the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, with the stipulation that the Ave Maria should be learned if possible. Parents were urged to bring their children to church. Repeated admonitions of church councils about the spiritual nurture of children were embedded in canon law. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 went so far as to demand that, in addition to other regulations, children were to commune of Easter Sunday. The duty of confessors to see to the state of religious knowledge among children was reaffirmed. There is no evidence, however, that suggests that instruction in the Christian faith was a prerequisite to the rite of confirmation.

Beginning in the 13th century, heretical movements became a growing challenge to the church. Among these were the Waldensians, founded by Peter Waldo of Lyons (d. 1217). He was a wealthy man who gave his considerable wealth to the poor and became a missionary preacher crying out against the worldliness of the established church. The Waldensian movement was immediately distinguished by its establishment of schools. They may have been the first to insist on including the Decalog in the penum of the religious studies of children. But even more important was their diligent cultivation of Bible knowledge. Their view was that every home must be a Christian school and that it ought to learn to know Holy Scripture. The Waldensians refused to receive anyone at the Communion table who could not give a comprehensive account of his faith. Most of them could do so by the time they were twelve to fourteen years old.

The 14th century brought with it the first signals of the coming Renaissance with all its impetus to learning. Rising above the horrors of the Great Schism (1309-77) in the church, John Gerson (1363-1429) became a vital transitional figure who later could be quoted approvingly by such diverse figures as Ignatius Loyola and Martin Luther. A conciliarist, wielding great influence at the Council of Constance (1414-18), Gerson's mysticism, his concern for a genuinely spiritual life, endeared him to the Brethren of the Common Life and placed him within the context of events that were to lead both to reform of the church and a revival of religious education.

Gerson was so far ahead of his time as to have anticipated Luther in his demand for the establishment of a school in every parish. He wrote numerous educational tracts, among them one on Bringing Children to Christ and another related to it, on The Art of Hearing Confession.<sup>13</sup> One of his most influential manuals was Opusculum Tripartitum. It was 35 pages in length. One page dealt with God the Creator and the destination of man,

a second treated the fall of man, and a third the redemption and the Creed. From pages 4-15 there was a discussion of the Ten Commandments and from pages 23-35 instruction about confession and how to die. The book was intended for the use of poorly trained priests, for uneducated laymen and those who could not attend church, for children and youth, and for those who care for the sick in hospitals.<sup>14</sup>

Another little book, written primarily for children, was ABC Des Simples Gens, it included expositions of the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, the Creed, the Decalog, the three divine and the four cardinal virtues, the seven beatitudes, the seven bodily and spiritual operations of mercy, the seven Sacraments, the seven consecrations, the seven gifts of the blessed ones, and a few sentences about condemnation.<sup>15</sup>

John Wyclif (1329-84), often referred to as the Morning Star of the Reformation, who anticipated Luther's interest in vernacular versions of the Bible, shared Gerson's interest in the spiritual welfare of Christians. He wrote tracts of instruction. By the end of the 14th century the Decalog was consistently included in manuals of instruction. Other features were added, some of them in the character of the Medieval church, but only the Waldensians and Wyclif had incorporated biblical studies in the informal curriculum of spiritual nurture.

John Huss (1369-1415) died a martyr, condemned by the Council of Constance. Gerberding notes that Huss spent the last days before his death compiling a manual of instruction which included the Creed, the Decalog, and the Lord's Prayer. It was later enlarged by the Bohemian Brethren. That version was most important because it included, for the first time in this genre of literature, questions and answers on the doctrines of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A table of duties citing Bible verses was added. The book was further revised by the addition of material from the Raudnitz Catechism, which later came into the program of studies of the Moravian Brethren.

Another martyr, Girolamo Savonarola of Florence (1452-98), produced a manual of instruction titled Instruction for Christian people. It explained the Decalog and the Creed.

Among numerous educational manuals Die Tafel des Christlichen Lebens, published in Low German late in the 15th century, is important. It was written specifically for children and included a discussion of the Paternoster, the Ave Maria, the Creed, the five exterior and interior senses, the four cardinal virtues and the four sins that cry to heaven, the four last things, the seven capital sins, the seven bodily and seven spiritual works of

mercy, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the seven Sacraments, the seven beatitudes, the nine alien sins and the Ten Commandments.<sup>16</sup>

Other tracts which helped to revive domestic catechization and the instructional obligations of priests in the confessional were, Der Seele Trost (1472), Ein Spiegel des Christlichen Glauben (1472), John Wolf's Beichbuechlein (1468), Stephen Lanzkranna's Die Himmelstrass (1478). An anonymous manual with a wide circulation was written in 1470. It was Fundamentum Aeternae Felicitas. Its 66 pages included a consideration of the twelve articles of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, sin, with mention of the seven capital sins, the Sacraments, the last things; death, judgment, hell and heaven. The final article was an instruction about grace.<sup>17</sup> Koelde's manual of 1470 called Seelenwurtzgaertlein, stressed the grace of God. Luther found no fault with it or with the Geistliche Streit of Ulrich Draft, written in 1503. Its objective was to teach the dying to trust in Christ.<sup>18</sup>

A manual produced by Jacob Wimpfeling (1450-1528) brings us to an important feature in the development of religious education in the 15th century. Wimpfeling was a product of the educational system of the Brethren of the Common Life in Schlettstedt, Alsace. He became an important educator himself, founding and teaching in a Latin school in Strassburg. The Brethren, not a heretical sect like the Waldenses, were generally laymen committed to the Devotio Moderna which, late in the 14th century, had spread from Holland to Germany, France, and Italy. They were devoted to the deepening of their spiritual lives in a tradition that found its classical expression in Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ. Stress was laid on an inner spirituality which took its guidance from such Medieval saints as Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, and from the more recent John Gerson. The Devotio Moderna was seen most conspicuously among the free association of the secular priests and lay people who represented the main body of the Brethren of the Common Life. Their founder was Geert de Groote, a teacher and educator, who abandoned a brilliant professional career to live a simple devotional life in the company of his associates. The Brethren generally remained in their secular vocations while they pursued their spiritual and contemplative lives. Their great importance was to lie in the fact that they formed a network of common schools of unsurpassed excellence in which Bible reading and study was effectively pursued. Many important personalities in the 15th and 16th centuries were members of this group: a good many more attended their schools. Among them was Adrian VI the hapless pope (1522-23), so frequently mentioned since the election of John Paul II, as the last non-Italian occupant of the Throne of St. Peter.

Luther himself was not formally associated with the Brethren of the Common Life but in his later years he spoke warmly of the instruction he had from some of their teachers while he was a fourteen-year-old student at Magdeburg. E.G. Schwiebert believes that it was at Magdeburg, rather than at Erfurt, that Luther made his discovery of the Bible.<sup>19</sup> In any case, there can be no doubt that the Brethren, with their reverence for Holy Scripture and their practical use of the Bible in the educational process, were a major influence in the progress of religious instruction.

Numerous catechisms and instructional booklets were circulating at the beginning of the 16th century. Some of them are of special interest because Luther made reference to them. Pearl of Passion and The Little Gospel were two children's books to which the Reformer took exception because of their admonition to intercession to saints. In a treatise, "The Law, Faith and Prayer," written in 1520, Luther referred to other harmful books. He said: "Among the many injurious teachings and books by which Christians are misled and deceived, and through which a vast amount of unbelief has arisen, I consider not the least those little prayer books, through which a great burden is foisted upon the simple minded in the form of confession and enumeration of sins and much unchristian foolishness in the form of prayers to God and his saints. Indulgences on red titles are the means of puffing these words of high-sounding names. One is called Hortulus Animae, or, "The Little Garden of the Soul," another Paradisus Animae, or "The Soul's Paradise," and so forth. Such books stand in need of thorough revision, or perhaps they should be entirely destroyed. And this, I think is true likewise of the passional and legendary books in which we find many sections contributed by the devil."<sup>20</sup>

The following is a partial listing of about thirty manuals that were available in the first third of the 16th century: Andreas Althammer, a catechism with questions and answers, "Instruction in the Christian Faith," 1528; Johannes Brenz, "Questions on the Christian Faith for Children," 1528; Johannes Bugenhagen, a manual for the instruction of children in 1524; Wolfgang Capito, "Catechism," 1524; John Colet, "The Catechyzon," 1510; Erasmus of Rotterdam, a Latin catechism with the Creed, the seven Sacraments, written for Colet's St. Paul's School in London, 1512-13; Hans Gerhart, "Catechism," 1525; Dustus Jonas, a series of simple sermons for children concerning forgiveness of sins and salvation, 1524; Johannes Lachmann, "Instruction for Children, How They are to Learn and Keep the Faith," 1528; Philip Melancthon, a manual of instruction including the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, the 66th Psalm, The Ten Commandments, 1524; Urbanus Rhegius, An exposition of the

Creed in twelve parts with questions asked by the pupil and answered by the teacher, 1523; Nicholas Ruzs, a catechism with an evangelical content that was condemned by the Roman Church; Ulrich Surgent, Manuale Curatorum, a widely circulated manual published in Basle in 1502 which gave the form in which the parts of the catechism were to be read in the churches; Konrad Sam, "Catechism," 1526.

We should also take note of placards, large conspicuous banners or sheets of paper displaying the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, which were tacked up on the walls of schools, hospitals, and churches.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the history of religious education in the Middle Ages or to measure its impact on the church. Our review of the literature of religious instruction before the publication of Luther's Catechism has told us more about the defects of Medieval theology than about the practical application of religious knowledge to the lives of the people. In a sense we may say that Luther's catechisms had no forerunners at all, indeed could have none, because the defective theology of the Medieval church made its instruments of instruction invalid and unacceptable. Luther had turned theology around and new text books were needed. If the Reformation was a restoration of apostolic theology, a revivification of the Christian faith on a revolutionary scale, then no less a revolution was required in the educational application of the old truths to a new generation of Christians.

Luther's Bible translations had given the Bible back to the people and his biblical studies had enabled them to grasp Scripture's fundamental message. But it was not enough for him to be a great theologian. He had to combine his expository talents with a comprehensive program of educational development and spiritual nurture. His Catechism thus needed to be as unique as the theology that informed and supported it.

Bible translations were not a novelty in Luther's time. More than twenty translations were available when he began his work on the German Bible. But his Bible was to stand alone as the master pattern for the shaping of all future vernacular Bibles. By the same token we have seen that dozens of catechisms were circulating in 1529. Nevertheless Luther's work broke so much new ground, his catechism was so thoroughly based on Scripture, and at the same time so clearly delineated that it too became the mode, in its excellence, for future instruction in religion.

Luther understood Scripture better than any of his contemporaries. Therefore he was qualified,

above all others, for the task of summarizing it. Moreover, his particular talents qualified him supremely for the task of basing instruction on his summaries and his understanding. He considered the Bible to constitute a body of knowledge which all sinners need to apprehend. He was not content, like Gregory the Great, to take a condescending attitude toward the unlettered by assuming that they were incapable of grasping and believing the fundamental truths of Scripture. He made it his business to see to it that they did come to know and believe those vital truths.

Therefore, when he held an open Bible before the people and asked, as in the questions of the Catechism, "What Does This Mean?" he was combining exposition with instruction. The theologian had become a teacher. The apostolic witness rang true in that instruction. The spirit of Jesus, the Master Teacher, had returned to the church.

The actual writing of Luther's Catechism may well have been precipitated by a decree of John, Elector of Saxony, dated Trinity Sunday, 1527, for a tour of inspection to be made of the churches of his lands. Luther was appointed for this task, to be assisted by Justus Jonas and Johannes Bugenhagen. Luther entered upon these duties the same year and continued the year following. In 1529 Luther wrote to Spalatin of the results of his tour of inspection. "The church everywhere presents a very sad picture. The peasants know nothing and learn nothing; they never pray and they simply abuse their liberty by wholly neglecting confession and the Lord's Supper. They act as if they had no religious obligations. They have cast off the papal religion and disgraced ours."<sup>21</sup>

Luther's findings are also vividly described in the preface to the Small Catechism. After a greeting to "All Faithful and Godly Pastors and Preachers," he says: "The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy. Good God! The common people, especially in the villages, 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, have been Baptized, receive the Holy Sacraments. They cannot recite either the Lord's Prayer, the Creed or the Ten Commandments; they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts."<sup>22</sup> Medieval catechetical procedures had obviously been ineffective.

The progress of the thought and writing which preceded the final completion of the Small Catechism is detailed in Dr. Reu's books and

articles, as well as in other useful histories. We shall restrict ourselves here to just a few comments on the influence of Medieval instructional literature on Luther. Indeed, we may say that, as Luther went through the process of clarifying biblical doctrine in his own mind he was steadily engaged in the summarization and organization that was to reach final form in the Catechism. As early as 1517 when his tentative probings of Scripture led to the publication of the 95 Theses, he showed how unerringly he could go to the very heart of a difficult and complex matter. Recall the 62nd of the 95 Theses. Here he says that "The true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."

Luther's pedagogical concerns were part and parcel of his pastoral concern from the very beginning of his career as a reformer. In 1516 he preached a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. This was followed by a series on the Lord's Prayer in 1517. Luther first showed his hand in a determination to improve on the available catechetical booklets in 1520 when he published a revision of previous sermonizing in "A Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed and Lord's Prayer."<sup>23</sup> The first thing that we observe in this exposition is that, though he accepted the primers or manuals of the Middle Ages, he had changed the order of their content. The Ten Commandments, which had not been included at all in early times, and later had only occupied the third place, Luther placed the first in order. The preface to this work shows the rationale of the pedagogical principles operative in his philosophy of Christian education. He said that the law must be taught first so that "the commandments teach a man to know his illness . . . and thus [he] knows himself a sinner and a wicked man." The teaching of the Gospel then follows, and "the Creed shows him and teaches him where he may find the remedy, the grace which helps him become a good man and [helps him] to keep the commandments; it shows him God, and the mercy He has revealed and offered in Christ. In the third place the Lord's Prayer teaches him how to ask for this grace, get it, and take it to himself, to wit, by habitual, humble, comforting prayer; then grace is given, and by fulfilment of God's command he is saved."

This preface to Luther's catechetical exercise of 1520 is followed by three pages of general comment on the Decalog, six and a half pages of discussion of transgressions against the commandments, and three pages on the keeping of the commandments. The Creed is treated on several pages under the three headings of the Triune God rather than the twelve subdivisions of the Medieval church. The Lord's Prayer is treated under the familiar headings of the seven petitions. Most of this material anticipates the succinct exposition of the Catechism of 1529, but there is

ample evidence of Luther's theological maturation in the intervening years.

One paragraph in the 1520 work has no place in that of 1529. In that passage of time Germany had suffered the scourge of the Peasants' Revolt. In view of the anarchy brought on by Thomas Muenzer and his followers, it is not surprising that the following paragraph from the 1520 work has no counterpart in 1529: "I believe that in the congregation or church all things are common, that everyone's possessions belong to the others and no one has anything of his own."

