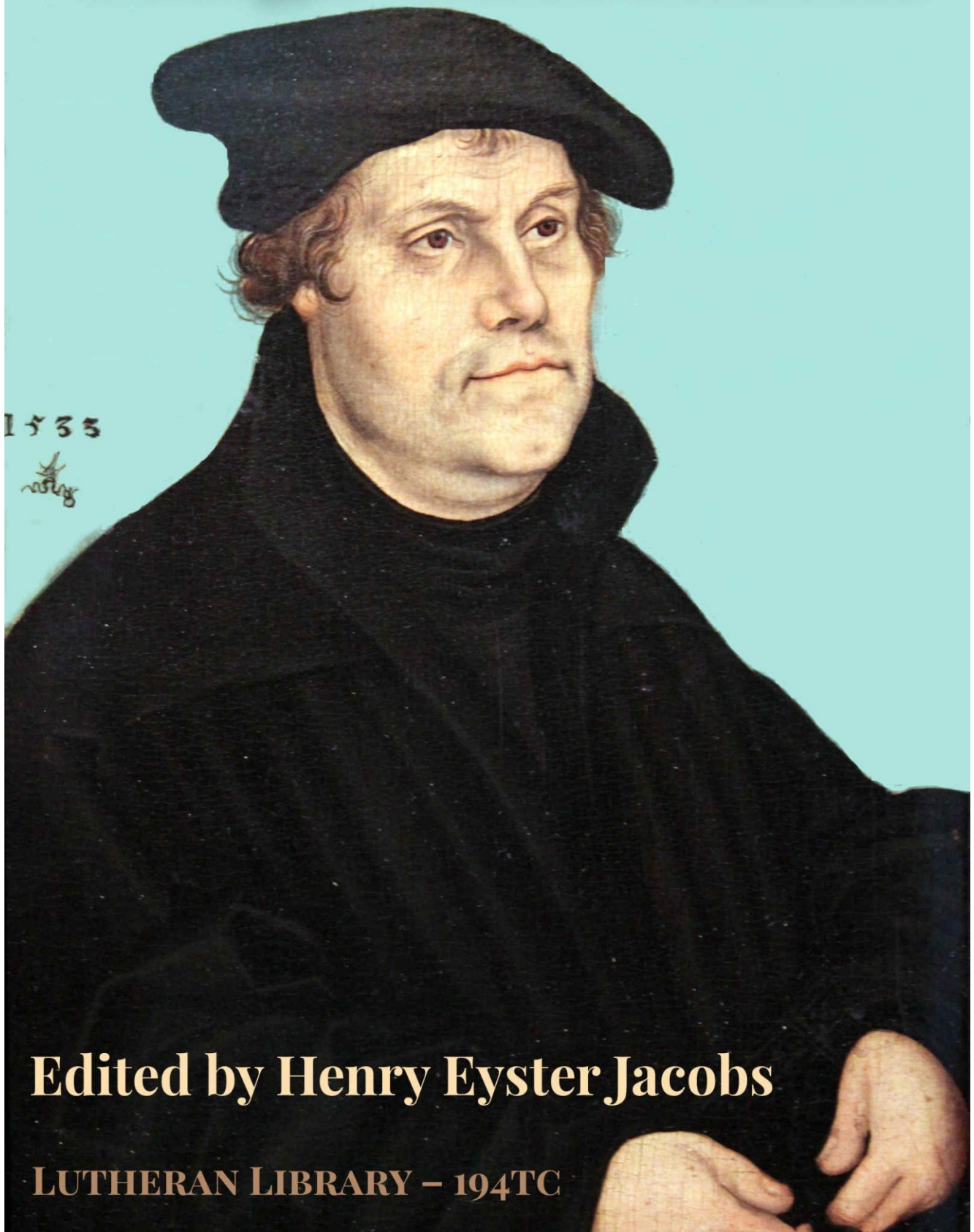


Martin Luther's Large Catechism



Edited by Henry Eyster Jacobs

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THE LARGE CATECHISM OF MARTIN LUTHER

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TRANSLATED BY
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The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.

First Preface.

A Christian, Profitable and Necessary Preface, and Faithful, Earnest Exhortation of Dr. Martin Luther to all Christians, but especially to all Pastors and Preachers, in order that they may daily exercise themselves in the catechism, which is a short summary of the entire Holy Scriptures, and that they may always Practice the same.

We have no slight reason for urging so constantly the Catechism, and for both desiring and beseeching others to do the same, since we see to our sorrow that many pastors and preachers are in this so very negligent, and slight not only their office, but even the doctrine itself; some from great and ambitious art, but others from pure indolence and care for their palates, being not otherwise disposed than if it were for the sake of their appetites that they are pastors and preachers, and as though they had nothing to do but to spend and consume as long as they live; as they have been accustomed to do under the Papacy.

And although they have everything that they are to preach and teach set forth now so fully, clearly, and intelligibly in so many excellent books, and *Sermones per se loquentes, Dormi secure, Paratos et Thesauros*¹, as in former times they were called; yet they are not so godly and honest as to buy these books, or even if they have them, they do not look at them or read them. Alas! they are shameful gluttons and ministers of their appetites, who would much more properly be swineherds and dog-fanciers than pastors and Gospel ministers.

And now that they are delivered from the unprofitable and burdensome bubbling concerning the Seven Canonical Hours, oh that, instead thereof, they would only, morning, noon and night, read a page or two in the Catechism, the Prayer Book, the New Testament, or elsewhere in the Bible, and pray the Lord's Prayer once for themselves and their parishioners, so that they might render honor and return thanks to the Gospel, by which they have been delivered from

burdens and troubles so manifold, and might have some little shame because like brutes they retain no more of the Gospel than such corrupt, pernicious, shameful, carnal liberty! For, alas! the common people regard the Gospel altogether too lightly; so that even though we use all diligence, we accomplish no great results. What will be the consequence if we be careless and indolent, as we were under the Papacy?

To this there is added this shameful vice and secret infection of security and satiety, viz. that many regard the Catechism as a plain, unimportant statement of doctrine which they can read over once, and then throw the book into a corner, and be ashamed to read in it again.

Yea, even among the nobility there are some rude and niggardly fellows, who declare that, from now on, there is need neither of pastors nor preachers; that we have everything in books, and every one can learn it for himself; and in this confidence they allow the parishes to fall into decay and desolation, and cause pastors and preachers to suffer hunger and extreme distress. Such conduct is to be expected from crazy Germans. For we Germans have such disgraceful people, and must endure them.

But this I say for myself. I am also a doctor and a preacher, yea, as learned and experienced as all who have such presumption and security. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning and whenever I have time I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain, and that too gladly, a child and pupil of the Catechism. And yet these delicate, fastidious fellows pretend with one reading to be doctors above all doctors, and to know everything and be in need of nothing. And this is indeed a sure sign that o they despise both their office and the souls of the people, yea even God and his Word. They need not be afraid of a fall, since they are already fallen all too horribly; but they need become children, and begin to learn their alphabet, which they imagine that they have long since outgrown.

Therefore I beg such indolent epicures or presumptuous saints, for God's sake, to believe and be persuaded that they are by no means so learned or such great doctors as they imagine; and never to presume that they have thoroughly learned this [all the parts of the Catechism], or know enough of everything, even though they think that they know it ever so well. For though they should know and understand it perfectly (which, however, is impossible in this life), yet if it be daily read and practiced in thought and speech, it yields much profit and fruit;

for in such reading and repetition and meditation the Holy Ghost is present, and ever bestows new and more light and devoutness, so that we daily relish and appreciate it better, according as Christ promises (Matt. 18:20): “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*”

Besides, nothing is more effectual against the devil, the world and the flesh and all evil thoughts than to be occupied with the Word of God, and to speak thereof, and meditate upon it; so that the first Psalm declares those blessed who meditate upon the law of God day and night. Undoubtedly, you will never offer any incense or other savor against Satan more efficacious than employment upon God’s commandments and words, and speaking, singing, or thinking thereof. For this is indeed the truly holy water and holy sign from which he flees, and by which he is driven away.

If you had no other profit and fruit therefrom, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think of and practice these things, viz. thereby to drive away the devil and evil thoughts. For he cannot hear or endure God’s Word; and God’s Word is not like any careless talk, as that of Dietrich of Berne², etc., but as St. Paul says (Rom. 1:16): “*The power of God.*” Yea, indeed, the power of God which gives the devil extreme pain, and strengthens, comforts and helps us beyond measure.

And what need is there of many words? If I were to recount all the profit and fruit which God’s Word produces, whence would I have enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we say of God’s Word, which drives away and brings to naught this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? It must of course be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts. And shall we frivolously despise such power, profit, strength and fruit – we, especially, who wish to be pastors and preachers? If so, we should not only have nothing given us to eat, but be driven out with the dogs, and be cast away with refuse, because we not only daily need this all, as we do our daily bread, but must also daily use it against the daily and incessant attacks and stratagems of the devil with his thousand arts.

And if this were not sufficient to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, yet God’s command even alone ought to constrain us, which in Deut. 6:6 sqq. he solemnly enjoins, that we should always meditate upon his precepts, when we sit down, and when we walk forth, and when we lie down, and when we rise up, and should have them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant mark and sign. Doubtless he did not so solemnly require and enjoin this without a purpose; but because he knew our danger and need, as well as the constant and furious

assaults and temptations of devils, he wishes to warn, equip and preserve us against them, as with a good armor against their fiery darts and with good medicine against their poisonous drafts.

Oh, what mad, senseless fools are we, that while we must ever live and dwell among such mighty enemies as devils, we nevertheless despise our armor and defense, and are too indolent to look for, or think of them! And what else are such supercilious, presumptuous saints, who are unwilling to read and study the Catechism daily, doing, but esteeming themselves much more learned than God himself with all his saints, angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all Christians? For inasmuch as God himself is not ashamed to teach the same daily, since he knows nothing better to teach, and always keeps teaching the same thing, and does not take up anything new or different, and all the saints know nothing better to learn, or different, and cannot learn this perfectly, are we not wonderful men to imagine, if we have once read or heard it, that we know it all, and have no farther need to read and learn, but can learn perfectly in one hour what God himself cannot finish teaching, since he continues teaching it from the beginning to the end of the world, and all prophets, together with all saints, have been occupied with learning it but in part, and are still pupils, and must remain such?

For it is certain that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures, so that, in all circumstances and events, 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 the world. And what indeed is the entire Psalter but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment? But now I know of a truth that such indolent epicures and presumptuous spirits do not understand a single psalm, much less the entire Scriptures; and yet they pretend that they know and despise the Catechism, which is a compend and brief summary of all the Holy Scriptures.

Therefore I again implore all Christians, especially pastors and preachers, not to be doctors too soon, and imagine that they know everything (for imagination and stretched cloth fall far short of the measure), but that they daily exercise themselves in these studies and constantly apply them to practice. Let them guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous on a infection of such security and presumption, and persevere in reading, teaching, learning, thinking, meditating, not ceasing until they have learned by experience and are sure that,

by this teaching, they have killed Satan, and have become more learned than God himself and all his saints.

If they manifest such diligence, then I will agree with them, and they will perceive what fruit they will have, and what excellent men God will make of them; so that in due time they themselves will acknowledge that the longer and the more they have studied the Catechism, the less they know of it, and the more they find yet to learn; and then only, as hungry and thirsty ones, will they truly appreciate that which now, because of great abundance and satiety, they cannot endure. To this end may God grant his grace! Amen.

1. Titles of collections of Postils.↵
2. The reference is to verses commemorating the exploits of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths.↵

Short Preface Of Dr. Martin Luther.

This little work has been planned and undertaken in order to furnish a course of instruction for children and the simpleminded. Hence of old such works received in Greek the name Catechism, i.e. instruction for children. This of necessity every Christian should know; so that he who does not know this should not be reckoned among Christians nor be admitted to the sacrament, just as a mechanic who does not understand the rules and customs of his trade is rejected and regarded incapable. Therefore the young should be thoroughly instructed in the parts which belong to the Catechism or instruction for children, and should diligently exercise themselves therein.

Therefore it is the duty of every father of a family at least once a week to examine his children and servants, and to ascertain what they know of it, or have learned, and, if they be not familiar with it, to keep them faithfully at it. For I well remember the time – and it may even now be daily seen – when there were adults and even aged persons so uncultivated as to know nothing of these things, and who, nevertheless, went to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and used everything belonging to Christians, notwithstanding the fact that those who come to the Lord's Supper ought to know more and have a fuller understanding of all Christian doctrine than children and new scholars. However, for the common people, we would be satisfied with the three parts, which have been in Christendom from of old, but have been little taught and employed, until they are generally and diligently practiced, and have become familiar to all, both young and old, who wish to be and to be called Christians. These are the following:

I. The Ten Commandments.

- 1) Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

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

5) Thou shalt not kill.

6) Thou shalt not commit adultery.

7) Thou shalt not steal.

8) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

9) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

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

II. The Chief Articles Of Our Faith.

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

2) 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.

3) 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.

III. The Lord's Prayer.¹

Our Father who art in heaven,

1 Hallowed be thy name,

2 Thy kingdom come,

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

4 Give us this day our daily bread,

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

6 And lead us not into temptation,

7 But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

These are the most necessary parts which every Christian should first learn to repeat word for word, and which our children should be accustomed to recite daily when they arise in the morning, when they sit down to their meals, and when they retire at night; and until they repeat them they should be given neither food nor drink. The same duty is also incumbent upon every head of a household with respect to his man-servants and maid-servants, if they do not know these things and are unwilling to learn them. For a person who is so heathenish as to be unwilling to learn these things is not to be tolerated; for in these three parts everything contained in the Scriptures is comprehended in short, general and simple terms. For the holy Fathers or apostles (whoever they were) have thus embraced in a summary the doctrine, life, wisdom and art of Christians, of which they speak and treat, and with which they are occupied.

When these three parts are apprehended, we ought to know how to speak concerning our sacraments, which Christ himself instituted, viz. Baptism, and the holy body and blood of Christ, according to the text which Matthew (28:19 sqq.) and Mark (16:15 sq.) record at the close of their Gospels as to how Christ gave his last instructions to his disciples and sent them forth.

IV. Of Baptism.

Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

So much is sufficient for a plain person to know from the Scriptures concerning Baptism. In like manner, also, concerning the other sacrament, in short, simple words, according to the text of St. Paul. 1 Cor. 11:23 sq.

V. Of The Lord's Supper.

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.

Thus there are in all five parts of the entire Christian doctrine which should be constantly practiced and required [of children], and heard recited word for word. For you must not depend upon that which the young people may learn and

retain from the sermon alone. When these parts have been well learned, you may assign besides some psalms or hymns, based thereupon, in order to enforce the same, and thus to lead the youth into the Scriptures, and accustom them to make daily progress therein.

Yet it is not enough for them alone to comprehend and recite these parts verbatim. Let the young people also attend the preaching, especially during the time which is devoted to the Catechism, that they may hear it explained, and may learn to understand what every part contains, and, in their turn, be able to explain what they have heard, and when asked may give a correct answer, so that the preaching may not be without profit and fruit. For the reason that we exercise such diligence in preaching so often upon the Catechism in order that its truths may be inculcated on our youth, not in an ambitious and acute manner, but briefly and with the greatest simplicity, so as to enter the mind readily and be fixed in the memory.

Therefore we propose to take up the above-mentioned articles in regular order, and treat of them as plainly as possible and as fully as necessity demands.

1. Lit.: The Prayer, or “Our Father,” which Christ taught.↩

Part First. The Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

That is: Thou shalt have [and worship] me alone as thy God. What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood? What is it to have a god? or, what is God?

Answer: A god is that whereto we are to look for all good and to take refuge in all distress; so that to have a god is to trust and believe him from the whole heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true. And, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, viz. faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god. Therefore it is the intent of this commandment to require such true faith and trust of the heart as regards the only true God, and rest in him alone. That is as much as to say: “See to it that you let me be your God, and you never seek another,” i.e. “Whatever you lack in good, seek it of me, and look to me for it, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, lay hold of me and cling fast to me. I verily will give you enough and help you out of every necessity; only let not your heart cleave to or rest in any other.”

This I must unfold somewhat more plainly, that it may be understood and perceived by ordinary examples of the contrary, Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions, in which he trusts and boasts so arrogantly as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, i.e. money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is as joyful and undismayed as though he were in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few are to be found who are of good cheer, and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon.

This [care and desire for money] adheres and clings to our nature, even to the grave.

So too, whoever trusts and boasts in the possession of great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship and honor has also a god, but not the only true God. This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent when without them or deprived of them. Therefore I repeat that the true explanation of this point is that to have a god is to have something upon which the heart entirely trusts.

Besides, consider what, in our blindness, we have hitherto been doing under the Papacy. If any one had toothache, he fasted and honored St. Apollonia [macerated his flesh by voluntary fasting to the honor of St. Apollonia]; if he were afraid of fire, he sought St. Laurence as his deliverer; if he dreaded pestilence, he made a vow to St. Sebastian or Rachio, and a countless number of such abominations, where every one selected his own saint whom he worshiped and invoked in distress. Here belong those also whose idolatry is most gross, and who make a covenant with the devil, in order that he may give them plenty of money or help them in love-affairs, preserve their cattle, restore to them lost possessions, etc., as e. g. sorcerers and necromancers. For all these place their heart and trust elsewhere than in the true God, and neither look to him for any good nor seek anything from him. Thus you can easily understand what and how much this commandment requires, viz. that man's entire heart and all his confidence be placed in God alone, and in no one else. For to have God, you can easily perceive, is not to lay hold of him with our hands or to put him in a bag [as money], or to lock him in a chest [as silver vessels]. But he is said to be apprehended when the heart lays hold of him and depends upon him. But to depend upon him with the heart is nothing else than to trust in him entirely. For this reason he wishes to withdraw us from everything else, and to attract us to himself, viz. because he is the only eternal good. As though he would say: Whatever you have heretofore sought of the saints, or for which you have trusted in Mammon, as well as all else, expect of me, and regard me as the one who will help you and endow you richly with all good things.

Lo, you have here the true honor and service of God, which pleases God, and which he commands under penalty of eternal wrath, viz. that the heart know no other trust or confidence than in him, and do not suffer itself to be torn from him, but, for him, risk and disregard everything upon earth. On the other hand, you can easily see and judge how the world practices only false worship and idolatry. For no people has ever been so godless as not to institute and observe some sort

of divine service. Thus every one has set up as his own god whatever he looked to for blessings, help and comfort.

When, for example, the heathen who aimed at power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god, the others, who were bent upon riches, happiness, or pleasure and a life of ease, venerated Hercules, Mercury, Venus, or others. Women with child worshiped Diana or Lucina. Thus every one makes that to which his heart is inclined his god. So that even in the mind of the heathen to have a god is nothing but to trust and believe. But their error is this, that their trust is false and wrong; for it is not placed in the only God, beside whom there is truly no other in heaven or upon earth. Wherefore the heathen really form their self-invented notions and dreams of God into an idol, and put their trust in that which is altogether nothing. Thus is it with all idolatry; for it consists not merely in erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather in the heart, which is intent on something else, and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints or devils, and neither accepts God, nor looks to him for good to such an extent as to believe that he is willing to help; neither believes that whatever good it experiences comes from God.

Besides, there is also a false divine service and extreme idolatry, which we have hitherto practiced, and is still prevalent in the world, upon which also all ecclesiastical orders are founded, and which alone concerns the conscience, that seeks in its own works help, consolation and salvation, presumes to wrest heaven from God, and reckons how many institutions it has founded, how often it has fasted, attended Mass, etc. Upon such things it depends, and of them boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God gratuitously, but desires itself to earn them or merit them superabundantly, as though he were in our service and debt, and we his lord. What is this but reducing God to an idol, yea, a mere Pomona¹, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God? But this is slightly too subtle, and cannot be comprehended by young pupils.

But let this be said to the simpler, in order that they may well note the meaning of this commandment and retain it in memory, viz. that we are to trust in God alone, and look to him and expect from him all good, as from one who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace and all necessities of both temporal and eternal things; who also preserves us from misfortune, and if any evil befall us delivers and aids us, so that it is God alone (as has been sufficiently said) from whom we receive all good, and by whom we are delivered from all evil. Hence also, I think, we Germans from ancient times designate God (more elegantly and appropriately than in any other language) by

that name from the word Good, since he is an eternal fountain which gushes forth and overflows with pure good, and from which emanates all that is and is called good.

For even though otherwise we experience much good from men, we are still to consider whatever we receive by his command or arrangement as received from God. For our parents, and all rulers, and every one besides, with respect to his neighbor, have received from God the command that they should do us all manner of good; so that we receive these blessings not from them, but, through them, from God. For creatures are only the hand, channels and means whereby God gives all things, as he gives to the mother breasts and milk to support her child, and corn and all manner of produce spring from the earth for nourishment, none of which could be produced by any creature of himself.

Therefore no man should presume to take or give anything except as God has commanded; in order that thereby it may be acknowledged as God's gift, and thanks may be rendered him for it. On this account also these means of receiving good gifts through creatures are not to be rejected, neither should we in presumption seek other ways and means than God has commanded. For that would not be receiving from God, but seeking of ourselves.

Let every one, then, see to it that he esteem this commandment great and high above all things, and do not deride it. Ask and examine your heart diligently, and you will find whether it cleave to God alone or not. If you have a heart that can expect of him nothing but what is good, and this too especially in want and distress, and that renounces and forsakes everything that is not God, then you have the only true God. If, on the contrary, it cleave to anything else, of which it expects more good and help than of God, and do not find refuge in him, but in adversity flee from him, then you have an idol, another god.

In order that it may be seen that God will not have this commandment disregarded, but will most strictly enforce it, he has attached to it first a terrible threat, and then a beautiful consolatory promise which it is important to learn and to impress upon young people, that they may take it to heart and retain it:

Exposition of the Appendix to the First Commandment.

For 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 showing mercy unto thousands of them

that love me and keep my commandments.

Although these words pertain to all the commandments (as we shall hereafter learn), yet they are joined to this as the chief commandment, to indicate that it is of first importance that men have a right head; for where the head is right, the whole life must be right, and *vice versa*. Learn, therefore, from these words how angry God is with those who trust in anything but him, and again how good and gracious he is to those who trust and believe in him alone with the whole heart; so that his anger does not cease until the fourth generation, while, on the other hand, his blessing and goodness extend to many thousands. Learn this, that you may not live in such security and commit yourself to chance, as men of brutal heart, who think that it makes no great difference how they live. He is a God who, if men turn from him, will not leave it unavenged, and will not cease to be angry until the fourth generation, even until they are utterly exterminated. Therefore he is to be feared, and not to be despised. This also he has demonstrated in all history, as the Scriptures fully show and daily experience can well teach. For, from the beginning, he has utterly extirpated all idolatry, and, on account of it, both heathen and Jews; even as at the present day he overthrows all false worship, so that all who remain therein must finally perish. Therefore, although proud, powerful and rich worldlings are now to be found, who boast defiantly of their Mammon, notwithstanding that God is angry or laughs at them, in the confidence that they can endure his wrath; yet, before they are aware, they shall be wrecked, with all in which they trusted; as all others have perished who have thought themselves more secure or powerful.

And just because of such hardened men who imagine, because God connives and allows them to rest in security, that he either is entirely ignorant or cares nothing about such matters, he must deal thus severely and inflict punishment, not forgetting them unto children's children; so that every one may see that this is not a matter of sport to him. For they are those whom he means when he says: "Who hate me," i.e. those who persist in their defiance and pride; who will not hear what is preached or said to them; who, if they be reproved, in order that before punishment begin they may learn to know themselves and amend, are so mad and foolish that they clearly merit wrath; as we see now daily in bishops and princes.

But terrible as are these threatenings, so much the more powerful is the consolation of the promise, that those who trust in God alone should be sure that he will show them mercy, i.e. that he will show them pure goodness and blessing, not only for themselves, but also to their children and children's

children, even to the thousandth generation. This ought certainly to move and impel us, if we wish all temporal and eternal good, to stay our hearts with all confidence upon God; since the Supreme Majesty makes such gracious offers and such rich promises.

