

Martin Luther's Small Catechism



**Henry Eyster Jacobs (ed.)
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THE SMALL CATECHISM OF MARTIN LUTHER.
EDITED BY HENRY EYSTER JACOBS



Ch. E. Jacobs.

THE SMALL CATECHISM OF MARTIN LUTHER

EDITED BY
HENRY EYSTER JACOBS, D. D.

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I. The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.

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Preface for Pastors and Preachers.

Martin Luther to all Faithful and Godly Pastors and Preachers: Grace, Mercy and Peace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The deplorable condition in which I found religious affairs during a recent visitation of the congregations has impelled me to publish this Catechism, or statement of the Christian doctrine, after having prepared it in very brief and simple terms. Alas I what misery I beheld! The people, especially those who live in the villages, seem to have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and many of the pastors are ignorant and incompetent teachers. And, nevertheless, they all maintain that they are Christians, that they have been baptized and that they have received the Lord's Supper. Yet they cannot recite the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live as if they were irrational creatures, and now that the Gospel has come to them, they grossly abuse their Christian liberty.

Ye bishops! what answer will ye give to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and paid no attention to the duties of your office? I invoke no evil on your heads. But you withhold the cup in the Lord's Supper, insist on the observance of your human laws, and yet, at the same time, do not take the least interest in teaching the people the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any other part of the Word of God. Woe unto you!

Wherefore I beseech you in the name of God, my beloved brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to engage heartily in the discharge of the duties of your

office, to have mercy on the people who are entrusted to your care, and to assist us in introducing the Catechism among them, and especially among the young. And if any of you do not possess the necessary qualifications, I beseech you to take at least the following forms and read them, word for word, to the people on this wise:

In the first place, let the preacher take the utmost care to avoid all changes or variations in the text and wording of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, etc. Let him, on the contrary, take each of the forms respectively, adhere to it, and repeat it anew year after year. For young and inexperienced people cannot be successfully instructed unless we adhere to the same text or the same forms of expression. They easily become confused when the teacher at one time employs a certain form of words and expressions, and at another, apparently with a view to make improvements, adopts a different form. The result of such a course will be, that all the time and labor which we have expended will be lost.

This point was well understood by our venerable fathers, who were accustomed to use the same words in teaching the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. We, too, should follow this plan when we teach these things, particularly in the case of the young and ignorant, not changing a single syllable, nor introducing any variations when, year after year, we recur to these forms and recite them anew before our hearers.

Choose, therefore, the form of words which best pleases you, and adhere to it perpetually. When you preach in the presence of intelligent and learned men, you are at liberty to exhibit your knowledge and skill, and may present and discuss these subjects in all the varied modes which are at your command. But when you are teaching the young, retain the same in form and manner without change: teach them, first of all, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., always presenting the same words of the text, so that those who learn can repeat them after you and retain them in the memory.

But if any refuse to receive your instructions, tell them plainly that they deny Christ and are not Christians; such persons shall not be admitted to the Lord's Table, nor present a child for baptism, nor enjoy any of our Christian privileges, but are to be sent back to the Pope and his agents, and, indeed, to Satan himself. Their parents and employers should, besides, refuse to furnish them with food and drink, and notify them that the government was disposed to banish from the country all persons of such a rude and intractable character.

For although we cannot, and should not, compel them to exercise faith, we ought, nevertheless, to instruct the great mass with all diligence; so that they may know how to distinguish between right and wrong in their conduct toward those with whom they live or among whom they desire to earn their living. For whoever desires to reside in a city, and enjoy the rights and privileges which its laws confer, is also bound to know and obey those laws. God grant that such persons may become sincere believers! But if they remain dishonest and vicious, let them at least withhold from public view the vices of their hearts.