Luther's next catechetical venture was the Betbuechlein of 1522 which repeated much of the content of the 1520 edition and added the following items reminiscent of Medieval books. 1. A discussion of the Ave Maria in opposition to Maryolatry; 2. Devotions based on the Psalms; 3. A commentary on the Epistle to Titus; 4. Prayers based on the seven petitions; 5. An explanation of true faith; 6. An instruction concerning prayer; 7. An instruction concerning confession; 8. An instruction on the Sacrament; 9. An instruction on death. This document, covering 75 pages in the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works,<sup>24</sup> made little catechetical improvement on the manual of 1520. It had a long way to go to reach the concise definition of the Catechism of 1529. The material on the Lord's Supper, five questions to be asked of communicants, in the very popular and widely disseminated Betbuechlein, was a later addition derived from a sermon of 1523. The Sacraments had still not found their place as a vital ingredient in a proper summary of the Christian faith.

Still another stage in the building of the definitive Catechism of 1529 was Luther's treatise of 1524, "To the Councillors of all Cities in the German Empire on the Establishment and Maintenance of Christian Schools."<sup>24</sup> In this statement Luther's debt to Gerson, the Bohemians, and the Brethren of the Common Life was clear. Effective catechetical instruction was needed beyond that which could be given in Christian homes.

In the meantime Luther was busy, very busy with his academic duties and his many important projects as leader of the Lutheran movement. He therefore gave his secretary, Justus Jonas, and his young protege, Agricola, the formidable assignment of drawing up a proper Catechismus Puerorum. Nothing came of it, but in 1525 some unknown author [was it Bugenhagen?] did produce a Buchlein fuer Kinder und Laien. Some of Luther's material was in it, but its chief distinction lies in the fact that it had drawn from the Catechism of the Bohemian Brethren and, for the first time in the history of the literature of catechetical material in Germany, there were

comprehensive sections on Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession. In this publication the content of the Catechism of 1529 was established.

The publication of the Deutsche Messe in 1526 gave further evidence of the need for a definitive catechism. A spate of manuals, noted in a previous section of this paper, appeared.

Eventually Luther and Melancthon, collaborating on the visitations demanded by the Elector of Saxony, pressed the need for a universally acceptable catechism further and suggested that the condition for first Communion be an understanding of the five parts of the Catechism, the Decalog, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Luther's Catechism finally evolved from the work that had been done by many authors and by the refinement of Luther's own thought growing out of three sets of catechetical sermons which he delivered from May to December 1527. After an initial exposure as printed placards in January 1529, the Small and the Large Catechism were published later in the year.

In conclusion, it behooves us to return to reflection on the objectives of this essay. It was to examine the antecedents of Luther's Catechism. I believe that, having looked at the forerunners of the Catechism, we must conclude that, though Luther was a product of his own age and that though he drew from material available from the past, particularly the literature of the pre-Reformers, the Catechism was a unique literary creation. It seems not too much to say that in the Catechism we have much more than a refinement of previous manuals of instruction. What we have in the Catechism is the entire scope of the Reformation in brilliant microcosm. Luther's creative synthesis of apostolic theology thus has its counterpart in the structuring of the essence of biblical theology within a miniature Bible.

Just as Luther's theological construct, the doctrine of justification, was uniquely creative and perceptive, so his organization of biblical themes in the Catechism was unique in the depth and breadth of the focus in which he placed the elemental features of the will and grace of God revealed in Holy Scripture.

It was Luther's Catechism that first stated and elaborated the concept of the means of grace and brought the Word and the Sacraments into their appropriate relationship. In one great sweep the Catechism removed the fantasies of a Medieval hagiography, substituting the facts of Scripture for the fables of Medieval superstition. When Luther asked the question "What Does This mean?" of the Ten Commandments he was not content to establish a canon of worldly

righteousness that a 16th century Pharisee might measure his life by. Rather, Luther explained the Ten Commandments in terms of the fruits of faith which illuminate and enrich the lives of justified sinners. He thus gave the law a long lost dimension. He reminded a Christian catechumenate that love is the fulfilling of the law and he gave renewed scope and meaning to the joy of Christian life.

Where, in all post-apostolic literature, is there a cut and polished gem comparable, in its comprehensive perfection, to Luther's explanation of the Second Article? It is true that Scripture contains much that is beyond human knowledge. Luther's insights enable us to see clearly the things we need to know in order to apprehend the will and love of God. Through the Catechism Luther ordered that knowledge in such a way as to give us an organization for the study of Christian doctrine and a firm foundation for our present and future contemplation of the Word and promise of God. "This is most certainly true!"



# **Luther's Use of Scripture in the Small Catechism**

*by James W. Voelz*

To prepare and present a paper on Luther's use of Scripture in the Small Catechism is no small task. The principal problem is, of course, the welter of material. Of 540 lines in the German text of this work, 143 or 22% are simple citations of the Scriptures, and of the 397 remaining, at least 167 or an additional 31% are exegetical treatments of Scriptural passages. Inevitably, therefore, I have been forced to be selective, both for the limits of time, and for the maintenance of my sanity. Accordingly, I have chosen to consider Luther's use of Scripture in the Small Catechism in two ways, which will constitute the two major portions of this paper. In the first part, we will deal with the Small Catechism's use of Scripture generally, exploring the theological purpose behind a catechetical use of Holy Scripture, while in the second we will deal with selected passages, concentrating upon the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacrament of the Altar. Because the material in the Small Catechism is quite terse and spare, as is appropriate for a basic instructional manual, I will have occasion to refer both to the Large Catechism, which was prepared in close connection with the Small Catechism,

and to Luther's writings at large, which illuminate his thinking on given matters. We begin with Part I, Luther's general use of Scripture in the Small Catechism.

## **Part I**

It was said in the introduction that 22% of the Small Catechism is simple quotation of Scripture, while a further 31% is exegesis of that Scripture. In total, then, 310 of the 450 lines of the Small Catechism concern themselves directly with Scripture and its interpretation. What use is made of such a massive handling of God's Word? Luther tells us in the introduction to the various chief parts:

- I. The Ten Commandments, as the Head of the Family Should Teach them in a Simple Way to His Household
- II. The Creed, as the Head of the Family Should Teach It in the Simplest Way to His Household
- III. The Lord's Prayer, as the Head of the Family



Should Teach It in the Simplest Way to His Household, etc.

The key here is the simple word “should” — “should teach . . . to his household.” Not a weak, wishy-washy “should”; not, “it would be nice if he would”, but “ought to” should, as in “the head of the family ought to teach . . . to his household.” The German and the Latin are clearer here. The German is soll and the Latin debeat. “Sollen” means to be obliged to, to be bound to, to have to, must — indeed, to be in debt, which shows the general tenor of the word, while “debeo” carries a similar force, namely, to be under obligation to render, to be in duty bound, must, even to be necessary; again with an overtone of being in debt, as there is with “sollen”. The head of the household is under moral obligation to teach what is written in the Catechism.

When we deal with the contents of the Small Catechism, therefore — or, to put it in terms of our paper’s topic, when we deal with the Catechism’s use of Scripture as a whole — we are in the realm of LAW, the realm of Command. To be sure, the specific content of the Catechism is not all Law — far from it. Sections like the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar are the sweetest Gospel, in and of themselves. But the use to which all of the sections are put — not only the Ten Commandments or the Table of Duties, but also the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, and the Sacrament of the Altar — is a law purpose: they must be taught and they must be learned. As Luther says in his introduction:

Therefore I entreat (and adjure) you all for God’s sake, my dear sirs [and brethren who are pastors or preachers,] to devote yourselves heartily to your office, to have pity on the people who are entrusted to you, and to help us inculcate the Catechism upon the people . . . . (SC Pref 7)

But which uses of the Law, to use good Lutheran categories, are involved here? Luther tells us in his introduction:

But those who are unwilling to learn it — [all of the parts of the Catechism by rote memorization] . . . their parents and employers should refuse them food and drink, and (they would also do well if they were to) notify them that the prince will drive such rude people from the country, etc. (SC Pref 12)

For although we cannot and should not force any one to believe, yet we should insist and urge the people that they know what is right and wrong with those among whom they dwell and wish to make their

living. For whoever desires to reside in a town must know and observe the town laws, the protection of which he wishes to enjoy, no matter whether he is a believer or at heart and in private a rogue or a knave. (SC Pref 13)

This is nothing less than the first use of the Law. Luther envisions the contents of the Catechism, and, therefore, principally the Scripture passages and their exposition, to be a standard of life and thought for the political entity which has broken with the pope and embraced evangelical doctrine — the regulator, as it were, of outward behavior. And this, of course, is not dissimilar to the provisions of the Peace of Augsburg, concluded in 1555, after Luther’s death, with its rule of cuius regio, eius religio.

The contents of the Catechism are also intended to perform the second use of the Law. This is, of course, the mirror, the use which shows men their sin. Luther expresses this in a general way when he says:

But those who are unwilling to learn it should be told that they deny Christ and are no Christians, neither should they be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at baptism, nor exercise any part of Christian liberty, but should be turned back to the Pope and his officials, yea, to the devil himself. (SC Pref 11)

And again:

. . . the common people in the villages . . . live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts. (SC Pref 3)

Specifically, he commands that preachers ought to stress those sections of the Catechism which are most abused by their people, that their sin might be shown for what it is.

And particularly, urge that commandment or part most which suffers the greatest neglect among your people. For instance, the Seventh Commandment, concerning stealing, must strenuously be urged among mechanics and merchants, and even farmers and servants, for among these people many kinds of dishonesty and thieving prevail. (SC Pref 18)

Note that while his example is a commandment, he says “urge that commandment or part”. Indeed, the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Altar, as it is contained in the sixth chief part, may be used in this way, as Luther advises his pastors

regarding those who despise the sacrament as something useless and unnecessary:

let them go and tell them that such belong to the devil as do not regard nor feel their great need and the gracious help of God.  
— (SC Pref 24)

a reference, no doubt, to the question, "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?"

Finally, then, the Scripture references and their exegesis also perform the third use of the Law in their catechetical context, that is to say, they instruct Christian men and women concerning the will of God for their faith and life. Luther speaks time and again of this usage in his introduction, urging that it be applied particularly to the simple, to the young, and to the unlearned.

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare (publish) this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine! Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the (common) holy sacraments. Yet they (do not understand and) cannot (even) recite either the Lord's Prayer or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; (SC Pref 1-3)

And again:

O ye bishops . . . you do not care in the least . . . whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, the Ten Commandments, or any part of the Word of God . . . Therefore, I entreat and adjure you all for God's sake, my dear sirs . . . to have pity on the people who are entrusted to you and to help us inculcate the Catechism upon the people and especially upon the young. (SC Pref 4, 5)

This is, in the end, the primary, overall use of Scripture and its interpretation in the Small Catechism. Indeed, it is the most natural use, given its setting. And this is not bad; for while the third use of the law is not its primary use in Lutheranism as it is in Calvinism,<sup>1</sup> instruction in doctrine and living was a fundamental necessity in Luther's time, even as it is today in ours, and such instruction is greatly facilitated by a catechetical presentation of God's Word.

We may say, therefore, that Luther employs Scripture and its interpretation abundantly in the

Small Catechism and that both sections of Law and sections of Gospel are equally included. Overall, the Scripture passages and their exegesis are used as Law. All three uses of the Law are in evidence. A knowledge of, and external conformity to, the texts and their treatments is required, which is first use. These texts and their interpretation are used to accuse those who do not act according to, and demonstrate a living belief in, them — second use. And they are used to instruct all men and women in the faith, especially the ignorant and young — third use. With the exception of the first use — given our changed political situation — the second and third uses can and must be applied also by us today.

## Part II

We now turn to Part II, Luther's specific treatment of Scripture in selected sections of the Small Catechism. We begin with his first section, the Ten Commandments and their exposition.

### A

The Ten Commandments were, in many ways, Luther's favorite portion of Holy Scripture. They occupy, as we have said, the first portion of his catechism. And he could, at times, wax grandiloquent about them. He says, e.g., in the Large Catechism:

Whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scripture, so that in all affairs and cases he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters and is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in this world. (LC Pref 17)

We will, therefore, consider in quite some detail, one question of no small hermeneutical significance, namely, why did Luther select the ten commands he did select to be the so-called Ten Commandments? As we shall see, the answer to this question reveals Luther's fundamental approach to the interpretation of the entire Old Testament.

Why did Luther select the ten commandments which we have contained in the Small Catechism to be the Ten Commandments? This is by no means a foolish question. As is apparent from a reading of the Old Testament, especially Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21, there is no specific list of ten commandments. There are a number of commandments, but in total they number more than ten — at least twelve, if not more. Why were ten selected? Basically because of three passages which mention ten commandments, Ex. 34:28, Deut. 4:13, and Deut. 10:4. Each is similar to the others, so a reading of one

will be sufficient:

Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sounds or words, but you saw no form — only a voice. So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. (Deut. 4:12, 13)

But which ten commands did Moses have in mind? As Bo Reicke has clearly shown, three traditions arose to answer this question.<sup>2</sup> The first combines, as the first commandment, the introduction, Ex. 20:2 (Deut. 5:6): "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery," with the prohibition against false gods, Ex. 20:3 (Deut. 5:7): "You shall have no other gods before me," and the prohibition against graven images, Ex. 20:4-6 (Deut. 5:8-10):

You shall not make for yourself an idol, (a graven image) or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The prohibition against misuse of the divine name, Ex. 20:7 (Deut. 5:11), is then taken as the second commandment, the commandment concerning the Sabbath, Ex. 20:8-11 (Deut. 5:12-15) as the third, the command concerning parents, Ex. 20:12 (Deut. 5:16) as the fourth, the prohibition of murder, Ex. 20:13 (Deut. 5:17) the fifth, the prohibition of adultery, Ex. 20:14 (Deut. 5:18) the sixth, the prohibition of theft, Ex. 20:15 (Deut. 5:19), the seventh, and the prohibition of false witness, Ex. 20:16 (Deut. 5:20) the eighth. Finally, the prohibition against coveting the neighbor's house, Ex. 20:17a (Deut. 5:21b) is separated from the prohibition against coveting everything else that is the neighbor's, Ex. 20:17b (Deut. 5:21) to form the ninth and tenth commandments. (Note the different order of things coveted in Deuteronomy.) This was the solution of the Massorettes, and it is reflected in their pericopic punctuation.<sup>3</sup> The church of the West, including Augustine<sup>4</sup>, Isidor of Seville<sup>5</sup>, and Peter Lombard<sup>6</sup> followed this division, eventually dropping the introduction and the commands against graven images. (In all three traditions, other commandments in these sections of Exodus and Deuteronomy, for example those in the small discourse on keeping the Sabbath, were dropped, being seen, evidently, as appositional to the main

commandment on a given subject.)