Therefore let every one give the most earnest heed that it be not regarded as though this were spoken by a man. For to you it is a question either of eternal blessing, happiness and salvation, or of eternal wrath, misery and woe. What more would you have or desire than that which he so kindly promises, viz. to be yours with every blessing, and to protect and help you in all need?

But this, alas! is the great calamity, that the world believes nothing of this, and regards it not as God's Word, because it sees that those who trust in God, and not in Mammon, suffer care and want, and the devil opposes and resists them; that they have neither money, favor nor honor, and besides can scarcely support life; while, on the other hand, those who serve Mammon have power, favor, honor, possessions and every comfort in the eyes of the world. For this reason, against such appearances, these words must be grasped; and we must remember that they do not lie or deceive, but must prove true.

Reflect for yourself or make inquiry and tell me: Do all they who have employed all their care and diligence to accumulate great possessions and wealth finally attain them? You will find that they have labored and toiled in vain, or even though [with much toil] they have amassed great treasures, they have been dispersed and scattered, so that they themselves have never found happiness in their wealth, and it never reached the third generation. In all histories, as well as in the experience of aged people, you will find enough examples. See that you only regard and ponder them.

Saul was a great king, chosen of God, and a godly man; but when he was established in his throne, he let his heart decline from God, put his trust in his crown and power, and perished with all that he had; so that none of his children remained.

David, on the other hand, was a poor, despised man, hunted down and chased, so that he nowhere felt secure of his life; yet he was to be preferred to Saul, and become king. For these words must abide and prove true, since God cannot lie or deceive. Only let not the devil and the world deceive you by appearances, which indeed remain for a time, but finally are nothing.

Let us then learn well the First Commandment, that we may see how God will allow no presumption nor any trust in any other object, and how he requires nothing higher of us than confidence from the heart for everything good; so that

we may proceed straight forward and employ all the blessings which God gives no farther than as a shoemaker uses his needle, awl and thread for work, and then lays them aside, or as a traveler uses an inn, and food and his bed, only for temporal necessity, each one in his station, according to God's order, and without allowing any of these things to be our lord or idol. Let this suffice with respect to the First Commandment, which we have had to explain at length, since it is of chief importance, because, as before said, where the heart is rightly disposed toward God and this commandment is observed, all the rest follow.

The Second Commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

As the First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught it faith, so this commandment leads us forth and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first objects that, springing from the heart, manifest themselves are words. Therefore as I have taught above what it is to have a god, so it is necessary to comprehend simply the meaning of this and all the commandments, and to answer accordingly.

If, then, it be asked: How do you understand the Second Commandment, and what is meant by taking God's name in vain? we answer briefly: It is taking God's name in vain if we call upon the Lord God in any way in support of falsehood or wrong of any kind. Therefore this commandment forbids the mention of God's name, or taking it upon the lips, when the heart knows or should know differently, as among those who take oaths in courts of justice, where one side falsifies against the other. For God's name cannot be more abused than when used to support falsehood and deceit. Let this be considered the plain and most simple meaning of this commandment.

From this every one can readily infer when and in how many ways God's name is taken in vain, although it is impossible to enumerate all its abuses. Yet, in a few words, all abuse of God's name occurs first in worldly business and in matters which concern money, possessions, honor, whether it be publicly before courts of justice, in the market or elsewhere, where men make false oaths in God's name, or take the responsibility of the matter upon their souls. And this is especially prevalent in marriage affairs, where two secretly betroth themselves to one another, and afterward abjure.

But, the greatest abuse occurs in spiritual matters, which pertain to the conscience, when false preachers rise up and offer their lying vanities as God's Word.

Behold, all this is decorating one's self with God's name, or wishing to be fair and maintain our cause, whether it occur in gross, worldly business or in sublime, subtle matters of faith and doctrine. And among liars belong also blasphemers, not alone those who are very gross, well known to every one, who, without fear, disgrace God's name (they belong not to our school, but to that of the hangman); but also those who publicly traduce² the truth and God's Word, and refer it to the devil. Of this there is no need to speak further.

Here, then, let us learn and thoroughly understand the importance of this commandment, that we diligently be on our guard against every abuse of the holy name, as the greatest sin that can be outwardly committed. For to lie and deceive is in itself a great sin, but is greatly aggravated by attempting a justification, and where, to confirm it, the name of God is invoked and is used as a cloak for shame, so that from a single lie a double lie, nay manifold lies, result.

Therefore, to this commandment God has added also a solemn threat, viz.: *"For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* That is: It shall in nowise be overlooked or pass unpunished in any one. For just as he will not leave it unavenged if any one turn his heart from him, so too will he not suffer his name to be employed to support a lie. Now, alas! it is a common calamity in all the world that there are so few who are not guilty of using the name of God in falsehood and all wickedness. They are as few as those who in their heart trust alone in God.

For by nature we all have within us this beautiful virtue, viz. that every one who has committed a wrong would like to cover up and adorn his disgrace, so that no one may see it or know it; and no one is so bold as to boast to all the world of the wickedness he has perpetrated, but wishes everything to be done secretly, and without any one being aware of it. Then if any one be arraigned, the name of God must suffer for it, and change the villainy into godliness, and the shame into honor. This is the common course of the world, which, like a great deluge, has inundated all lands. Hence we have also as our reward that which we seek and merit, pestilences, wars, famines, conflagrations, floods, faithless wives, spoiled children, faithless servants, and trouble of every kind. Whence else should we have so much misery? It is still a great mercy that the earth bears and supports us.

Therefore, above all things, the attention of our young people should be directed to this commandment, and they should be accustomed to hold this and the First Commandment in high regard; and in case they transgress, resort must at once be had to the rod, and the commandment must be held before them, and be constantly inculcated, so that they may be brought up not only with punishment, but also in the reverence and fear of God.

Thus you now understand what it is to take God's name in vain, viz. (to recapitulate briefly) either simply in falsehood, to present, in God's name, anything untrue, or to curse, swear, conjure and, in short, to practice wickedness in any way.

But besides this you must also know how to use the name of God aright. For by the words: "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,*" he gives us plainly to understand that it is to be used properly. For it has been revealed and given to us for the very purpose that it may be of constant use and profit. Therefore, since the use of this holy name for falsehood or wickedness is here forbidden, it necessarily follows that we are, on the other hand, commanded to employ it for truth and for all good, as where one swears truly where there is need and it is demanded. So also when it is rightly taught, and when the name is invoked in trouble or praised and thanked in prosperity, etc.; all of which is comprehended summarily and commanded in the passage (Ps. 50:15): "*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*" For all this is bringing it into the service of truth, and using it in a blessed way, and thus his name is hallowed, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer.

Thus you have an explanation of the sum of the entire commandment. And with this understanding the question with which many teachers have troubled themselves is solved, viz. Why, in the Gospel, swearing is prohibited,³ and yet Christ, St. Paul and other saints often swore? The explanation is briefly this: We are not to swear in support of evil, i.e. in falsehood; and where there is no need or use, but for the support of good and the advantage of our neighbor. For it is truly a good work whereby God is praised, truth and justice are established, falsehood is refuted, peace is made among men, obedience is enforced, and contentions are suppressed. For thus God himself interposes and decides between right and wrong, good and bad. If the one side swear falsely, they have their sentence that they shall not escape punishment, and though it be deferred a long time, they shall not succeed; so that all that they may gain thereby will slip out of their hands, and they never will enjoy it; as I have seen in the case of

many who repudiated their marriage-vows, that they have never had a good hour or a healthful day, and thus perished miserably in body, soul and possessions.

Therefore I again and again advise and exhort, that by means of warning and terror, restraint and punishment, they be accustomed to shun falsehood, and especially to avoid the use of God's name in its support. For where they are allowed to do thus, no good will result, as it is even now evident that the world is worse than it has ever been, and that there is no government, no obedience, no fidelity, no faith, but only presumptuous, licentious men, whom no teaching or reproof helps; all of which is only God's wrath and punishment for such flagrant contempt of this commandment.

On the other hand, they should be constantly urged and incited to honor God's name, and to have it always upon their lips in everything that may happen to them or come to their notice. For to give true honor to his name is to look to it and implore it for all consolation; so that (as we have heard above) first the heart, by faith, gives God the honor due him, and afterwards the lips, by confession.

This habit is not only blessed and useful, but especially powerful against the devil, who is ever about us, and lies in wait to bring us into sin and shame, calamity and trouble, but who is always offended to hear God's name, and cannot remain long where it is mentioned and called upon from the heart. And, indeed, many a terrible and shocking calamity would befall us if, by our calling upon his name, God did not preserve us. I have myself tried it, and learned by experience that often sudden great calamity was immediately averted and removed during such invocation. To vex the devil, I say, we should always have this holy name in our mouth, so that he may not be able to injure us as he would wish.

For this end it is also of service that we be in the habit of daily commending ourselves to God, with soul and body, wife, child, servants and all that we have, against all necessities that may occur; whence also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals, and other prayers morning and evening, have originated and remain in use. Likewise also the practice of children to cross themselves and exclaim, when any thing monstrous or terrible is seen or heard: "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" etc. Thus too, if any one experience unexpected good, however trivial, that he say: "God be praised and thanked for bestowing this on me!" As formerly the children were accustomed to fast and pray to St. Nicholas and other saints. This would be more pleasing and acceptable to God than all monasticism and Carthusian sanctity.

So we might thus train our youth, in a childlike way and in the midst of their plays, in God's fear and honor, so that the First and Second Commandments might be familiar and in constant practice. Then some good might adhere, spring up and bear fruit, and men grow up in whom an entire land might rejoice and be glad. This would be the true way to bring up children; since, by means of kindness, and with delight, they can become accustomed to it. For what must only be forced with rods and blows will have no good result, and at farthest, under such treatment, they will remain godly no longer than the rod descends upon their backs.

But this manner of training so spreads its roots in the heart that they fear God more than rods and clubs. This I say with such simplicity, for the sake of the young, that it may penetrate their minds. For since we are preaching to children, we must also prattle with them. Thus have we prevented the abuse, and have taught the right use of the divine name, which should consist not only in words, but also in practice and life; so that we may know that God is well pleased with this, and will as richly reward it as he will terribly punish its abuse.

The Third Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The word Sabbath (*Feiertag*) is derived from the Hebrew word which properly signifies to rest (*feiren*), i.e. to abstain from labor. Hence we are accustomed to say, in German, *Feierabend machen*, i.e. to cease working, or give a holy evening [sanctify the Sabbath]. Now, in the Old Testament, God separated the seventh day, and appointed it for rest, and commanded that it should be regarded holy above all others. According to this external observance, this commandment was given to the Jews alone, that they should abstain from toilsome work, and rest, so that both man and beast might recuperate, and might not be debilitated by unremitting labor. Although they afterwards interpreted this too strictly,⁴ and grossly abused it, so that they traduced and could not endure in Christ those works which they themselves were accustomed to do thereon, as we read in the Gospel; just as though the commandment were fulfilled in this, viz. that no external [manual] work whatever be performed, which was not, the meaning, but, as we shall hear, that they sanctify the Sabbath or Day of Rest.

This commandment, therefore, according to its gross sense, does not pertain to us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like the other ordinances

of the Old Testament, which were bound to particular customs, persons, times and places, and all of which have now been made free through Christ.

But to derive hence Christian instruction for the simple as to what, in this commandment, God requires, let it be observed that we keep the festal days, not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians (for they have no need of this observance), but first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; and for the common people, man-servants and maid-servants, who are occupied the whole week with their work and trade, that for a day they may forbear, in order to rest and be refreshed.

Secondly, and most especially, that on such day of rest (since otherwise it cannot be accomplished) time and opportunity be taken to attend divine service, so that we meet to hear and treat of God's Word, and afterwards to praise God in singing and prayer.

But this, I say, is not so limited to any time, as with the Jews, that it must be just on this or that day; for in itself no one day is better than another, and this should indeed occur daily; but since the mass of people cannot give such attendance, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. But since from of old Sunday [the Lord's Day] has been appointed for this purpose, we also should continue the same, that everything be done in harmonious order, and no one, by unnecessary innovation, create disorder.

Therefore the simple meaning of the commandment is this, viz. since holidays are observed, such observance be devoted to hearing God's Word; so that the special employment of this day be the ministry of the Word for the young and the mass of poor people; yet that the observance of rest be not so strictly interpreted as to forbid any other incidental and necessary work.

When, then, it is asked: "What is meant by the commandment: '*Remember the sabbath-day to sanctify it*'?"

Answer: To sanctify the Sabbath is the same as "to keep it holy." But what is meant by "keeping it holy"? Nothing else than to be occupied in holy words, works and life. For the day needs no sanctification for itself; for in itself it has been created holy [from the beginning of the creation it was sanctified by its Creator]. But God desires it to be holy to thee. Therefore it becomes holy or unholy on thy account, according as thou art occupied on the same with things that are holy or unholy.

How then does such sanctification occur? Not that [with folded hands] we sit behind the stove and do no rough [external] work, or deck ourselves with a

garland and put on our best clothes, but (as has been said) that we occupy ourselves with God's Word, and exercise ourselves therein.

And indeed we Christians ought always to keep such a Sabbath, and to be occupied with nothing but holy things, i.e. daily to meditate upon God's Word, and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. But because (as has been said) we do not all have leisure, we must devote several hours a week to the young, or at least a day to the mass of people, in order that we may be concerned about this alone, and especially urge the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and thus direct our whole life and being according to God's Word. The Sabbath is truly kept whenever time is devoted to earnest attention to this, and the practice of it; but that cannot be called a true Christian Sabbath where this is not done. For they who are not Christians can keep holiday and be idle just as well as the entire swarm of our ecclesiastics, who stand daily in the churches, singing, and ringing bells, but who keep no Sabbath day holy, because they neither preach nor practice God's Word, but teach and live contrary to it.

For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints, or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, they would not avail us anything; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God's Word is the treasury which sanctifies everything whereby even all the saints themselves were sanctified. Whatever be the hour when God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, person, day and work are then sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all. Therefore I constantly say that all our life and work must be guided by God's Word, if it is to be pleasing to God or holy. Where this occurs, this commandment exerts its power and is fulfilled.

On the contrary, any matter or work that is without God's Word is unholy before God, no matter how brilliant it may appear, even though it be covered with relics, such as the fictitious spiritual orders, which know nothing of God's Word and seek holiness in their own works.

Notice, therefore that the power and efficacy of this commandment consist not in the resting, but in the sanctifying, so that to this day belongs a special holy exercise. For other works and occupations are not properly holy exercises, unless the man himself be first holy. But here a work is to be done whereby man is himself made holy, which occurs (as we have heard) alone through God's Word. For this, then, fixed places, times, persons, and the entire external order of divine

service have been created and appointed, so that it may be publicly and constantly exercised.

Since, therefore, so much depends upon God's Word that without it no Sabbath can be kept holy, we ought to know that God will insist upon a strict observance of this commandment, and will punish all who despise his Word and are not willing to hear and learn it, especially at the time appointed for the purpose.

Therefore this commandment is violated not only by those who grossly abuse and desecrate the Sabbath, as those who, on account of their avarice or frivolity, cease to hear God's Word, or lie in taverns, and are dead drunk, like swine; but also by that other great crowd, who listen to God's Word as though it were a trifle, and attend upon preaching only from custom, and at the end of the year know as little of it as at the beginning. For hitherto the opinion has been prevalent that it is properly hallowed when on Sunday a Mass or the Gospel is heard; but no one has asked about God's Word, as also no one taught it. Yet now, even since we have God's Word, we nevertheless do not correct the abuse; but while constantly attending upon preaching and exhortation, we hear it without care and seriousness.

Know, therefore, that it is not only to be heard, but to be learned and retained in memory, and do not regard it as an optional matter or one of no great importance, but as God's commandment, who will require of you how you have heard, learnt and honored his Word.

Likewise those fastidious spirits are to be reproved who when they have heard a sermon or two, find it tedious and dull, thinking that they know all that well enough, and need no more instruction. For just that is the sin which has been hitherto reckoned among mortal sins, and is called *αχνοια* i.e. torpor or satiety, a malignant, dangerous plague which the devil infuses into the hearts of many, that he may surprise us and secretly withdraw God's Word from us.

For let me tell you this, even though you know it perfectly and be already master of all things, you are still daily in the dominion of the devil, who ceases neither day nor night to steal unawares upon you, so that he may kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against the foregoing as well as against all the commandments. Therefore you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips and in your ears. But where the heart is idle, and the Word does not sound, he breaks in and does the damage before we are aware. On the other hand, such is the efficacy of the Word wherever seriously contemplated, heard and used, that it never departs without fruit, but always awakens new

understanding, pleasure and devoutness, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words. And even though no other interest or necessity impel us, yet this ought to influence every one, since thereby the devil is put to flight and driven away, and, besides, this commandment is fulfilled, which is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant.

The Fourth Commandment.

Thus far we have learned the first three commandments, viz those which relate to God. First, that with our whole heart and throughout all our life we trust in him and fear and love him. Secondly, that we abuse not his holy name in the support of falsehood or any bad work, but employ it to the praise of God and the profit and salvation of our neighbor and ourselves. Thirdly, that in the observance of the Sabbath and of rest we diligently use and employ God's Word, so that all our actions and our entire life be directed by it. Now follow the other seven, which relate to our neighbor, among which the first and greatest is:

Honor thy father and thy mother

The parental estate God has especially honored above all estates that are beneath him, so that he not only commands us to love our parents, but to honor them. For with respect to brothers, sisters and our neighbors in general he commands nothing higher than that we love them; so that he separates and distinguishes father and mother above all other persons upon earth, and places them next to himself. For to honor is far higher than to love, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility and deference as though to a majesty there hidden, and requires not only that they be addressed kindly and with reverence, but most of all that both in heart and with the body we so act as to show that we esteem them very highly, and that, next to God, we regard them the very highest. For one whom we honor from the heart we must truly regard as high and great.

We must, therefore, impress it upon the young that they should regard their parents in God's stead, and remember that however lowly, poor, frail and queer they may be, nevertheless they are father and mother given them by God. And they are not to be deprived of their honor because of their mode of life or their failings. Therefore we are not to regard their persons, how they may be, but the

will of God who has thus appointed and ordained. In other respects we are, indeed, all alike in the eyes of God; but among us there must necessarily be such inequality and distinction with respect to order, and therefore God commands that you be careful to obey me as your father, and that I have the precedence.

Learn, therefore, first, what is the honor towards parents required by this commandment, viz. first, that they be held in honor and esteemed above all things, as the most precious treasure on earth. Secondly, that in our words to them we observe modesty, and do not speak roughly, haughtily and defiantly; but yield to them in silence, even though they go too far. Thirdly, also, with respect to works, that we show them such in honor, with body and possessions, as to serve them, help them, and provide for them when old, sick, infirm, or poor, and all that not only gladly, but with humility and reverence, as doing it before God. For he who knows how to regard them in his heart will not allow them to suffer hunger or want, but will place them above and near him, and will share with them whatever he has and can obtain.

Secondly, notice how great, good and holy a work is here assigned children, which is, alas! so much neglected and disregarded, and no one perceives that God has commanded it or that it is a holy, divine Word and doctrine. For if it had been regarded as such, every one could have perceived that it required holy men to live according to these words, and there would have been no need of inventing monasticism and spiritual orders, but every child would have abided by this commandment, and could have directed his conscience to God, and said: "If I am to do a good and holy work, I know of none better than to render all honor and obedience to my parents, because God has himself commanded it. For what God has commanded must be much and far nobler than everything that we may ourselves devise; and because there is no higher or better teacher to be found than God, there can be no better doctrine than he imparts. Now he teaches fully what we should do if we wish to perform truly good works; and in that he commands them, he shows that they please him. If, then, it is God who makes this command, and who knows not how to appoint anything better, I will never improve upon it."

In this manner we would have had godly children properly taught and reared in true blessedness, who would have remained at home in the service of their parents and in obedience to them, causing them much pleasure and joy. And yet God's commandment was not thus honored, but was neglected and allowed to pass out of sight, so that a child could not lay it to heart, and meanwhile gaped in ignorant astonishment at our devices, and never acknowledged God's authority.

Let us therefore, at length, learn, for God's sake, that placing all other things out of sight, our youths look first to this commandment, if they wish to serve God with truly good works, viz. that they do what is pleasing to their fathers and mothers, or to those to whom they may be subject in their stead. For every child that knows and does this has, in the first place, this great consolation in his heart, that he can joyfully exult and say (in spite of and against all who are occupied with works of their own device): "Behold this work is well pleasing to my God in heaven, that I know for certain." Let them all come together with their many great, distressing and difficult works and make their boast; we will see whether they can show one that is greater and nobler than obedience to parents, to whom God has appointed and commanded obedience next to his own majesty; so that if God's Word and will are accomplished, nothing shall be esteemed higher than the will and word of parents; yet see that we abide in obedience to God and violate not the former commandments.

Therefore you should be heartily glad and thank God that he has chosen you and made you worthy to do a work so precious and acceptable to him. Only see that you esteem it great and precious, although it be regarded as the most humble and despised, not on account of our worthiness, but because it is comprehended and established in the jewel and sanctuary, namely the Word and commandment of God. Oh how gladly might all Carthusians, monks and nuns pay a high price for this jewel, if in all their ecclesiastical establishments and institutions they could bring a single work into God's presence done by virtue of his commandment, and be able before his face to say with joyful heart: "Now I know that this work is well pleasing to thee." What will become of these poor wretched persons when, in the sight of God and all the world, contrasted with a little child who has lived according to this commandment, they shall blush with shame, and shall be obliged to confess that with their whole life they are not worthy to give it a drink of water? But it serves them right in return for their Satanic perversion in treading God's commandment under foot, that they torment themselves with works of their own device, and in addition have scorn and loss for their reward.

Should not the heart therefore leap and melt for joy if it may go to work and do what is commanded, so that it can say: Lo, this is better than all holiness of the Carthusians, even though they kill themselves fasting and praying without ceasing, upon their knees? For you have a sure test and a divine testimony that he has commanded this, but concerning the other not a word. But this is the calamity and sad blindness of the world, viz. that no one believes it, since the

devil has so deceived us with false holiness and the outward speciousness of our own works.

Therefore I would be very glad (I say again) if men would open their eyes and ears, and take this to heart, in order that we may not be again led astray from the pure Word of God to the lying vanities of the devil. Thus also matters would be in a good condition; so that parents would have more joy, love, friendship and concord in their houses; thus the children could captivate their parents' hearts. When they are obstinate, on the other hand, and will not do what they ought until a rod is laid upon their back, they offend both God and their parents, so that they deprive themselves of this treasure and joy of conscience, and lay up for themselves only misfortune. Therefore, as every one complains, the course of the world now is such that both young and old are altogether dissolute and beyond control, have no modesty nor sense of honor, do nothing good except as they are driven to it by blows, and perpetrate what wrong and detraction they can behind each other's back; therefore God also punishes them, that they sink into all kind of indecency and misery. Thus the parents commonly are themselves stupid and ignorant; one fool begets [teaches] another, and as they have lived, so live their children after them.

This now should be the first and most important consideration (I say) to urge us to the observance of this commandment; on which account, even if we had no father and mother, we ought to wish that God would set up wood and stone before us, that we might call them father and mother. How much more, since he has given us living parents, should we rejoice to show them honor and obedience, because we know it is so highly pleasing to the Divine Majesty and to all angels, and vexes all devils, and is besides the highest work which we can do, after the sublime divine worship comprehended in the previous commandments; so that giving of alms and every other good work toward our neighbor are not equal to this! For God has assigned this estate the highest place, yea in his own stead, upon earth. This will and pleasure of God ought to be sufficient to cause and induce us to do what we can with good will and pleasure.