In the second place, when those whom you are instructing have become familiar with the words of the text, it is time to teach them to understand the meaning of those words, so that they may become acquainted with the object and purport of the lesson. Then proceed to another of the following forms, or, at your pleasure, choose any other which is brief, and adhere strictly to the same words and forms of expression in the text, without altering a single syllable; besides, allow yourself ample time for the lessons. For it is not necessary that you should, on the same occasion, proceed from the beginning to the end of the several parts; it will be more profitable if you present them separately, in regular succession. When the people have, for instance, at length correctly understood the First Commandment, you may proceed to the Second, and so continue. By neglecting to observe this mode the people will be overburdened, and be prevented from understanding and retaining in memory any considerable part of the matter communicated to them.

In the third place, when you have thus reached the end of this Short Catechism, begin anew with the Large Catechism, and by means of it furnish the people with fuller and more comprehensive explanations. Explain here at large every Commandment, every Petition, and, indeed, every part, showing the duties which they severally impose, and both the advantages which follow the performance of those duties, and also the dangers and losses which result from the neglect of them. Insist in an especial manner on such Commandments or other parts as seem to be most of all misunderstood or neglected by your people. It will, for example, be necessary that you should enforce with the utmost earnestness the Seventh Commandment, which treats of stealing, when you are teaching workmen, dealers, and even farmers and servants, inasmuch as many of these are guilty of various dishonest and thievish practices. So, too, it will be your duty to explain and apply the Fourth Commandment with great diligence when you are teaching children and uneducated adults, and to urge them to observe order, to be faithful, obedient and peaceable, as well as to adduce

numerous instances mentioned in the Scriptures which show that God punished such as were guilty in these things and blessed the obedient.

Here, too, let it be your great aim to urge magistrates and parents to rule wisely and to educate the children, admonishing them, at the same time, that such duties are imposed on them, and showing them how grievously they sin if they neglect them. For in such a case they overthrow and lay waste alike the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, acting as if they were the worst enemies both of God and of men. And show them very plainly the shocking evils of which they are the authors when they refuse their aid in training up children to be pastors, preachers, writers, etc., and set forth that on account of such sins God will inflict an awful punishment upon them. It is, indeed, necessary to preach on these things; for parents and magistrates are guilty of sins in this respect which are so great that there are no terms in which they can be described. And truly, Satan has a cruel design in fostering these evils.

Finally, inasmuch as the people are now relieved from the tyranny of the Pope, they refuse to come to the Lord's Table, and treat it with contempt. On this point, also, it is very necessary that you should give them instructions, while, at the same time, you are to be guided by the following principles: That we are to compel no one to believe, or to receive the Lord's Supper; that we are not to establish any laws on this point, or appoint the time and place; but that we should so preach as to influence the people, without any law adopted by us, to urge, and, as it were, to compel us, who are pastors, to administer the Lord's Supper to them. Now this object may be attained if we address them in the following manner: It is to be feared that he who does not desire to receive the Lord's Supper at least three or four times during the year despises the Sacrament, and is no Christian. So, too, he is no Christian who neither believes nor obeys the Gospel; for Christ did not say, "Omit or despise this," but, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it," etc. He commands that this should be done, and by no means be neglected and despised. He says, "This do."

Now, he who does not highly value the Sacrament shows thereby that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell; that is to say, he does not believe that such evils exist, although he may be deeply immersed in them, and completely belong to the devil. On the other hand, he needs no grace, no life, no Paradise, no heaven, no Christ, no God, no good thing. For if he believed that he was involved in such evils, and that he was in need of such blessings, he could not refrain from receiving the Sacrament, wherein aid is afforded against such evils, and, again, such blessings are bestowed. It will not

be necessary to compel him by the force of any law to approach the Lord's Table; he will hasten to it of his own accord, will compel himself to come, and indeed urge you to administer the Sacrament to him.