The second tradition combines the introduction, Ex. 20:2 (Deut. 5:6) with the prohibition against false gods, Ex. 20:3 (Deut. 5:7) as the first commandment. The prohibition against graven images, Ex. 20:4-6 (Deut. 5:8-10) is then seen as the second commandment, the prohibition against misuse of the divine name the third, and so forth, until the tenth commandment, which is the prohibition against coveting, Ex. 20:17 (Deut. 5:21) — a combination of commandments nine and ten of the first tradition, which we have just analyzed. This was the solution of Hellenistic Judaism, including Philo of Alexandria<sup>7</sup> and Josephus<sup>8</sup>, and it was adopted by Eastern or Orthodox Christendom, including Irenaeus<sup>9</sup>, Origen<sup>10</sup>, and Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, the Jewish Rabbis followed their own system, essentially a combination of the solutions of the first and second traditions. The introduction was understood as the first commandment, separate from the rest. The commandments against false gods and against image-making were combined, as in the Massoretic and Western tradition, to form the second commandment, and the rest proceeded as normal (the injunction against misuse of the divine name became the third commandment, etc.), until the tenth commandment, which was taken, as in the tradition of Hellenistic Judaism and the East, as the total prohibition against coveting. This is the schema followed by the Talmud<sup>12</sup> and by the Midrashim<sup>13</sup>, through the middle ages (e.g., Ibn Ezra of Toledo, 12th C.)<sup>14</sup>, until the present day.<sup>15</sup> It has not been particularly influential in Christendom, either in the East or in the West.

As is apparent from this brief overview, the real issue is the matter of images. What are we to do with the words:

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. (Ex. 20:4)

Once this problem is dealt with, the matter of the ninth and tenth commandments automatically takes care of itself. Luther, as we know, followed the Western Christian tradition and omitted any reference to images. His colleagues in the Reformed camp, most notably Zwingli and Calvin, followed Hellenistic Judaism and the Eastern tradition (with the exception of Martin Bucer, who adopted the Rabbinic system<sup>16</sup>) and included the references to images. It is for this reason that the two major catechisms of these traditions, Luther's Small Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism, respectively, contain different versions of the commandments.

Now, why did Luther go in the direction that he did? Two major reasons may be adduced. The first is exegetical. Luther understood Ex. 20:4-6 (Deut. 5:8-10) as essentially an explanation and amplification of Ex. 20:3 (Deut. 5:7), the prohibition against other gods. He writes in his essay "Against the Heavenly Prophets":

I cite the first commandment (Exod. 20:3): "You shall have no other gods before me." Immediately, following this text, the meaning of having other gods is made plain the words: "You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness . . ." (Exod. 20:4). This is said of the same gods, etc. No one will be able to prove anything else. From subsequent words in the same chapter (Exod. 20:23), "You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold," it follows that "make" certainly refers to such gods.

For this saying, "You shall have no other gods," is the central thought, the standard, and the end in accordance with which all the words which follow are to be interpreted, connected, and judged. For this passage points out and expresses the meaning of this commandment, namely, that there are to be no other gods. Therefore the words "make," "images," "serve," etc., and whatever else follows, are to be understood in no other sense than that neither gods nor idolatry are to develop therefrom.<sup>17</sup>

He even goes on to say:

No conclusion can be drawn from the words, "You shall have no other gods," other than that which refers to idolatry. When however images or statues are made without idolatry, then such making of them is not forbidden, for the central saying, "You shall have no other gods," remains intact.<sup>18</sup>

Now this is diametrically opposed to the Reformed approach. The Reformed consistently understood Ex. 20:4-6 (Deut. 5:8-10), not as a further description of the false gods which were prohibited in the first commandment. Instead, they saw it as pertaining to the true God — specifically to how he is — or in this case, is not — to be pictured and portrayed, and how he is to be worshipped and adored. They understood it to prohibit, not worship of a false god, but false worship of the true God, or, at best, misguided or misdirected worship. In the words of the Heidelberg Catechism:

Q.96. What does God require in the second commandment?

A. That we should not represent him or worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his Word.

Q.97. Should we, then, not make any images at all?

A. God cannot and should not be pictured in any way . . . .

Q.98. But may not pictures be tolerated in churches in place of books for unlearned people?

A. No, for we must not try to be wiser than God, who does not want his people to be taught by means of lifeless idols, but through the living preaching of his Word.<sup>19</sup>

Calvin is equally clear:

As in the preceding commandment the Lord has declared himself to be the one God, besides whom no other deities ought to be imagined or worshipped, so in this he more clearly reveals his nature, and the kind of worship with which he ought to be honoured, that we may not dare to form any carnal conceptions of him. The end, therefore, of this precept is, that he will not have his legitimate worship profaned with superstitious rites. Wherefore, in a word, he calls us off, and wholly abstracts us from carnal observances, which our foolish minds are accustomed to devise, when they conceive of God according to the grossness of their own apprehensions . . . .<sup>20</sup>

Zwingli followed a similar line<sup>21</sup>, as did his close friend Leo Jud of Schlettstadt, Alsace, who interpreted Ex. 20:23, ("You shall not make other gods besides me, gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves.") The passage quoted by Luther in defence of understanding images in the sense of false gods, to mean: "Don't make me into a gold or silver god." (To do so he had to render ἑαυτῷ, "with me", as "myself."<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that he consistently converted the NT injunctions against idolatry to injunctions against images or portrait-making and worship, rendering I Cor. 5:11, e.g., as "I have written to you that you ought not to mix or have relationships with adulterous or covetous people, with robbers, or with those who worship a representation" and I Cor. 10:7 as "You ought not reverence portraits or images", in the first passage translating εἰδωλα as bild and in the second, the same word as bildnussen.<sup>23</sup>

Who is correct on this matter? My own preference lies with Luther and with his understanding of the relationship between Exodus 20:3 and verses 4-6. It seems most natural, on a "neutral" reading of the text, to understand the injunction concerning images to amplify the

meaning of "other gods" in the previous verse. It is quite unnatural to understand the words "You shall not worship them or serve them" as referring to images of the true God, especially when worship of a false god has just been prohibited. Indeed, the wrath spoken of in the very next words, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God . . . ." is best understood as directed against pretenders to the heavenly throne, not against foolish or ill-thought-out representations devised by true worshippers. To be sure, Deut. 4:15, 16 seems to pose a problem for this interpretation:

So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female.

These words clearly do prohibit images of the true God, which is what the Reformed contend Ex. 20:4-6 and Deut. 5:8-10 enjoin. But these verses are easiest understood as containing injunctions which are similar to, though directed toward a different end than, those in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and they cannot be used to determine the meaning of other pericopes which have no similarly stated, or even contextually implied, rationale.

Luther's major reason for omitting reference to images in his rendering of the Ten Commandments, however, is not exegetical. It is much deeper, much more far-reaching than that. It reflects his basic approach to Scripture, his basic hermeneutical principles, if you will, and it is rooted most firmly in his Biblical theology. It has, in short, to do with his view of the Old Covenant. Luther believed that, for New Testament Christians, the entire body of Mosaic legislation has been abrogated. He writes:

. . . the law of Moses is no longer binding on us because it was given only to the people of Israel . . . . We would rather not preach again for the rest of our life than to let Moses return and to let Christ be torn out of our hearts. We will not have Moses as ruler or lawgiver any longer. Indeed God himself will not have it either. Moses was an intermediary solely for the Jewish people. It was to them that he gave the law. We must therefore silence the mouths of those factious spirits who say, "Thus says Moses," etc. Here you simply reply: Moses has nothing to do with us. If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses. Thus the consequence would be that if I accept Moses as master, then I must have myself circumcised, wash my clothes in the Jewish way, eat and drink

and dress thus and so, and observe all that stuff. So, then, we will neither observe nor accept Moses. Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service.

That Moses does not bind the Gentiles can be proved from Exodus 20:1, where God himself speaks, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This text makes it clear that even the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us. For God never led us out of Egypt but only the Jews. The sectarian spirits want to saddle us with Moses and all the commandments. We will just skip that . . . it is clear enough that Moses is the lawgiver of the Jews and not of the Gentiles. He has given the Jews a sign whereby they should lay hold of God, when they call upon him as the God who brought them out of Egypt. The Christians have a different sign, whereby they conceive of God as the One who gave His Son, etc.<sup>24</sup>

Do such sentiments make Luther anti-nomian? Most assuredly they do not. The key for Luther was the natural law. This, he maintained, is valid for all men.

When these factious spirits come, however, and say, "Moses has commanded it," then simply drop Moses and reply, "I am not concerned about what Moses commands." "Yes," they say, "He has commanded that we should have one God, that we should trust and believe in him, that we should not swear by his name; that we should honor father and mother; not kill; steal, commit adultery; not bear falsewitness, and not covet (Exod. 20:3-17); should we not keep these commandments?" You reply: Nature also has these laws. Nature provides that we should call upon God. The Gentiles attest to this fact. For there never was a Gentile who did not call upon his idols, even though these were not the true God. The Gentiles have it written in their heart, and there is no distinction (Rom. 3:22). As St. Paul also shows in Romans 2:14-15, the Gentiles, who have no law, have the law written in their heart.

Therefore it is natural to honor God, not steal, not commit adultery, not bear false witness, not murder; and what Moses commands is nothing new. For what God has given the Jews from heaven, he has also written on the hearts of all men.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, Luther believed that some parts of the Law of Moses are still valid, even though the

legislation as such has been abrogated, namely, those laws and ordinances — but only those laws and ordinances — which reflect the natural law.

But the other commandments of Moses, which are not (implanted in all men) by nature, do not restrict the Gentiles. Nor do these pertain to the Gentiles, such as the tithe and others equally fine which I wish we had too. Now this is the first thing that I ought to see in Moses, namely the commandments to which I am not bound except insofar as they are (implanted in everyone) by nature (and written in everyone's heart).<sup>26</sup>

And again: “. . . where he [Moses] gives commandment, we are not to follow him except so far as he agrees with the natural law.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Luther maintained that the validity of these ordinances does not rest upon their having been given by Moses, but rather that it rests solely — and precisely — upon their total agreement with the natural law: “Thus I keep the commandments which Moses has given, not because Moses gave commandments, but because they have been implanted in me by nature, and Moses agrees exactly with nature . . . .”<sup>28</sup> And again: “. . . we read Moses not because he applies to us, that we must obey him, but because he agrees with the natural law . . . .”<sup>29</sup> The correspondence between OT moral ordinances and the natural law does make Mosaic legislation valuable for pedagogical purposes, of course, because it is a clear expression of this natural law.

Now on the basis of this view of the Old Covenant, Luther was forced to reject the OT commandment concerning graven images as valid for believers in the NT era. Luther saw that, when all is said and done, this piece of legislation is part of the old covenant and that the old covenant has been done away with. To be sure, he agreed that some parts of this covenant do have enduring validity, as we have seen. But as we have also seen, he also realized that those parts are the ones which correspond to the natural law, which is enduringly valid, and that they themselves are valid only because they are, in fact, congruent with that natural law. Luther saw that the OT commandment against idol forms and likenesses has no such congruence. Therefore, he said that it is not binding upon us, and that it is of no further value to us. In his own words:

Where then the Mosaic law and the natural law are one, there the law remains and is not abrogated . . . . Therefore Moses' legislation about images . . . and what else goes beyond the natural law, since it is not supported by the natural law, is free, null and void, and is specifically given to the Jewish people

alone. It is as when an emperor or a king makes special laws and ordinances in his territory, as the Sachsenspiegel in Saxony, and yet common natural laws such as to honor parents, not to kill, not to commit adultery, to serve God, etc., prevail and remain in all lands. Therefore one is to let Moses be the Sachsenspiegel of the Jews and not to confuse us Gentiles with it, just as the Sachsenspiegel is not observed in France, though the natural law there is in agreement with it.<sup>30</sup>

It is impossible to overestimate the significance of Luther's handling of the question of images, as we have just examined it. Of special interest is his insight into the nature of the Mosaic Law, for it determined his approach to all of the commandments, and it was particularly important in his treatment of the third commandment, enabling him to reword it from “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,” to “Thou shalt sanctify the holy day,” based on an appeal to natural law.<sup>31</sup> This insight into the Law's nature and purpose was not one which came easily or quickly to the Christian church. As we know, many of the earliest Christians continued to be bound to the ways of the OT code, even after the Resurrection. They observed Mosaic Laws of purification, circumcision, sabbath observance, and dietary control. (We need think only of Peter's vision of the sheet with unclean animals in Acts 10, the controversy at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, and Paul's statement of being a Jew to the Jews in 1 Cor. 9.<sup>32</sup>) Indeed, St. Paul had to fight the Judaizers from the very first and say concerning them, Col. 2: 16, 17:

Therefore, let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a mere shadow of what is to come . . . .

In his insight, Luther was true to his apostle of freedom, St. Paul, and it is, therefore, not surprising that one of his favorite NT books with the epistle of Christian freedom, St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians.

## B

As we turn from the Ten Commandments to the Lord's Prayer, we turn from what Luther considered to be the most important section of the Small Catechism to the section which is perhaps the most beloved to its readers. Herein are contained our Lord's words of comfort and hope, and they are expounded so beautifully to bring out the very depth of the Gospel message. For example the explanation to the fifth petition, “Forgive us our trespasses” reads:



We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we also heartily forgive, and readily do good to those who sin against us.<sup>33</sup>

In his third chief part, Luther exhibits great insights in his handling of Scripture, much as he did with the Ten Commandments. Again, many could be adduced. But, again, one stands out in particular. It is the treatment of the Introduction, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Luther writes: "God would thereby (with this introduction) tenderly urge us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him confidently, with all assurance, as dear children, ask their dear father." (SC III, 2) With the first clause of this explanation, Luther captures the important NT truth that we need constantly to be reminded of the fact that, by faith, we are in a father-son relationship with God, not a master-slave relationship. This is not the natural state of affairs. Indeed, the Jews did not believe it — they virtually never addressed God as their father.<sup>34</sup> And it is easy to slip back into the bondage of slavery, by reverting once more to the service of the law. As Paul reminds the Galatians:

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son. (Gal. 4:4-5, 7)

Luther saw that by beginning his prayer with the words "Our Father," our Lord reminds us of our true status as Christians and roots us more firmly in our faith.

Equally importantly, however, with the second clause of his explanation, Luther captures the NT insight into the nature of God's fatherhood, and, therefore, of our childhood. He shows that God is not harsh and severe, but kind, loving, and caring. These words say what the early church said when it used the Aramaic word "Abba," my father, as an address to God — a child's word, really,<sup>35</sup> a simple, trusting word — "Daddy" would be a good translation. With this type of father we are given the privilege of request, and we need not be afraid to exercise that privilege, even as our Lord himself explained it in the Sermon on the Mount, when he said:

Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be

opened to you . . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him? (Matt. 7:7, 11)

As Luther properly saw it, the entire Christian life is summed up in this introduction.

Unlike the Ten Commandments, however, in which there is little to take exception to, Luther's treatment of the Lord's Prayer can be criticized in at least one respect, when the text is approached exegetically. His explanation to the second petition, "Thy kingdom come," reads:

What does this mean? The kingdom of God comes indeed without our prayer of itself; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also.