Besides this, it is our duty before the world to be grateful for benefits and every good which we have of parents. But in this again the devil rules in the world, so that the children forget their parents, as we all forget God, and no one considers how God nourishes, protects and defends us, and bestows so great good on body and soul: especially if an evil hour come we are offended and murmur with impatience, and all good which we have all our life received is as if it never had been. Just so also we do with our parents, and there is no child that

understands and considers this, except it be enlightened and led thereto by the Holy Ghost.

God knows very well this perverseness of the world; therefore he admonishes and urges by commandments that every one consider what parents have done for him, and he will find that he owes to them body and life, as well as sustenance, support and rearing, since otherwise he would have perished a hundred times in his own filth. Therefore it is a true and good saying of old and wise men: *Deo, parentibus et magistris non potest satis gratiae rependi*, that is, to God, to parents and to teachers we can never render sufficient gratitude and compensation. He that regards and considers this will indeed without compulsion do all honor to his parents, and cherish them as those through whom God has done him all good.

Besides all this, it should be a great inducement to influence us the more to obedience to this commandment, that God adds to the same a temporal promise and says: *“That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee”*

Here we can see how much God is in earnest in respect to this commandment, inasmuch as he not only declares that it is well pleasing to him, and how much joy and delight he has therein; but also that it shall be for our prosperity and promote our highest good; so that we may have a pleasant and agreeable life, furnished with every good thing. Therefore also St. Paul indicates the same and highly rejoices in it, when he says (Eph. 6:2, 3): This *“is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long on the earth.”* For although the rest also include their promises, yet in none is it so plainly and explicitly stated.

Here then thou hast the fruit and the reward, viz. that whoever observes this commandment shall have good days, happiness and prosperity; and on the other hand, also, the punishment, that whoever is disobedient shall the sooner perish, and never enjoy life. For to have long life in the sense of the Scriptures is not only to become old, but to have everything which belongs to long life, as, namely, health, wife and child, support, peace, good government, etc., without which this life can neither be enjoyed in cheerfulness nor long endure. If, therefore, thou wilt not obey father and mother and submit to discipline, then obey the inquisitor; if thou wilt not obey him, then submit to the executioner, i.e. death [death the all-subduer, the teacher of wicked children]. For in regard to this God is determined: Either if you obey him, rendering love and service, he

will grant you exceeding great recompense with all good, or if you offend him he will send upon you death and the torturer.

Whence come so many criminals that must daily be hanged, beheaded, broken upon the wheel, but from disobedience [to parents], because they will not submit to discipline in good part? and the result is [since they are unwilling to hear the reproof of parents given in kindness and love] that, by the punishment of God, they bring upon themselves misfortune and grief. For it seldom happens that such wicked people die a natural or timely death.

But the godly and obedient have this blessing, that they live long in quietness, and see their children's children (as said above) to the third and fourth generation.

As experience also teaches that where there are honorable, old families who stand well and have many children, they have their origin in this fact, viz. that some of them were well brought up and were regardful of their parents. So on the other hand it is written of the wicked (Ps. 109:13): *"Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out."* Therefore consider well how great a thing in God's sight obedience is, since he so highly esteems it, is so highly pleased with it, and rewards it so richly, and besides is so rigid in punishing those who transgress with respect to it.

All this I say, that it may be well impressed upon the young. For no one believes how necessary this commandment is, since it has not been thus esteemed and taught hitherto under the papacy. Every one thinks they are insignificant and easy words which he has always known, therefore men pass this lightly by, are eagerly intent upon other matters, and do not see or believe that God is so greatly offended if this be disregarded, or that he esteems it a work so well pleasing and precious if it be observed.

In connection with this commandment it is proper to speak further of all kinds of obedience to persons in authority who have to command and to govern. For all authority flows and is propagated from the authority of parents. For where a father is unable alone to educate his [rebellious and irritable] child, he employs a schoolmaster⁵ that he may instruct it; if he be too weak, he obtains the assistance of his friends and neighbors; if he depart, he confers and delegates his authority and government to others who are appointed for the purpose.

Likewise he must have domestics, man-servants and maid-servants, under him for the management of the household, so that all whom we call masters are in the place of parents and must derive their power and authority to govern from them. Hence also they are all called fathers in the Scriptures, as those who in

their government perform the functions of the office of a father, and should have a paternal heart toward their subordinates. As also from antiquity the Romans and other nations called the masters and mistresses of the household *patres et matres familiae*, that is house-fathers and house-mothers. So also they called their national rulers and chiefs *patres patriae*, that is fathers of the country, for a great shame to us who would be Christians that we do not call them so, or, at least, do not esteem and honor them as such. What a child owes to father and mother the same owe all who are embraced in the household. Therefore man-servants and maid-servants should be careful not only to be obedient to their masters and mistresses, but also to honor them as their own fathers and mothers, and to do everything which they know is expected of them, not from compulsion and with reluctance, but with pleasure and joy for the cause just mentioned, namely, that it is God's command and is pleasing to him above all other works. Therefore they ought rather to pay wages in addition and be glad that they may obtain masters and mistresses, to have such joyful consciences and to know how they may do truly golden works; a matter which has hitherto been neglected, and despised, when instead everybody ran, in the devil's name, into convents or pilgrimages and for indulgences, with loss [of time and money] and with an evil conscience.

If indeed this truth could be impressed upon the poor people, a servant-girl would leap and thank and praise God, and with her menial work for which she receives support and wages she would acquire such a treasure as all that are esteemed the greatest saints have not obtained. Is it not an excellent boast to know and say this, that if you perform your daily domestic task it is better than all the ascetic life and sanctity of monks? And if you have the promise in addition that you shall fare well and prosper in all good, how can you be more blessed or lead a holier life in regard to works? For in the sight of God faith alone can render holy and serve him, but the works are for the service of man. Then you have all good protection and defense in the Lord, a joyful conscience and a gracious God besides, who will reward you a hundredfold, so that you are even a nobleman if you be only pious and obedient. But if not, you have in the first place only the wrath and displeasure of God, no peace of heart, and afterwards all manner of plagues and misfortunes.

Whoever will not be influenced by this and inclined to piety we leave to the hangman and to death. Therefore let every one who allows himself to be advised remember that God is not making sport, and know that it is God who speaks with

you and demands obedience. If you obey him you are his dear child, but if you despise this commandment, then take shame, calamity and grief for your reward.

The same also is to be said of obedience to civil government, which (as we have said) is embraced in the estate of fatherhood and extends farthest of all relations. For here the father is not one of a single family, but of as many people as he has tenants, citizens or subjects. For God through them, as through our parents, gives to us support, estate, protection and security. Therefore since they bear such name and title with all honor as their highest dignity, it is our duty to honor them and to esteem them great as the greatest treasure and the most precious jewel upon earth.

He, now, who is obedient here, is willing and ready to serve, and cheerfully does all that pertains to honor, knows that he is pleasing God and will receive joy and happiness for his reward. If he will not do it in love, but despises and resists authority or rebels, let him know on the other hand also that he shall have no favor or blessing, and where he thinks to gain a florin thereby, he will elsewhere lose ten times as much, or become a victim to the hangman, perish by war, pestilence and famine, or experience no good in his children, and be obliged to suffer injury, injustice and violence at the hands of his servants, neighbors or strangers and tyrants; so that what we seek and deserve comes upon us as our reward.

If we would only once give it fair consideration that such works are pleasing to God and have so rich a reward, we would be established in possession of purely superabundant good and would have what our heart desires. But because the word and command of God are so lightly esteemed, as though some vagabond had spoken it, let us see therefore whether you are the man to oppose him. How difficult it will be for him to recompense you! Therefore it is better for you to live thus with the divine favor, peace and happiness than with displeasure and misfortune. Why, think you, is the world now so full of unfaithfulness, disgrace, calamity and murder, but that every one desires to be his own master and subject to no authority, to care nothing for any one, and do what pleases him? Therefore God punishes one knave by means of another, so that when you defraud and despise your master, another comes and deals the same with you, yea in your household you must suffer ten times more from wife, child or servants.

We feel indeed our misfortune, we murmur and complain of unfaithfulness, violence and injustice, but are unwilling to see that we ourselves are knaves who have truly deserved this punishment, and yet are not thereby reformed. We do

not really desire the divine favor and happiness, therefore it is but fair that we have misfortune without mercy. There must somewhere upon earth be still some godly people that God yet allows us so much good! On our own account we should have neither a farthing in the house nor a stalk of straw in the field. All this I have been obliged to urge with so many words, in hope that some one may take it to heart, that we may be relieved of the blindness and misery in which we have lain so long, and may truly understand the Word and will of God. and earnestly accept it. For therein we would learn how we could have joy, happiness, and salvation, both temporal and eternal, in abundance.

Thus we have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment, fathers in blood and fathers in office, or those to whom belongs the care of the family, and those to whom belongs the care of the nation. Besides these they are yet spiritual fathers; not like those in the Papacy, who have indeed caused themselves be so designated, but have not performed the functions of the paternal office. For those only are to be called spiritual fathers who govern and guide us by the Word of God. Of this name St. Paul boasts (1 Cor. 4:15), where he says: *“In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.”* Because they are fathers indeed they are entitled to honor above all others. But they are regarded of the least importance: for the only honor the world has to confer upon them is to drive them out of the country and to grudge them a piece of bread, and in short they must be (as says St. Paul, 1 Cor. 4:13) “as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.”

Yet there is need that this also be urged upon the populace, that those who would be Christians are under obligation in the sight of God to esteem them worthy of double honor who minister to their souls, that they deal well with them and provide for them. For that, God wishes to give you additional blessing and will not let you come to want. But in this every one withholds and makes objections, and all are afraid that they will perish from bodily want, and therefore cannot now support a respectable preacher, where formerly they filled ten gormandizers. In this we also deserve that God deprive us of his Word and blessing, and again allow preachers of lies to arise to lead us to the devil, and in addition to drain our sweat and blood.

But those who keep in sight God’s will and commandment have the promise that everything which they bestow upon temporal and spiritual fathers, and whatever they do to honor them, shall be richly recompensed to them, so that they shall have not only bread, clothing and money for a year or two, but long life, support and peace, and shall be eternally rich and blessed. Therefore only do

what is your duty, and let God take care how he shall support you and provide you with abundance. Since he has promised it, and has never yet lied, he will not be found lying to you in this.

This ought indeed to encourage us, and give us hearts that would melt in pleasure and love toward those to whom we owe this honor, so that we would raise our hands and joyfully thank God who has given us such promises, induced by which we ought to run to the ends of the world [to the remotest parts of India]. For although the whole world should combine, it could not add an hour to our life or give us a single grain from the earth. But God wishes to give you all exceeding abundantly according to your heart's desire. He who despises and regards this is not worthy ever to hear a word of God. This is indeed superfluous to say to those who come under the instruction of this commandment.

In addition, it would not be amiss to preach to the parents, and such as bear their office, as to how they should deport themselves toward those who are committed to them for their government. For although this is not expressed in the Ten Commandments, it is nevertheless abundantly enjoined in many places in the Scriptures. And God desires to have it embraced in this commandment when he speaks of father and mother. For he does not wish to have in this office and government knaves and tyrants; nor does he assign to them this honor, viz. power and authority to govern, and to allow themselves to be worshiped; but they should consider that they are under obligations of obedience to God; and that first of all they are earnestly and faithfully to discharge the duties of their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but especially to train them to the honor and praise of God. Therefore do not think that this is appointed for thy pleasure and arbitrary will; but that it is a strict command and institution of God, to whom also thou must give account of the matter.

But this is again a sad evil, that no one perceives or heeds this, and all live on as though God gave us children for our pleasure or amusement, and servants that we should employ them like a cow or ass, only for work, or as though all we had to do with our subjects were only to gratify our wantonness, without any concern on our part as to what they learn or how they live; and no one is willing to see that this is the command of the Supreme Majesty, who will most strictly call us to an account and punish for it; not that there is so great need to be so intensely anxious about the young. For if we wish to have proper and excellent persons both for civil and ecclesiastical government, we must spare no diligence, time or cost in teaching and educating our children, that they may serve God and the

world, and we must not think only how we may amass money and possessions for them. For God can indeed without us support and make them rich, as he daily does. But for this purpose he has given us children, and has commanded us to train and govern them according to his will, else he would have no need of father and mother. Let every one know, therefore, that above all things it is his duty, or otherwise he will lose the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God; and, if they have talents, to give them also opportunity to learn and study, that they may be able to avail themselves of that for which there is need [to have them instructed and trained in a liberal education, that men may be able to have their aid in government and in whatever is necessary].

If that were done God would also richly bless us and give us grace, that there would be men trained by whom land and people would be reformed, and likewise well-educated citizens, chaste and domestic wives, who afterwards would continue to rear godly children and servants. Here think what deadly injury you are doing if you be negligent and fail to bring up your child to usefulness and piety, and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, meriting hell even in your dealings with your own children, even though you be otherwise ever so pious and holy. And because this is disregarded, God so fearfully punishes the world that there is no discipline, government or peace, of which we all complain, but do not see that it is our fault, for as we train them we have spoiled and disobedient children and subjects. Let this be sufficient exhortation; for to amplify this belongs to another time.

The Fifth Commandment.

Thou shall not kill.

We have now completed the discussion of both spiritual and temporal government, that is, divine and paternal authority and obedience, But here we go forth from our own house to our neighbor's, to learn how we should live with respect to one another, every one for himself toward his neighbor. Therefore God and government are not included in this commandment, nor the power which they have to kill. For God has delegated his authority to governments to punish evil-doers instead of parents, who aforetime (as we read in Moses) were required to bring their children to judgment and sentence them to death. Therefore this prohibition pertains to individuals and not to government.

This commandment is now easy enough, and is often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew (5:21 sqq), where Christ himself explains and sums it up – namely, that we must not kill, either with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help or counsel. Therefore it is forbidden to every one to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and government. For it is proper for God, and for every one who stands in his stead, to be angry, to reprove and punish, even on account of those who transgress this and the other commandments.

But the cause and need of this commandment is that God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness; therefore he has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the wicked. As now there are many temptations against all the commandments, so the temptation in respect to this is that we must live among many people who do us wrong, that we have cause to be hostile to them.

As when your neighbor sees that you have better possessions from property, and more happiness [a larger family and more fertile fields] from God, than he, he is offended, envies you, and speaks no good of you.

Thus by the devil's incitement you will have many enemies who cannot bear to see you have any good, either bodily or spiritual. When we see them it is natural for our hearts in their turn to rage and bleed and take vengeance. Thus there arise cursing and blows, from which follow finally misery and murder. Therefore God like a kind father anticipates, interposes and wishes to have all quarrels settled, that no misfortune come of them, nor one destroy another. And in fine he would hereby defend, liberate and keep in peace every one against all the crime and violence of every one else; and has, as it were, placed this commandment as a wall, fortress and refuge about our neighbor, that we do him no bodily harm or injury.

Thus this commandment insists upon it that no one offend his neighbor on account of any injury, even though he have fully deserved it. For where murder is forbidden, all cause also is forbidden whence murder may originate. For many a one, although he does not kill, yet curses and makes imprecations, which if fulfilled with respect to any one, he would not live long. Since this inheres in every one by nature, and is a matter of ordinary experience, that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another, God wishes to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor, and to accustom us ever to keep in view this commandment, always as in a mirror to contemplate ourselves in it, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and

invocation of his name to commend to him the wrong which we suffer; and thus let our enemies rage and be angry, doing what they can. Thus we may learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, i.e. our enemies.

Therefore the entire sum of this commandment is to be impressed upon the simple-minded most explicitly, viz. What is the meaning of *not to kill*? In the first place, that we hurt no one with our hand or deed. Then that we do not employ our tongue to instigate or counsel thereto. Further, that we neither use nor assent to any kind of means or methods whereby any one may be injured. And finally that the heart be not ill-disposed toward any one, nor from anger and hatred wish him ill, so that body and soul may be innocent in respect to every one, but especially in respect to those who wish you evil or actually commit such against you. For to do evil to one who wishes and does you good is not human, but diabolical.

Secondly, it is to be observed that not only he who does evil to his neighbor is guilty of violating this commandment, but he also who can do him good, anticipate, prevent, defend and save him, so that no bodily evil or harm happen to him, and yet does it not. If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. And it will not avail to make the pretext that you did not afford any help, counsel or aid thereto, for you have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit whereby his life would have been saved.

Therefore God also properly calls all those murderers who do not afford counsel and help in distress and danger of body and life, and will pass a most terrible sentence upon them in the last day, as Christ himself has announced, as he shall say (Matt. 25:42 sq.): “*I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.*” That is: You would have suffered me and mine to die of hunger, thirst and cold, would have suffered the wild beasts to tear us to pieces or left us to decay in prison or perish in distress. What else is that but to reproach them as murderers and bloodhounds? For although you have not actually done all this, you have nevertheless, so far as you were concerned, suffered him to perish in misfortune.

It is just as if I saw some one struggling in deep water or one fallen in the fire, and could extend to him the hand to save him and pull him out, and yet refused to do it. Would I not appear even in the eyes of the world a murderer and a criminal? Therefore it is God's ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show to every one love and all good; and (as we have said) this has especial reference to our enemies. For to do good to our friends is but a miserable heathen virtue, as Christ declares it (Matt. 5:46).

Thus we again have the Word of God whereby he would encourage and urge us to truly noble and sublime works, as gentleness, patience, and, in short, love and kindness to our enemies, and would ever remind us to reflect upon the First Commandment, that he is our God, i.e. that he will help, assist and protect us, that thus he may extinguish the desire of revenge in us.

This we ought to practice and inculcate, and we would have an abundance of good works to do. But this would not be preaching to the benefit of the monks; it would be greatly to the detriment of the ecclesiastical estate, and an infringement upon the sanctity of Carthusians, and would even forbid their good works and clear the convents. For in this wise the state of common Christians would be considered as high, and even higher, and everybody would see how they mock and delude the world with a false, hypocritical appearance of holiness, because they disregard this commandment like the others, and esteem them unnecessary, as though they were not commandments, but mere advice; and besides, they have shamelessly proclaimed and boasted of their hypocritical estate and works as the most perfect life; for, in order that they might lead a pleasant, easy life, without the cross and without patience, they also have resorted to their cloisters, so that they might not be obliged to suffer wrong from any one or to do him any good.

But know now that these are the truly holy and godly works, in which, with all the angels, he rejoices, in comparison with which all human holiness is but filth and stench, and deserves only wrath and damnation.

The Sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The commandments that follow are easily understood from the explanation of the preceding; for they are all to the effect that we be careful to avoid doing any kind of injury to our neighbor. But they are arranged in very precise order. In the

first place, they treat of his person. Then we proceed to the person nearest him, or the possession nearest his body, namely his wife, who is one flesh and blood with him; so that we cannot inflict a higher injury upon our neighbor in any good that is his. Therefore it is explicitly forbidden here to bring any disgrace upon him in respect to his wife. He expressly mentions adultery, because among the Jews it was a command and appointment that every one must be married. Therefore also the young were early married, so that the state of celibacy was held in small esteem, neither were public prostitution and lewdness tolerated as now. Therefore adultery was the most common form of unchastity among them.

But because there is among us such a shameful mixture and the very dregs of all kinds of vice and lewdness, this commandment is also directed against all manner of impurity, whatever it may be called; and not only is the external act forbidden, but every kind of cause, incitement and means, so that the heart, the lips and the whole body may be chaste and afford no opportunity, help, or persuasion for impurity. And not only this, but that we also defend, protect and rescue wherever there is danger and need; and give help and counsel, so as to maintain our neighbor's honor. For wherever you allow such a thing when you could prevent it, or connive at it as if it did not concern you, you are as truly guilty as the one perpetrating the deed. Thus it is required, in short, that every one both live chastely himself and help his neighbor do the same. Thus God by this commandment wishes to surround and protect as if with bars every wife and husband, that no one injure, harm or touch them.

But since this commandment is directed to the state of matrimony and gives occasion to speak of the same, you may well mark and understand, first, how highly God honors and extols this estate, inasmuch as by his commandment he both sanctions and guards it. He has already sanctioned it above in the Fourth Commandment: "*Honor thy father and thy mother;*" but here he has (as we said) guarded and protected it. Therefore he also wishes us to honor it, and to maintain and use it as a truly divine and blessed estate; because in the first place he has instituted it above all others, and therefore created man and woman (as is evident) not for lewdness, but to live in the married relation, be faithful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the glory of God.

Therefore God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others; and in addition has applied and appropriated everything in the world to it, that this estate may indeed be richly provided for. Married life is therefore no subject for jest or idle inquisitiveness; but it is an excellent thing, and one concerning which the earnestness of God is occupied. For it is of the highest importance to him that

to fight against wickedness and the devil men be raised up who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of himself, godly living and all virtues.

Therefore I have always taught that this estate be not despised nor held in disrepute, as is done by the blind world and our false spiritual guides; but that it be regarded according to God's Word, by which it is adorned and sanctified, so that it is not only placed on an equality with other conditions in life, but that it transcends them all, whether they be that of emperor, prince, bishop or whatever they will. For both ecclesiastical and civil estates must humble themselves, and all must be found in this estate, as we shall hear. Therefore it is not a particular estate, but at the same time the most common and the most noble which pervades all Christendom, yea which even extends through all the world.

In the second place, you must know that it is not only an honorable but also a necessary state, solemnly commanded by God; so that, in general, in all conditions, man and woman, who have been created for it, shall be found in this estate; yet with some exceptions (although few) whom God has especially exempted, because they are not fit for the married estate, or who by high supernatural gifts can maintain chastity without this estate. For where nature has its course, as it is implanted by God, it is not possible to maintain chastity without marriage. For flesh and blood remain flesh and blood, and the natural inclination and excitement have their course without let or hindrance, as the observation and experience of all testify. That, therefore, it may be the more easy in some degree to avoid unchastity, God has commanded the estate of matrimony, that every one may have his proper portion, and be satisfied therewith; although God's grace is yet necessary that the heart also may be pure.

From this you see how the popish crew, priests, monks and nuns, resist God's order and commandment, inasmuch as they despise and forbid matrimony, and presume and vow to maintain perpetual chastity, and besides deceive the simple-minded with lying words and appearances. For no one has so little love and inclination to chastity as just those who because of great sanctity avoid marriage, and either indulge in open and shameless prostitution or secretly do even worse, viz. that which is too bad to mention, as has, alas! been learned too fully. And in short, even though they abstain from the act, their hearts are so full of impure thoughts and evil desires that there is a continual burning and secret suffering which can be avoided in the married life. Therefore are all vows of chastity out of the married state condemned by this commandment; and free permission is granted, yea even the command is given, to all poor constrained consciences which have been deceived by their monastic vows, to abandon the condition of

unchastity and enter the married life, considering that even if the monastic life had divine sanction, it were nevertheless out of their power to maintain chastity, and if they remain in that condition they must only sin more and more against this commandment.

I speak of this now in order that the young may be so instructed as to be induced to marry, and to know that it is a blessed estate and well pleasing to God. For in this way it might in the course of time again receive its proper honor, and we should have less of the pernicious, horrible, disorderly life which now runs riot in open prostitution and other shameful vices which are the result of the disregard of married life. Therefore it is the duty of both parents and government to see to our youth, that they be brought up to discipline and respectability, and when they have come to years of maturity to have them married honorably and in the fear of God; and he will not fail to add his blessing and grace, that men may have joy and happiness from the same.

From all this it can now be concluded that this commandment not only demands that every one live chastely in thought, word and deed in his condition, that is, especially in the estate of matrimony, but also that every one love and esteem his wife or her husband as a gift of God. For where marital chastity is to be maintained, man and wife must by all means live together in love and harmony, that one may cherish the other from the heart and with entire fidelity. For that is one of the principal points which enkindle the love and desire of purity; so that where this is found, chastity will follow as a matter of course without any command. Therefore also St. Paul so diligently exhorts husband and wife to love and honor one another. Here you have again a precious, yea many and great good works, of which you can joyfully boast, against all ecclesiastical estates, chosen without God's Word and commandment.