Hence, you are by no means to adopt any compulsory law in this case, as the Pope has done. Let it simply be your aim to set forth distinctly the advantages and losses, the wants and the benefits, the dangers and the blessings, which are to be considered in connection with the Sacrament; the people will, doubtless, then seek it without urgent demands on your part. If they still refuse to come forward, let them choose their own ways, and tell them that those who do not regard their own spiritual misery, and do not desire the gracious help of God, belong to Satan. But if you do not give such solemn admonitions, or if you adopt odious compulsory laws on the subject, it is your own fault if the people treat the Sacrament with contempt. Will they not necessarily be slothful if you are silent and sleep? Therefore consider the subject seriously, ye Pastors and Preachers. Our office has now assumed a very different character from that which it bore under the Pope; it is now of a very grave nature, and is very salutary in its influence. It consequently subjects us to far greater burdens and labors, dangers and temptations, whilst it brings with it an inconsiderable reward and very little gratitude in the world. But Christ himself will be our reward if we labor with fidelity. May He grant such mercy unto us who is the Father of all grace, to whom be given thanks and praises through Christ, our Lord, for ever! Amen.

Part First. The Ten Commandments.

In the plain form in which they are to be taught by the Head of a family.

The First Commandment.

I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

What is meant by this Commandment?

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

The Second Commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to curse, swear, conjure, lie, or deceive by his name, but call upon him in every time of need, and worship him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

The Third Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to despise his Word and the preaching of the Gospel, but deem it holy, and willingly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to despise nor displease our parents and superiors, but honor, serve, obey, love, and esteem them.

The Fifth Commandment.

Thou shalt not kill.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to do our neighbor any bodily harm or injury, but rather assist and comfort him in danger and want.

The Sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as to be chaste and pure in our words and deeds, each one also loving and honoring his wife or her husband.

The Seventh Commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to rob our neighbor of his money or property, nor bring it into our possession by unfair dealing or fraudulent means, but rather assist him to improve and protect it.

The Eighth Commandment.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not deceitfully to belie, betray, slander, nor raise injurious reports against our neighbor, but apologize for him, speak well of him, and put the most charitable construction on all his actions.

The Ninth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to desire by craftiness to gain possession of our neighbor's inheritance or home, or to obtain it under the pretext of a legal right, but be ready to assist and serve him in the preservation of his own.

The Tenth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

What is meant by this Commandment?

Answer. We should so fear and love God as not to alienate our neighbor's wife from him, entice away his servants, nor let loose his cattle, but use our endeavors that they may remain and discharge their duty to him.

What does God declare concerning all these Commandments?

Answer, He says: I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

What is meant by this declaration?

Answer. God threatens to punish all those who transgress these commandments. We should, therefore, dread his displeasure and not act contrarily to these commandments. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should, therefore, love and trust in him, and cheerfully do what he has commanded us.

Part Second. The Creed.

In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

The First Article - Of Creation.

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

What is meant by this Article?

Answer. I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, with all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with my raiment, food, home, and family, and all my property; that he daily provides me abundantly with all the necessaries of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me and guards me against all evil; which he does out of pure, paternal, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true.

The Second Article – Of Redemption.

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

What is meant by this Article?

Answer. I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, secured and delivered me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood, and with his innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in

everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness: even as he is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The Third Article – Of Sanctification.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting. Amen.

What is meant by this Article?

Answer. I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the true faith; in which Christian Church he daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and will raise up me and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Part Third. The Lord's Prayer.

In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

The Introduction.

Our Father who art in heaven.

What is meant by this Introduction?

Answer. God would thereby affectionately encourage us to believe that he is truly our Father, and that we are his children indeed, so that we may call upon him with all cheerfulness and confidence, even as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents.

The First Petition.

Hallowed be thy name.

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. The name of God is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may be hallowed also by us.

How is this effected?

Answer. When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with it; to this may our blessed Father in heaven help us! But whoever teaches and lives otherwise than as God's Word prescribes, profanes the name of God among us; from this preserve us, Heavenly Father!

The Second Petition.

Thy kingdom come.

What is meant by this Petition?

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

When is this effected?

Answer. When our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth, and in heaven for ever.

The Third Petition.