How is this done? When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead a godly life, here in time and hereafter in eternity.<sup>36</sup>

This exposition reflects the commonly held opinion that the Kingdom of God is to be defined as "the reign and rule of God in the hearts of believers." It may be called a subjective view, and the problem with it is that it is neither sufficient nor exhaustive as an explanation of this phrase. In the NT, the word Kingdom, in the phrase Kingdom of God, refers to God's active and dynamic reign and rule, as Luther rightly saw. But its primary referent is precisely, God's reign and rule in the person and in the work of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Now, while there is a subjective element to this kingdom or reign, namely, our Lord's wooing and winning the hearts of those who heard Him, and of course, his wooing and winning the hearts of those today who do hear him through the preaching of the word of his select ambassadors, the apostles, most frequently — standardly — this Kingdom is seen objectively, as God engaged in conflict against the forces of evil. Preeminent are our Lord's battles against Satan, especially his enduring of the temptation of the arch-deceiver, and his healing of madmen, epileptics, and other afflicted people by casting out demons from his enslaved creation; his defeat of Satan, as he stormed the gates of hell in his triumphal death and burial; and finally his breaking of the bonds of corruption which enthralled his poor creation, holding it a prisoner, estranged from its maker, as he rose triumphant on Easter morning, bringing new life to the world. These were objective acts. They occurred apart from subjective human response. Indeed, they are the very foundation for, and ground of, the call of the child of God.

Why is this important? It is important because



of the relationship between Christ's first, lowly, coming, and his second coming in glory. When he first walked our earth, Christ established — re-established, really — God's reign and rule over his whole creation. To use Oscar Cullman's famous WWII imagery, he broke the back of the evil forces and decimated their power, as the allies did to Nazi Germany at the invasion of Normandy. But his kingdom — his reign — has not completely been implemented. Not all creatures are yet under his gracious rule. Pockets of resistance remain, as it were. The Rhein still has to be crossed. When will this happen? It is happening even now as God's word is preached and his sacraments administered, as missionaries go out and churches expand. But it will not fully happen until the end of time, when the last vestiges of resistance have been crushed, when the last rebels have been conquered; in short, when Satan is finally put away to vex creation no more. Then God's reign will be complete. Christ will be all in all. All things will be put under his feet. This, too, is part of — in fact, the consummation of — the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The thrust of this petition, therefore, is a many-faceted one. Yes, we can say with Luther that the coming of the Kingdom of God is the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts and lives. This is one way in which God's reign is implemented. But we can also say that it concerns something outside of ourselves, and that in a two-fold sense. First, it concerns missions, and the spreading of God's Word, as our synodical catechism indicates when it says: "What do we ask in this petition? . . . b. that he would extend his kingdom of grace on earth (missions)."<sup>37</sup> Secondly, however, and more importantly, it also concerns the parousia, Christ's second coming, when God's Kingdom, now fulfilled, will be fully consummated, again, as our synodical catechism does also indicate.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, given the early church's sense of the imminence of the parousia, and its prayer, recorded in Rev. 22:20 and I Cor. 16:23, marana-tha, "Come, Lord Jesus," this interpretation of the Petition should be given a place of high prominence. In the words of Martin Franzmann:

The piety of the pure in heart prays that God may act, may so act in might and mercy that He become King, be manifested as King, and rule forever as King. It prays that God may so act in redemption and judgment that He will clear His name . . . of all that beclouds it, and burst forth full in His glory.<sup>39</sup>

### C

We conclude with a brief word on the Sacrament of the Altar. It is included with some hesitancy, because, again, it must be somewhat critical of Luther's interpretation. But the problem, as it appears, is not a serious one, and

should cause us no great difficulty.

My concern is with Luther's understanding of the source of the benefits of the sacrament of the altar. After citing the words of institution, Luther says:

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? That is shown us by these words "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; namely, 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? It is not the eating and drinking indeed that does them, but the words here written "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.<sup>40</sup>

Now, from an exegetical standpoint, this seems strange. The words seem to be made all-important, any, sole-sufficient: "in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words." And again, "It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them [gives the sacrament's benefits], but the words here written, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." The body and blood are necessary — Luther calls them a "chief thing" in his explanation — but what is their function beneficially? Are they there simply because Christ commanded them? It is interesting to note that my reading of Luther here is not unique in this regard, for Edmund Schlink also raises the same question, asking: "[In the Small Catechism] is there a basic theological concern involved in this separation of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper from forgiveness? In other words, does the benefit, forgiveness, belong to the essence of the Lord's Supper or does it not."<sup>41</sup>

Two things may be said about this problem. First, it is certainly improper Biblically to separate the benefits from the essence of the sacrament of the altar. Considering the NT generally, it does violence to the doctrine of the body of Christ, especially as we find it in the Pauline Epistles. It cannot be insignificant that we, who are the body of Christ, in this sacrament feed on the body of Christ, as we sit at table one with another. In the words of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, "Through this food we are united with Christ" (AP XXII, 10), and of the Formula of Concord, ". . . this most venerable sacrament [is] . . . a firm bond of union of Christians with

Christ their head and with one another. . . ." (ThD VII, 44).

Specifically, Paul's arguments in 1 Cor. 10 against the idolators are inexplicable if the sacrament's body and blood carry no merit in and of themselves. Some Corinthians were partaking of the sacrament and eating sacrifices offered at local idols' temples, and of these Paul says:

Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1 Cor. 10:18, 21)

To partake of the sacrifice identifies the worshipper with the sacrifice. It communicates to him its benefits. But it also implies fellowship and puts him in the sphere of influence of the god to whom the sacrifice is given. It puts him in the god's power, places him under his aegis, as it were. And the same thing happens at our Lord's table, when the sacrifice of Christ is — not sacrificed anew — but given to us, so that we, too, may be endued with its divine power. We might also cite John 6 at this point, which, while not necessarily sacramental, is surely not non-sacramental, and totally inapplicable to the Holy Eucharist:

Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. For my flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him." (John 6:53, 55, 56)

Secondly, we can also say that Luther personally did not separate the benefits of the Lord's Supper from our Lord's true body and blood. He says, e.g., in the Large Catechism: "The body of Christ can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, that effects or profits nothing." (V, 30) And again, "He bids me eat and drink, that it may be my own and may benefit me, as a sure pledge and token, yea, the very same treasure that is appointed for me against my sins, death and every calamity." (V, 22). Indeed, far from denigrating the value of the reception of the body and blood, Luther valued it more highly than you or I probably dare to think. He sees it, even, as valuable for our physical bodies, for he says:

Now, because this poor bag of worms, our body, also has the hope of the resurrection from the dead and of eternal life, this body must also become spiritual and digest and consume all that is carnal in it. And that is what this spiritual food

accomplishes: if a man eats it bodily, it will digest his flesh and transform him, so that he too becomes spiritual, that is, eternally alive and blessed, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 15), "It is raised a spiritual body." To use a crude illustration, the effect of this food is as if a wolf had devoured a sheep which proved to be so powerful a meal that it transformed the wolf into a sheep. Similarly, when we eat the flesh of Christ in a bodily and spiritual manner this food is so powerful that it transforms us into it and turns carnal, sinful, natural men into spiritual, holy, living men. This we are already, but still concealed in faith and hope.<sup>42</sup>

What a tremendous eschatological statement that is!

How, then, should we understand Luther's explanation of the benefits of the Sacrament of the altar? They must, it is clear, be seen against the background of his time. Luther's problem was not that his people, coming out of a Roman Catholic tradition, had a low regard for the body and blood of Christ. On the contrary, the problem was quite the opposite: a magical understanding of its significance and benefits. Too many of them had an *ex opere operato* view of the effectiveness of this sacrament. Therefore, Luther, properly, concentrated upon the word of God which is so closely connected with Christ's body and blood. He saw that partaking of our Lord in the sacrament is valuable because, and only because, we have the promise in God's Word that it is, in fact, valuable (cf. LC, V, 22, 28-30), and that a mere reception of these divine elements does not assure forgiveness automatically to everyone, regardless of his faith (cf. LC, V, 33-35). He puts it well in one statement in the Large Catechism when he says: "Yet however great is the treasure in itself, it must be comprehended in the Word and administered to us, else we should never be able to know or seek it". (V, 30). Far from splitting the elements and the word, Luther kept them together in the tightest union. In the words of Edmund Schlink again, ". . . the intimate relationship between essence and benefit has its basis in Christ's words of institution by the power of which we have both Christ's body and blood and the forgiveness of sins."<sup>43</sup>

# Early Christian Catechetics: An Historical and Theological Construction

*by William C. Weinrich*

A. In the Jewish-Christian Pseudo-Clementine Homilies the apostle Peter is presented as instructing the people of Tyre. They should repent and submit to those things which are pleasing to God. Those things, Peter says, which please God are: to pray to God, the giver of all things; to abstain from food offered to idols; to be washed from all pollution; and summing up the rest in one word, to do to one's neighbor those good things one wishes for oneself (Clem. Hom. 7:4). From what follows it is clear that the "good things" one is to do to one's neighbor are founded upon the Decalogue. For example, Peter says in explanation, "You would not like to be murdered; do not murder another man." Similar explanatory statements are made concerning committing adultery and theft. Then the Homilies continue: "After Peter had spent a few days in teaching (  $\kappa\alpha\tau\eta\chi\epsilon\iota\nu$  ) them in this way, . . . they were baptized (Clem. Hom. 7:5).

Clearly reflected in this passage is a prebaptismal catechism such as might be given to a non-Jewish proselyte. Prayer, abstention from impure food, washing from pollution, and the Decalogue

encapsulated in the "golden rule," form the content of this instruction. The next scene in the Homilies presents a parallel, but differently stated, teaching of Peter, this time in Sidon (Clem. Hom. 7:7-8). Peter presents his teaching in the form of the two ways:

I make known unto you as it were two paths, and I shall show you by which travellers are lost and by which they are saved, being guided of God. The path of the lost, then, is broad and very smooth — it ruins them without troubling them; but the path of the saved is narrow, rugged, and in the end it saves, not without much toil, those who have journeyed through it. And these two paths are presided over by unbelief and faith (7:7; cf. Clem. Hom. 18:17)

Those who journey along the path of unbelief are those who prefer pleasure, who do what is not pleasing to God and on that account "have forgotten the day of judgment." The path of faith is "the service of God's own appointment" and

consists in worship of God alone, abstention from all things impure, good works, and expectation of eternal life (7:8).

Although the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies themselves are probably to be dated around the middle of the third century, these parallel accounts contain catechetical form and content which derive from earliest Christian practice and, as we shall see, from Jewish antecedents of that Christian practice. Basic are the ideas of keeping oneself free from all that makes impure and of doing good to one's neighbor, this latter based on the "golden rule" as the summation of the Decalogue, and both ideas capable of being taught through the scheme of the two ways. Forming an interpretive context for these two ideas are the two further notions of worship of God alone and the final judgment.

To a great extent just such instruction was given prior to the baptism of proselytes by which pagans were washed clean of their impurities before entering the nation of Israel. Although from approximately the first century on reference to proselyte baptism is rather frequent,<sup>1</sup> the rite of such baptism is given in but two sources, the tractate Yebamoth in the Babylonian Talmud and in the tractate Gerim (On Proselytes). Yebamoth 47 speaks of the instruction of proselytes as follows:

Then they are to instruct him in some of the lighter and some of the weightier commandments; and inform him as to the sins in regard to the corner of the field, the forgotten sheaf, the gleanings, and the tithe for the poor. Then shall they teach him the penalties for transgression: "Know well that up until the time that thou hast come hither thou hast eaten the forbidden fat of cattle without incurring the sentence of excommunication; that thou hast profaned the sabbath without incurring the penalty of lapidation. But from now on if thou eat the forbidden fat of cattle thou wilt be excommunicated; if thou profane the sabbath thou wilt be stoned." In the same way as they instruct him about the penalties of transgression shall they teach him the rewards for observance of the commandments and shall say to him: "Know thou that the world to come was made only for the righteous, but Israel at this present time may not experience very great good or very great afflictions."

A thorough examination of this passage led David Daube to posit a five-part "pattern of instruction": 1) an examination of the motives for conversion, 2) instruction about the com-

mandments, 3) instruction about the command to love, 4) instruction concerning punishments, 5) instruction concerning rewards and the world to come.<sup>2</sup> The similarities with the catechesis underlying the passages in the Homilies are obvious. Of interest is the fact that the words about the corner of the field, the gleanings, the forgotten sheaf, and the tithe for the poor are most certainly derived from Leviticus 19 (see 19:9-10), which according to the rabbis was regarded as the central chapter of the central book of the Torah and hence the central chapter of the whole Torah. We have already seen that in the Homilies the Decalogue is summed up in the "golden rule" which is simply another rendering of Lev 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," which is the middle verse of Leviticus 19 (see Matt 7:12; 22:40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14). We shall return to the importance of Leviticus 19 below. For now it may suffice to intimate that in both the Homilies and in proselyte baptism the proselyte is viewed as entering a community of levitical holiness characterized by freedom from all that is impure and by love of the neighbor.

That the "two ways" schema was used in the instruction of proselytes is indicated from Midrash Rabba on Ruth 1:7 and 1:16 which refer to the laws of proselytes, "the words דרך" ("way") and הלך ("walk") in both verses being taken as indications that the necessary instruction in the "two ways" had been given Ruth by Naomi.<sup>3</sup> The Midrash on Ruth 1:16 bears unmistakable traces of the rite of proselyte baptism. When Ruth clearly resolves to be converted, it is said that Naomi "began to unfold to her the laws of conversion." Two of these are explicitly given: "My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to frequent Gentile theatres and circuses" and "My daughter, it is not the custom of daughters of Israel to dwell in a house which has no mezuzah." There is further mention of "penalties and admonitions" and of "other commandments of the Bible." Here is basically the same pattern of instruction that we found in the Homilies and in proselyte baptism as it is reflected in Yebamoth: abstention from all things impure, instruction in the commandments (reference to the mezuzah probably implying the Decalogue), and instruction in penalties and rewards (by implication). The word mezuzah refers to the doorposts of a house or sanctuary upon which, according to Deut 6:9, the commandments of God were to be written. Deut 6:9 closes the famous passage Deut 6:4-9 which begins with the "Hear, O Israel" and the commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might," namely, that commandment which along with Lev 19:18 is given as the summation of the whole law (Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27).

The early Christian writing, the Didache,

contains perhaps the most famous occurrence of two-way instruction, and, as the full title shows,<sup>4</sup> this instruction was directed to Gentile proselytes.<sup>5</sup> According to the Didache there are two ways, a way of life and a way of death. The way of life is summed up by a conjunction of Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, which as we have just noted occurs also in the NT, and the whole is then recapitulated in the "golden rule" negatively formulated: "The way of life is this: first, you shall love the God who made you; second, [you shall love] your neighbor as yourself. But all things whatsoever you would wish not to happen to you, do not do to another" (Did. 1:2). The way of life is then described in some detail, first by a series of commandments based primarily upon words taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Did. 1:3-6). There is no discernible order to these commands, but the thrust is to abstain from fleshly desires (Did. 1:4a) and, especially, to love in a selfless way even toward those who do not merit it. The way of life is further described in Did. 2:2-7; 3:1-10 by a series of commandments based upon the Decalogue. We quote Did. 2:2-7:

Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not corrupt boys; do not fornicate; do not steal; do not practice magic; do not go in for sorcery; do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant. Do not covet your neighbor's property; do not commit perjury; do not bear false witness; do not slander; do not bear grudges. Do not be double-minded or double-tongued, for a double tongue is a deadly snare. Your words shall not be dishonest or hollow, but substantiated by action. Do not be greedy or extortionate or hypocritical or malicious or arrogant. Do not plot against your neighbor. Do not hate anybody; but reprove some, pray for others, and still others, love more than your own life.