The Seventh Commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

After our person and wife or husband, temporal property is the nearest good. That also God wishes to have secure, and has commanded that no one shall damage or injure his neighbor in his possessions. For to steal is nothing else than to get another's property wrongfully into our possession. This comprehends all kinds of advantage in all kinds of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. This is indeed such a widespread and common crime, but so little regarded and

observed, that it exceeds all measure, so that if all thieves – who nevertheless do not wish to be considered such – were to be hanged to the gallows, the world would soon be desolate and would be without both executioners and gallows. For as we have just said to steal is not only to rob our neighbors' coffer and pockets, but to be too far-reaching in the market, in all stores and shops, wine and beer-cellars, workshops, and in short whenever we trade or take or give money, goods or work.

As, for instance, to explain this somewhat roughly for the common mass of people, so that it may be seen how godly we are: When a man-servant or maid-servant does not serve faithfully, and does damage, or at least allows it to occur when it could be prevented, or otherwise from indolence, idleness or malice neglects the goods entrusted to him, to the spite and vexation of master and mistress. And when this is done purposely (for I do not speak of unavoidable casualties), you can dispose of thirty, forty dollars a year, which if another had taken secretly he would be hung by the rope. But you even bid defiance and make your boast of it, and no one dare call you a thief!

The same I say of mechanics, workmen and day-laborers, who all follow their own will, and know not in how many ways to take advantage of people, and yet are careless and unfaithful in their work. All these are far worse than secret thieves, against whom we can guard with lock and bolt, or who, if apprehended, are treated in such a manner that they will not do the same again. But against these no one can guard. No one dare even look awry at them or accuse them of theft, so that one would ten times rather lose from his purse. For here are my neighbors, good friends, my own servants, to whom I look for fidelity, who defraud me first of all.

Likewise also in the market and in common trade this course prevails to the greatest extent, where one openly defrauds another with defective goods, false measures, weights, coins, and by taking advantage by expert arts and uncommon transactions or dexterous inventions, in short by getting the best of the bargain and wantonly oppressing and distressing him. And who indeed can even recount or imagine it all? This is in short the most general trade and the largest guild on earth, and if we regard the world through all conditions of life it appears to be only a vast, wide stall, full of great thieves.

Therefore they also are called judicial robbers, despoilers of land and commerce, not pickpockets and sneak-thieves who steal the ready cash, but who sit upon the bench and are styled great noblemen, and honorable, pious citizens, and yet rob and steal upon a good pretext.

Yes, here we might be silent about the insignificant individual thieves if we would attack the great, powerful arch-thieves that are in the company of lords and princes, who daily plunder not only a city or two, but all Germany. Yea what would become of the head and supreme protector of all thieves, the holy chair at Rome, with all its retinue, which has appropriated the wealth of all the world, and has it in possession to this day?

This is, in short, the course of the world: that whoever can steal and rob openly goes in freedom and security unmolested by any one, and is yet to be honored. But the small, secret thieves who have once reached too far must bear the shame and punishment to keep the former in positions of honor and piety. But let them know that in the sight of God they are the greatest thieves, who also will punish them as they deserve and are worthy.

Because this commandment is so far-reaching and comprehensive, as just indicated, it is necessary to present the same with emphasis to the common people, to let them know that these things cannot be done with impunity, but always to keep before their eyes the wrath of God, and inculcate the same. For this we have to preach not to Christians, but chiefly to knaves and scoundrels, to whom it would be more fitting for judges, jailers, and executioners to preach. Therefore let every one know that it is his duty, at the risk of God's displeasure, not only to do no injury to his neighbor, nor to deprive him of gain, nor to perpetrate any act of unfaithfulness or malice in any bargain or transaction of trade, but faithfully to preserve his property for him, to secure and promote his advantage; and this especially applies to every one who takes money, wages and support for such service.

He now who wantonly despises this may indeed go his way and escape the hangman, but he shall not escape the wrath and punishment of God; and when he has long practiced his defiance and arrogance, he shall yet remain a tramp and beggar, and in addition have all plagues and misfortune. Now, when you ought to preserve the property of your master and mistress, for which service you have your support, you go your own way, take your wages like a thief, expect to be honored as a nobleman, of whom there are many that are insolent towards their masters and mistresses, and are unwilling to do them a favor or service by which to protect them from loss.

But beware, and consider what you will gain, that when you have your own household (to which God will help with all misfortunes) it will be recompensed to you, and you will find that where you have done injury or defrauded to the value of one mite, you will have to pay thirty again.

Such shall be the lot of mechanics and laborers of whom we hear and from whom we are obliged to suffer such intolerable maliciousness, as though they were noblemen in another's possessions, and every one were obliged to give them what they demand. Only let them continue practicing their exactions as long as they can; but God will not forget his commandment; and he will reward them according as they have served, and will hang them, not upon a green gallows, but upon a dry one; so that in all their life they shall neither prosper nor accumulate anything. And indeed if there were a well-ordered government in the land such wantonness might be checked and prevented, as was the case in ancient times among the Romans, when such characters were suddenly visited in a way that others took warning. No more shall others prosper who change the open, free market into a carrion-pit of extortion and a den of robbery, where the poor are daily oppressed, and who cause new impositions and famine, every one using the market according to his caprice in proud defiance, as though it were his right and privilege to sell his property for as high a price as he please, and no one had a right to say a word about it. These we will indeed allow to pass, and let them practice their exactions, extortions and avarice, but we will trust in God, who nevertheless will so arrange it that when you have completed your extortion he will pronounce his curse, and your grain in the storehouse, your beer in the cellar, your cattle in the stalls shall all perish, and verily where you have defrauded any one to the amount of a florin, your entire pile shall be consumed with rust, so that you shall in no wise enjoy it.

And indeed we see this being fulfilled daily before our eyes, that no stolen or dishonestly acquired possession brings prosperity. How many there are who rake and scrape day and night, and yet grow not a farthing richer! And men, though they gather much, are subject to so many plagues and misfortunes that they cannot enjoy it or transmit it to their children. But because no one takes notice of it, and we go on as though it did not concern us, God must visit us in a different manner and teach us the mode of his government, so that he imposes one taxation after another, or billets a troop of soldiers upon us, who in one hour empty our coffers and purses, and do not desist as long as we have a farthing left; and in addition, by way of thanks, burn and devastate house and home, and outrage and kill wife and children.

And, in short, if you steal much, depend upon it that twice as much will be stolen from you; and he who with violence and wrong robs and acquires will find one who shall deal after the same fashion with him. For God is master of

this art, that since every one robs and steals of another, he punishes one thief by means of another. Where else should we find enough gallows and ropes?

Whoever is willing to be instructed can be sure that this is the commandment of God, and that it must not be treated as a jest. For although you despise us, defraud, steal and rob, we will indeed submit, suffer and endure your haughtiness, and according to the Lord's Prayer forgive and show pity; for we know that the godly shall have enough, and you injure yourself more than another.

But of this beware: When the poor man comes to you (of whom there are so many now) who must buy with the penny of his daily wages, and live upon it, and you are harsh to him, as though every one lived by your favor, and you extort and exact to the utmost amount, and besides with pride and haughtiness turn him off whom you ought to help with a gift, he will go away wretched and sorrowful; and because he can complain to no one he will cry and call to heaven, – then beware (I say again) as of the devil himself. For such groaning and calling will be no jest, but will have a weight and emphasis that will prove too heavy for you and all the world. For it will reach Him who takes care of the poor sorrowful hearts, and will not allow this injury done them to escape his vengeance. But if you despise that cry and defy Him who hears it, then remember whom you have brought upon you. If you are successful and prosperous you may, before all the world, call God and me a liar.

Now we have exhorted, warned and protested enough; he who will not heed or believe it may go on until he learn this by experience. Yet it is important to impress this upon the young, that they may be careful not to follow the old lawless crowd, but keep their eyes fixed upon God's commandment, lest his wrath and punishment come upon them. Nothing further belongs to us, except to instruct and reprove with God's Word; but to check such open wantonness there is need of government and princes who have eyes and voice, by which to establish and maintain order in all manner of trade and commerce, so that the poor be not burdened and oppressed or burden themselves with others' sins.

Let this suffice concerning the explanation of what is stealing, that it be not taken too narrowly, but extend as far as we have to do with our neighbors. And briefly, in a summary, like the former commandments, it is herewith forbidden in the first place to do our neighbor any injury or wrong (of whatever sort supposable in curtailing his possessions and property, or preventing or hindering his enjoyment of them), or even to consent or allow such a thing, but to interpose and prevent it. And, on the other hand, it is commanded that we improve his

possessions and promote all his interests; and, in case he suffer want, that we help, communicate and lend both to friends and foes.

Whoever now seeks and desires good works will find here in abundance such as are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God, and in addition are favored and crowned with most excellent blessings, that we can be sure of a rich compensation for all that we do for our neighbor's good and from true friendship; as King Solomon also teaches (Prov. 19:17): "*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*" Here then thou hast a rich Lord who is certainly sufficient for thee, and who will not suffer thee to want or to come short in anything; thus thou canst with a joyful conscience enjoy a hundred times more than thou couldst acquire by extortion in unfaithfulness and wrong. But whoever does not desire the blessing will find wrath and misfortune enough.

The Eighth Commandment.

Thou shall not bear false witness.

Besides body, wife or husband, and temporal possessions, we have yet another treasure, namely, personal honor and good report, with which we cannot dispense. For it is intolerable to live among men in open shame and general contempt. Therefore God wishes the reputation, character and honor of our neighbor to be assailed or diminished as little as his money and possessions, that every one may stand in his integrity before wife, child, servants and neighbors. And in the first place we take the most manifest meaning of this commandment according to the words (*Thou shalt not bear false witness*), as pertaining to courts of justice, where a poor innocent man is accused and oppressed by false witnesses in order to be punished in his body, property or honor.

This appears indeed little to concern us now, but with the Jews it was a common and ordinary matter. For the people were organized under an excellent and regular government; and where such a government is, it is not administered without cases of this sin. The cause of it is, that where judges, magistrates, princes or others in authority sit in judgment, it cannot in the course of the world be otherwise but that men will be unwilling to give offence, will flatter and speak with regard to favor, money, hope or friendship; and in consequence a poor man and his cause must be oppressed and be subject to wrong and

punishment. And it is a common calamity in the world that those who sit in judgment are seldom godly men.

For a judge ought necessarily to be above all things a godly man, and not only godly, but also wise, modest, yea, a brave and fearless man. So also ought a witness to be fearless, but especially a godly man. For he who would judge all matters rightly and decide them by his verdict will often offend good friends, relatives, neighbors and the rich and powerful who can greatly serve or injure him. Therefore he must be quite blind, closing eyes and ears, neither seeing nor hearing, but going straight forward in everything that comes before him, and deciding accordingly.

Therefore this commandment is given first of all that every one shall help his neighbor to secure his rights, and not allow them to be hindered or violence to be done them, but to strictly maintain and promote them as God may grant, whether he be judge or witness, and let it affect what it will. And especially is a goal set up here for our jurists that they use all diligence in dealing truly and uprightly with every case, allowing right to be right, and neither perverting nor glossing it over or keeping silent concerning it, irrespective of money, possession, honor or power. This is one part and the most immediate sense of this commandment respecting all that takes place in court.

Afterwards, however, it extends much further, if we apply it to spiritual jurisdiction or administration; here it is a fact that every one bears false witness against his neighbor. For wherever there are godly preachers and Christians, they must bear the judgment of the world, and be called heretics, apostates, yea seditious and desperately wicked miscreants. And besides the Word of God must be subjected to the most shameful and virulent persecutions, blasphemies, contradictions, perversions and false explanations and applications. But that we will let pass; for it is the way of the blind world that she condemns and persecutes the truth and the children of God, and yet esteems it no sin.

In the third place, what concerns us all, this commandment forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we can injure or molest our neighbor. For to bear false witness is nothing else but a work of the tongue. Whatever therefore is done with the tongue against a fellow-man is hereby forbidden by God; whether it be false preachers with their doctrine and blasphemy, false judges and witnesses with their unjust verdicts, or outside of court by lying and evil-speaking. Here belongs particularly the detestable vice of gossip and slander, with which the devil instigates us, and of which there is much to be said. For it is a common evil plague that every one prefers hearing evil to hearing good of his neighbor; and

although we ourselves are ever so bad, we cannot suffer that any one should say anything bad about us, but every one would much rather that all the world should speak of him in terms of gold; and yet we cannot bear that only the best be said of others.

Therefore, to avoid this vice we should consider that no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his neighbor, although he may see him sin, unless he have a command to judge and to reprove. For there is a great difference between these two things, viz. judging sin and knowing it. You may indeed know it, but you are not to judge it. I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins, but I have no command to report it to others. If therefore I rush on, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, change your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed as judge and to punish by virtue of your office.

Those are called slanderers who are not content with knowing a thing, but proceed to exercise judgment, and when they know a slight offence of another, carry it into every corner, and are gratified that they can stir up another's baseness, as swine roll themselves in the dirt and root in it with the snout. It is nothing else than meddling with the office and judgment of God, and pronouncing sentence and punishment with the most severe verdict. For no judge can punish to a higher degree nor go further than to say: "He is a thief, a murderer, a traitor," etc. Therefore, whoever presumes to say the same of his neighbor goes just as far as the emperor and all governments. For although you do not wield the sword, you employ your poisonous tongue to the shame and hurt of your neighbor.

God therefore forbids that any one speak evil of another although he be guilty, and the former know it right well; much less if he do not know it, and have it only from hearsay. But you answer: Shall I not say it if it be the truth? Answer: Why do you not make accusation to a regular judge? Yes. But I cannot prove it publicly, and thus I might be silenced and turned away in a harsh manner [incur the penalty of a false accusation]. Ah! here's the rub.⁶ If you do not venture to stand before the proper authorities with your charges, then hold your tongue. But if you know it, know it for yourself and not for another. For if you repeat it, although it be true, you will appear as a liar, because you cannot prove it, and you are besides acting wickedly. For we ought never to deprive any one of his honor or good name unless he be publicly condemned.

Everything, therefore, which cannot be properly proved is false witness.

Therefore what is not made public by sufficient proof no one shall make public or declare for truth: and in short, whatever is secret should be kept secret or secretly reproved, as we shall hear. Therefore, if you encounter an evil tongue which betrays and slanders another, contradict such a one to his face, that he may blush; thus many a one will keep silence who else would bring some poor man into bad repute, from which he would not easily extricate himself. For honor and a good name are easily tarnished, but not easily restored.

Thus you see, in short, it is forbidden to speak any evil of our neighbor, and yet the civil government, preachers, father and mother are excepted, that this commandment may be so understood that evil be not unreproved. Just therefore as, according to the Fifth Commandment, no one is to be injured in body, and yet the executioner is excepted, who, by virtue of his office, does his neighbor no good, but only evil and harm, and nevertheless does not sin against God's commandment, because God has, on his own account instituted that office; for he has reserved punishment for his own good pleasure, as he has threatened in the First Commandment, – just so also, although no one has a right in his own person to judge and condemn another, yet if they to whose office it belongs refuse to do it, they sin as well as he who should do so without such office. For here necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to make accusation, to investigate and testify; and it is not different from the case of a physician who is sometimes compelled to handle and examine a patient in parts otherwise not to be examined. Just so governments, father and mother, brothers and sisters, and other good friends, are under obligation to each other to reprove evil wherever it is needful and profitable.

But the true way in this matter would be to observe the order according to the Gospel (St. Matt. 18:15), where Christ says: *“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone”* Here you have a precious and excellent doctrine whereby to govern well the tongue, which is to be carefully observed against this abuse. Let this, then, be your rule, that you do not too readily speak evil of your neighbor to others; but admonish him privately that he may amend. Likewise, also, if some one report to you what this or that one has done, teach him also, if he have seen it himself, to go and admonish him; but if not, let him keep silent.

The same you can learn also from the daily government of the household. For when the master of the house sees that the servant does not do what he ought, he himself takes him to account. But if he were so foolish as to let the servant sit at home, and went on the streets to complain of him to his neighbors, he would no

doubt be told: “You fool! what does that concern us? go and tell him himself.” See, that would be acting quite brotherly, so that the evil would be stayed, and your neighbor’s honor would be maintained. As Christ also says in the same place: *“If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”* Then you have done a good work; for do you think it is a little matter to gain a brother? Let all monks and holy orders step forth, with all their works melted together into one mass, and see if they can boast that they have “gained a brother.”

Further, Christ teaches: _“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established_.” So he whom it concerns is always to be treated with personally, and not to be spoken of without his knowledge. But if that do not avail, then bring it before the public, whether before the civil or the ecclesiastical tribunal. For then you do not stand alone, but you have those witnesses with you by whom you can convict the guilty one, relying on whom the judge can pronounce sentence of punishment. This is the right and regular course for checking and reforming a wicked person. But if we only gossip about another in all corners, and stir up his baseness, no one will be reformed, and afterwards when we are to stand up and bear witness we deny having said so. Therefore it would be well for such tongues that their delight in thus talking were severely punished, so that others would profit by the example. If you were acting for your neighbor’s reformation or from love of the truth, you would not act in an underhanded way and shun the day and the light.

All this refers to secret sins. But where the sin is public, so that the judge and everybody know it, you can, without any sin, avoid him and let him go, because he has brought himself to shame, and also you may publicly testify against him. For when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slander or false judgment or witness. As we now reprove the Pope with his doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public, that every one may learn to guard against it.

Thus we have now the sum and general understanding of this commandment, viz. that no one do any injury with the tongue to his neighbor, whether friend or foe; nor speak evil of him, whether it be true or false, unless it be done by commandment or for his reformation; but that every one employ his tongue to say the best of every one else, to cover his neighbor’s sins and infirmities, excusing him, apologizing for him and adorning him with due honor. The chief consideration is what Christ indicates in the Gospel, in which he comprehends

all commandments respecting our neighbor (Matt. 7:12): *“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them”*

Even nature teaches the same thing in our own bodies, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 12:22): *“Much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.”* No one covers face, eyes, nose and mouth. For they, as in themselves the most honorable members which we have, do not require it. But the most infirm members, of which we are ashamed, we cover with all diligence, yea, hands, eyes and the whole body must help to cover and conceal them. Thus also should we among ourselves adorn to the best of our ability whatever blemishes and infirmities we find in our neighbor, and serve and help him to promote his honor; and on the other hand prevent whatever may be discreditable to him. And it is especially an excellent and noble virtue for one always to put the best construction upon all he may hear of his neighbor (if it be not a public crime), and present it in a favorable light against the poisonous tongues that are busy wherever they can pry out and discover something to blame in a neighbor, and that pervert it in the worst way; as is especially now done with the precious Word of God and its preachers.

There are comprehended, therefore, in this commandment very many good works which please God most highly, and bring abundant good and blessing, if only the blind world and the false saints could recognize them as such. For there is nothing on or in the entire man which can do both greater and more extensive good or harm in spiritual and in temporal matters than the tongue, though it is the least and feeblest member.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

These two commandments are given especially to the Jews, although in part they also concern us. For they do not interpret them as referring to unchastity or theft, because these are forbidden above. They also thought that they had kept all those when they had done or not done the external act. Therefore God has added these two commandments in order that it be esteemed as sin and be forbidden to desire or in any way to aim at getting our neighbor's wife or possessions; and

especially because under the Jewish government man-servants and maid-servants were not free, as now, to serve for wages as long as they pleased, but were their master's property, with their body and all they had, as cattle and other possessions. So, too, every man had power over his wife to put her away publicly by giving her a bill of divorce, and to take another. Therefore they were in constant danger among each other that if one took a fancy to another's wife he might take occasion both to dismiss his own wife and to estrange the other's wife from him, that he might obtain her under pretext of right. That was not considered a sin nor disgrace with them; as little as now with hired help, when a proprietor dismisses his manservant or maid-servant, or takes another's servants from him in any way.

Therefore (I say) they thus interpreted, as is right also (although it goes farther and higher) that no one think or purpose to obtain another's wife, servants, house and estate, land, meadows, cattle, even with appearance of right or by seemingly proper means, yet with injury to his neighbor. For above, in the Seventh Commandment, the vice is forbidden, where one appropriates to himself the possessions of others or keeps them from his neighbor without right. But here it is also forbidden to take anything from your neighbor, even though you could do so honorably in the eyes of the world, so that no one could accuse or blame you as though you had obtained it by fraud.

For we are so inclined by nature that no one desires to see another have as much as himself, and each one acquires as much as he can, without regard to how another may fare. And yet we all pretend to be godly, adorn ourselves most finely and conceal our rascality, resort to and invent adroit devices and deceitful artifices (such as now are daily most ingeniously contrived) as though they were derived from justice; yea, we even dare to impertinently refer to it, and boast of it, and do not wish to have it called rascality, but shrewdness and caution. In this jurists and counselors assist, who twist and stretch the law as it will help their cause, irrespective of equity or their neighbor's necessity. And, in short, whoever is the most expert and cunning finds most help in law, as they themselves say: The laws favor the watchful (*Vigilantibus jura subveniunt*).

This last commandment therefore is given not for rogues in the eyes of the world, but just for the most pious, who wish to be praised and be called honest, upright people who have not offended against the former commandments, as especially the Jews claimed to be; and even now for many great noblemen, gentlemen and princes. For the other common masses belong yet farther down,

under the Seventh Commandment, as those who do not ask how they may acquire their possessions with honor and right.

This occurs principally in litigations, where it is the purpose to get something from our neighbor and to eject him from his possessions. As (to give examples) when people quarrel and wrangle for a large inheritance, real estate, etc., they avail themselves of, and resort to, whatever has the appearance of right, so dressing and adorning everything that the law must favor their side, and they keep possession of the property with such title that no one can make complaint or lay claim thereto. In like manner, if any one desire to have a castle, city, duchy, or any other great thing, he practices so much financiering through relationships and by any means he can that another is deprived of it, and it is judicially declared to be his, and confirmed with deed and seal as acquired honestly and by princely title.

Likewise also in common trade where one dexterously slips something out of another's hand so that he must look after it, or surprises and defrauds him in what he regards as his advantage and benefit, so that the latter cannot regain or redeem it without injury, debt or perhaps distress; and the former gains the half or even more; and yet this must not be considered as acquired by fraud or stolen, but honestly bought. Here they say: The first is the best, and every one must look to his own interest, let another get what he can. And who can be so wise as to think of all that one can get into his possession by such specious pretexts? This the world does not consider wrong, and will not see that the neighbor is thereby put to a disadvantage and must sacrifice what he cannot spare without injury. Yet there is no one who wishes this to be done him; from which they can easily perceive that such device and appearance are false.

Thus was the case formerly also with respect to wives. They were skilled in such devices that if one were pleased with another woman, he himself or through others (as there were many ways and means to be thought of) caused her husband to conceive some displeasure toward her, or had her resist him and so conduct herself that he was obliged to dismiss her. That sort of thing undoubtedly prevailed much under the Law, as also we read in the Gospel, of king Herod, that he took his brother's wife while he was yet living, and yet wished to be thought an honorable, pious man, as St. Mark also testifies of him. But such an example I trust will not be found among us, because in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to be divorced – except in case where one shrewdly by some stratagem takes away a rich bride from another.

But it is not a rare thing with us that one estranges or entices away another's man-servant or maid-servant, or allures them by flattering words.

In whatever way such things happen we must know that God does not wish that you deprive your neighbor of anything that belongs to him, that he suffer the loss and you gratify your avarice with it, even if you could claim it honorably before the world; for it is a secret and dastardly imposition practiced under a disguise that it may not be known. For although you go your way as if you had done no one any wrong, you have nevertheless injured your neighbor. And if it be not stealing and cheating, it yet is desiring your neighbor's property; that is, aiming at possession of it, enticing it away from him without his will, and being unwilling to see him enjoy what God has granted him. And although the judge and every one must leave you in possession of it, yet God will not leave you therein. For he sees the deceitful heart and the malice of the world, who wherever ye yield to her a finger's breadth, is sure to take an ell in addition, and at length public wrong and violence follow.