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

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done by us also.

When is this effected?

Answer. When God frustrates and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose which would hinder us from hallowing the name of God and prevent his kingdom from coming to us, such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh; and when he strengthens us, and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in the faith, even unto our end. This is his gracious and good will.

The Fourth Petition.

Give us this day our daily bread.

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. God gives indeed without our prayer even to the wicked also their daily bread; but we pray in this petition that he would make us sensible of his benefits, and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is implied in the words: “Our daily bread”?

Answer. All things that pertain to the wants and the support of this present life; such as food, raiment, money, goods, house and land, and other property; a believing spouse and good children; trustworthy servants and faithful magistrates; favorable seasons; peace and health; education and honor; true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition.

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

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins, nor deny us our requests on account of them; for we are not worthy of any thing for which we pray, and have not merited it; but that he would grant us all things through grace, although we daily commit much sin, and deserve chastisement alone. We will therefore, on our part, both heartily forgive, and also readily do good to, those who may injure or offend us.

The Sixth Petition.

And lead us not into temptation.

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. God indeed tempts no one to sin; but we pray in this petition that God would so guard and preserve us that the devil, the world, and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor lead us into error and unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and that, though we may be thus tempted, we may nevertheless finally prevail and gain the victory.

The Seventh Petition.

But deliver us from evil.

What is meant by this Petition?

Answer. We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect the body or soul, property or character, and, at last, when the hour of death shall arrive, grant us a happy end, and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

What is meant by the word “Amen”?

Answer. That I should be assured that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father, and are heard by him; for he himself has commanded us to pray in this manner, and has promised that he will hear us. Amen, Amen; that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.

Part Fourth. The Sacrament Of Holy Baptism.

In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

I. What is Baptism?

Answer. Baptism is not simply water, but it is the water comprehended in God's command, and connected with God's Word.

What is that Word of God?

Answer. It is that which our Lord Jesus Christ spake, as it is recorded in the last chapter of Matthew, verse 19: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

II. What gifts or benefits does Baptism confer?

Answer. It worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and confers everlasting salvation on all who believe as the Word and promise of God declare.

What are such words and promises of God?

Answer. Those which our Lord Jesus Christ spake, as they are recorded in the last chapter of Mark, verse 16: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

III. How can water produce such great effects?

Answer. It is not the water indeed that produces these effects, but the Word of God which accompanies and is connected with the water, and our faith, which relies on the Word of God connected with the water. For the water, without the Word of God, is simply water and no baptism. But when connected with the Word of God, it is a baptism; that is, a gracious water of life and a "washing of regeneration" in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says to Titus in the third chapter, vers. 5-8: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."

IV. What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer. It signifies that the old Adam in us-is to be drowned and destroyed by daily sorrow and repentance, together with all sins and evil lusts; and that

again the new man should daily come forth and rise, that shall live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity for ever.

Where is it so written?

Answer. St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 6, verse 4, says: “We are buried with Christ by baptism into death; that like as he was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Of Confession¹

How plain questions should be taught concerning it.

What is Confession?

Answer. Confession consists of two parts: the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness through the pastor as of God himself, in no wise doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins ought we to confess?

Answer. In the presence of God we should acknowledge ourselves guilty of all manner of sins, even of those which we do not ourselves perceive; as we do in the Lord’s Prayer. But in the presence of the pastor we should confess those sins alone which we have knowledge and which we feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Answer. Here reflect in your condition, according to the Ten Commandments, namely: Whether you are a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or mistress, a man-servant or maidservant – whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful, whether you have injured any one by words or actions, whether you have stolen, neglected, or wasted aught, or done other evil.

Please show me a short way to confess.

Answer. You should speak to the confessor thus: Reverend and dear sir, I beseech you to hear my confession, and to announce to me forgiveness for God’s sake.