In Didache 5 the way of death is described, first by a series of evil acts or vices (5:1), then by a series of clauses descriptive of persons who do evil works (5:2). Also here one can discern the Decalogue as the underlying basis.

From Did. 7:1 it is clear that the instruction of the two ways in Didache 1-6 was intended as prebaptismal instruction, since the words "having spoken beforehand all these things" can only refer to the preceding six chapters. What we have then in the Didache's "two ways" is prebaptismal instruction, such as it might be given to a proselyte, which includes that from which one is to keep free and that which is to characterize one's life, this latter summed up in the dual command to love God and neighbor.

As we have seen, ethical instruction given in the

form of the "two ways" was used both within Judaism and within Christianity prior to the baptism of proselytes. In this context the "two ways" was a didactic form used to describe the change of life which the one to be baptized was to undergo in and through his baptism. However, the use of the "two ways" scheme in such literature as the Manual of Discipline of Qumran, the epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and Matt 7:13-15, where Jesus speaks of the wide and narrow ways, demonstrates that the "two ways" was not only directed toward pagan proselytes nor was it only used in baptismal contexts. It was simply a literary form through which ethical instruction could be given. However, that the "two ways" scheme could be used for prebaptismal instruction is reflective of the fact that it corresponds so well to the very structure of Jewish and Christian belief, namely, that when one is brought into the covenant with God, one is separated from evil and all things unholy and is bound to God and to his commandments. We have noted this structure of separation or abstinence and positive good works throughout and have called attention to the fact that the Decalogue which underlies this instruction is understood to be summed up in the words of Lev 19:18, which is within the Holiness Code.

The studies of Philip Carrington and Edward Gordon Selwyn have demonstrated that in the early Church there was current a common pattern of catechetical instruction based upon the concept of the Church as a "neo-levitical" or priestly community and centering around the twin pillars of abstinence from lust and avarice, and holiness effected in mutual love toward the brethren and honest dealings toward all men.<sup>6</sup> Carrington and Selwyn come to this conclusion through a comparison of 1 Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter (esp. 1:15-2:12), both of which exhibit noticeable relationships to the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26 (esp. 17-19). Before pointing out some of these relationships, it might be well to outline briefly the principal characteristics of a holy community according to the Holiness Code. Such a community is (1) holy (Lev 19:2: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy"). The community is holy because it is separated from all uncleanness, especially seen in the sins of idolatry, fornication, and murder (blood); but it is also holy because it is (2) indwelt by God (Lev 26:11-12: "And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you; and I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people"). Such a community is (3) characterized by mutual love (Lev 19:18: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"; cf. Lev 19:34) and (4) by submission to proper order (Lev 19:32). It may be added that characteristic of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-19) is the address in the divine first person, giving notice that the abode of God is one of active address and

instruction.

We now return to I Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter to show forth schematically the echoes they exhibit of the Holiness Code, on occasion also referring as well to other pertinent passages of the NT:

1) There is a call to holiness:

- 1 Thess 4:3: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν)
- 1 Thess 4:7: "For God did not call us for uncleanness but in holiness" (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ)
- 1 Pet 1:15-16: "but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (Note here the direct quotation of Lev 19:2)

This holiness is seen in separation from that which is unclean:

- 1 Thess 4:3: "That you (ἀπέχεσθαι) abstain from fornication" (πορνεία)
- 1 Thess 4:4: "that each of you know to keep his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of desire as do the Gentiles who know not God" (This may very likely reflect Leviticus 18 which commands against all kinds of sexual immorality.)
- 1 Pet 2:11: "abstain (ἀπέχεσθαι) from the passions which war against the soul"

cf. also Eph 4:17-19; Col 3:5-7; Acts 15:29

2) This holiness is also due to the indwelling of God who has his abode among his people through his Spirit which is holy:

- 1 Thess 4:8: God "gives his holy Spirit to you" (The motif of holiness is emphasized through the addition of the word "holy" which does not occur in Ezek 36:27; 37:14 to which this passage alludes.)
- 1 Pet 1:2: the recipients of Peter's epistle have been chosen "in the sanctification of the Spirit" (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ)

πνεύματος)

- 1 Pet 2:5: the Christians are to be built into "a Spiritual house" in order to bring forward "Spiritual sacrifices"

- 1 Thes 4:9: The Christians are said to be "instructed by God" (θεοδιδασκτοι). (This statement comes immediately upon the words concerning the gift of the Spirit and indicates that the abiding of God in his Spirit is one of active instruction, even prompting toward the good [θεοδιδασκτοι εἰς]. We noticed earlier the use of the divine first person in the Holiness Code, and that may be reflected in this passage.<sup>7)</sup>

3) The indwelling of God through his holy Spirit does not only separate from uncleanness but issues forth into a life of holiness which is characterized by mutual love:

- 1 Thess 4:9: the Thessalonians have been "taught by God to love one another"
- 1 Pet 1:22: "having purified your souls . . . for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart"
- 1 Pet 2:17: "love the brotherhood"
- 1 Pet 4:8: "above all hold unfailing love for one another"

It may well be that the words "Do not render evil for evil" (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9; Rom 12:17) belong here as well, for they appear to be a paraphrase of Lev 19:18.

cf. Rom 8:4: Christ has condemned sin in the flesh "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (i.e. by the prompting guidance of the Spirit). (In Rom 13:10 Paul will say that the law is summed up in the command to love one's neighbor as oneself.)

4) The members of a holy community are subject to proper order:

- 1 Pet 2:13; 2:18; 3:1-7  
cf. Col 3:18-22; Eph 5:21ff; James 4:7, 10; Rom



13:1-7

In view of such correspondences between 1 Thess 4:1-12 and 1 Peter and the apparent relationship they both have to the Holiness Code, Carrington and Selwyn conclude that both rest on a common catechetical tradition whose leading ideas are abstinence from all things impure (expressed by common terminology, especially ἀπέχεσθαι, πορνεία, πλεονεξία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἐπιθυμία), holy living embodied in mutual love for the brethren, and the indwelling of the holy God. In addition the idea of making a good impression on pagans by good Christian conduct may well have been part of such a catechetical tradition. The idea is present in 1 Thess 4:12 and Col 4:5 (where there is similar expression: πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω) and is present as well in 1 Pet 2:12 (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) and in Matt 5:16. Some confirmation of this may be given by the fact that the idea occurs in Ezek 36:23, that is, a passage in close proximity to Ezek 36:27 which, as we have seen, is quoted in 1 Thess 4:8. The whole passage of Ezek 36:23-27 is virtually an OT summary of the motifs we have been considering, so it may be well to quote it in full:

And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Although we may say with C. H. Dodd that a passage like 1 Thess 4:1-12 presents us "trustworthy information of the contents of the Pauline catechesis,"<sup>8</sup> it is to be noted that 1 Thess 4:1-12, or any other NT passage to which we have alluded, is not itself actually a catechism. Rather, the common motifs which one finds in the NT (sometimes with remarkable likenesses of terminology and order) indicate that in writing their epistles the NT authors were alluding to a common instructional pattern which was known to their readers and to which they could refer in more or less detail depending upon the requirements of the situation.

To summarize we list the leading motifs of early Christian catechesis thus far discussed:

- 1) idea of a holy community indwelt by God through his holy Spirit
- 2) abstinence from all things impure (the word "to abstain" [ἀπέχεσθαι] often being used and often a list of vices added from which one is to abstain [esp. πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, πλεονεξία]<sup>9</sup>)
- 3) holy living characterized by mutual love (a list of virtues might be added [for ex. ἀγάπη, εἰρήνη, ὑπομονή, πίστις, μακροθυμία, ταπεινοφροσύνη]<sup>10</sup>)
- 4) discussion of various relationships (husband to wife, parents to children, towards authorities, servant to master); here the necessity of having a good reputation among the pagans may have been taught.
- 5) in light of the fact that exhortation is often given in conjunction with mention of the judgment (Rom 13:11; 1 Thess 4:6; 1 Cor 16:13; Col 4:2; Eph 6:18; 1 Pet 4:7; 5:8), it is likely that catechetical instruction was given within a call to watchfulness and prayer.

B. The occurrence in the NT of the word "way" (ὁδός), either with a genitive qualifier (righteousness: Matt 21:32, 2 Pet 2:21; salvation: Acts 16:17; truth: 2 Pet 2:2) or absolutely (Acts 19:9,23 22:4; 24:14,22), to designate the Christian reality, and the common occurrence of the word "walk" (περιπατεῖν) to designate the active life within that reality indicate that the language of the two ways, if not the literary form, was adopted by the early Church not only for its ethical instruction but for its doctrinal instruction as well. Apollos is said in Acts 18:25 to have been taught (ἦν κατηχημένος) "the way of the Lord," which, if the content of his own teaching be any guide (18:25b), means that "the way of the Lord" is synonymous to "the things concerning Jesus" (τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ). That would be to say, the "way of the Lord" is the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That it in fact is to be understood in this way is indicated by the quotation of Isa 40:3 in all four gospels at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). John the Baptist's ministry is one of "preparing the way of the Lord" which, coming as it does before the ministry of Jesus, can only mean that to "prepare the way of the



Lord" is to be the announcer and forerunner of Jesus himself. John's gospel states it explicitly: Jesus said "I am the way" (John 14:6).

If this is the case, Apollos in being taught "the way of the Lord" was simply taught the gospel story. Two other passages in Luke-Acts indicate that indeed the gospel story (the ministry, death, resurrection of Jesus) was contained in primitive Christian catechesis. In the prologue to his gospel Luke says that the purpose for writing his gospel is that Theophilus "might know the truth concerning the words [he] had been taught" (Luke 1:4). The word for "taught" is *κατηχεν*, the same as in Acts 18:25 about Apollos. The instruction which Theophilus once received was basically the gospel story which Luke now for some reason feels required to go over again. The second passage is Acts 10:37-43. Apparently here is instruction for those in the household of Cornelius wishing to be baptized, and here is nothing other than the gospel story in summary: baptism of John, baptism of Jesus, the works of Jesus (especially his healings), the death of Jesus, his resurrection and appearances.

The gospel story itself was the content of early Christian instruction, that is to say, Christian catechesis took up what had first been preached — the gospel.<sup>11</sup> That is why on occasion the object of teaching can simply be "Christ" (Col 1:28) or "Jesus the Christ" (Acts 5:42). This latter passage shows explicitly that the content of preaching and of teaching was the same, for the verbs *διδάσκειν* and *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι* are placed in tandum: the apostles did not cease to teach and to preach that Jesus is the Christ.

While it appears likely that the gospel story as such could be and was at times the content of instruction, the bulk of NT data indicates that the core of preaching and teaching was Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus as Messiah especially in his death, resurrection, and coming again to judge. Luke concludes his gospel with Jesus opening the minds of his disciples that they might understand (this is catechetical!) the Scriptures which proclaimed the necessity for the Christ to suffer, to be raised, and for repentance and forgiveness to be preached in his name to all nations. Paul does this same proving from Scripture in the synagogue at Thessalonika (Acts 17:3). It may have been the case that instruction especially among Jewish-Christians included proofs from the OT that Jesus, crucified and raised, was the Christ. Be that as it may, C. H. Dodd in his little book, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments has sketched what he believes was the core substance of the preaching of the early Church: the coming of Christ fulfilled the OT prophecies and inaugurated the New Age, Christ was born of David's seed, he died to save us from the present evil age, he was buried, he rose

on the third day, he is exalted at the right hand of the Father, he will come again to judge the earth.<sup>12</sup> Early Christian instruction encompassed the same message. As we see from the gospels and the passages of Acts which were mentioned above, instruction to the Jewish Christian was predominately, if not only, Christological in its doctrinal section. However, instruction in a Gentile context would have included as well the notion of one God who is the creator and provider of all things. This is indicated, for example, in 1 Thess 1:9 where Paul speaks of the conversion of the Thessalonians as a turning "to God from idols to a living God who created heaven and earth and gave rains from heaven and fruitful seasons." J.N.D. Kelly has noted that the NT is replete not only with statements solely Christological but also with binitarian and trinitarian formulations which testify to an emerging creedal formulation that was to take on increasingly concrete form, issuing in the second century in the early symbols and rules of faith.<sup>13</sup> The faith of the Church in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was not only preached; it was also taught, Christian generation to Christian generation, and I would submit, handed down especially in that way. For as Alfred Seeberg writes in concluding his famous study on the catechism of early Christianity, the early symbols are nothing other than "the truths of the catechism ordered according to the trinitarian schema."<sup>14</sup>

C. We have briefly considered the content of what might be called the ethical and the doctrinal catechisms. It used to be generally accepted, and in some circles still is, that the preaching of the Church (the kerygma narrowly defined: cross, resurrection, exaltation) and the teaching of the Church (the words of Jesus and ethical instruction generally) were to be sharply divided and that the traditions which embodied them had virtually separate histories and served separate functions. Bultmann, for example, expresses this view in his Theology of the New Testament:

The reason that the sayings of the Lord, which at first were handed down separately from the Christological Kerygma, came more and more to be taken up into 'the gospel' . . . is that, while missionary preaching continued, preaching to Christian congregations took on ever-increasing importance, and for these already believing congregations, Jesus in the role of 'Teacher' had become important again.<sup>15</sup>

However, as H. G. Wood has pointed out, Luke in his prologue attributed the traditions, not just the narrative portions of his gospel, to eye-witnesses, and, as the gospel as a whole demonstrates, these traditions include both words and works of Jesus, that is, ethical instruction as well as the gospel

narrowly defined. "When Luke wrote of the things accomplished in the Christian dispensation, he was not thinking only of the death and resurrection of Jesus. He had in mind both the mighty works and the teachings of Jesus."<sup>16</sup> What we above termed the ethical and the doctrinal catechisms were never understood by the NT or the early Church to be separate; they were rather expressions of two sides of the same divine act of salvation. The language of the "way" already intimates this. The "way of the Lord" is the eschatological visitation of God in love toward mankind; yet NT exhortations repeatedly tell the Christian to "walk" according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4). That is to say, Christians, having been brought into the "Way," which is Christ, are now to "walk" in the way; their life is to be structured according to the contours of the divine act of salvation upon which that life is founded. The summation of all law is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," for as John says: "If God loved us in that manner, we also ought to love one another" (I John 4:11), or as Jesus himself says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

As examples of the intimate and organic relationship which the indicative and the imperative have, let us look at several passages of Scripture and then two Church Fathers of the second century. First of all, we note Leviticus 26:13, which earlier played an important role in our deliberations:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you to walk erect.