Therefore we abide by the common sense of these commandments, that in the first place we do not desire our neighbor harm, nor even assist nor give occasion for it, but gladly leave and see him in the enjoyment of his own, and besides advance and preserve for him what may be for his profit and service, as we should wish to be treated. Thus these commandments are especially given against envy and miserable avarice, that God may remove all causes and sources whence arises everything by which we do injury to our neighbor, and therefore he expresses it in plain words: Thou shalt not covet, etc. For he would especially have the heart pure, although we shall never attain to that as long as we live here: so that this commandment, like all the rest, will constantly accuse us and show how ungodly we are in the sight of God.

Conclusion of the Ten Commandments.

Thus we have the Ten Commandments, a compend of divine doctrine, as to what we shall do, that our whole life may be pleasing to God, and the true fountain and channel from and in which everything must flow that is to be considered a good work, so that outside of these Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God, however great or precious it be in the eyes of the world. Let us see now what our great saints can boast of their spiritual orders and their great and grievous works which they have invented and set up,

with the omission of those of the commandments as though they were of far too little consequence or were long ago perfectly fulfilled.

I am of opinion that here any one will find his hands full, and will have enough to do to observe these, viz.: meekness, patience and love to enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and what such virtues imply. But such works are not of value and make no display in the eyes of the world; for they are not unusual and ambitious and restricted to particular times, places, customs and postures, but are common, everyday domestic works which one neighbor can practice toward another, and therefore they are not of high esteem.

But the other works claim the astonished attention of men, being aided by their great display, expense and magnificent buildings, and these they so adorn that everything shines and glitters; they waft incense, they sing and ring bells, they light tapers and candles, so that nothing else can be seen or heard. For it is regarded a most precious work which no one can sufficiently praise if a priest stand there in a surplice embroidered with gilt, or a layman continue all day upon his knees in church. But if a poor girl tend a little child, and faithfully do what she is told, that is nothing; for else what should monks and nuns seek in their cloisters?

But see, is not that a shocking presumption of those desperate saints, who dare to invent a higher and better life and condition than the Ten Commandments teach, pretending (as we have said) that this is a plain life for the common man, but that theirs is for saints and perfect ones? Neither do the miserable blind people see that no man can it achieve so much as to observe one of the Ten Commandments as it should be, but both the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer must help us (as we shall hear), by which we must strive after that attainment [power and strength to keep the commandments], and pray for it and receive it continually. Therefore all their boasting amounts to as much as though I boasted that I had not a penny, but that I would confidently undertake to pay ten florins.

All this I say and urge, to do away with the sad abuse which has taken so deep root, and still cleaves to everybody, and that men accustom themselves in all conditions upon earth to look only here, and to be concerned with this law. For it will be a long time before they will invent a doctrine or state equal to these Ten Commandments; because they are so high that no one, by mere human power, can attain to them. And whoever attains to them will be a heavenly, angelic man, far above all holiness in the world. Only occupy yourself with them, and try your best, apply all power and ability, and you will find so much to

do that you will neither seek nor esteem any other work or holiness. This is sufficient for the first part of the common Christian doctrine, both for teaching and exhortation. Yet in conclusion we must repeat the text which belongs to these commandments, of which we have treated already in connection with the First Commandment, that we may learn how strenuously God insists upon it that we learn, teach and practice the Ten Commandments:

“For 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 showing mercy unto thousands of them, that love me and keep my commandments.”

Although (as we have heard above) this appendix was primarily attached to the First Commandment, it was nevertheless laid down for the sake of all the commandments, as all of them together are here referred to, and should be thereby enforced. Therefore I have said that this should be presented to and inculcated upon the young, that they may learn and remember it; that they may see what is to urge and move us to keep these Ten Commandments. And it is to be regarded as though this declaration were specially added to each, and inhered in and pervaded them all.

Now there is comprehended in these words (as said before) both a threatening of wrath and a friendly promise, so as not only to terrify and warn us, but also to induce and encourage us to receive and highly esteem his Word as a matter of divine earnestness, because he himself declares how much he is in earnest and how rigidly he will enforce it, namely, that he will severely and terribly punish all who despise and transgress his commandments; and again how richly he will reward, bless and do all good to those who hold them in high esteem, and are glad to act and live according to them. Thereby he demands that they all proceed from a heart which fears God alone and regards him, and from such fear avoids everything against his will, lest it should move him to wrath; and on the other hand also trusts in him alone, and from love to him does all he wishes, because he expresses himself as friendly as a father, and offers us all grace and every good.

Just this is also the import and true interpretation of the first and chief commandment, from which all the others must flow and proceed. This word: “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” therefore means nothing more or less than to demand in the simplest way, Thou shalt fear, love and trust in me as thine only true God. For where the heart is thus towards God, it has fulfilled this and all the other commandments. And, on the other hand, whoever fears and loves anything else in heaven and upon earth will keep neither this nor any other

commandment. Therefore the entire Scriptures have everywhere preached and inculcated this commandment as consisting in these two things: Fear of, and trust in God. And especially the prophet David in all his Psalms, as when he says (Ps. 147:11): “*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*” As if the entire commandment were explained in one verse, as much as to say: The Lord taketh pleasure in those who have no other gods.

Thus the First Commandment is to shine and impart its splendor to all the others. Therefore must this declaration run through all the commandments, like a hoop in a wreath, to join and hold together the end and the beginning; that it be continually repeated and not forgotten; as, namely, in the Second Commandment, that, moved by love and confidence derived according to the First Commandment, we fear God and do not take his name in vain to curse, lie, deceive, and for other modes of seduction and rascality; but make proper and good use of it, calling upon him in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. In like manner shall such fear, love and trust urge and impel us not to despise his Word, but to gladly hear, learn and honor it, and esteem it holy.

So afterwards, through all the following commandments of our duties towards our neighbor, everything must proceed from the power and in virtue of the First Commandment, viz. that we honor father and mother, masters and all in authority, and be subject and obedient to them, not on their own account, but for God’s sake. For you are not to regard or fear father or mother, or from love of them to do or omit anything. But see to that which God would have you do, and what he will quite confidently demand of you; if you omit that, you have an angry judge, but in the contrary case a gracious father.

Likewise, that you do your neighbor no harm, injury or violence, nor in any wise molest him, whether it respect his body, wife, property, honor or rights, as all these things are commanded in their order, even though you have opportunity and cause to do so, and no man could reprove you; but that you do good to all men, help them, and promote their interest wherever and whenever you can, purely from love of God and in order to please him, in the confidence that he will abundantly reward you for everything. Thus you see how the First Commandment is the chief source and fountain-head whence all the rest proceed; and again they all return to that and depend upon it, so that beginning and end run into each other and are bound together.

This (I say) is necessary and profitable to teach, admonish and remind the young people, that they may be brought up in the fear and reverence of God, and not with blows and compulsion. For where it is considered and laid to heart that

they are not human trifles, but the commandments of the Divine Majesty, who insists upon them with such earnestness, is angry with those who despise them, and will assuredly punish them, but, on the other hand, will abundantly reward those who keep them, there will be a spontaneous impulse and a desire gladly to do the will of God. Therefore it is not in vain that it is commanded in the Old Testament to write the Ten Commandments on all walls and corners, yes, even on the garments, not for an idle show, as did the Jews; but that we might have our eyes constantly fixed upon them, and have them always in our memory, and keep them in all our actions and ways; and that every one make them his daily practice in all cases, in every business and bargain, as though they were written in every place wherever he would look, yea, wherever he goes or stays. Thus there would be occasion enough, both at home in our own house and abroad with our neighbors, to practice the Ten Commandments, that no one need run far for them.

From this it again appears how far these Ten Commandments are to be exalted and extolled above all orders, commandments and works which are taught and practiced aside from them. For here we can challenge all the wise and all saints to step forth and say, Let us see whether they can produce any work like these commandments, upon which God insists with such earnestness, and which he enjoins with his greatest wrath and punishment, and besides adds such glorious promises of an outpouring of all good things and blessings upon us. Therefore they should be taught above all others, and be esteemed sacred and precious, as the highest treasure given by God.

1. Pomona: In Roman mythology, the goddess who fostered fruit-trees and promoted their culture. – Century Dictionary (1889).↵
2. Traduce: To misrepresent; hold up or expose to ridicule or calumny; defame; calumniate; vilify. – Century Dictionary (1889).↵
3. See Matt. 5:34 sqq.; James 5:12.↵
4. Literally: “Stretched this too tightly.”↵
5. The *magistratum* of Müller’s Latin is probably a typographical error Pfaff, Hase, Francke have *magistrum*.↵
6. Lit.: “Ah, indeed do you smell the roast?” Latin quotes from *Terrence, Andria: Hincillae lacrymae*.↵

Part Second. Of The Creed.

Thus far we have heard the first part of Christian doctrine, in which we have seen all that God wishes us to do or to leave undone. The Creed, therefore, properly follows, which teaches us everything that we must expect and receive from God; and, to speak most explicitly, teaches us to know him fully. This is intended to help us do that which according to the Ten Commandments we ought to do. For (as said above) they are set so high that all human ability is far too feeble and weak to jk[attain to or] keep them. Therefore it is as necessary to learn this part in order to know how to attain thereto, and whence and whereby to obtain such power. For if we could, of our own power, keep the Ten Commandments as they are to be kept, we would need nothing further, neither Creed nor Lord's Prayer. But before such advantage and necessity of the Creed are explained, it is sufficient at first for the simple-minded that they learn to comprehend and understand the Creed itself.

In the first place, the Creed has hitherto been divided into twelve articles. Although if all points which are written in the Scriptures and which belong to the Creed were to be distinctly set forth, there would be far more articles nor could they be clearly expressed in so few words. But that it may be most easily and clearly understood, as it is to be taught to children, we will briefly sum up the entire Creed in three articles, according to the three persons in the Godhead to whom everything that we believe pertains; so that the first article, Of God the Father, explains Creation, the second article, Of God the Son, explains Redemption, and the third, Of God the Holy Ghost, explains Sanctification. As though the Creed were briefly comprehended in so many words: I believe in God the Father, who has created me; I believe in God the Son, who has redeemed me; I believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies me. One God and one faith, but three persons, therefore also three articles or confessions. Let us thus briefly run over the words.

Article I.

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

This represents and sets forth most briefly the essence, will, action and work of God the Father. Since the Ten Commandments have taught that we are to have no other gods, it is natural to ask the question: What kind of a being is God? What does he do? How shall we praise, represent or describe him, that he may be known? That is taught in this and the following article. So that the Creed is nothing else than the answer and confession of Christians, arranged with respect to the First Commandment. As if you were to ask a little child: My dear, what sort of a God have you? what do you know of him? He could say: First, indeed, my God is God the Father, who has created heaven and earth; besides him I believe in nothing else as God; for there is no one else who could create heaven and earth.

But for the learned, and those who have acquired some scriptural knowledge, these three articles may be extended and divided into as many parts as there are words. But now for young scholars let it suffice to indicate the most necessary points, namely, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation: that we emphasize the words: **Creator of heaven and earth**. But what is the force of this or what do you mean by these words: "*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker, etc.*" Answer: I believe and mean to say that I am a creature of God; that is, that he has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul and life, members great and small, all my senses, reason and understanding, food and drink, shelter and support, wife and child, domestics, house and possessions, etc. Besides, he causes all creatures to serve for the necessities and uses of life – sun, moon and stars in the firmament, day and night, air, fire, water, earth and whatever it bears and produces, bird and fish, beasts, grain and all kinds of produce, and whatever else there is of bodily and temporal goods, good government, peace, security. So that we learn in this article that none of us has his life of himself, or anything that is here enumerated or can be enumerated, neither can he of himself preserve them, however small and unimportant a thing it might be, for all is comprehended in the word: **Creator**.

Besides this we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends against all evil and misfortune, averts all sort of danger and calamity; and that he does all without our merit of pure love and goodness, as a friendly father, who cares for us that no evil befall us. But to speak more of this pertains to the other two parts of this article, where we say: "*Father Almighty*"

Hence we must infer and conclude, since everything which we have and are, and whatever is in heaven and upon the earth, are daily given and preserved to us

by God, that it is our duty to love, praise and thank him without ceasing; and in short to serve him with all these things, as he has enjoined in the Ten Commandments.

Here we could say much if we would attempt to show how few there are that believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it, and say it, but neither see nor consider what the words teach us. For if we believed it with the heart, we would also act accordingly, and not stalk about proudly, bid defiance and boast as though we had life, riches, power and honor, etc. all of ourselves, so that others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the unhappy, perverted world, which is immured in darkness, and abuses all the good things and gifts of God only for its own pride, avarice, lust and luxury, and never once regards God, so as to thank him or acknowledge him as Lord and Creator,

Therefore, if we only believed it, this article must humble and terrify us all. For we sin daily with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have, as especially do those who even fight against the Word of God. Yet Christians have this advantage, that they acknowledge themselves in duty bound to serve God for all these things, and to be obedient to him [which the world knows not how to do].

We ought, therefore, daily to practice this article, to remember and consider in all that we see, and in all good that falls to our lot, and wherever we escape from calamity or danger, that it is God who gives and does all these things; that therein we perceive and see his paternal heart and his transcendent love toward us. Thereby the heart would be aroused and kindled to be thankful for all such good things, and to employ them to the honor and praise of God. Thus we have most briefly presented the meaning of this article, as much as is at first necessary for the most simple to learn, both as to what we have and receive from God, and what we owe in return, which is a most excellent object of knowledge, but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life, besides that he has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures in his Son and the Holy Ghost, as we shall hear.

Article II.

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 rigid hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Here we learn to know the second person of the Godhead, so that we see what we have from God over and above those temporal goods already spoken of; namely, how completely he has poured forth his riches and withheld nothing. This article is therefore very rich and broad; but that we may briefly treat of it in a childlike way, we will take up one word and comprehend in that the entire sum of the article, namely (as we have said), that we may learn how we are redeemed. This is taught in the words: *“In Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

If now you are asked, What do you believe in the second article, Of Jesus Christ? answer briefly: I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord. But what is it “to become Lord”? It is that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death and all evil. For before I had no Lord or King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, bound in sin and blindness.

For when we had been created by God the Father, and had received from him all manner of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil, so that we fell under his wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, as we had merited and deserved. There was no counsel, help or comfort until this only-begotten and eternal Son of God in his unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Thus therefore the tyrants and jailers are all expelled, and in their stead stands Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, salvation and of all good, and who delivered us poor lost mortals from the jaws of hell, has redeemed us and made us free, and brought us again into the favor and grace of the Father, and has taken us as his own property under his shelter and protection, that he may govern us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.

Let it then be considered the sum of this article that the little word *Lord* signifies simply as much as Redeemer, i.e. He who has brought us from Satan to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and who preserves us in the same. But all the points which follow in order in this article only serve to express and explain this redemption; that is, how and whereby it was accomplished, how much he suffered and what he paid and risked, that he might redeem us and bring us under his dominion, namely, that he became man, conceived and born without [any stain of] sin, of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, that he might be Lord over sin; that he suffered, died and was buried, that he might

make satisfaction for me and pay what I owe, not with silver nor gold, but with his own precious blood. And all that in order to become my Lord. For he did none of these for himself, nor had he any need of it. And after that he rose again from the dead, destroyed and swallowed up death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed the government at the Father's right hand; so that the devil and all principalities and powers must be subject to him and lie at his feet, until finally at the last day he will part and separate us from the wicked world, from the devil, death, sin, etc.

But to explain all these single points especially belongs not to brief sermons for children, but rather to the ampler sermons that extend over the entire year, especially at those times which are appointed for the purpose, to treat at length of each article – of the birth, sufferings, resurrection, ascension of Christ, etc.

Ay, the entire Gospel which we preach consists in this, viz. that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness depend, and which is so rich and comprehensive that we never can learn it fully.

Article III.

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.

This article I cannot explain better than (as I have said) that it treats of Sanctification, viz. that thereby the Holy Ghost, with his office, is declared and set forth, namely, that he makes holy.

Therefore we must establish ourselves upon the word Holy Ghost, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot use another like it. For there are besides many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures – the spirit of man, heavenly spirits and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called the Holy Ghost, that is, He which has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called Creator, the Son Redeemer, so the Holy Ghost, from his work, must be called Sanctifier, or one that makes holy. But what is the process of such sanctification? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby he redeems us, by his birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Ghost effects our sanctification, as follows, namely, by the communion of saints or Christian Church, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body and eternal life; that is, he

first leads us into his holy congregation, and places us in the bosom, of the Church, whereby he preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on him and have him for our Lord, except as it is offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is finished and accomplished; for Christ, by his suffering, death, resurrection, etc., has acquired and gained the treasure for us. But if the work remained concealed, so that no one knew of it, then it were in vain and lost. That this treasure therefore might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which he gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and apply it to us. Therefore sanctification is nothing else but bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which, of ourselves, we could not attain.

Learn then to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: What do you mean by the words: "*I believe in the Holy Ghost*"? you can answer: I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as his name implies. But whereby does he accomplish this? or what are his means and method to this end? Answer: The Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For in the first place he has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that bears every Christian through the Word of God, which he reveals and preaches, and through which he illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand and accept it, cling to it and persevere in it.

For where he does not cause it to be preached and made alive in the heart, so as to be understood, it is lost, as was the case under the Papacy, where faith was entirely put under a bushel, and no one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier, i.e. no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that he has acquired this treasure for us, and, without our works and merit, made us acceptable to the Father. And what indeed was the cause? This, verily, that Holy Ghost was not there to reveal it, and caused it to be preached; but men and evil spirits were there, who taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. Therefore it is no Christian Church; for where Christ is not preached there is no Holy Ghost who makes, calls and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord. Let this suffice concerning the sum of this article. But because the different points, which are here enumerated, are not quite clear to the simple, we will run over them.

The holy Christian Church the Creed denominates a communion of saints, for both expressions are taken together as one idea. But formerly the one point was not there, as it is also unintelligible in the translation. If it is to be given very

plainly, it must be expressed quite differently. For the word *ecclesia* is properly an assembly. But we are accustomed to the word *church* which the simple do not refer to an assembled multitude, but to the consecrated house or building. Although the house ought not to be called church, except for the reason that the multitude assembles there. For we who assemble constitute and occupy a particular space, and give a name to the house according to the assembly.

Therefore the word “church” (*Kirche*) means really nothing else than a common assembly, and is not German, but Greek (as is also the word *ecclesia*); for in their own language they call it *kyria*, as in Latin it is called *curia*. Therefore in our mother-tongue, in genuine German, it ought to be a Christian congregation or assembly (*eine Christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*), or, best of all and most clearly, a holy Christian people (*eine Heilige Christenheit*).

So also the word communion, which is added, ought not to be communion (*Gemeinschaft*), but congregation (*Gemeinde*). And it is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation whereby some one meant to explain what the Christian Church is. This those of us who understood neither Latin nor German have rendered *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, although no one would speak so in German, nor is it understood. But, to speak correct German, it ought to be *eine Gemeinde der Heiligen*, a congregation of saints, that is, a congregation made up purely of saints, or, to speak yet more plainly, *ein Heilige Gemeinde*, a holy congregation. I make this explanation in order that the words *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* may be understood, because the expression has become so established by custom that it cannot well be eradicated, and it is treated almost as heresy if one should attempt to change a word.

But this is the meaning and substance of this addition: I believe that there is upon earth a holy assembly and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet one in love, without sects or schisms. And I also am a part and member of the same, a participant and joint owner of all the good it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost, in that I have heard and continue to hear the Word of God, which is the means of entrance. For formerly, before we had attained to this, we were of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Thus, until the last day, the Holy Ghost abides with the holy congregation or Christian people. By means of this congregation he brings us to Christ and teaches and preaches to us the Word, whereby he works and promotes sanctification, causing [this community] daily

to grow and become strong in the faith and the fruits of the Spirit, which he produces.

We further believe that in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sin, which is wrought through the holy sacraments and absolution, and through all manner of consolatory promises of the entire Gospel. Therefore whatever is to be preached concerning the sacraments belongs here, and in short the whole Gospel and all the duties of Christianity, which also must be preached and taught without ceasing. For although the grace of God is secured through Christ, and sanctification is wrought by the Holy Ghost through the Word of God in the unity of the Christian Church, yet on account of our flesh which we bear about with us we are never without sin.

Everything therefore in the Christian Church is so ordered that we shall daily obtain free and full forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sin, the Holy Ghost does not allow it to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is full forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with and help each other.

But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no sanctification. Therefore all who do not seek sanctification through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but expect to merit it by their works, have expelled and severed themselves from this Christian Church.

Yet meanwhile, since sanctification has begun and is growing daily, we expect that our flesh will be destroyed and buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously, and arise to entire and perfect holiness in a new eternal life. For now we are only half pure and holy, so that the Holy Ghost has ever to continue his work in us through the Word, and daily to dispense forgiveness, until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness, but only perfectly pure and holy people, full of godliness and righteousness, delivered and free from sin, from death and from all evil, in a new, immortal and glorified body.

Behold, all this is to be the office and work of the Holy Ghost, viz. that he begin and daily increase holiness upon the earth by means of two things, namely, the Christian Church and the forgiveness of sin. But in our dissolution he will accomplish and perfect it in an instant, and will forever preserve us therein by the last two things confessed in the Creed.

But the term *Auferstehung des Fleisches* (Resurrection of the flesh) here employed is not according to good German idiom. For when we Germans hear

the word *Fleisch* (flesh), we think no farther than the shambles. But in good German idiom we would say *Auferstehung des Leibs*, or *Leishnams* (Resurrection of the body). Yet it is not a matter of much moment if we only understand the words in their true sense.

This is the force of this article, which must ever continue in operation. For creation is accomplished and redemption is finished. But the Holy Ghost carries on his work without ceasing to the last day. And for that purpose he has appointed a congregation upon the earth, by which he speaks and does everything. For he has not yet brought together all his Christian people nor completed the distribution of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in Him who through the Word daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian people, and through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins bestows, increases and strengthens faith, in order that when he has accomplished it all and we abide therein, and die to the world and to all evil, he may finally make us perfectly and for ever holy; which now we expect in faith through the Word.

Behold, here you have the entire divine essence, will and work depicted most exquisitely in quite short and yet rich words, wherein consists all our wisdom, which surpasses the wisdom, mind and reason of all men. For although the whole world with all diligence has endeavored to ascertain the nature, mind and work of God, yet has she never been able to determine anything whatever of it. But here we have everything in richest measure; for here in all three articles he has revealed himself, and opened the deepest recesses of his paternal heart and of his pure unutterable love. For he has created us for this very object, viz. that he might redeem and sanctify us; and in addition he has given and imparted to us everything in heaven and upon earth, and has given to us even his Son and the Holy Ghost, by whom to bring us to himself. For (as explained above) we could never attain to the knowledge of the grace and favor of the Father except through the Lord Christ, who is a mirror of the paternal heart, outside of whom we see nothing but an angry and terrible Judge. But of Christ we could know nothing except by the revelation of the Holy Ghost.

These articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people upon earth. For all outside of Christianity, whether heathen, Turks, Jews or false Christians and hypocrites, although they believe in and worship only one true God, yet know not what his mind towards them is, and cannot confide in his love or expect any good from him; therefore they abide in eternal wrath and damnation. For they have not the Lord Christ, and besides are not illumined and favored by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

From this you perceive that the Creed contains quite a different doctrine from the Ten Commandments. For the latter teaches indeed what we ought to do, but the former tells what God has done for and gives to us. The Ten Commandments also are written in the hearts of all men, but the Creed no human wisdom can comprehend, but it must be taught by the Holy Ghost. The Law, therefore, can make no Christian, for the wrath and displeasure of God abide upon us for ever, as long as we cannot keep it and do what God demands of us; but the faith of the Creed brings pure grace, and makes us godly and acceptable to God. For by the knowledge of this we love and delight in all the commandments of God; because we see that God, with all that he has, gives himself to us – the Father, with all creatures; the Son, with his entire work; and the Holy Ghost, with all his gifts – to assist and enable us to keep the Ten Commandments.