Say:

I, a poor sinner, confess before God that I am guilty of all sins; especially I confess before thee that I am a man-servant, a maid-servant, etc. But alas, I serve my master unfaithfully; for here and there I have not done what he told me; I have provoked him, and caused him to curse; I have neglected many things and

let them go to waste; likewise, in words and deeds I have been immodest; I have been angry with my on a equals; I have grumbled and sworn at my wife. For all this I am sorry, and pray for grace: I mean to do better.

A master or mistress should say thus:

In particular I confess before thee that I have not been faithful in training my children, domestics and wife [family] for God's glory. I have cursed. I have given a bad example by unchaste words and works. I have injured my neighbor. I have slandered, have overcharged and have given spurious goods and short measure.

And whatever more he has done in violation of God's command and his station, etc. But if any one do not feel that he is oppressed by these or greater sins, he should not be anxious, or search for or devise other sins, and thereby make a torture out of confession,² but should mention one or two sins known to himself. Thus: In particular I confess that I once cursed. I once used immodest words. I have neglected this or that, etc. Let this suffice.

But if you know of none at all (which, however, is scarcely possible), mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness after the general confession which you make before God to the minister.

Then the Confessor should say:

God be merciful unto thee and strengthen thy faith. Amen.

And again:

Dost thou believe that my forgiveness is the forgiveness of God?

Answer. Yes, dear sir.

Then let him say:

As thou believest, so be it done unto thee. And in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive to thee thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Depart in peace.

But those who have great burdens upon their consciences, or are distressed and tempted, a father confessor will know well how to console with passages of Scripture and to encourage them to faith. This should only serve as an ordinary form of confession for the uncultivated.

1. Müller makes of this a distinct part. Hase gives it as an Appendix to Part IV., Of Baptism. Francke entitles it "Introduction to Part V." This is the view of Walch Introduction, p. 611 sqq.↵
2. Cf. Aug. Conf., xxv.: 7 sqq.; Apology, Art. xi. (iv.): 63. p. 166.↵

Part Fifth. The Sacrament Of The Altar or The Lord's Supper.

In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Answer. It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ himself.

Where is it so written?

Answer. The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, together with St. Paul, write thus:¹

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you: this do, in remembrance of me.”

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

What benefits are derived from such eating and drinking?

Answer. They are pointed out in these words: “Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.” Namely, through these words, the remission of sins, life and salvation are granted unto us in the Sacrament. For where there is remission of sins, there are also life and salvation.

How can the bodily eating and drinking produce such great effects?

Answer. The eating and the drinking, indeed, do not produce them, but the words which stand here, namely: “Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.” These words are, besides the bodily eating and drinking, the chief things in the Sacrament; and he who believes these words has that which they declare and set forth, namely, the remission of sins.

Who is it, then, that receives this Sacrament worthily?

Answer. Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a good external discipline; but he is truly worthy and well prepared, who believes these words: “Given, and

shed for you, for the remission of sins.” But he who does not believe these words, or who doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words: “For You,” require truly believing hearts.

1. Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25.↵

Appendix I. Morning And Evening Prayer.

In the plain form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

Morning Prayer.

In the morning, when thou risest, thou shalt make the sign of the holy cross, and say:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing thou shalt say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

To these thou canst also add this Prayer:

I give thanks unto thee, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, thy dear Son. that thou hast protected me through the night from all danger and harm; and I beseech thee to preserve and keep me this day also from all sin and evil; that in all my thoughts, words, and deeds I may serve and please thee. Into thy hands I commend my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let thy holy angel have charge concerning me, that the wicked one have no power over me. Amen.

And then thou shouldst go with joy to thy work, after perhaps a hymn has been sung, as the Ten Commandments, or what thy devotion may suggest.

Evening Prayer.

In the evening, when thou goest to bed, thou shalt make the sign of the holy cross, and say:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing, thou shall say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

Then, if thou wilt, thou mayest add this Prayer:

I give thanks unto thee, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ thy dear Son, that thou hast this day so graciously protected me, and I beseech thee to forgive

me all my sins, and the wrong which I have done, and by thy great mercy defend me from all the perils and dangers of this night. Into thy hands I commend my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let thy holy angel have charge concerning me, that the wicked one have no power over me. Amen.