The words "to walk erect" have a double meaning. Literally they mean that God made the Jews freemen. But the verse is not interested in social history. As is clear from Lev 26:3 which speaks of "walking" in God's statutes, the words "to walk erect" have taken on the meaning of being obedient to the covenantal requirements. In that God broke the yoke of their slavery, the Israelites were placed within a covenant with God of which obedience to God's commandments was the historical expression, so to speak. Were the Israelites to disobey God's commandments, it would be as if they were still in Egypt. That is why in Lev 18:3 God can command the Israelites not "to do as they do in the land of Egypt . . . you shall not walk in their statutes." This, although the Israelites had already come out of Egypt! Obedience to the statutes is the very goal and purpose of God's saving; he wants a people for himself and a people whose God will be God. To disobey is to be no people, to fall back into a state of unredemption (Note Lev 26:14-33 where God threatens destruction and desolation should the

Israelites "walk" contrary to God).

The second passage is Rom 8:3-4, to which we have alluded before: God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemning sin in the flesh, "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." Here also the purpose of Christ's redeeming work is to establish a people in whom the law might be obeyed. Fulfilling the law is, if you will, the organic result of Christ's redeeming work. For Christ to condemn and defeat sin is nothing other than for him to establish obedience. The new life of the Christian is given "in, with and under" the redeeming, atoning and justifying work of Christ. This fulfilling of the law, says Paul, is a "walking in the Spirit" which, we have seen, reflects the thought of Ezek 35:27 and Lev 26:11-12.

A third passage is Col 2:6: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and being established in faith, as you have been taught." For purposes of present discussion, this passage is remarkable for two reasons. First of all, the use of the verbs παραλαμβάνειν and διδασκεῖν clearly indicate that this passage is founded upon a prior catechetical instruction of the Christians at Colossae. Secondly, it states in a direct and encapsulated fashion a couple of points we have emphasized in our discussion. The Christian life, "walking," is in conformity with Christ; "to walk in him" is descriptive of the entire Christian life which is under the Lordship of Christ and for that reason in conformity with him. Also, the three participial clauses, which give flesh to the idea of walking, indicative as they are of God's goal for man, describe this walking as a constancy in God's purpose for man at each point along the way of the Christian life.

We turn now to a couple of second century witnesses. Justin Martyr (c. 130-155) witnesses to the organic nature and relationship of the gospel and the Christian life. In 1 Apol. 10 Justin is clearly basing himself on catechetical material (παρελήφμεν, δεδιδάγμεθα) and relates the Christian life to the first article of the creed:

We have learned that God has no need of material offerings from men, considering that he is the provider of all. We have been taught and firmly believe that he accepts only those who imitate the good things which are his — temperance and righteousness and love of mankind, and whatever else truly belongs to the God who is called by no given name. We have also been taught that in the beginning he in his goodness formed all things that are for the sake of men out of unformed matter, and if they show themselves by

their actions worthy of his plan, we have learned that they will be counted worthy of dwelling with him, reigning together and made free from corruption and suffering.

Note here the imitation motif. The Christian community, because its God is the creator of all good things and the provider of all, is itself characterized by the attributes of God. Justin elucidates this theme in 1 Apol. 13-14 basing himself again upon catechetical material and relating the Christian life to the work of Christ through which the Christian has been brought into that relationship to the creator that God intended:

. . . we worship the fashioner of the universe, declaring him, as we have been taught, to have no need of blood and libations and incense . . . We have learned that the only honor worthy of him is, not to consume by fire the things he has made for our nourishment, but to devote them to our use and those in need, in thankfulness to him sending up solemn prayers and hymns for our creation and all the means of health . . . It is Jesus Christ who has taught us these things, having been born for this purpose and crucified under Pontius Pilate. (emphasis ours)

In 1 Apol. 14 Justin describes that conversion through which the Christian has been separated from all things impure and has been made to live through Christ after the manner of God himself:

Those who once rejoiced in fornication now delight in continence alone; those who made use of magic arts have dedicated themselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who once took pleasure in the means of increasing our wealth and property now bring what we have in common fund and share with everyone in need; we who hated and killed once another . . . now after the manifestation of Christ live together and pray for our enemies.

Here ethical instruction has been entirely assumed into talk of the salvific action of God the creator who through his Word re-established his creation as a creation of obedience and righteous living according to his creative intent. That is not as though the Christian life is itself part of the salvific action. It is rather that God effects his ways, and his ways, that is, the goal of his working, are an obedient people.

Irenaeus (c. 180) is a second Church Father who entertains this wholistic understanding of

God's work as encompassing the new life. His work Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, is perhaps the only extant second century writing which has an explicit catechetical purpose<sup>17</sup>; it wishes to explain the preaching of truth for the confirming of faith (Demon. 1). Irenaeus begins with the theme of the two ways:

For those who see (the illumined, the baptized), there is only one way, which ascends, and which the heavenly light illumines; but for those who do not see, there are many dark paths which go in opposing directions. The first leads to the Kingdom of Heaven by uniting man to God, but the second descends to death by separating man from God. . . . Thus, it is necessary to walk, thanks to faith, with sure and firm step, without swerving away, in order to avoid by abandoning (the faith) or lagging behind establishing our home within material pleasures, or by taking a false path from leaving the (narrow) way.

Since man, says Irenaeus, is a composite animal having both a body and a soul, there is "a purity of the body, namely, continence which abstains from all shameful things and all unjust acts, and a purity of soul which consists in guarding intact the faith." However, Irenaeus also speaks of the tight inner and organic bond between faith and the Christian life:

We ought to hold inflexible the rule of faith and to accomplish the commandments of God . . . But the accomplishment of these commandments is an acquisition of faith.

Faith, that is, the appropriation of God's salvific working reveals the meaning of the commandments making possible obedience to them. Thus, when in Demon. 6 Irenaeus quotes the Rule of Faith, he introduces it with the words: "Here is the Rule of our Faith, the foundation of the building (Church) and that which gives firmness to our conduct." Indeed, Irenaeus places the Christian life within the third article of the Rule:

The Holy Spirit by whom the prophets prophesied and the fathers were taught that which concerns God and the just were guided within the way of justice, and who, at the end of time, has been poured out in a new manner upon our humanity in order to renew man throughout all the world in the sight of God.

The Christian, in that he has appropriated the work of God, Father, Son and Spirit, has received the Spirit who is a witness to the will of God, and, as it were, an internal catechist bringing mankind

to obedience to God's purposes, to a walking in  
God's ways.

# NOTES

## Fredrich Essay

- <sup>1</sup> Large Catechism — The Creed, Art. II, Third Paragraph.
- <sup>2</sup> Large Catechism — The Creed, Art. II, Concluding Paragraph.
- <sup>3</sup> Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 336-337. WA, LIV, pp. 185-186.
- <sup>4</sup> The article "Of the Mass" is the outstanding example.
- <sup>5</sup> Large Catechism — The Creed, Art. III, Eleventh Paragraph.
- <sup>6</sup> WA, XL, III, 192. The translation is from E. Plass, What Luther Says, I, pp. 125-126.
- <sup>7</sup> I John 4, 18.
- <sup>8</sup> Large Catechism — The Ten Commandments, First Commandment, Third Paragraph.
- <sup>9</sup> Large Catechism — The Ten Commandments, Third Commandment, Third Paragraph.
- <sup>10</sup> See the previous note for the location.
- <sup>11</sup> The outstanding example is of course S. S. Schmucker's "American Lutheranism" attack on Luther's teaching.

<sup>12</sup> Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol XLIII, pp. 11-12, WA, X, I, 375.

<sup>13</sup> The preface to the complete edition of Luther's Latin writings in 1545 is an outstanding example. The Luther's Works has it in XXXIV, beginning at p. 327.

<sup>14</sup> Large Catechism — The Lord's Prayer, Introduction, Second Last Paragraph.

<sup>15</sup> The one occurs repeatedly in the Augustana; the other is the conclusion of the Athanasian Creed.

<sup>16</sup> Large Catechism — The Lord's Prayer, First Petition, Final Paragraph.

<sup>17</sup> Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. XLVII, pp. 52-53. WA, XXX, III, 317.

<sup>18</sup> WA, XL, III, 192. See note 6 for a larger quotation.

### Kolb Essay

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<sup>1</sup> Christoph Fischer, Auslegung der Fünff Heuptstück des heiligen Catechismi (1573; Leipzig: Rambau, 1578), lf. [(v)]r.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., lf. [(v)]r.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase is used fairly frequently in the period, e.g. in Johann Mathesius, Historien Von des Ehrwürdigen in Gott Seligen thewren Manns Gottes, D. Martin Luthers Anfang, Lehre, Leben . . . (1565; Leipzig: Lamberg, 1621), lf. 58, and Bartholomaeus Rosinus, Kurtze Fragen vnnd Antwort vber die sechs Heubtstück des Heiligen Catechismi Doctoris Martini Lutheri (Regensburg: Burger, 1581), lf. A2, reprinted in Johann Michael Reu, Quellen zur Geschichte des Katechismus-Unterrichts (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1904), I, 743.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Wigand, Catechisticae, Explicationes, breviter et methodice recitatae in Enarratione Catechismi (Strassburg: Jobin, 1576), p. 10; cf. Cyriakus Spangenberg, Der Dritte Theil der Citharae Lutheri, Die Heuptstücke des Heiligen Catechismi In Gesangsweise gefasset (Erfurt: Bawmann, 1570), lf. [(ij)].

<sup>5</sup> Tilemann Hesshus, Christlicher in Gottes Wort gegründet Glaub in Frag und Antwort kurtz verfasst (Lauingen: Saltzer, 1568), lvs. B2v-(B6), in Reu, Quellen, I, 646-647.

<sup>6</sup> Brenz first issued his catechism in 1528 under the title Fragstück des christenlichen glaubens für die Jugendt zu Schwebisch Hall; it was revised and frequently reissued during the course of the sixteenth century.

E.g., in the Schulordnung for the Hohenlohe issued in 1549, both Brenz's and Luther's catechisms were prescribed, see Emil Sehling, Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts (Leipzig: Reisland, 1902- ), XV, 51; cf. the ecclesiastical constitution of Nördlingen of 1579, Sehling XII, 360ff.

<sup>7</sup> Reu discusses the translations of Luther's Small Catechism and the various kinds of commentary on it produced in the sixteenth century in his Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, A History of Its Origin, Its Distribution, and Its Use (Chicago: Wartburg, 1929), pp. 62-93. Examples of these genre are included in the notes of this essay.

The most recent study of Luther's catechisms in English is Gerald Strauss's Luther's House of Learning, Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), chapter 8, "Techniques of Indoctrination: Catechisms," pp. 151-175. This provocative work suffers from a lack of a clear delineation of Luther's distinction between law and gospel and his two kingdoms analysis of the Christian life, and therefore its discussion of the theological principles on which Lutheran pedagogy was based in the Reformation era is not as precise as it should be.

<sup>8</sup> Reu, Quellen, I, 3, 469-472, lists more than seventy-five editions, several in translation, of Judex's work; I have used Das Kleine Corpus Doctrinae. Das ist, Die Hauptstücke vnd Summa Christlicher Lehre für die Kinder in Schulen vnd Heusern Fragweis auff's einfeltigst gestellet (Regensburg: Burger, 1573).

<sup>9</sup> On the "crypto-Calvinist" movement, see Robert Calinich, Kampf und Untergang des Melancthonismus in Kursachsen in den Jahren 1570 bis 1574 und die Schicksale seiner vornehmsten Häupter (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1866), and Jürgen Moltmann, Christoph Pezel (1539-1604) und der Calvinismus in Bremen (Bremen: Einkehr, 1958), pp. 60-75.

<sup>10</sup> Sehling, I, 423.

<sup>11</sup> Das güldene Kleinot. D. Mart. Lutheri Catechismus In kurtze Frage vnnd Antwort gefasset (Frankfurt am Main: Bassaeus, 1577), preface dated October 31, 1568, lf. (A8)r; Reu, Quellen, I, 670.

<sup>12</sup> Enchiridion. Der Kleine Katechismus Doct. Martini Lutheri. Sampt der Haustafel, in mehr Fragstück verfasst (Leipzig, 1566), lf. A2; Reu, Quellen, III, 2, 858-859.

<sup>13</sup> Mencil wrote in the preface to Spangenberg's Catechismus. Die Fünff

Hauptstück der Christlichen Lere, Sampt der Hausstafel vnd dem Morgen vnd Abendt Gebet, Benedicite vnd Grantias, etc. (Magdeburg: Kirchner, 1573), preface dated March 1, 1564, lf. ) (ijr; Wigand, Catechisticae, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Mathesius, Luther, lvs. 60r, 58r.

<sup>15</sup> Instructions for the ducal Saxon visitation, 1554, in Sehling, I, 222; cf. Reu, Small Catechism, pp. 66-67.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., the ecclesiastical constitution of the Grafschaft Hoya, 1581, Sehling, VI, 2, 1143, 1173.

<sup>17</sup> Countless examples could be cited, among them the ecclesiastical constitutions of electoral Saxony (1580), Sehling, I, 423; Anhalt (1562), II, 562; Henneberg (1582), II, 310, 330-346; Pomerania (1569), IV, 385; Prussia (1568), 79, 84-85; Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1569), VI, 1, 142.

<sup>18</sup> Sehling, I, 423.

<sup>19</sup> Sehling, IV, 385; Heinrich Salmuth, Das ist, Die Fürnembsten Hauptstück der heiligen Christlichen Lehr (Bautzen/Leipzig: Wolrab/Gross, 1581), lf. Ciiijv.

<sup>20</sup> The Amberg ecclesiastical constitution (1555/1557), Sehling, XIII, 289; Stieber's Instructio, XIII, 569.

<sup>21</sup> Mathesius, Luther, lvs. 57v-59r; Wigand, Catechisticae, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Numerous citations could be offered, e.g. the ecclesiastical constitutions of electoral Saxony (1580), Sehling I, 392, 423; Kurland (1570), Reu, Quellen, III, 1, 70; Brandenburg (1572), Sehling, III, 103; Pomerania (1569), IV, 385, 401; Hoya (1581), VI, 2, 1150-1151, 1176-1177, 1180; Regensburg (1567?), XIII, 464-465; Braunschweig-Grubenhagen (1581), VI, 2, 1046; Wertheim (c. 1555), XI, 718; electoral Saxon visitation instructions (1555), I, 313; Mansfeld agenda (1580), II, 232-233, 236.

<sup>23</sup> Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel ecclesiastical constitution (1569, Sehling, VI, 1, 226; Coelestin, Von Schulen (Strassburg: Emmel, 1568), lvs. Aijv, Hiiijv; Salmuth, lf. Ciiijr.

<sup>24</sup> The ecclesiastical constitution of Palatinate-Neuburg (1576), Sehling, XIII, 177; of electoral Saxony, I, 424-425; cf. the Mansfeld agenda, II, 232-234; the Pomeranian constitution (1569), IV, 441; those of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1569), VI, 1, 165; and Hoya (1581, VI, 2, 1162-1163, among others.