Let this suffice concerning the Creed to lay a foundation for the simple, that they may not be burdened; so that if they understand the substance of it they may afterwards strive to acquire more, and to refer whatever they learn in the Scriptures to these parts, and ever to grow and increase in richer understanding. For as long as we live here we shall daily have enough of this to preach and to learn.

Part Third. Of Prayer – The Lord’s Prayer.

We have now heard what we must do and believe, and i wherein consists the best and happiest life. Now follows the third part, i.e. how we ought to pray. For since we are so situated that no man can perfectly keep the Ten Commandments, even though he have begun to believe, and since the devil with all his power, together with the world and our own flesh, resists our endeavors to keep them, nothing is so necessary as that we should resort to the ear of God and call upon him and pray to him, that he would give, preserve and increase in us faith and the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments, and that he would remove everything that is in our way and opposes us therein. But that we might know what and how to pray, our Lord Christ has himself taught us both the mode and the words, as we shall see.

But before we enter upon the explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, it is most necessary to exhort and incite people to prayer, as both Christ and the apostles have done. And the first consideration is, that it is our duty to pray because of God’s commandment. For this we learned in the Second Commandment: “*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,*” which requires that we praise that holy name, and call upon it in every time of need, or pray. For to call upon the name of God is nothing else than to pray. Prayer is therefore as rigidly and earnestly and sacredly commanded as to have no other God, not to kill, not to steal, etc. Let no one think, therefore, that it is the same whether he pray or not, as careless people who go about in such delusion, and ask: “Why should I pray? Who knows whether God will hear my prayer, or pay any attention thereto? If I do not pray, some one else will.” And thus they fall into the habit of never praying; and even console themselves, because we condemn false and hypocritical prayers, as though we taught that there is no duty or need of prayer. But this is ever true, viz. that services which have been practiced hitherto in the churches by repetitions and intonations were no prayers. For such external matters, when they are properly observed, may be a good exercise for young children, scholars and simple persons, and may be called singing or reading, but are not really praying. But praying, as the Second Commandment teaches, is to call upon God in every time of need. This he requires of us, and has not left it to

our choice. But it is our duty and obligation to pray if we would be Christians, as much as are our duty and obligation to obey our parents and the government; for in prayer and by calling upon it the name of God is truly honored and rightly employed. This we must therefore mark, above all things, that thereby we silence and repel such thoughts as would deter and keep us from prayer. Just as it would be idle for a son to say to his father, “Of what advantage is my obedience? I will go and do what I can; it is all the same;” but there stands the commandment, Thou shalt and must do it. So also here it is not left to my will to do or to leave undone, but I shall and must pray [at the risk of God’s wrath and displeasure.¹

This is therefore to be considered and noticed before everything else, that thereby we may silence and repel the thoughts which would keep and deter us from praying – as though it were not of much consequence whether we pray or not, or it were commanded those only who are holier and in better favor with God than we – as indeed the human heart is by nature ever despairing, so that it always flees from God, in the thought that he does not wish or desire our prayer, because we are sinners and have merited nothing but his wrath. Against such thoughts (I say) we should regard this commandment and turn to God, that we may not by such disobedience excite his anger still more. For by this commandment he gives us plainly to understand that he will not reject us or cast us oft* although we are sinners, but that he would rather draw us to himself, so that we might humble ourselves before him, acknowledge our misery and ruin, and pray for grace and help. Therefore we read in the Scriptures that he is angry also with those who did not return to him, and by their prayers assuage his wrath and seek his grace when they were smitten for their sins.]

From this you are to conclude and think, because it is so solemnly commanded to pray, that you should by no means despise your prayer, but rather set great store by it, and always seek an illustration from the other commandments. A child should by no means despise obedience to father and mother, but should always think: The work is a work of obedience, and what I do, I do with no other intention but because I walk in the obedience and commandment of God, in which I can establish myself and stand firm, and I esteem it a great thing, not on account of any worthiness of mine, but on account of the commandment. So here also what and for what we pray we should regard as demanded by God, and we should do it in obedience to him, thinking: On my account it would amount to nothing; but it shall avail, for the reason that God has

commanded it. Therefore whatever be any one's necessity or desire, he should always come before God in prayer in obedience to this commandment.

We pray, therefore, and exhort most diligently every one to take this to heart and by no means to despise our prayer. For hitherto it has been taught in the name of Satan in such a manner that no one esteemed it, and men supposed it to be enough to do the work, whether God would hear it or not. But that is staking prayer on a risk, and murmuring it on a venture; and therefore it is a lost prayer. For we allow such thoughts as these to deter us and lead us astray: "I am not holy or worthy enough; if I were as godly and holy as St. Peter or St. Paul, then I would pray." But put such thoughts far away, for just the same commandment which applied to St. Paul applies also to me; and the Second Commandment is given as much on my account as on his account, so that he can boast of no better or holier commandment.

Therefore thou shouldst say: "My prayer is as precious, holy and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul or of the most holy saints." And this is the reason: "For I will gladly grant that he is holier in his person, but not on account of the commandment; since God does not regard prayer on account of the person, but on account of his word and obedience thereto. Yet the reason is this: I rest my prayer upon the same commandment with those of all the saints, and besides I pray for the same thing and for the same reason for which they pray and ever have prayed; and therefore it is as precious to me, as well as much more needful, as to those great saints."

This is the first and most important point, that all our prayers are based and rest upon obedience to God, irrespective of our person, whether we be sinners or saints, worthy or unworthy. And we must know that God will not have it treated as a jest, but that he is angry, and will punish all who do not pray as surely as he punishes all other disobedience; besides, that he will not suffer our prayers to be in vain or lost. For if he had not purposed to answer your prayer, he would not bid you pray and give so solemn a commandment for that purpose.

In the second place, we should be the more urged and incited to pray because God has also made the promise, and declared that it shall surely be to us as we pray, as he says (Ps. 50:15): "*Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.*" And Christ, in the Gospel of St. Matthew (7:7): "*Ask and it shall be given you;*" "*For every one that asketh receiveth.*" Such promises ought certainly to encourage and animate our hearts to take pleasure and delight in prayer, since he testifies in his Word that our prayer is heartily pleasing to him, and shall

assuredly be heard and granted, that we may not despise it or think lightly of it, and pray upon an uncertainty.

This you can hold up to him and say: “Here I come, dear Father, and pray, not of my own purpose or upon my own worthiness, but according to thy commandment and promise, which cannot fail or deceive me.” Whoever, therefore, does not believe this promise, must know again that he excites God to anger by most highly dishonoring him and reproaching him with falsehood.

Besides this, we should be allured and induced to pray because, in addition to this commandment and promise, God anticipates us, and himself arranges the words and form of prayer for us, and places them upon our lips, as to how and what we should pray, that we may see how heartily he pities us in our distress, and may never doubt that such prayer is truly pleasing to him, and shall certainly be answered. This gives indeed a great advantage to this [the Lord’s Prayer] over all prayers that we might ourselves compose. For in them the conscience would ever be in doubt, and might say: I have prayed, but who knows how it pleases him, or whether I have adopted the right form and proportions? Hence there is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth than the Lord’s Prayer which we daily pray, because it has this excellent testimony, that God loves to hear it, which we ought not to surrender for all the riches of the world.

And therefore also is it prescribed that we should see and consider the distress which ought to urge and compel us to pray without ceasing. For whoever would pray must have something to present, state and name which he desires; if not, it cannot be called a prayer.

Therefore we have rightly rejected the prayers of monks and priests, who howl and growl in a hostile manner day and night, but none of them think of praying for a hair’s breadth of anything. And if we would collect all the churches, together with all ecclesiastics, they would be obliged to confess that they have never from the heart prayed for even a drop of wine. For none of them has ever purposed to pray from obedience to God and faith in his promise, nor has any one regarded any distress, but they only thought (when they had done their best) that they had done a good work, whereby they paid God for his benefits as men unwilling to take anything from him, but wishing only to give him something of their own.

But where there is to be a true prayer there must be earnestness. Men must feel their distress, and such distress as presses them and compels them to call and cry out; then prayer will be made spontaneously, as it ought to be, and men will require no teaching how to prepare themselves and to attain to the proper

devotion. But the distress which ought to concern us most, both for ourselves and for every one, you will find abundantly set forth in the Lord's Prayer. Therefore it is to serve also to remind us of the same, that we contemplate it and lay it to heart that we may not become remiss in prayer. For we all have necessities and wants enough, but the great want is that we do not feel and realize them. Therefore God also requires that we lament and plead our necessities and wants, not because he does not know them, but that we may kindle our hearts to stronger and greater desires, and open wide our arms to receive so much the more.

It is well, therefore, for every one to accustom himself from his youth daily to pray for all his wants, whenever he is sensible of anything affecting his interests or that of other people, among whom he may be, as for preachers, government, neighbors, domestics; and always (as we have said) to hold up to God his commandment and promise, knowing that he will not have them disregarded. This I say, because I would like to see people brought again to pray truly and earnestly, and not have them go about coldly and indifferently, whereby they become daily more unable to pray; which is just what the devil desires, and for what he works with all his powers. For he is well aware what damage and harm it does his cause if men exercise themselves rightly in prayer.

For this we must know, that all our shelter and protection rest in prayer alone. For we are far too feeble to cope with the devil and all his powers and adherents that set themselves against us, and they might easily crush us under their feet. Therefore we must consider and have recourse to those weapons with which Christians must be armed in order to stand against the devil. For what do you think has hitherto accomplished so much in defending us and frustrating the counsels and purposes of our enemies, as well as restraining the murder and insurrection whereby the devil thought to crush us, together with the Gospel, except that the prayer of a few godly men intervened like a wall of iron on our side? We should indeed have been spectators of a far different play, viz. how the devil would have destroyed all Germany in its own blood. Now they may confidently deride it and make a mock of it. But by prayer alone, if we shall only persevere and not become slack we will yet be a match both for them and the devil. For, whenever a godly Christian prays: "Dear Father, let thy will be done," God speaks from on high and says: "Yes, dear child, it shall be so, in spite of the devil and of all the world."

Let this be said as an exhortation, that men may learn, first of all, to esteem prayer as something great and precious, and to make a proper distinction

between “vain repetitions” and praying for something. For we by no means reject prayer, but the bare, useless howling and murmuring we reject, as Christ himself also rejects and prohibits “vain repetitions.” Now we will most briefly and clearly treat of the Lord’s Prayer. Here we find all needs and distresses comprehended in seven successive articles or petitions, which never cease to pertain to us, and each so great that it ought to constrain us to pray and plead the same all our lives.

The First Petition.

Hallowed be thy name.

This is indeed somewhat obscure, and not in good German idiom. For in our mother-tongue we would say: “Heavenly Father, help that thy name may by all means be holy.” But what is it to pray that his name may be holy? Is it not holy already? Answer: Yes it is always holy in its nature, but not in our use. For God’s name is given to us because we have been baptized and have become Christians, so that we are called children of God, and have the sacraments, whereby he so unites us with himself that everything which is his must serve for our use.

But here a great necessity rests upon us, for which we ought to be most concerned, that this name have its proper honor, be esteemed holy and sacred, as our greatest treasure and sanctuary; and that as godly children we pray that the name of God, which is holy in heaven, may also be and remain holy with us upon earth and in all the world.

But how does it become holy among us? Answer, as plainly as it can be said: When both our doctrine and life are godly and Christian. For since in this prayer we call God our Father, it is our duty always to deport and demean ourselves as godly children, that we may not live to his shame, but to his honor and praise.

Now the name of God can be profaned by us either in words or in works. (For whatever we do upon the earth must be either words or works, speech or act.) In the first place, it is profaned if men preach, teach and speak error and delusion in the name of God, so that this name must serve to adorn and to find market for falsehood. Such is indeed the greatest profanation and dishonor of the divine name. In the next place also, where men make use of the holy name as a cloak for their shame by swearing, cursing, conjuring, etc. In the third place, by an openly wicked life and works, when those who are called Christians and people of God are adulterers, drunkards, avaricious, gourmands, envious and slanderers.

Here also must the name of God come to shame and be profaned because of us. For just as it is a shame and disgrace to a natural father to have a bad, ruined child that opposes him in words and deeds, so that on its account he suffers reproach and contempt; so also it brings dishonor upon God if we who are called by his name and have all manner of goods from him teach, speak and live in any other manner except as godly and heavenly children, that he must hear it said of us that we cannot be the children of God, but must rather be the children of the devil.

Thus you perceive that in this petition we pray just for that which God has enjoined in the Second Commandment; namely, that his name be not taken in vain to swear, curse, lie, deceive, etc., but be rightly employed to the praise and honor of God. For whoever employs the name of God for any sort of wrong profanes and desecrates this holy name, as aforetime a church was considered desecrated when a murder or any other crime had been perpetrated therein, or when a pyx or altar was desecrated, as though holy in themselves, yet becoming unholy in use. Thus this point is easy and clear as soon as the language is understood, viz. that to hallow is the same as in our idiom to praise, magnify and honor both in word and deed.

Here learn of how great need such prayer is. For because we see how full the world is of sects and false teachers, who all wear the holy name as a cover and sham for the doctrines of devils, 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's pure doctrine, and would suppress it, as bishops, tyrants, fanatics, etc. Likewise also for ourselves who have the Word of God, but are not thankful for it, nor live as you 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 be considered above everything else, and his Word be taught in its purity and be esteemed precious and holy.

The Second Petition.

Thy kingdom come.

As in the First Petition we prayed that, as respects the honor and name of God, he would prevent the world from adorning its lies and wickedness therewith, but cause it to be esteemed high and holy both in doctrine and life,

that he may be praised and magnified in us; so here we pray that his kingdom may come. But just as the name of God is in itself holy, and we pray nevertheless that it be holy among us, so also his kingdom comes of its own power without our prayer, yet we pray nevertheless that it may come to us; that is, that it prevail among us and with us, so that we may be a part of those among whom his name is hallowed and his kingdom prospers.

But what is the kingdom of God? Answer: Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent his Son Jesus Christ our Lord into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life and salvation against sin, death and an evil conscience. And besides he has given us his Holy Ghost, to apply the same to us by his holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us by his power in the faith.

Therefore we pray here in the first place that this may become effective with us, and that the name of God be so praised through his holy Word and a Christian life that we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow therein, and that it may gain approbation and adherence among other people, proceed with power throughout the world, that many may find entrance into the kingdom of grace, be made partakers of redemption, and be so led by the Holy Ghost that we shall for ever remain altogether in a kingdom now begun.

For God's kingdom comes to us in two ways; first, here temporarily through the Word and faith; and secondly, in eternity for ever through revelation. We therefore pray for both, viz. that it may come to us who are not yet therein, and to us who have received the same, by daily increase, and hereafter in eternal life. All that is but as much as to say: Dear Father, we pray, give first thy Word, that the Gospel be preached effectively throughout the world; and secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Ghost thy kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be overcome, that it may have no right or power over us, until at last it shall be utterly destroyed, and sin, death and hell shall be exterminated, that we may live for ever in perfect righteousness and blessedness.

From this you perceive that we pray here not for a crust of bread or a temporal, perishable good; but for an eternal, ineffable treasure and everything that God himself can effect; which is far too great for any human heart to think of desiring if he had not himself commanded us to pray for the same.

But because he is God he claims the honor of giving much more and more richly than any one can comprehend – like an eternal, unfailing fountain, which

the more it pours forth and overflows, the more it continues to give – and he desires nothing more earnestly of us than that we ask much and great things of him, and again is angry if we do not ask and pray confidently.

For just as if the richest and most mighty emperor would bid a poor beggar ask whatever he might desire, and were prepared to give great imperial presents, and the fool would beg only for a dish of gruel; he would be rightly considered a rogue and a scoundrel, who was despising and making a monk of the invitation of his imperial majesty, and who would not be worthy of coming into his presence. So also it is a great reproach and dishonor to God if we to whom he offers and pledges such great and unspeakable treasures despise the same, and do not have sufficient confidence to receive them, but scarcely venture to pray for a piece of bread.

That is all the fault of the shameful unbelief which does not look to God for as much good as will satisfy the stomach; much less expects without doubt such eternal treasures of God. Therefore we must strengthen ourselves against it, and let this be our first prayer. Then indeed will all else be richly bestowed upon us, as Christ teaches (Matt. 6:33): *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* For how could he allow as to suffer want in temporal things when he promises that which is eternal and imperishable?

The Third Petition.

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

Thus far we have prayed that God’s name be honored by us, and that his kingdom prevail among us; in which two points is comprehended all that pertains to the honor of God and to our salvation, that we come into the ownership of God and all his possessions. But the great need is, that we cling firmly to them, and do not suffer ourselves to be torn therefrom. For as in a good government it is not only necessary that there be those who build and govern well, but also those who make defense, afford protection and maintain it in security; so here also, although we have prayed for the things of the greatest need, viz. for the Gospel, faith and the Holy Ghost, that he may govern us and redeem us from the power of the devil, we must also pray that his will be done. For if we are to abide therein, there will be quite wonderful encounters, so that,

on account of them, we must suffer many thrusts and blows from everything that ventures to oppose and prevent the fulfillment of the two petitions that precede.

For no one believes how the devil opposes and exerts all his powers against them, and cannot suffer that any one teach or believe aright. And it hurts him beyond measure to suffer his lies and abominations, that have been honored under the most specious pretexts of the divine Name, to be exposed, and that he be disgraced, and besides be driven out of the heart, and suffer such a breach to be made in his kingdom. Therefore, with all his power and might he chafes and rages as a fierce enemy, and marshals all his subjects, and enlists the world and our own flesh as his allies. For our flesh is in itself indolent and inclined to evil, even though we have accepted and believe the Word of God. The world, too, is perverse and wicked; this he incites against us in various ways, and kindles and adds fuel, that he may hinder and drive us back, cause us to fall and again bring us under his power. That is all his will, mind and thought, for which he strives day and night, and never rests a moment, but employs all arts, malicious devices, ways and means which he can invent.

We therefore who would be Christians must surely reckon upon having the devil with all his angels, together with the world, as our enemies, who will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where the Word of God is preached, accepted or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting. And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth – possessions, honor, house and estate, wife and child, body and life. That hurts indeed our flesh and the old Adam. For the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience whatever afflictions befall us, and to yield whatever is taken from us.

Therefore there is just as much need, as in everything else, that we pray without ceasing: “Dear Father, thy will be done, not the will of the devil and of our enemies, nor of anything that would persecute and destroy thy holy Word, or hinder thy kingdom; and grant that we may bear with patience and may overcome in whatever it be our lot to suffer on account of this thy will, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away from weakness or indolence.”

In these three petitions we find expressed in the simplest manner the need which pertains to God himself, yet all for our sakes. For whatever we pray concerns only us, namely, as we have said, that the will of God, which must be done without us, may also be done in us. For as his name must be hallowed and his kingdom come without our prayer, so also his will must be done and succeed, although the devil with all his adherents raise a tumult and rage in fury, and

undertake to utterly exterminate the Gospel. But for our own sake we must pray that, even against their fury, his will be also done without hindrance in us, that they may accomplish nothing, and we remain firm against all violence and persecution, and submit to the will of God.

Such prayer must indeed be our protection and defense now, to repel and overcome all that the devil, Pope, bishops, tyrants and heretics can do against our Gospel. Let them rage all together and attempt their utmost, and deliberate and resolve how they may destroy and exterminate us, that their will and counsel may prevail. One or two Christians with this petition alone shall be our wall against them, upon which they shall dash themselves to pieces. This consolation and confidence we have, that the will and purpose of the devil and of all our enemies must fail and come to naught, however proud, secure and powerful they know themselves to be. For if their will were not broken and frustrated, the kingdom of God could not abide upon the earth or his name be hallowed.

The Fourth Petition.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Here we are mindful of the poor bread-basket, namely, of our body and the necessities of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it is also very broad and comprehensive. For if you speak of, and pray for, daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy the same, and also against everything which interferes with it. Therefore you must enlarge your thoughts and extend them afar, not only to the oven or the flour-barrel, but to the distant field and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread and every sort of sustenance. For if God did not cause it to grow, and bless and preserve it in the field, we could never take bread from the oven or have any to set upon the table.

To speak briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world. For on that account alone do we need daily bread. But to our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessities, but also that we live in peace and quiet with those among whom we live and have our intercourse in daily business and conversation and in every manner possible; in short, whatever pertains to the interests of family, of neighbors and of government. For where these things do not prosper as they ought, the necessities of life also must fail, and life cannot be maintained.

There is, besides, the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and government, as that by which, most of all, God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we had received of God all good things in abundance, we should not be able to retain any of them, or use them in security and happiness, if he did not give us a permanent and peaceful government. For where there are dissension, strife and war, there the daily bread is already taken away, or at least diminished.

Therefore it would be very proper to place in the coat-of-arms of every pious prince the figure of a loaf of bread, instead of that of a lion or of a wreath of rue, or to stamp it upon the coin, to remind both them and their subjects that by their office we have protection and peace, and that without them we could not eat and retain our daily bread. Wherefore also they are worthy of all honor, so that we should give to them for their office what we ought and can, as to those through whom we enjoy in peace and quietness what we have, inasmuch as otherwise we could not retain a farthing; and that in addition we shall also pray for them that through them God may bestow on us still more blessing and good.

Thus we have very briefly indicated how far this petition extends through all interests upon earth. Of this any one might indeed make a long prayer, and with many words enumerate all the things that are included therein, as that we pray God to give to us food and drink, garments, house and estate, and health of body, also that he cause the grain and fruits of the field to grow and produce richly. And that afterwards he help us in our families, giving and preserving to us a godly wife, pious children and servants; cause our work, handicraft, or whatever we have to do to prosper and succeed, and favor us with faithful neighbors and good friends, etc. Also to give to emperors, kings and all ranks, and especially to our rulers and all counselors, magistrates and officers, wisdom, strength and success for good government and victory over the Turks and all our enemies; to give to subjects and the common people obedience, peace and harmony in their life with one another; and that he would preserve us from all sorts of calamity to body and support, as lightning, hail, fire, flood, poison, pestilence, cattle-plague, war and bloodshed, famine, destructive beasts and wicked men, etc. All this it is important to impress upon the simple, viz. that these things come from God and must be prayed for by us.

But this petition is especially directed against our chief enemy, the devil. For all his thought and desire is occupied with depriving us of all that we have from God and hindering us in its enjoyment; and he is not satisfied to obstruct and destroy spiritual government in order that he may lead souls astray by his lies

and bring them under his power, but he also seeks to prevent the stability of all government and honorable peaceable relations upon earth. Thus he causes so much contention, murder, sedition and war, also lightning and hail, destruction of grain and cattle, poisoning the air, etc.; in short, he is sorry that any one has a morsel of bread from God and eats the same in peace; and if it were in his power, and our prayer (next to God) did not prevent him, he would not allow a stalk in the field or a farthing in the house, yea, not even an hour of life, to those especially who have the Word of God and endeavor to be Christians.

Thus God also wishes to indicate to us how he cares for us in all our need and faithfully provides also for our daily maintenance. And although he grants and preserves the same even to the wicked and knaves, yet he wishes that we pray to him for it; so that we may recognize that we receive it from his hand, and may feel his paternal goodness toward us therein. For when he withdraws his hand nothing can prosper or be maintained to the end, as is daily seen and experienced. How much trouble there is now in the world only on account of bad coin, yea on account of daily oppression and imposition in common trade, bargaining and labor on the part of those who wantonly oppress the poor and deprive them of their daily bread! This indeed we must allow them to do; but let them take care that they do not omit the common prayer, and that this petition in the Lord's Prayer be not against them.

The Fifth Petition.

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

This point now pertains to our poor miserable life, which, although we have and believe the Word of God, and do and suffer his will, and are supported by his gifts and blessings, is nevertheless not without sin. For we stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world, among men who do us great wrong and give cause for impatience, anger, revenge, etc. And besides we have Satan at our back, who attacks us on every side, and fights (as we have heard) against all the foregoing petitions, so that it is not possible to stand always firm in such a persistent conflict.