Then thou shouldst go to sleep immediately and joyfully.

Appendix II. The Blessing And Thanksgiving At Table.

In the form in which it is to be taught by the Head of a family.

Grace before Meat.

Before meat, the members of the family standing at the table reverently and with folded hands, there shall be said:

The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord: and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.¹

Note. – Pleasure (*Wohlgefallen*) means, that all animals receive so much to eat that they are on this account joyful and of good cheer; for care and avarice hinder such pleasure.

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer, and after that this Prayer:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless unto us these thy gifts, which of thy tender kindness thou hast bestowed upon us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thanks after Meat.

After meat, all standing reverently and with folded hands, there shall be said:

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. He giveth food to all flesh: he giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens which cry. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Then the Lord's Prayer and the following Prayer:

We give thanks to thee, O God our Father, for all thy benefits, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

1. Ps. 145:16. Otherwise rendered: “Fillest every living thing with pleasure.”↵

Appendix III. Table Of Duties.

Or certain passages of the Scriptures, selected for various orders and conditions of men, wherein their respective duties are set forth.

Bishops, Pastors and Preachers.

A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice, but holding fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 1 Tim. 3:2-6; Tit. 1:9.

What Duties Hearers owe their Bishops.¹

Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:14). Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things (Gal. 6:6). Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward (1 Tim. 5:17, 18). Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you. Heb. 13:17.

Magistrates.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God; for rulers are not a terror to good

works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom. 13:1-4.

What Duties Subjects Owe Magistrates.²

Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matt. 22: 21). Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, etc. Wherefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor (Rom. 13:1, 5 sqq.). I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2: 1 sq.). Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, etc. (Tit. 3:1). Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors as those that are sent, etc. 1 Pet. 2: 13 sq.

Husbands.

Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered (1 Pet. 3:7). And be not bitter against them. Col. 3: 29.

Wives.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet 3:6.

Parents.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4.

Children.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Eph. 6:1-3.

Male and Female Servants, and Laborers.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the o heart; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Eph 3; 5-8.

Masters and Mistresses.

Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1.

Young Persons in General.

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. 1 Pet. 5: 5, 6.

Widows.

She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day; but she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 1 Tim. 5:5, 6.

Christians in General.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Herein are comprehended all the commandments (Rom. 13:9, 10). And persevere in prayer for all men. 1 Tim. 2:1,2.

1. Omitted in German.↵
2. Omitted in German↵

About the Author

Henry Eyster Jacobs (November 10, 1844 – July 7, 1932) was an American educator and Lutheran theologian. Jacobs was born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the son of professor Michael and Juliana M (Eyster) Jacobs. His sister Julia Jacobs Harpster became a missionary in India; his brother Michael William Jacobs became a judge. He graduated from Pennsylvania College in 1862 and from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg in 1865. Between 1870 and 1883, he was professor at Pennsylvania College. He was then appointed professor of systematic theology in The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mount Airy, where he also assumed the office of dean in 1894. In 1920, he became President of the Seminary when the office of dean was abolished.

He served as president of his church's board of foreign missions (1902–07), of the General Conference of Lutherans (1899, 1902, 1904), of the American Society of Church History (1907–08), and of the Pennsylvania German Society (1910–11). He also translated various German theological works and editing the Lutheran Church Review (1882–96), and Lutheran Commentary (1895–98). Henry Eyster Jacobs, working with John A.W. Haas, published The Lutheran Cyclopaedia in 1899.