<sup>25</sup> See the ecclesiastical constitutions of Braunschweig-Grubenhagen (1581), Sehling, VI, 2, 1050; Hoya (1581), VI, 2, 1184; Palatinate-Neuburg (1576), XIII, 176, for example; on sponsors, cf. the Mansfeld agenda (1580), II, 232-234, following Luther in the Small Catechism Preface 11, Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, 5. ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), p. 503; The Book of Concord, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), p. 339.



<sup>26</sup> The ecclesiastical constitutions of Hoya (1581), Sehling, VI, 2, 1197; Palatinate-Neuburg (1576), XIII, 176; Freudenthal and Goldstein in Silesia (1584/1591-1592), III, 480; and the Mansfeld agenda (1580), III, 232. Cf. Spangenberg, Ehespiegel, Das ist, Alles was von heiligen Ehestand nütliches, nötiges, vnd tröstliches mag gesagt werden. In Siebentzig Brautpredigten zusammen verfasst (1562), ff. xixr.

<sup>27</sup> Niels Hemmingsen, Libellus de Coniugio, Repudio & Divortio (Leipzig: Steinmann, 1578), p. 148; Wigand, De coniugio doctrina (Jena: Richtzenhan, 1578), ff. Q4v-Q5r; Joachim Magdeburg, Die Ware, vnd in Gottes wort gegründte Lere, I. Vom rechten Adel der Fürstinnen . . . II. Von allen nötigsten stücken den heiligen Ehestand belangend. III. Von Christlicher Haushaltung vnd Narung (Eisleben: Gaubisch, 1563), lvs. [A8] v, L5r, Mv-M3r; David Chytraeus, Catechesis (Lübeck: Jauch, 1611), preface dated 1568, ff. A3v; Josua Opitz, Epithalamion, Das ist, Ein Christliche Brautpredigt (Regensburg: Burger, 1572), lvs. E4v-E5r; Spangenberg, Ehespiegel, lvs. xxv/r, xxixr, and clxxv/r; in the first of these references Spangenberg also requires grandparents to exercise concern for the proper training of their grandchildren. Cf. Luther, Large Catechism, Shorter Preface 4-5, and Small Catechism Preface 19; Bekenntnisschriften, pp. 554, 505; Book of Concord, pp. 362, 340. Strauss treats the role of the family in sixteenth century Lutheran catechetical instruction, chapter 6, "Pedagogy and the Family," pp. 108-131. Strauss believes that Lutherans shifted from an almost exclusive stress on parental education in the early 1520s to an emphasis on education in the school thereafter. It seems to me he makes too much of that shift, for at least from 1524 Luther called for catechetical instruction in the schools; see his An die Radherrn aller Stedte deutsches lands: dass sie Christliche schulen auffrichten und halten sollen, 1524, D. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883- ), 15, 27-53, Luther's Works 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 347-378. Strauss notes the ambiguity which beset the later reformers who praised Christian education in the home and yet exhibited a deep distrust of the individual parent's judgment. Strauss believes that the Lutheran clergyman ultimately turned away from private instruction, p. 123. Although some of the references listed at the beginning of this note are so perfunctory that they could support such a judgment, the writings of others, including Spangenberg, Fischer, and Amsdorf, e.g., indicate that they at least did expect parents to conduct worship and instruction in their homes.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Wolff Rus, Der Weiber haushaltung (Wittenberg: Lufft, 1561), lvs. 25v-26r; Mathesius, Vom Ehestandt, Vnd Hausswesen, Fünfftzehn Hochzeytpredigten (Nuremberg: Berg and Neuber, n.d.), ff. [Zziii]r.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., the visitation ordinance for Brandenburg (1573), Sehling, III 111, and the electoral Saxon constitution (1580), I, 423-424.

<sup>30</sup> Wolffhart, Der kleine Catechismus Lutheri durch etliche kurtze vnd kindische fragstück erkleret (Leipzig: Vögelin, 1561), preface dated August 12, 1559, ff. A2, printed in Reu, Quellen, III, 2, 928.

<sup>31</sup> Spangenberg, Vnterricht: Wie man die Kinder zu Gotte tragen vnd nach ihrem Exempel für Gotte wandeln solle (Erfurt: Bawmann, 1570), ff. Biiiv, and Catechismus, lvs. Av, Zzr.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., lvs. Aiiiv-Av/r. Spangenberg may have borrowed the sickness metaphor from Luther's Eyn kurz form der zeehen gepott. D.M.L. Eyn kurz form des Glaubens. Eyn kurz form dess Vatter vnszers (1520), in D. Martin Luthers Werke, 7, 204.

<sup>33</sup> Fischer, ff. Cv/v.

<sup>34</sup> Andreae, Zehen Predig von den sechs Hauptstucken Christlicher Lehr (Catechismus genant) allen Christlichen Haussuättern nützlich zulesen (Tübingen: Morhart, 1561), lvs. (Aiv)r-v/r. This work is typical of a wide number of helps prepared in the period, such as Sarcerius, Hausbuch Fur die Einfeltigen Hausueter von den vornemesten Artickeln der Christlichen Religion (Leipzig, 1555), and Zacharias Praetorius, Sylva Pastorum . . . Frommen Hausueter nützlich . . . von Catechismo, Postillen, Psalmen . . . (Magdeburg: Giseken, 1575).

<sup>35</sup> Spangenberg, Catechismus, ff. Aiiiv, Ehespiegel, ff. Ijr.

<sup>36</sup> Huberinus, Spiegel der Hauszucht (Nuremberg: Berg and Neuber, 1554), ff. [Ffv] v; Andreae, Zehen Predig, lvs. Ixxv-jv-Ixxvi-jv; Mathesius, Luther, ff. 59v.

<sup>37</sup> "Das got gebotten hat das die eldern ihren kindern vnd hausgesinde, die predigt (so sie in der kirchen gehort) da heim inn hause widerholen vnd erclern sollen. Nichlas von Amsdorff. 1562," a manuscript prepared for printing in Amsdorf's own hand, in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv of the Nationale Forschungs- und Gedekstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar, volume 41, of the collection of the

Ehemalige Thüringische Landesbibliothek, lvs. 219r-228r; see specifically lvs. 223v-226v. On this manuscript see Robert Kolb, "Parents Should Explain the Sermon, Nikolaus Von Amsdorf on the Role of the Christian Parent," The Lutheran Quarterly, XXV (1973), 231-240. Cf. Bekenntnisschriften, p. 554; Book of Concord, p. 362.

<sup>38</sup> Fischer, lvs. Cv/v and [Cv]j; Fischer's suggestion that food and drink be withheld was probably borrowed from Luther's Small Catechism Preface 12, Bekenntnisschriften, p. 504, Book of Concord, p. 339. Rosinus, lvs. A2-A3; Spangenberg, Citharae, lf. )(ij).

<sup>39</sup> Andreae, Zehen Predig, lvs. ix, xxijr-xxiiijr, lxxxjr-lxxxiiijr; cf. Bekenntnisschriften, pp. 547-548, Book of Concord, p. 359, Large Catechism 7-8.

<sup>40</sup> Special sections in Spangenberg's Catechismus and Fischer's Catechismus are given over to the Table of Duties, and Spangenberg treats the appointed daily prayers as well; see Spangenberg's title in note 13.

<sup>41</sup> Amsdorf, lf. 220; Fischer, lvs. Riiijv-Riiijr; Spangenberg, Catechismus, lvs. Aiiijv-Aiiijr; Salmuth, lvs. Ciiijr-Cv/v; Strauss, especially chapters 12 and 13, "Visitations and Visitation Records," and "Religion and Society," pp. 249-299.

<sup>42</sup> Gallus, Catechismus, Predigsweise gestellt, für die kirche zu Regenspurg, zum Methodo, das ist, ordentlicher summa Christlicher lere, wider allerlei newerung vnd verfelschung (Regensburg: Kohl, 1554), lf. \*ij; printed in Reu, Quellen, I, 735; Fischer, lf. [Bvii]r.

<sup>43</sup> Musculus, Catechismus, Glaub, Leer, vnd bekentnis der heiligen alten Leerer vnd Merterer . . . inn allen punckten mit vnserm Catechismo vnd jtz lautender reinen Leer dess heiligen Euangelij einstimmig vnd gantz einhellig (1557; Frankfurt an der Oder: Eichorn, 1559); Hesshus, lvs. (B5) v-(B6)r, Reu, Quellen, I, 647; Aumann, Je Lenger . . . Der herrliche, schöne, vnd Guldene kleine Catechismus (Magdeburg: Donat, 1597), lf. A5, Reu, Quellen, III, 2, 960.

<sup>44</sup> Wigand, Catechisticae, pp. 22-25.

<sup>45</sup> Andreae, Zehen Predig, lvs. 1xxviijr-lxxxjr; for a discussion of Andreae's further use of the catechism, see Robert Kolb, "Jakob Andreae's Concern for the Laity," Concordia Journal, 4 (1978), 58-67.

<sup>46</sup> Judex, Einfeltiger vnterricht für die Christen in Magdeburgk was von des Herrn Amssdorffii vormeintem Vrteil nach Gottes Wort vnd dem heiligen Catechismo zu halten sey (1564); Wigand, Bericht Ob die Erbsünde sey ein Wesen Aus dem Catechismo (Jena: Richtzenhan, 1571); Jena faculty, Vom Flickwerck M. Irenaj, Wie gar vngereimpt wider Gottes Wort vnd den Catechismus Lutheri er sich vntersteht zu beschönen der Manicheer Schwermerey (Jena: Richtzenhan, 1572); Schoppe, Rettung Des Heiligen Catechismi wider den Schwarm der neuen Manicheer vnd Substantisten (Jena: Richtzenhan, 1572). Gallus gave aid in approaching controversies current in the early 1550s to the fathers of the young in his Ein Kurtze Ordenliche summa der rechten Waren Lehre vnsers heiligen Christlichen glaubes, Welche lere ein yeder Christliher haussvatter nit allain für sich selb zewissen, sonder auch seine Kinder vnd Ehalden zuleren, oder leren zulassen schuldig ist (Regensburg: Kohl, 1552).

<sup>47</sup> Spangenberg, Catechismus, lvs. )(ijv-)(v/v.

<sup>48</sup> Andreae, Sechs Christlicher Predig Von den Spaltungen so sich zwischen den Theologen Augspurgischer Confession von Anno 1548, biss auff diss 1573. Jar nach vnnd nach erhaben, Wie sich ein einfältiger Pfarrer vnd gemeiner Christlicher Leye so dardurch möcht vererget sein worden, auss seinem Catechismo darein schicken soll (Tübingen: Gruppenbach, 1573), p. 15; translated in Robert Kolb, Andreae and the Formula of Concord, Six Sermons on the Way to Lutheran Unity (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), pp. 74-75. Cf. Andreae, Drey und dreissig Predigten von den fürnembsten Spaltungen in der christlichen Religion, so sich zwischen den Bapstischen, Lutherischen, Zwinglischen, Schwenckfeldern, und Widerteuffern halten (Tübingen: Morhart, 1568). On Andreae's change of method in 1573, see Kolb, Andreae, pp. 43-56, and Jobst Ebel, "Jakob Andreae (1528-1590) als Verfasser der Konkordienformel," Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 89 (1978), 102-107. Werner Schütz also treats Andreae's controversial sermons in "Jakob Andreae als Prediger," ibid., 87 (1976), 234-239.

<sup>49</sup> Andreae, Sechs Predig, pp. 16-17; Kolb, Andreae, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Andreae reported on his efforts at winning Flacius to his position on original sin and on creating Lutheran concord in Colloquium de peccato originis. Inter D. Jacobum Andreae et M. Matthiam Flaccium Illyricum Argentorati Anno 1571 institutum (Tübingen: Gruppenbach, 1574). See Andreae, Sechs Predig, pp. 33-34; Kolb, Andreae, p. 84.

<sup>51</sup> Andreae, Sechs Predig, pp. 37-39, 51-53, 59, 84-87; Kolb, Andreae, pp. 86-87, 94-95, 98-99, 112-113.

<sup>52</sup> See A Contemporary Look at the Formula of Concord, ed. Robert D. Preus and Wilbert Rosin (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), pp. 71-82.

<sup>53</sup> Andreae, Eine Christliche Predigt Vber das Euangelium auff den xxv. Sonntag nach Trinitatis, Matthei am 24. Von vielen vnd mancherley verfürungen in der Kirchen Gottes vor dem Jüngsten tage. Wie die eingefallene streitige Artickel vnter den Lehrern Augsp. Confession dieser Landen Christlich verglichen, Vnd ein jeder Leye, aus seinem heiligen einfeltigen Kinder Catechismo gründlich dieselbe vrtheilen, vnd vor aller verfürung möge bewaret werden (Leipzig: Steinman, 1578), lvs. (Eiv)v-(Fiv)r, Hijr-Hijr, Jijv-Jijr, (Aiv)v.

<sup>54</sup> Fünff Predigen: Von dem Wercke der Concordien (Dresden: Bergen, 1580), lvs. Cijv, i/ijr.

<sup>55</sup> The numerous tracts aimed at a lay level in these controversies suggest as much; furthermore, in certain instances, e.g. the Osiandrian controversy in Königsberg, lay people did become involved, demonstrating in behalf of Joachim.

### Scaer Essay

<sup>1</sup> Quotations throughout the essay are taken from The Small Catechism in Contemporary English (Slightly Revised; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968). Hereafter abbreviated CE. In 1960 a preliminary version of this new translation was copyrighted by three agencies of the Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church, and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The 1960 translation was published in Study Edition of the Intersynodical Translation of Luther's Small Catechism (Enchiridion) (St. Louis: Board of Parish Education, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1963). When the 1963 publication is cited it will be abbreviated SEIT. The 1963 SEIT was published under the authorization of the 1962 LCMS convention. It contained the Synodical Version used in the LCMS since 1897, the proposed translation, and Luther's German text as now contained in Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Fourth Edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959). Direct citations from the Bekenntnisschriften in the essay will be made from the 1967 edition and will be abbreviated BK. The 1963 Study Edition contained several essays and evaluation forms along with the parallel texts of German and English. The Preface mentions that this Study Edition (1963) was prepared at the request of the 1962 convention of the Missouri Synod (p. 3). The Historical Introduction indicates that the initiation for the new translation did not come from the synod convention but from the Board of Parish Education. "In 1956 the Board of Parish Education reported to the synodical convention that two staff members were participating in the development of an American version of Luther's Small Catechism (Proceedings, 1956, p. 282)" (p. 4). The Missouri Synod representatives, Dr. A. C. Mueller and Dr. A. H. Jahsmann, participated with representatives with church bodies which in the 1960's would establish The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. The initiative for the new translation seems to have come from the Board of Parish Education or its staff without explicit synod approval. Its production in those years before the consolidation of most of Lutheranism into three major bodies and formation of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. would suggest that the new translation was part of the movement to bring Lutheran groups together in the 1950's and 1960's. The Missouri Synod representatives were clergymen, but their expertise in the Study Edition and the two evaluation forms virtually avoid discussing the new translation's doctrinal or confessional content. Questions center around such matters as language and memory. Pupils and teachers were interrogated about their feelings. Several places (pp. 4, 8, 28) make mention of using the 1531 German edition of the Small Catechism for the translation. In many places the translators paid little or no attention to any German or Latin edition.