Therefore there is here again great need to call upon God and to pray: "Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses." Not as though he did not without, and even before, our prayer forgive sin (for he has given us the Gospel, in which is pure forgiveness) before we prayed or ever thought about it. But this is to the intent

that we may recognize and accept such forgiveness. For since the flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither believes nor trusts God, and is ever active in evil lusts and devices, that we sin daily in word and deed, in sins of omission and commission, by which peace of conscience is destroyed, so that it is afraid of the wrath and displeasure of God, and thus loses the comfort and consolation of the Gospel, it is an unceasing necessity that we have recourse to this petition, and obtain therein consolation wherewith to again comfort the conscience.

But this should serve to break our pride and keep us humble. For he has reserved this prerogative to himself, that if any one boast of his godliness and despise others, he may regard himself in the light of this prayer, and thus he will find that he is no better than others, and that in the presence of God all must lower their plumes, and be glad merely that they can attain forgiveness. And let no one think that as long as we live here he can reach such position that he will not need such forgiveness. In short, if God do not forgive without intermission we are lost.

It is therefore the intent of this petition that God would not regard our sins and bring in account against us what we daily deserve; but would deal graciously with us, and forgive, as he has promised, and thus grant us a joyful and confident conscience to stand before him in prayer. For where the heart is not in right relation towards God, nor can take such confidence, it will never more venture to pray. But such confident and joyful heart is impossible except in the assurance of the forgiveness of sin.

But there is a necessary yet consolatory addition attached: "*As we forgive.*"

He has promised that we shall be sure that everything is forgiven and pardoned, yet in so far as we also forgive our neighbor. For just as we daily sin much against God – and yet he forgives us all through grace – so we must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence and wrong, and shows malice toward us, etc. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you; but if you forgive, you have this consolation and assurance, that you have forgiveness in heaven. This is not on account of your forgiving, for God forgives freely and without condition, out of pure grace, because he has so promised as the Gospel teaches. But he has rather appointed this as a token for our confirmation and assurance in addition to the promise (which accords also with this prayer), (Luke 6:37): "*Forgive and ye shall be forgiven*" Therefore Christ also repeats it after the Lord's Prayer, and says (Matt. 6:14): "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*"

This sign is therefore annexed to this petition, that when we pray we remember the promise and think: “Dear Father, for this reason I come and pray thee to forgive me; not that I can make satisfaction, or can merit anything by my works, but because thou hast promised and attached the seal thereto, that I should be as sure as though I had absolution pronounced by thyself.” For as great effects as Baptism and the Lord’s Supper produce, which are appointed as external signs, this sign can also produce to confirm our consciences and cause them to rejoice. And it is especially given for this purpose, viz. that we might practice and make use of it every hour, as that which we have with us at all times.

The Sixth Petition.

And lead us not into temptation.

We have now heard enough of the struggle and toil required to preserve all that for which we pray, and to persevere therein, which, nevertheless, is not achieved without infirmities and stumbling. Besides, although we have received forgiveness and a good conscience and are entirely acquitted, yet is our life of such a nature that one stands to-day, and to-morrow falls. Therefore, even though we be godly and stand before God with a good conscience, yet we must ever pray that he would not suffer us to relapse and yield to trials and temptations.

But this temptation, or (as our old Saxons used to say) *Bekocrunge*, is of three kinds, namely, of the flesh, of the world and of the devil. For we all dwell in the flesh and carry the old Adam on our shoulders; he exerts himself and daily incites us to wantonness, indolence, excess in eating and drinking, avarice and deception, to defraud our neighbor and to impose upon him, and, in short, to all manner of evil lusts which cleave to us by nature, and to which we are incited by the society and example of other people, and by what we hear and see, which often irritate and corrupt even a guiltless heart.

Then comes the world, which offends us in word and deed, and impels us to anger and impatience. In short, there is nothing but hatred and envy, enmity, violence and wrong, unfaithfulness, vengeance, cursing, raillery, slander, pride and haughtiness, with superfluous ornament, honor, fame and power, where no one is willing to be the least, but every one desires to sit at the head and to be seen before all.

Then comes the devil, inciting and provoking in all directions, but especially exerting himself in spiritual matters and such as pertain to the conscience, namely, to induce us to despise and disregard the works and Word of God, to tear us from our faith, from hope and from love, and bring us into a perverted faith or unbelief, false security and obduracy; or, on the other hand, to despair, denial of God, blasphemy and innumerable other shocking things. These are indeed snares and nets – yea, real fiery darts which the devil shoots most venomously into the heart, and not flesh and blood.

Great and grievous indeed are these dangers and temptations which every Christian must bear, even though each one were alone by himself. So that every hour that we are in this vile life, where we are attacked on all sides, chased and hunted down, we are moved to cry out and to pray that God would not suffer us to become weary and faint and to relapse into sin, shame and unbelief; for otherwise it would be impossible to overcome even the least temptation.

This, then, is “*not leading us into temptation*” viz. when he gives us power and strength to resist, even when the temptation be not taken away. or removed. For since we live in the flesh and have the devil about us, no one can escape temptation and allurements; and it cannot be otherwise than that we must endure trials – yea, even be entangled in them; but for this we pray, viz. that we may not fall and be drowned therein.

To feel temptation is therefore a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it. We must all feel it, although not all in the same manner, but some in a greater degree and more severely than others; as youth suffer especially from the flesh, afterwards they that attain to middle life and old age, from the world, but others who are occupied with spiritual matters – that is, strong Christians – from the devil. But such feeling, as long as it is against our will and we prefer to be rid of it, can harm no one. For if we did not feel it, it could not be called a temptation. But to consent thereto is when we give it loose reins and do not resist or pray against it.

Therefore we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be incessantly attacked, so that no one go on in security and heedlessly, as though the devil were far from us, but at all times expect and return his blows. For though I now am chaste, patient, kind and in firm faith, the devil will yet this hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never desists nor becomes tired, so that when one temptation ceases, others always arise anew.

Therefore there is no help or comfort, except to run hither and to take hold of the “Lord’s Prayer” and thus address God from the heart: “Dear Father, thou hast taught me to pray. Let me not relapse because of temptations.” Thus you shall see that they must desist, and finally yield. Else if you venture to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space. For he has a serpent’s head, which if it gain an opening into which he can pry, the whole body will follow without detention. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back.

The Seventh and Last Petition.

But deliver us from evil. Amen.

In the Greek text this petition says: “*Deliver or preserve us from the evil one, or the malicious one;*” and looks as if it were speaking of the devil, as though he would comprehend everything in one, that the entire substance of all our prayer should be directed against our chief enemy. For it is he who prevents and destroys everything among us that we pray for: the name or honor of God, God’s kingdom and will, our daily bread, a cheerful good conscience, etc.

Therefore we finally sum it all up and say: “Dear Father, pray help that we be rid of all these calamities.”, But there is nevertheless also included whatever may happen to us under the devil’s kingdom – poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all misery and sorrow which is so without limit upon the earth. For since the devil is not only a liar, but also a murderer, he constantly seeks our life, and wreaks his anger whenever he can affect our bodies with misfortune and harm. Hence it comes that he often breaks men’s necks or drives them to insanity, drowns some, and induces many to commit suicide, and to many other terrible calamities. Therefore we have nothing left upon earth to do but to pray against this arch-enemy without ceasing. For unless God preserved us we would not be secure against him for even an hour.

Hence you see again how God wishes us to pray to him for everything also which affects our bodily interests, that we seek and expect help nowhere else except in him alone. But this point he put last. For if we are to be preserved and delivered from all evil, the name of God must be sanctified in us, his kingdom must be with us and his will be done among us. After that he will preserve us from sin and shame, and besides from everything that might harm or injure us.

Thus God has briefly placed before us all the necessities which may ever concern us, so that we might have no excuse for not praying. But all depends upon this, that we learn to say “Amen” that is, that we do not doubt that our prayer will surely be heard, and that what we pray shall be done. For this is nothing else than the word of undoubting faith, not of one praying at a venture, but of one who knows that God does not lie to him, since he has promised to grant it. Where, therefore, there is no such faith, there also can be no true prayer. It is, therefore, a pernicious delusion of those who thus pray that they cannot from the heart say “Amen” thereto, and positively conclude that God will answer their prayer, but that they remain in doubt and say, “How should I be so bold as to boast that God will answer my prayer? Since I am nothing but a poor sinner,” etc.

The reason for this is, they regard not the promise of God, but their own work and worthiness, whereby they despise God and reproach him with lying, and therefore they receive nothing. As St. James says (1:6): “*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.*” Only consider the importance that God attaches to our being, sure that we do not pray in vain, and to our avoidance of a light estimation of prayer.

1. The part enclosed in brackets, which ends with paragraph 11, is wanting in the Ed. Pr. of the Large Catechism, but found in the editions from 1530 on. It was not inserted in the first German edition of the Book of Concord but was adopted by the Latin edition.↩

Part Fourth. Of Baptism.

We have now finished the three chief parts of common Christian doctrine. Besides these we have yet to speak of our two sacraments instituted by Christ, of which also every Christian ought to have at least some short elementary instruction, because without them there can be no Christian; although, alas! hitherto no instruction concerning them has been given. But a in the first place we take up baptism, by which we are first received into the Christian Church. That it may be readily understood, we will carefully treat of it, and keep only to that which it is necessary to know. For how it is to be maintained and defended against heretics and sects we will commend to the learned.

In the first place, it is important above all things to know well the words upon which baptism is founded, and to which everything pertains that is to be said on the subject, namely, where the Lord Christ speaks (Matt. 28:19): *“Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”*

Likewise in St. Mark, the last chapter (v. 16): *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”*

In these words we must notice, in the first place, that here stands God’s commandment and institution that we shall not doubt that baptism is divine, and not devised and invented by men. For as truly as I can say no man has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God himself, so also I can boast that baptism is no human trifle, but that it is instituted by God himself, and that it is most solemnly and rigidly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved. It is not, then, to be regarded a trifling matter, like the putting on of a new coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem baptism excellent, glorious and exalted, for which we chiefly contend and fight, because the world is now so full of sects exclaiming that baptism is a merely external thing, and that external things are of no use. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God’s Word and commandment which have instituted, established and confirmed baptism. But what God has instituted and commanded cannot be a vain, useless thing, but must be most precious, though in external appearance it

be of less value than a straw. If hitherto, when the Pope with his letters and bulls dispensed indulgences and consecrated altars and churches, solely because it has been considered a great thing of the letters and seals; we ought to esteem baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it, and it is performed in his name. For these are the words. *Go . . . baptize* – but not in your name, but in the name of God.

For to be baptized in the name of God is to be baptized not by men, but by God himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless God's own work. From this fact every one may himself readily infer that it is a far higher work than the work of any man or saint. For what greater work can we do than the work of God?

But here the devil makes his great efforts to delude us with false appearances, and lead us away from the work of God to our own works. For the appearance is much more splendid when a Carthusian does many great and difficult works; and we all think much more of that which we do and merit ourselves. But the Scriptures teach thus: Even though we collect in one mass the works of all the monks, however splendidly they may shine, they would not be as noble and good as if God should pick up a straw. Why? Because the person is nobler and better. And here we must not estimate the person according to the works, but the works according to the person, from whom they most derive their worth. But insane reason does not regard this, and because baptism does not present the attractive appearance of the works which we do, it is to be esteemed as nothing.

From this now derive a proper understanding of the subject, and when asked what baptism is, answer, that it is not simply water, but water comprehended in God's Word and commandment, and sanctified thereby, so that it is nothing else than a divine water; not that the water in itself is better than other water, but that God's Word and commandment are added.

Therefore it is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil that now our new spirits mock at baptism, separate it from God's Word and institution, and regard nothing but the water which is taken from the well; and then they prate and say: How is a handful of water to save souls? Yes indeed, my friend, who does not know as much as that, that if they be separated from one another water is water? But how dare you thus interfere with God's order, and tear out the most precious jewel with which God has connected it and set it, and which he will not have separated? For the germ in the water is God's Word and commandment and the name of God, which is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth.

Thus we now comprehend the difference, that baptism is quite another thing from all other water; not on account of the natural water, but because something more noble is here added. For God himself stakes his honor, his power and might thereon. Therefore it is not simply natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it, – all on account of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has and is able to do all that God is and can do [since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it]. Hence also it derives its character as a sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught: “*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum.*” That is, when the Word is joined to the element or natural substance it becomes a sacrament, that is, something holy and divine, and a holy and divine sign.

Therefore we always teach that the sacraments and all external things which God has ordained and instituted should not be regarded according to the coarse, external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, but as the Word of God is included therein. For thus we also speak of the parental estate and of civil government. If we would regard the persons in such estate according to their noses, eyes, skin, and hair, flesh and bones, we should find them to look like Turks and heathen. And you might well proceed to say: Why should I esteem them more than others? But because the commandment of God is added: “*Honor thy father and thy mother*” I see quite another man, adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God. The commandment (I say) is the chain of gold about his neck, yea, the crown upon his head, which shows to me how and why I shall honor this flesh and blood.

Thus, and much more even, we must honor baptism, and esteem it glorious, on account of the Word, as being honored both in word and deed by God himself, and confirmed with miracles from heaven. For do you think it was a jest that when Christ was baptized the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly, and there was nothing present but divine glory and majesty?

Therefore I exhort again that these two, the water and the Word, be by no means separated. For if the Word be taken away, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bathkeeper’s baptism. But when the Word is added, as God has ordained, it is a sacrament, and is called Christian baptism. This is the first part of the essence and dignity of the holy sacrament.

Since we know now what baptism is, and how it is to be administered, we must, in the second place, also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted;

that is, what it avails, gives and produces. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* Therefore we state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit and end of baptism is this, viz. to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with him for ever.

Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem baptism, because in it we obtain such an unspeakable treasure, which also indicates sufficiently that it cannot be simply water. For water alone could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the name of God is comprehended therein. But where the name of God is, there also must be life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it (Tit. 3:5).

But as our would-be wise, new spirits declare that faith alone saves, and that works and everything external avail nothing, we answer: It is true, nothing in us is in any way effectual but faith, as we shall hear still further. But these blind guides are unwilling to see, viz. that faith must have something which it is to believe, something of which it may take hold, and upon which it can stand and rest. Thus faith clings to the water, and believes that in baptism is pure salvation and life; not in the water (as we have said plainly enough), but in the Word and institution of God incorporated therein, and the name of God which inheres in it. If I believe this, what else is that but believing in God as in him who has given and set his Word in this ordinance, and proposes to us this external element wherein we may apprehend such a treasure.

We therefore say that it is madness to separate faith, and that wherein faith adheres and to which it is bound, though it be something external. Yea, it must be something external, that it may be apprehended by the senses, comprehended, and thereby be brought into the heart, as indeed the entire Gospel is an external, verbal proclamation. In short, what God does and works in us he proposes to work through such external institutions. Wherever, therefore, he speaks, yea, whereby or whereinsoever he speaks, there faith must look, and to that it must hold. Now here we have the words: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* To what else do they refer but to baptism, i.e. the water comprehended

in God's institution? Hence it follows that whoever rejects baptism rejects the Word of God, faith and Christ, who directs us to baptism and binds us thereto.

In the third place, since we have learned the great benefit and power of baptism, let us see further who is the person that receives these benefits and gifts of baptism. That also is again most clearly and beautifully expressed in the words: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. Because these blessings are here promised and presented in the words in and with the water, they cannot be received, except we believe it with the heart. Although it is in itself a transcendent divine treasure, it is of no avail without faith. Therefore is the effect of this single word, "*He that believeth*" – so great that it excludes and rejects all work which we can do in the opinion thereby to merit and obtain salvation. For it is determined that whatever is not of faith avails nothing and receives nothing.

But if they say, as they are accustomed, Baptism also is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation, what then would remain of faith? Answer: Yes, our works avail nothing for salvation, but baptism is not our work, but the work of God (for you must make a great distinction between the baptism of Christ and a bathkeeper's baptism). God's works are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude faith, but demand it; for without faith they cannot be apprehended. For in this, that you suffer the water to be poured upon you, you have not so received baptism that it becomes a blessing to you; but it will be a blessing to you if you have yourself baptized with the purpose, according to God's command and institution, and besides in God's name, to receive in the water the promised salvation. This the hand cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it.

Thus we see plainly that this is no work of our doing, but a treasure which he gives us, and which faith apprehends; just as the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended in the Word, and offered to us and received by faith. Therefore they do us wrong in exclaiming against us that we preach against faith; since we alone insist upon it as of such necessity that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed.

Thus we have these three parts which it is necessary to know concerning this sacrament, especially that the institution of God is to be held in all honor, which alone would be sufficient, though it be an entirely external thing. Just as the command "*Honor thy father and thy mother*" refers to bodily flesh and blood, wherein we are to regard not the mere flesh and blood, but the commandment of

God in which they are comprehended, and on account of which the flesh is called father and mother; so also, though we had no more than these words, _“Go ye and baptize_” etc., it would be necessary for us to accept and do it as the institution of God. Yet now we have not only God’s commandment and injunction, but also the promise, on account of which it is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained, and is in short so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot comprehend it. But it requires a special art to believe this, for there is no want of treasure, but there is a want of faith to apprehend it and hold it firmly.

Therefore every Christian has enough in baptism to learn and to practice all his life. For he has always enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and brings, viz. victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ and the Holy Ghost with his gifts. In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature consider it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. For only consider, if I here were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, if they died, of restoring them to life, so that they would live for ever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich no one could find access! But here in baptism there is brought free to every one’s door such a treasure and such medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive.

We must so regard baptism and avail ourselves of its blessings, that when our sins and conscience oppress us we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: I am baptized, and if baptized it is promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body. For for this reason two things are done in baptism, viz. the body which can apprehend nothing but the water is sprinkled, and the word is spoken for the soul to apprehend.

But because water and the Word are united in baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live for ever; the soul through the Lord which it believes; but the body because it is united with the soul, and also apprehends baptism as it is able to apprehend it. We have, therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul, for thereby we are made holy and are saved, which otherwise no kind of life, no work upon earth, could attain.

This must suffice respecting the nature, blessing and use of baptism, for it answers the present purpose.

Of Infant Baptism.

Here we are brought to a question by which the devil, through his sects, confuses the world, namely – Of Infant Baptism. Whether children also believe, and it be right to baptize them? Concerning this, we say briefly: Let the simple and unlearned dismiss this question from their minds, and refer it to the learned. But if you will answer, then answer thus:

That the baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from his own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Ghost; and that there are yet many even today in both whose life and doctrine we perceive that they have the Holy Ghost; as it is also given to us by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Ghost.

But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, he would not give the Holy Ghost nor any part thereof to any of them; therefore during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian. But since God confirms baptism by the gift of his Holy Ghost, as is plainly perceptible in some of the Church Fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Huss and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since the holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world, they must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God. For he can never be opposed to himself, or support falsehood and wickedness, or for its promotion impart his grace and Spirit. This is indeed the best and strongest proof for the simple-minded and unlearned. For they shall not take from us or overthrow this article: *“I believe in a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.”*

Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believe or not; for on that account baptism does not become spurious; but everything depends upon the Word and commandment of God. This now is perhaps somewhat acute, but it rests entirely upon what I have said, that baptism is nothing else but water and the Word of God in and with each other, i.e. when the Word is added to the water, baptism is genuine, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make baptism, but receives it; and baptism does not therefore become spurious if it be wrongly received or employed, as it is not bound (as said) to our faith, but to the Word.

For even though a Jew should today come with evil purpose and wickedness, and we should baptize him in all good faith, we must say that his baptism is nevertheless genuine. For here is the water together with the Word of God, even

though he do not receive it as he should, just as those who unworthily partake of the Lord's Supper receive the true sacrament, even though they do not believe.

Thus you see that the objection of the sectarians is vain.

For (as we have said) even though infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case (as we shall now prove), yet their baptism would be genuine, and no one should rebaptize them. So too the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not corrupted though some one approach it with evil purpose, and he is not to be allowed on account of his abuse to take it a second time, the selfsame hour, as though he had not received the true sacrament at first; for that would be the greatest profanation and contempt of the sacrament. How can we think it possible that God's Word and institution should therefore fail and be of no account, because we make a wrong use of it?

Therefore I say, if you have not believed, then believe now and say thus: The baptism indeed was right, but I, alas! did not receive it aright. For I myself also, and all who are baptized, must speak thus before God: "I come in my faith and in that of others, yet I cannot rest in this, viz. that I believe, and that many people pray for me; but in this I can rest, that it is thy Word and commandment. Just as I receive the Lord's Supper, trusting not in my faith, but in the Word of Christ; whether I am strong or weak I commit myself into the hand of God. But this I know, that he bids me go eat and drink, etc., and gives me his body and blood, that will not deceive me or prove false to me."

Thus we do also in infant baptism. We bring the child in the purpose and hope that it may believe, and we pray that God may grant it faith: but we do not baptize it upon that, but solely upon the command of God. Why so? Because we know that God does not lie: I and my neighbor, and in short all men, may err and deceive, but the Word of God cannot err.

Therefore they are presumptuous and likewise obtuse minds that draw such inferences and conclusions as that where there is not the true faith, there also can be no true baptism. Just as if I would draw the inference: If I do not believe, then Christ is nothing; or thus: If I am not obedient, then father, mother and government are nothing. Is it indeed a correct conclusion that where any one do not what he ought, the thing therefore in itself shall be nothing and of no value?

My dear reader, just invert the argument and draw this inference. For this very reason baptism is something and is right, because it has been wrongly received. For if it were not something right and true in itself, it could not be wrongly received nor sinned against. The saying is: "An abuse does not destroy

a matter, but confirms it.” For gold is not the less gold though a harlot wear it in sin and shame.

Therefore let it be decided that baptism always remains true, retains its full nature, even though a person should be baptized, and yet should not truly believe. For God’s institution and Word cannot be changed or perverted by men. But these fanatics are so blinded that they do not see the Word and commandment of God; and regard baptism only as they regard water in the brook or in a vessel; and the magistrate only as they look upon another man; and because they regard neither faith nor obedience, they conclude that these institutions themselves are of no account. Here lurks a concealed seditious devil, who would like to tear the crown from the head of authority to trample it under foot, and in addition pervert and bring to naught all the works and institutions of God. Therefore we must be brave and well armed, and not allow ourselves to be turned from the Word, so as not to regard baptism a mere empty sign, as the fanatics dream.

Finally, we must also know what baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such external sign and form for the sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or form is this, that we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterwards are drawn out again. These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and efficacy of baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives. So that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that that which belongs to the new man may come forth. But what is the old man? It is that which is born in us, from Adam, malicious, hateful, envious, lascivious, avaricious, indolent, haughty, yea, unbelieving, infected with all vices, and having by nature nothing good in it. When now we are received into the kingdom of Christ, these things must daily decrease, that we daily become more gentle, more patient, more meek, and ever withdrawn more and more from unbelief, avarice, hatred, envy, haughtiness.

This is the true use of baptism among Christians, as signified by the employment of water. Where this therefore is not practiced, but the old man is left unbridled, so as to continually become stronger, that is not rightly using baptism, but striving against baptism. For those who are without Christ cannot but daily become worse, according to the proverb which expresses the truth,

“Worse and worse – the longer, the worse.” If a year ago one was proud and avaricious, then he is today much prouder and more avaricious; so that the vice grows and increases from youth up. A young child has no special bad habits; but if it grow up it becomes unchaste and impure, and if it reach maturity real vices begin to prevail and become daily worse.

Therefore the old man goes unrestrained in his nature if he be not checked and suppressed by the power of baptism. On the other hand, where men have become Christians, he daily decreases until he is finally destroyed. That is rightly to be buried in baptism, and to daily come forth again. Therefore the external sign is appointed not only for a powerful effect but also for an important signification. Where, therefore, faith flourishes with its fruits, there it has no empty significance, but the work [of mortifying the flesh] is added; but where faith is wanting, it remains a mere unfruitful sign.