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Preface

The Church's Confessions of Faith are its authorized declarations on subjects concerning which its teaching has been misunderstood or misrepresented, or is liable to such misunderstanding and misrepresentation. They are not comprehensive systems of doctrine covering the entire sphere of divine revelation, but have arisen entirely from historical circumstances, where the teaching of the Church has become a matter of controversy. An exception to this statement may probably be found in Luther's Catechisms ; and yet, while they were written for other than polemical purposes, they were offered as standards for the more popular presentation of the truths of the Christian religion at a crisis when both pastors and people needed especial guidance. In each Confession the topics treated, as well as the order, the extent, and the mode of treatment of each topic, are not ideal or determined by any effort to present an exhaustive and logical summary of the faith, as a whole, from the Holy Scriptures, but only to meet an historical need and to respond to a call for a particular emergency. Each Confession is in reality only a part of the one Confession of the faith, which the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is continually drawing from the Holy Scriptures and from communion with the Church's Lord.

The Holy Scriptures are the sole source and authority of the Church's teaching, and amply sufficient for all ordinary purposes of instruction; but when that which the Holy Scriptures teach is called into question, it is the Church's duty, in all ages, as a witness to the truth and set for its defense, to give clear and unmistakable testimony as to what is the meaning of God's Word on the subjects under discussion. All the authority of such testimonies depends upon their conformity with Holy Scripture. Confessions are authoritative, not because the Church has adopted them, but because of the Word of God which they are found to contain. " We accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, not because it was composed by our theologians, but because it has been derived from God's Word." (Formula of Concord, p. 536, 5.)

What the Church has once confessed, with respect to questions of more than merely temporary or local significance, becomes a part of her very life. If it be

what the Confession declares that it is, the very truth of God's Word, expressed in terms so clear and unambiguous as to guard against all misunderstanding, the Church of the future cannot be indifferent to it, but cherishes it as a sacred trust ("the deposit," 1 Tim. 6:20), which is to be transmitted to posterity that later generations may be profited by the experience of their predecessors. Nevertheless, in so doing, the Church cannot restrict Its testimony, as new circumstances arise, simply to that which, under entirely different circumstances, has been given at some particular crisis in the past. She is not so bound to the past as to be unable to define her faith in terms adapted to new conditions, but is "ready always to give answer to every one that asketh a reason" of her faith (1 Pet. 1:15). Accordingly, the Augsburg Confession very appropriately asserts the principle of Confessional development in its closing words:

"If anything further he desired, we are ready, God willing, to present ampler information according to the Scriptures" (p. 67 sq.).

The simplest and briefest of all the Confessions, the Apostles' Creed, historical investigations show was the product of a gradual growth of four hundred years, as successive controversies furnished the occasion for additional articles. It was not primarily a liturgical formula, as it is with us today, but a clear and distinct utterance on various controverted points, without mentioning those who taught otherwise. A similar growth can be traced without difficulty in the Nicene Creed, where the Council of Nice marks only a particular stage in its formulation, but neither its beginning nor its completion. The Athanasian Creed is the ultimate fruit of centuries of controversy concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, as the arena for theological discussion is passing from the East to the West.

Neither the structure nor the contents of the Augsburg Confession can be adequately interpreted without the study of the historical occasion for each article. Even where it is least polemical, an historical motive for each statement is present. The Apology is the author's own protest against perversions of the meaning and the attempts to answer the positions of the Augsburg Confession ; in other words, it is the official interpretation of those who prepared and presented the Augustana.

When, some years later, after the conciliatory spirit that animates the Augsburg Confession had failed to make an impression on its opponents, Luther, in the Smalcald Articles, provided for the General Council that the Emperor had promised to call a statement of the issues involved in the controversies with

Rome that was entirely up to date, while Melanchthon supplemented it with an appendix on Church Power, that is the foundation of all Lutheran Church Polity.

The last of the Confessions, the Formula of Concord, after more than a generation had passed since the controversy with Rome was most acute, attempts to afford a common basis upon which Lutherans could stand, and thus end a period of confusion, division, and estrangement that had broken the Lutheran Church of Germany into fragments. Never was there a more careful and discriminating Church document written, guarding in each article against exaggerations on each side, and then, in most precise and definite words, setting forth the teaching from the Holy Scriptures on the subjects concerning which there had been misunderstanding and alienation of feeling. In it the Lutheran Church shows her fidelity in judging errors within, just as in the other great Confessions she had judged errors from without, her borders. To judge others without also judging our own selves (1 Cor. 11:31) is to be fair and just neither to ourselves nor to others.