<sup>2</sup> CE, p. 3., SEIT, pp. 8-9, BK, p. 507.

<sup>3</sup> CE, p. 3, SEIT, pp. 8-9, BK, p. 508. In the SEIT a brief essay, "Problems of the Translator" discusses the problem that children would have in understanding "witchcraft", "conjure", and "sorcery". The suggestion was made to put "practice superstition" in the text but it did not prevail. In the 1968 edition "superstitiously" was added. Here is an example of where the intelligence of children was underestimated and contemporary developments were not anticipated. With the rise of Satanic interest no word is more appropriate than "witchcraft". A very popular television show was built about this very theme.

<sup>4</sup> CE, p. 3, SEIT, pp. 8-9, BK, p. 508.

<sup>5</sup> CE, p. 3, SEIT, pp. 8-9, BK, p. 508.

<sup>6</sup> CE, p. 4, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, p. 508.

<sup>7</sup> CE, p. 4, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, p. 509.

<sup>8</sup> CE, p. 4, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, p. 509.

<sup>9</sup> CE, p. 4, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, p. 509.

<sup>10</sup> CE, p. 5, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, p. 509.

<sup>11</sup> CE, p. 5, SEIT, pp. 10-1, BK, pp. 509-10.

<sup>12</sup> CE, p. 5, SEIT, pp. 12-3, BK, p. 510.

<sup>13</sup> CE, p. 6, SEIT, pp. 12-3, BK, pp. 510-1.

<sup>14</sup> The word "exists" has become a philosophically freighted word and is used most prominently in the philosophy of existentialism. The word "creatures" is definite and concrete. The same cannot be said about "all that exists".

<sup>15</sup> BK, p. 56. Augustana IV. "Weiter wird gelehrt, dasz wir Vergebung der Sunde und Gerechtigkeit vor Gott nicht erlangen mogen durch unser Verdienst, Werk und Genugtun, . . ." Small Catechism in German. ". . . ohn alle mein Verdienst und Wirdigkeit, . . ." BK, 511, SEIT, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> CE, p. 7, SEIT, pp. 14-5, BK, p. 511. Explanatory Notes (SEIT, p. 28) make no mention of any changes in the Second Article.

<sup>17</sup> The Nicene Creed according to its Latin version in the Lutheran Confessions speaks of Jesus in the preincarnate state as "filium Dei unigenitum et ex patre natum ante omnia saecula". BK, p. 26. The ancient church described the Son's relationship to the Father as both birth and generation. In English theological language the concept of the eternal birth is infrequent.

<sup>18</sup> Gustav Aulen, Christus Victor, Translated A. G. Hebart. (Longdon: S.P.C.K., 1953). Jurgen Moltmann, "God in Revolution," in Religion, Revolution and the Future, translated M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Scribner, 1969), p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> CE, p. 7, SEIT, pp. 14-5, BK, pp. 511-2.

<sup>20</sup> CE, p. 8, SEIT, pp. 16-7, BK, p. 512.

<sup>21</sup> CE, p. 9, SEIT, pp. 16-7, BK, p. 513.

<sup>22</sup> CE, p. 10, SEIT, pp. 18-9, BK, p. 514.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:45.

<sup>24</sup> CE, p. 10, SEIT, pp. 18-9, BK, p. 514.

<sup>25</sup> CE, p. 11, SEIT, pp. 18-9, BK, p. 514.

<sup>26</sup> CE, p. 11, SEIT, pp. 18-9, BK, p. 515.

<sup>27</sup> CE, p. 12, SEIT, pp. 20-1, BK, p. 515. The Explanatory Notes (p. 23) make no mention of the significant changes made in the sections on the sacraments. The notes are void of any substantive theological comment which ordinarily would be expected.

<sup>28</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, a classical expression of the Reformed faith puts the matter forth in the answer to Question 69: "Thus, that Christ has appointed the outward washing with water and added the promise that I am washed with His blood and Spirit from the pollution of my soul . . .". Quoted from L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology. (Fourth Revised and Enlarged Edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), p. 628.

<sup>29</sup> The new translation of the catechism was made when neo-orthodoxy was having its full force on American theology, including Lutheranism. In its Barthian form in particular, neo-orthodoxy stressed that the word "Word" was applicable to Jesus Christ and not to the Scriptures except in a derived sense. The section on Baptism seems to have been written from this neo-orthodox perspective.

<sup>30</sup> CE, p. 12, SEIT, pp. 20-1, BK, pp. 515-6.

<sup>31</sup> CE, pp. 12-3, SEIT, pp. 20-1, BK, p. 516.

<sup>32</sup> CE, p. 13, SEIT, pp. 22-3, BK, p. 516-7.

<sup>33</sup> CE, p. 13, SEIT, pp. 22-3, BK, pp. 519-20.

<sup>34</sup> Werner Elert, Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries. Translated by Norman E. Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 1-14. The term Holy Communion according to its Biblical usage (1 Corinthians 10:16) can refer properly to the participation in Christ's body and blood. Under the influence of Schleiermacher communion is understood as the voluntary coming together of Christians.

<sup>35</sup> The SEIT (1963) has this: "What is Holy Communion? It is the sacrament instituted by Christ Himself, in which He gives us His body and blood in and with the bread and wine." The CE (1968) has this: "Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us to eat and drink." The SEIT (1963) does use two prepositions which approaches the Lutheran triad of "in, with, and under". It is utterly inferior to the clear and concrete of the older version: "It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and drink." The SEIT (1963) did not make the absolute identification between the outward elements and the body and blood. The CE (1968) is an improvement on this point.

<sup>36</sup> The SEIT (1963), as mentioned in the previous note, is superior in its use of prepositions.

<sup>37</sup> The pertinent section of the Wittenberg Concord is quoted in the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII, 14, BK, p. 976. Hermann Sasse sees the Wittenberg Concord as a solidly Lutheran presentation of the Lord's Supper by its inclusion in the Formula. This Is My Body (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 301-11. There is sufficient evidence that the ambiguity in the Wittenberg Concord was the forerunner of the ambiguity in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Martin Bucer, the principle cosigner with Luther of the Wittenberg Concord, was responsible for the wording on the Lord's Supper which would later be incorporated in the Book of Common Prayer. Melancthon's Variata of 1541 was recognized as a concession to the Reformed and was recognized as acceptable by them. The similarity between the Variata and the Wittenberg Concord is striking. The Concord offers this about the Lord's Supper: "Cum pane et vino vere et substantialiter adesse, exhibere et sumi corpus Christi." The Variata offers this: "Cum pane et vino vere exhibentur corpus et sanguis Christi vescentibus in coena domini." BK, p. 65.

<sup>38</sup> CE, p. 12; SEIT, pp. 22-5, BK, p. 520.

<sup>39</sup> CE, pp. 12-3, SEIT, pp. 24-5, BK, p. 520.

<sup>40</sup> Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 648-9. The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII, 114-8, specifically and clearly condemns this understanding. BK, 1012-3.

<sup>41</sup> CE, p. 14, SEIT, pp. 24-5, BK, p. 521.

<sup>42</sup> CE, p. 15, SEIT, pp. 24-5, BK, pp. 517-9.

<sup>43</sup> CE, p. 15, SEIT, pp. 24-5, BK, pp. 517-9.

### **Tjernagel Essay**

<sup>1</sup> Chicago, Wartburg, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Chicago, Wartburg, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> C.F.W. Walther, The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, St. Louis, Concordia, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> Theo. E. Schmauk and Theo. E. Benze, The Confessional Principle and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, General Council Pub. Bd. 1911.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Porterfield Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology, Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1875.

<sup>6</sup> J.M. Reu, "Religious Instruction of the Young in the 16th Century," *Lutheran Church Review*, Vol. 34, page 567, October 1915.

<sup>7</sup> The word 'catechism', denoting a book of instruction in questions and answers was not used in that sense until the 16th century.

<sup>8</sup> The terms 'catechize' and 'catechization' were used in the Middle Ages as a description of questions which priests asked in the confessional to determine whether parents were instructing their children in the Christian faith.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Theo. Graebner, The Story of the Catechism, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Reu, Martin Luther's Catechism.

<sup>11</sup> G.H. Gerberding, The Lutheran Catechist, page 71.

<sup>12</sup> J.M. Reu, Catechetics, p. 76.

<sup>13</sup> G.H. Gerberding, op. cit. page 73.

<sup>14</sup> J.M. Reu, "Religious Instruction . . .," page 573 f.

<sup>15</sup> J.M. Reu, ibid. page 575.

<sup>16</sup> J.M. Reu, ibid. page 575 f.

<sup>17</sup> J.M. Reu, ibid. page 571 f.

<sup>18</sup> Sodergren, "Reflections on Origins of Luther's Catechism."

<sup>19</sup> E.G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times, St. Louis, Concordia, 1950, page 119.

<sup>20</sup> John Nicholas Lenker, Luther's Catechetical Writings, Vol. 24, page 190.

<sup>21</sup> Lenker, op. cit. page 6 f.

<sup>22</sup> Triglot Concordia, Preface to the Small Catechism, par. 3.

<sup>23</sup> The Works of Martin Luther, Philadelphia Edition, Vol. 2, pages 349-84.

<sup>24</sup> The Weimar Edition of Luther's Works, Vol. 10, pt. 2, pages 355-430.

<sup>25</sup> The American Edition of Luther's Works, Vol. 45, pages 347-78.

## Voelz Essay

All Confessional references, unless otherwise noted, are from Triglot Concordia, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1921.

- <sup>1</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, transl. by John Allen, 7th American Edition, revised and corrected, with intro. by B. B. Warfield, Vol. I, Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936, Book II, Chapter VII, 12.
- <sup>2</sup> Bo Reicke, Die Zehn Worte in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1973, p. 4.
- <sup>3</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 9.
- <sup>4</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 12.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 21.
- <sup>8</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 22.
- <sup>9</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 23.
- <sup>10</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 25.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 42.
- <sup>13</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 43.
- <sup>14</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 44.
- <sup>15</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 42.
- <sup>16</sup> Reicke, Die Zehn Worte, p. 48.
- <sup>17</sup> Martin Luther, "Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments", Luther's Works, Vol. 40, Church and Ministry II, ed. Conrad Bergendorff, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958, p. 86.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> "The Heidelberg Catechism, 1563", Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century, ed. with historical introductions by Arthur C. Cochrane, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966, pp. 324-325.
- <sup>20</sup> Calvin, Institutes, Vol. 1, Book II, Chapter VIII, 17.
- <sup>21</sup> Huldreich Zwingli, Saemtliche Werke, Vol. 2, ed. Emil Egli and George Finsler, Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1908, p. 655.
- <sup>22</sup> Zwingli, Saemtliche Werke, p. 690.
- <sup>23</sup> Zwingli, Saemtliche Werke, p. 691.
- <sup>24</sup> Martin Luther, "How Christians Should Regard Moses", Luther's Works, Vol. 35, Word and Sacrament I, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960, pp. 164, 165.
- <sup>25</sup> Luther, Moses, pp. 167, 168.



<sup>26</sup> Luther, Moses, p. 168. Note: We read "do not restrict the Gentiles" instead of "the Gentiles do not hold", to complete the sentence "But the other commandments of Moses, which are not (implanted in all men) by nature . . ." The German is: "Aber die andern gepot ym Mose, die allen menschen von natur nich sind eingepflantzet, halten die Heyden nicht . . ." (emphasis added). Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 16. Band, Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1899, p. 380.

<sup>27</sup> Luther, Moses, p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> Luther, Moses, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup> Luther, Moses, p. 172.

<sup>30</sup> Luther, Heavenly Prophets, pp. 97, 98.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See also Samuele Bacchiochi, "How It Came About: From Saturday to Sunday", Biblical Archeology Review, IV, No. 3, Sept/Oct 1978, pp. 32-40.

<sup>33</sup> A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine, Revised edition, St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1965, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology, Part One, London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1972, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Jeremias, Theology, p. 67.

<sup>36</sup> Short Explanation, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Short Explanation, p. 155.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Martin H. Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961, p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Short Explanation, p. 21.

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Schlink, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961, pp. 166-167.

<sup>42</sup> Schlink, Theology, p. 165 n, translating Dr. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 23. Band, Weimar: Hermann Hoehlaus Nachfolger, 1901, p. 205.

## Weinrich Essay

<sup>1</sup> The date and origin of Jewish proselyte baptism is an object of considerable debate. A good summary of the evidence is given by George Raymond Beasley-Murray (Baptism in the New Testament/Exeter: Paternoster, 1972/18-25).

<sup>2</sup> David Daube, The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 2; London: University of London, Athlone, 1956) 106-40.

<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann Kohler, "Didache," The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York/London: Fund and Wagnalls, 1903), 4: 585.

<sup>4</sup> "Teaching of the Lord through the twelve Apostles to the Gentiles"

<sup>5</sup> For a comparison of the Didache and proselyte baptism, see André Benoit, Le Baptême Chrétien au second siècle: La Théologie des Pères (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953) 12-27.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Carrington, The Primitive Christian Catechism: A Study in the Epistles (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1940); Edward Gordon Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (New York: St. Martin's; London: Macmillan, 1964) 291-92, 369-75.

<sup>7</sup> Very instructive is Lev 26:13: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect." Here God, who abides in his holy community, causes his people to "walk erect," that is, to obey his commandments. This same idea is present in Ezek 36:27, which, we have noted, is quoted in 1 Thess 4:8. Ezek 36:27: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances."

<sup>8</sup> Charles Harold Dodd, Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in early Christianity (New York: Columbia University, 1951) 14.

<sup>9</sup> See Alfred Seeberg, Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit (Theologische Bücherei 26; München: Kaiser, 1966; repr. of 1903 edition) 17-19, for a list of vices and their probability of belonging to the catechetical tradition.

<sup>10</sup> See Seeberg, Katechismus, 22, for a listing of virtues and their probability of belonging to the catechetical tradition.

<sup>11</sup> For a good discussion of the "dogmatic" catechism of the early Church, see André Turck, Évangélisation et Catéchèse aux deux premiers siècles (Paris: Cerf, 1962) 49-83.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Harold Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963) 7-35.

<sup>13</sup> John Norman David Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, 1960) 13-23.

<sup>14</sup> Seeberg, Katechismus, 271: "Die altkirchlichen Symbole sind nichts anderes als die nach dem trinitarischen Schema geordnete Aufzählung von Katechismuswahrheiten."

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1: 86.

<sup>16</sup> H. G. Wood, "Didache, Kerygma, and Evangelion," New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson 1983-1958, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: Manchester University, 1959) 309-10.

<sup>17</sup> Other catechetical works were certainly written during the second century. For example, Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180) is said to have written manuals for elementary instruction (Eus. eccl. hist. 4.24.1).