And here you perceive that baptism, both in its power and significance, comprehends also the third sacrament, which has been called repentance, as it is really nothing else than baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man [that his lusts be restrained] at the beginning of a new life? Therefore if you live in repentance, you walk in baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins and exercises it. For therein are given grace, spirit and power to overcome the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong.

Therefore our baptism abides for ever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, we nevertheless always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man. But we must not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were a hundred times put under the water, it would nevertheless be only one baptism, although the act and significance continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to baptism, that we return to and practice what had been begun and had been abandoned.

This I say, therefore, that we do not fall into the opinion in which we for a long time had been, by imagining that our baptism is something past, which we can no longer use after we have fallen again into sin. And the reason is, that it was regarded only according to the external act once performed and completed. And this arose from the fact that St. Jerome wrote that repentance is the second plank by which we must swim forth and cross over after the ship is broken, by which we climb, and on which we are carried across the deep when we come into the Christian Church. Thereby the use of baptism is so removed that it can profit us no longer. Therefore the expression is not correct, or else never rightly

understood. For the ship never breaks, because (as we have said) it is the institution of God, and not a matter of ours; but it happens, indeed, that we slip and fall out of the ship. Yet if any one fall out, let him see to it that he swim up and cling to it till he again come into it and live in it, as he had formerly begun.

Thus it appears how excellent a thing baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and afterwards daily strengthens the new man; and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory.

For this reason let every one esteem his baptism as a daily dross in which he shall constantly walk, that he may ever be found in the faith and its fruits, that he suppress the old man and grow up in the new. For if we would be Christians we must practice the work whereby we are Christians. But if any one fall away therefrom, let him again come into it. For just as Christ the mercy-seat does not abolish himself or forbid us again to come to him, even though we sin, so all his treasure and gifts also remain. If, therefore, we have once in baptism received forgiveness of sin, it will remain every day, as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old man about with us.

Part Fifth. Of The Sacrament Of The Altar.

As we have heard of holy baptism, so we must speak also concerning the other sacrament, namely, concerning these three points: What it is, what are its benefits, and who shall receive it. And all these are established by the words whereby Christ has instituted it. This every one who desires to be a Christian and go to the sacrament should know. For we do not think that they who know not what they seek, or why they come, should be admitted or should have it administered to them. The words are these:

"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."

Here also we do not wish to enter into controversy and contend with the traducers and blasphemers of this sacrament, but we must first learn (as we did in respect of baptism) what is of the greatest importance, namely, that the chief point is the Word and institution or command of God. For it has not been invented or introduced by any man, but without any one's counsel and deliberation it has been instituted by Christ. Therefore just as the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed retain their nature and worth, although you never keep the first, pray the second or believe the third; so also does this precious sacrament remain undisturbed, so that nothing can be withdrawn or taken from it, even though we employ and dispense it unworthily. Can you think indeed that God is so concerned about what we do and believe, as on that account to change his institutions? Yet in all worldly things everything remains as God has created and ordered it, no matter how we employ or use it. This must always be maintained, for thereby the prating of nearly all the fanatical spirits can be repelled. For they regard the sacraments as something that we do without the Word of God.

What is therefore the Sacrament of the Altar?

Answer: *It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by the Word of Christ to eat and to drink.* And as we have said of baptism that it is not simply water, so here also we say the sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine as are ordinarily served at table, but bread and wine comprehended in and connected with the Word of God.

It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is and is properly called the body and blood of Christ. For it is said: *“Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum.”* “If the Word be joined to the element it becomes a sacrament.” This saying of St. Augustine is so explicitly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better. The Word must make a sacrament of the element, else it remains a mere element. Now, it is not the word or institution of a prince or emperor, but of the Exalted Majesty, at whose feet all creatures should fall and say: “Amen, it is as he says,” and accept it with all reverence, fear and humility. With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics raise the objection, How can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? etc., I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as is the Divine Majesty in his little finger. For here stands the Word of Christ: *“Take, eat; this is my body; – Drink ye all of this, this is the new testament in my blood,”* etc. Here we abide, and would like to see those who will constitute themselves his masters, and make it different from what he has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if you take away the Word or regard it without the Word, you have nothing but mere bread and wine. But if the Word be added thereto, as it must be, then in virtue of the same it is truly the body and blood of Christ. For as the lips of Christ have spoken, so it is, as he can never lie or deceive.

Hence it is easy to reply to all manner of questions about which at the present time men are anxious, as, for instance: Whether a wicked priest can administer and distribute the sacrament, and such like other points. For here conclude and say: Even though a knave take or distribute the sacrament, he receives the true sacrament, that is, the true body and blood of Christ, just as truly as he who receives or administers it in the most worthy manner. For it is not founded upon the holiness of men, but upon the Word of God. And as no saint upon earth, yea, no angel in heaven, can change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, so also can no one change or alter it, even though it be abused. For the Word by which it became a sacrament and was instituted does not become false because of the person or his unbelief. For he does not say: If you believe or are

worthy you will receive my body and blood, but: Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood. Likewise: Do this (namely, what I now do, institute, give and bid you take). That is as much as to say, No matter whether you be worthy or unworthy, you have here his body and blood by virtue of these words which are added to the bread and the wine. This mark, and observe well; for upon these words rest all our foundation, protection and defense against all error and temptation that have ever come or may yet come. Thus we have briefly the first point which pertains to the essence of this sacrament. Now let us further look to the efficacy and benefits on account of which the sacrament was instituted; which is also the most necessary part therein, that we may know what we should there seek and obtain. This is plain and clear from the words just mentioned: *“This is my body and blood, given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.”* That is as much as to say briefly: We approach the sacrament in order to receive there a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins. Why so? Because the words stand here and give us the same; for on this account he bids me eat and drink, that it may be my own and may benefit me, as a sure pledge and token, yea, just the very same thing that is appointed for me against my sins, death and every calamity.

On this account indeed is it called a food of souls, which nourishes and strengthens the new man. For by baptism we are first born anew; but (as we said before) there remains besides the old vicious nature of flesh and blood in man, and there are so many hindrances and temptations of the devil and of the world that we often become weary and faint, and sometimes also stumble.

Therefore it is given for daily food and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to retire in such a battle, but that it become ever stronger and stronger. For the new life must be so regulated that it continually increase and progress; but it must suffer much opposition. For the devil is such a furious enemy that if he sees that we oppose him and attack the old man, and that he cannot overpower us with violence, he prowls and moves about on all sides, attempts all arts, and does not desist, until he finally wearies us, so that we either renounce our faith or yield hands and feet and become careless or impatient. Therefore is this consolation here given when the heart feels that the burden is becoming too heavy, so that it may here obtain new power and refreshment. But here a willful misrepresentation is made by our wise spirits with their great art and wisdom, crying out and protesting: How can bread and wine forgive sins or strengthen faith? Although they hear and know that we do not say this of such bread and wine as is in itself bread and wine, but of such

bread and wine as is the body and blood of Christ, and is united with the words. That, we say, is the treasure, and nothing else, through which such forgiveness is obtained. Now the only way in which it is given and appropriated to us is in the words: "*Given and shed for you.*" For herein I have both truths, that it is the body and blood of Christ, and that it is mine as a treasure and gift. But the body of Christ can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, without efficacy and without benefits. Yet however great be 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.

Therefore also it is vain talk when they say that the body and blood of Christ are not given and shed for us in the Lord's Supper, and therefore we cannot have forgiveness of sins in the sacrament. For although the work was accomplished and the forgiveness of sins acquired on the cross, yet it cannot otherwise come to us, but through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it, that such a thing was accomplished and is to be given us if it were not delivered to us in the preaching or administration of the oral Word? Whence will they know, or how can they lay hold of and appropriate to themselves, this forgiveness, except they hold and believe the Scriptures and the Gospel? But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed: "*I believe a holy Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin*" etc., are by the Word embodied in this sacrament and presented to us. Why should we allow this treasure to be torn from the sacrament? Since they must confess that these are the words which we hear everywhere in the Gospel, and they dare by no means say that these words in the sacrament are of no use, as little as that the entire Gospel or Word of God, apart from the sacrament, is of no use. Thus we have now the entire sacrament, both as to what it is in itself and as to what it brings and profits. Now we must also see who is the person that receives this efficacy and benefit. That is answered briefly, as we said above of baptism and often elsewhere: Whoever believes it has what the words declare and bring, For they are not spoken or proclaimed to stone and wood, but to those who bear them, to whom he says: "*Take and eat*" etc. And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received otherwise than by faith. This faith he himself demands in the Word when he says: "*Given and shed for you*" As if he had said: For this reason I give it, and bid you eat and drink, that you may partake of it and enjoy it. Whoever now receives these words, and believes that what they declare is true, has it. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, as it is offered to him in vain, and he refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure indeed is opened and placed at every one's door, yea, upon every one's

table, but it is necessary that you also take of it, and confidently regard it as the words give it to you.

This now is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this sacrament worthily. For since this treasure is fully presented in the words, it can be apprehended and appropriated only by the heart. For such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized by the hand. Fasting and prayer, etc. may indeed be an external preparation and discipline, that the body may bear itself modestly and reverently towards the body and blood of Christ; yet that which is given in and with it cannot be seized and appropriated by the body. But this is done by the faith of the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. This may suffice for the general instruction respecting this sacrament; for what is further to be said of it belongs to another time.

In conclusion, since we have now the true understanding and doctrine of the sacrament, there is indeed need of some exhortation and admonition, that men may not neglect so great a treasure which is daily administered and distributed among Christians – that is, that those who would be Christians often prepare themselves to receive this venerable sacrament. For we see that men are negligent and indifferent with respect to it; and there is a great multitude of such, who hear the Gospel, and who, because the nonsense of the Pope has been abolished, and we are freed from his laws and coercion, go one, two, three years or even longer without the sacrament, as though they were such strong Christians that they have no need of it; and some allow themselves to be prevented and deterred by the pretense that we have taught that no one should approach it unless he feel hunger and thirst, and which urge him to it. Some pretend that it is a matter of liberty and not necessary, and that it is sufficient to believe without it; and thus for the most part they go so far that they become quite hardened, and finally despise both the sacrament and the Word of God.

Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should be coerced or compelled, lest we again institute an inquisition destructive to souls. But this we must know, nevertheless, that such people as so long a time deprive themselves of, and withdraw from, the sacrament, are not to be considered Christians. For Christ has not instituted it to be treated as a show; but has offered it to his Christians, that they may eat and drink it, and thereby remember him.

And those indeed who are true Christians, and esteem the sacrament precious and holy, ought to urge and impel themselves thereto. Yet that the simple-minded and the weak who also desire to be Christians be the more incited to consider the cause and need which ought to impel them, we will treat somewhat of this point.

For as in other matters pertaining to faith, love and patience, it is not enough to teach and instruct, but there is need also of daily exhortation, so here also is there need of importunity in preaching, that men may not become indifferent and be offended, since we know and feel how the devil always opposes this and everything Christian, and drives and deters therefrom as much as he can. And we have, in the first place, the clear text in the very words of Christ: "*Do this in remembrance of me.*" These are words bidding and commanding us, by which all who would be Christians are enjoined to partake of this sacrament. Therefore whoever would be a disciple of Christ, with whom he here speaks, must consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please him. But if one say: It is written in immediate connection, "*as oft as ye do it*" from which it appears that he compels no one, but leaves it to our free choice, answer: That is true, yet it is not written that we should never do so. Yea, just because he uses the words, "*as oft as ye do it*" it is implied that we shall often do it; and therefore it is added that he wishes to have the sacrament free, not limited to special times, like the Passover of the Jews, which they were obliged to eat only once a year, and just upon the fourteenth day of the first full moon in the evening, and which must not vary a day. As if he would say thereby: I institute a Passover or Supper for you which you shall enjoy not only once a year, just upon this evening, but often, when and where you will, according to every one's opportunity and necessity, bound to no place or appointed time, although the Pope afterwards perverted it, and again made a Jewish feast of it.

Thus, you perceive, it is not left free in such a sense that we may despise it. For that I call despising it if one allow so long a time to elapse and with nothing to hinder him, but yet never feels desire for it. If you wish such liberty you may as well have so much more, and be no Christian, that you may neither believe nor pray. For the one is just as much the command of Christ as the other. But if you wish to be a Christian, you must from time to time render satisfaction and obedience to this commandment. For this commandment ought ever to move you to examine yourself and to think: See, what sort of a Christian I am! If I were truly one, I would sometimes have some little longing for that which my Lord has commanded me to do. And, indeed, because we are so much estranged from it we perceive what sort of Christians we were under the Papacy, that we went from mere compulsion and fear of human commandments, without inclination and love, and never regarded the commandment of Christ. But we neither urge nor compel any one; nor need any one do it as a favor or service to us. But you

should be induced and constrained of your own accord, by this, viz. that he desires it and that it is pleasing to him. You must not be influenced by men to faith or to any good work. We, on our part, do no more than to say and exhort you as to what you ought to do – not for our sake, but for your own sake. He invites and allures you; and if you despise it, you must yourself answer for it.

This is the first point, especially for those who are cold and indifferent, that they may come to reflection and be awakened. For this is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as every one will find, that if a person thus withdraw from this sacrament, he will daily become more and more hardened and cold, and will at last altogether disregard it. Otherwise we must, from time to time, examine heart and conscience, and assume the position of those who desire to be right with God. And the more this is done, the more will the heart be warmed and enkindled, that it may not become entirely cold.

But if you say: How if I feel that I am not prepared? Answer: The same is also my temptation, especially from the old way under the Pope, in which we were compelled to self-torture in order to be so perfectly pure that God could not find the least blemish in us. On this account we became so timid that every one was instantly thrown into consternation and said to himself: Alas! thou art unworthy! For then nature and reason begin to reckon our unworthiness in comparison with the great and precious good; and then it appears like a dark lantern in contrast with the bright sun, or as filth in comparison with precious stones. Because nature and reason see this they refuse to approach, and would wait until they are prepared, so long that one week brings another, and one half year the other. But if you are to regard how good and pure you are, and labor that nothing burden the conscience, you must never approach.

We must, therefore, make a distinction here among men. For those who are shameless and dissolute must be told to stay away. For they are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin. For they do not desire it, and do not wish to be godly. But the others, who are not so hardened and wicked, and desire to be godly, must not absent themselves, even though they be feeble and full of infirmities: as St. Hilary also says: “If any one have not committed sin in such a way as to be properly put out of the congregation and to be esteemed as no Christian, he ought not to absent himself from the sacrament, that he may not deprive himself of life.” For no one will reach such a position that he will not retain many daily infirmities in flesh and blood.

Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized

because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, as poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who neither desires grace or absolution nor intends to reform.

But whoever earnestly desires grace and consolation should feel impelled of his own accord, and should allow no one to deter him, but say: I, indeed, desire to be worthy; but I come not upon any worthiness, but upon thy Word, because thou hast commanded it, and I desire to be thy disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness. But this is difficult. For we always have this obstacle and hindrance to encounter, viz. that we look more upon ourselves than upon the Word and lips of Christ. For nature desires so to act that it can stand and rest in itself, and where it cannot do so it declines to take a step. Let this suffice concerning the first point.

In the second place, there is besides this commandment also a promise, as we heard above, which ought most strongly to incite and encourage us. For here stand the kind and precious words: *“This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you, for the remission of sins.”* These words, I have said, are not preached to wood and stone, but to thee and me. Else he might as well be silent and not institute a sacrament. Therefore consider, and bring thyself into this *YOU*, that his speaking with thee be not in vain.

For in this he offers to us the entire treasure which he has brought for us from heaven, and to which he so invites us in other places with the greatest kindness, as in St. Matt. 11:28: *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Now it is indeed a sin and a shame that he so cordially and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, and we act so distantly with regard to it, and permit so long a time to pass [without partaking of the sacrament] that we grow quite cold and hardened, and have no inclination or love for it. We must never regard the sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee, but as a remedy imparting only salvation and comfort, which will cure us and give us life, both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered the body also is relieved. How then is it that we regard it as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?

It is indeed true that those who despise it and live in an unchristian manner receive it to their hurt and judgment, for nothing shall be good or saving to them, just as with a sick person who from caprice eats and drinks what is forbidden him by the physician. But those who are sensible of their weakness, desire to be rid of it and long for help, should regard and use it only as a precious antidote

against the poison which is in them. For here in the sacrament you shall receive, from the lips of Christ, forgiveness of sin, which contains and brings with it the grace and Spirit of God, with all his gifts, protection, shelter and power against death and Satan and all misfortune. Thus you have, on the part of God, both the commandment and the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, on your part, your own distress which oppresses you, and because of which this commandment, invitation and promise are given, ought to impel you. For he himself says: *“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick;”* that is, those who are weary and heavy-laden with their sins, with the fear of death, temptations of the flesh and of the devil. If, therefore, you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, then go joyfully to this sacrament and obtain refreshment, consolation and strength. For if you would wait until you are rid of such burdens, that you might approach worthily and with entire purity to the sacrament, you must for ever stay away. For in that case he pronounces sentence and says: If you are pure and godly you have no need of me, and I have no need of thee. Therefore they alone are to be called unworthy who neither feel their infirmities nor wish to be considered sinners.

But if you say: What shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the sacrament? Answer: For those who are so minded that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they explore deeply their own heart to ascertain whether they also have flesh and blood. And if you find that to be the case, then go, for your good, to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, and hear what is the nature of the fruits of your flesh: *“Now the works of the flesh”* (he says c. 5:19 sqq.) *“are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings and such like.”*

Therefore if you cannot feel it, only believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yea, St. Paul further concludes (Rom. 7:18): *“I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing”* If St. Paul, therefore, speaks thus of his flesh, we had better not pretend to be more holy. But that we do not feel it is so much the worse; for it is a sign that there is a leprous flesh which feels nothing, and yet rages and consumes. Yet, as we have said, even if you be quite dead to all sensibility, only believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. And, in short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason have you to go to the sacrament to seek help and a remedy.

In the second place, look about you and see whether you are also in the world. Or if you do not know it, ask your neighbors. And if you are in the world, do not think that there will be lack of sins and misery. For only begin to deport yourself as though you would be godly and adhere to the Gospel, and see whether no one will become your enemy, and do you harm, wrong and violence, and likewise give you cause for sin and crime. If you have not experienced it, then learn it from the Scriptures, which everywhere give this praise and testimony to the world.

Besides this, you will also have the devil about you, whom you will not entirely tread under foot, because our Lord Christ himself could not entirely avoid him. Now, what is the devil? Altogether, as the Scriptures call him, a liar and murderer. A liar to lead the heart astray from the Word of God, and to blind it, that you cannot feel your distress or come to Christ. A murderer, who cannot bear one single hour to see you live. If you could see how many knives, darts and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the sacrament as often as possible. But there is no reason why men walk so securely and heedlessly, except that they neither think nor believe that they are in the flesh, and in this wicked world or in the kingdom of the devil.

Therefore only try this and practice it well, and examine yourself, or look about you a little, and only keep to the Scriptures. If even then you still feel nothing, you have so much the more need to lament both to God and to your brother. Then take counsel and seek others' prayers, and do not desist until the stone be removed from your heart. Then, indeed, the distress will not fail to be manifest, and you will find that you have sunk twice as deep as any other poor sinner, and are much more in need of the sacrament against the misery which unfortunately you do not feel, so that God may give his grace, and you may feel it more and hunger the more for the sacrament. This, too, especially since the devil plies his forces against you, and lies in wait for you without ceasing, to seize and destroy you, soul and body, so that you are not secure against him one hour. How soon might he have suddenly brought you into misery and distress when you least expected it!

Let this then be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are adults and aged, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the understanding of Christian doctrine. For thereby the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer might be more easily inculcated to our youth, and they would learn it with zest and pleasure, and thus would accustom themselves to it and practice it from their youth. For the old are well nigh defunct, so that

these and other things cannot be attained, unless we train the people who are to follow and succeed us in our office and work, that they also bring up their children in good fruits, that the Word of God and the Christian Church may be preserved. Therefore let every father of a family know that it is his duty, by the injunction and command of God, to teach these things to his children, or have them learn what they ought to know. For since they are baptized and received into the Christian Church, they should also enjoy this communion of the sacrament, so that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us in believing, loving, praying and fighting against the devil.

About the Author

The following was retrieved from Wikipedia, October 29, 2018:

"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 Cyclopedia in 1899.

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Preface by Henry Eyster Jacobs

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.

Note on the Translation

The translation of the Augsburg Confession adopted in this volume is the well-known one of Dr. Charles P. Krauth, which he has kindly revised as the proof-sheets passed through his hands. In the Small Catechism, the translation prepared by Dr. Charles F. Schaeffer with the co-operation of a committee of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, and in universal use in the English churches of the General Council, is reprinted, with the addition of the formula for confession contained in the Book of Concord. The Large Catechism was translated for this work by Rev. A. Martin, Professor of the German Language and Literature in Pennsylvania College, to whom the Editor is greatly indebted for assistance and advice also in other directions. Some changes have, however, been made to conform it as nearly as possible to the plan of translation adopted in the rest of the volume.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord were translated by the Editor. The rendering of the Apology is from the Latin, the German translation of Justus Jonas of the Concordienbuch being more of a paraphrase than a translation, differing sometimes from the original by the omission, introduction and transposition of entire paragraphs, and therefore inducing the editors of some of the best German editions of the Symbolical Books to prepare fresh translations. We have, accordingly, carefully revised our translation from the Latin, by comparing it with the German translations of Schopf, Kothe, Spieker and Bodemann.

The Smalcald Articles were translated from the German, and Melanchthon's Appendix, "Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope," from the Latin, in which it was composed. In the Formula of Concord the German, according to the same principle, has been used as the standard text.

The chief variations of the alternate language, officially received in our churches, from the original language of each Confession, is indicated in brackets, with the exception of the Apology, where they were found so numerous and extensive as to render it necessary to insert them frequently among the foot-notes.

The Latin edition of Dr. Fredericus Franke, published by Tauchnitz, Leipsic, 1848, has not only been largely followed in indicating variations, but has also furnished most of the notes.

The paging of Müller's *Symbolischen Bucher* has been printed in the margin, so as to enable this translation to furnish all references to this most widely-received and highly-esteemed edition of the Confessions. As the St. Louis German edition, published in 1880 as a jubilee offering, adopts the same plan, this edition can be readily used also with it by observing the marginal numbers in each. The references in the foot-notes conform to the marginal paging.

The second edition of the New Market translation (1854), for which our English churches owe so much to the energy and devotion of the brothers Revs. Ambrose and Socrates Henkel, as well as the Swedish edition, published under supervision of the Swedish Augustana Synod, Chicago, 1878, have been frequently consulted, and have furnished material aid.

Additional matter, prepared as Introduction and Appendix to this work, but which has swollen to such an extent as to exceed the limits of this volume, will be published in the near future. The second volume will comprise a brief outline of the history of the Confessions; the documents from which Melancthon elaborated the Augsburg Confession; the non-Lutheran Confessions of Augsburg – the Tetrapolitan of the Reformed cities, Zwingli's *Medio Fidei* and the Confutation of the Augsburg Confession by the Papists (so indispensable for an intelligent study of the Apology, which is its answer); the *Variola* in its two chief forms; the Official Appendix to the Book of Concord – viz. the Catalogue of Testimonies; together with a minute index on the basis of the exhaustive index in Müller.

With all the care that has been taken, the Editor fully expects that errors that have escaped his notice will be occasionally detected. Had he waited until satisfied that his work would be all he could wish, it would never have appeared. All that he claims is that, with all the means at his command, he has made a sincere effort to supply a deeply-felt want.

In the hope that it may stimulate a fresh interest in the priceless treasures that are the heritage of the Lutheran Church, and promote their more thorough study, and that it may bear also its part, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, in bringing to a clear understanding of the faith and uniting upon a firmly-grounded scriptural platform our perplexed and divided people, this new edition of the Confessions is, in God's name and for His glory presented to the American public.

Henry E. Jacobs

Pennsylvania College.

Gettysburg, Pa., February 27, 1882.

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May God bless you and keep you, help you, defend you, and lead you to know the depth of His love. *Amen*

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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