Upon the basis of all these Confessions the foundations of the Lutheran Church in America were laid. They were included not only in the Constitutions of many of the earlier congregations, but also in the first Constitution of the Mother Synod. With the entrance of a period when the importance of this confessional position was not recognized, there came into our history retarding and disorganizing forces that threatened the very existence of our Church as it became anglicized, and that to the present day have greatly divided and confused it.

With a widespread and all but general return towards the confessional position of the Fathers, a period of new life and promise for our Church in America has begun. Upon the hearty acceptance of these Confessions in their historical sense, and their consistent application in the spirit of the Gospel to practice, the General Council, in common with others, offers a basis for the union of the entire Lutheran Church in America. The work in which she has so successfully cooperated in the preparation of a Common Service will not be complete until the agreement possible in such joint work is traced to a more thorough harmony in the faith than had been supposed, and its ultimate expression in agreement as to the terms of confessional statement.

But for the attainment of such end the Confessions must be readily accessible in the common language of the country, and should be found in the studies of all our pastors and in the homes and libraries of all our intelligent people. Even although our Church has never asked its laymen to subscribe to more than the

Catechism, yet the importance of their acquaintance with all that, as members of Lutheran synods, they require their pastors to know and teach cannot be questioned.

Heretofore translations into English have been accessible only in expensive editions. The edition of which this is a revision was undertaken in 1882 by a retired clergyman, the Rev. G. W. Frederick, at great pecuniary risk. He spared no expense in providing for the work a most attractive form, and in enabling the editor to introduce any amount of matter, which he deemed of value for illustrating the history and teaching of the Confessions. That edition is not supplanted by this. It will continue to be published by the General Council's Publication Board for the use of scholars. In it will be found the history of each confession, and the various documents upon which they were based. But the popular edition, here offered, fulfills the hope of the editor from the very beginning, to have the Confessions published at such price that they may be scattered broadcast throughout all English-speaking lands, where there are confessors of the Lutheran faith for Canada and Australia, for South Africa and India, for the West Indies and South America, as well as for the United States of America. Such edition will serve an important office in deepening and strengthening the faith of our people in drawing them together in the bonds of a common fellowship, and in enabling them to appreciate all the more highly their heritage. But beyond this, as the preceding edition was warmly welcomed by eminent representatives of other denominations because of much that they found in it encouraging them in their conflicts, so this edition will continue to a much wider circle than the Lutheran Church the testimony which our Fathers gave, and, while in many other religious bodies confessional lines have vanished and confessional obligations weakened, a standard is here raised around which millions in this western world will rally. The attentive reader, whatever may be his antecedents, will see that the matters here treated are not antiquated or obsolescent, but enter most deeply into the issues of the hour.

The translations included in this volume are those of the two-volume edition, except that, for the translation of the Augsburg Confession, credited in that edition to Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, but which is in reality a reprint of a sixteenth century English translation, published in "The Harmony of the Confessions" in 1586, we have substituted the translation officially approved by the General Council after its preparation by a joint committee of the various synodical bodies, mentioned in the note introducing it at the proper place (p. 32). With this exception, the plates are those of the larger edition. A number of minor

changes, however, have been made, suggested by twenty-nine years' use of the translation in the study and the class-room, and by criticisms of which we have been informed.

We send forth this volume with gratitude for the privilege of having been called to edit it and its predecessor, and in the full confidence that it will be a blessing to our Church in America, and, through it, in advancing the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name these confessions were written.

Henry Eyster Jacobs.

Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Philadelphia, Pa., February 27, 1911.

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Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. –Jude 1:24-25

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