

Organization of the Parts of the Catechism

Part First. The Ten Commandments

17] For it needs must be that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures, so that, in all affairs and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters, and is qualified to sit in judgment upon all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in the world. And what, indeed, is the entire Psalter but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment?

Part Second. The Creed

1] 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**. Now, there properly follows **the Creed, which sets forth to us everything that we must expect and receive from God**, and, to state it quite briefly, teaches us to know Him fully. 2] And 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 [attain to or] keep them. Therefore it is as necessary to learn this part as the former in order that we may know how to attain thereto, whence and whereby to obtain such power. 3] For if we could by our own powers keep the Ten Commandments as they are to be kept, we would need nothing further, neither the Creed nor the Lord's Prayer. 4] But before we explain this advantage and necessity of the Creed, it is sufficient at first for the simple-minded that they learn to comprehend and understand the Creed itself.

Part Third. OF PRAYER. The Lord's Prayer.

1] We have now heard what we must do and believe, in which things the best and happiest life consists. Now follows the third part, **how we ought to pray**. 2] 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, nothing is so necessary as that we should continually resort to the ear of God, call upon Him, and pray to Him, that He would give, preserve, and increase in us faith and the fulfilment of the Ten Commandments, and that He would remove everything that is in our way and opposes us therein. 3] 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.

Part Fourth. Baptism

1] We have now finished the three chief parts of the 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 an ordinary, brief instruction, because without them there can be no Christian; although, alas! hitherto no instruction concerning them has been given. 2] But, in the first place, we take up **Baptism, by which we are first received into the Christian Church**. However, in order that it may be readily understood, we will treat of it in an orderly manner, and keep only to that which it is necessary for us to know. For how it is to be maintained and defended against heretics and sects we will commend to the learned.

Part Fifth. The Sacrament of the Altar

1] In the same manner as we have heard regarding Holy Baptism, we must speak also concerning the other Sacrament, namely, these three points: What is it? What are its benefits?

and, Who is to receive it? And all these are established by the words by which Christ has instituted it, 2] and which **every one who desires to be a Christian and go to the Sacrament should know**. For it is not our intention to admit to it and to administer it to those who know not what they seek, or why they come. The words, however, are these: 3] Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread....

{Tappert: ⁸⁵ Let this serve as an exhortation, then, not only for us who are grown and advanced in years, but also for the young people who ought to be brought up in Christian doctrine and a right understanding of it. With such training we may more easily instill the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer into the young so that they will receive them with joy and earnestness, practice them from their youth, and become accustomed to them. ⁸⁶ **For it is clearly useless to try to change old people. We cannot perpetuate these and other teachings unless we train the people who come after us and succeed us in our office and work, so that they in turn may bring up their children successfully. Thus the Word of God and the Christian church will be preserved.** ⁸⁷ Therefore let every head of a household remember that it is his duty, by God's injunction and command, to teach or have taught to his children the things they ought to know. Since they are baptized and received into the Christian church, they should also enjoy this fellowship of the sacrament so that they may serve us and be useful. For they must all help us to believe, to love, to pray, and to fight the devil.

Here follows an exhortation to confession.⁶

A Brief Exhortation to Confession (Not included in the German Book of Concord, but first added in the 1529 revised edition.)

¹ Concerning confession, we have always taught that it should be voluntary and purged of the pope's tyranny. We have been set free from his coercion and from the intolerable burden he imposed upon the Christian church. Up to now, as we all know from experience, there has been no law quite so oppressive as that which forced everyone to make confession on pain of the gravest mortal sin. ² Moreover, it so greatly burdened and tortured consciences with the enumeration of all kinds of sin that no one was able to confess purely enough. ³ Worst of all, no one taught or understood **what confession is and how useful and comforting it is**. Instead, it was made sheer anguish and a hellish torture since people had to make confession even though nothing was more hateful to them. ⁴ These three things have now been removed and made voluntary so that we may confess without coercion or fear, and we are released from the torture of enumerating all sins in detail. Moreover, we have the advantage of knowing how to use confession beneficially for the comforting and strengthening of our conscience.

⁵ Everyone knows this now. Unfortunately, men have learned in only too well; **they do whatever they please and take advantage of their freedom, acting as if they will never need or desire to go to confession any more....}**

References of the Catechisms in the Book of Concord

Smalcald Articles, Part I. Divine Majesty, Article IV.

*That the Son became man in this manner, that He was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the pure, holy [and always] Virgin Mary. Afterwards He suffered, died, was buried, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God, will come to judge the quick and the dead, etc., as the Creed of the Apostles, as well as that of St. Athanasius, and **the Catechism in common use for children**, teach.*

Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Standard

5] And because such matters concern also the laity and the salvation of their souls, we also confess **the *Small and Large Catechisms* of Dr. Luther, as they are included in Luther's works, as the Bible of the laity**, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture, and is necessary for a Christian man to know for his salvation.

Formula of Concord, Epitome, XI.

22] This is the brief and simple explanation of the controverted articles, which for a time have been debated and taught controversially among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession. Hence every simple Christian, according to the guidance of God's Word and **his simple Catechism**, can perceive what is right or wrong, since not only the pure doctrine has been stated, but also the erroneous contrary doctrine has been repudiated and rejected, and thus the offensive divisions that have occurred are thoroughly settled [and decided].

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Standard

8] 6. And now, in the sixth place, because **these highly important matters [the business of religion] concern also the common people and laymen** [as they are called], who, inasmuch as they are Christians, must for their salvation distinguish between pure and false doctrine, we confess also ***the Small and the Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they were written by him and incorporated in his works, because they have been unanimously approved and received by all churches adhering to the Augsburg Confession, and have been publicly used in churches, schools, and in [private] houses, and, moreover, because the Christian doctrine from God's Word is comprised in them in the most correct and simple way, and, in like manner, is explained, as far as necessary [for simple laymen].***

9] In the pure churches and schools these public common writings have been always regarded as **the sum and model of the doctrine** which Dr. Luther, of blessed memory, has admirably deduced from God's Word, and firmly established against the Papacy and other sects; and to his full explanations in his doctrinal and polemical writings we wish to appeal, in the manner and as far as Dr. Luther himself in the Latin preface to his published works has given necessary and Christian admonition concerning his writings, and has expressly drawn this distinction namely, that the Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine, to which the writings of no man should be regarded as equal, but to which everything should be subjected.

10] But [this is not to be understood as if] hereby other good, useful, pure books, expositions of the Holy Scriptures, refutations of errors, explanations of doctrinal articles, are not rejected;

for as far as they are consistent with the above-mentioned type of doctrine, these are regarded as useful expositions and explanations, and can be used with advantage. But what has thus far been said concerning the summary of our Christian doctrine is intended to mean only this, that we should have a **unanimously accepted, definite, common form of doctrine**, which all our evangelical churches together and in common confess, from and according to which, because it has been derived from God's Word, all other writings should be judged and adjusted as to how far they are to be approved and accepted.

11] For that we embodied the above-mentioned writing, namely, *the Augsburg Confession, Apology, Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms*, in the oft-mentioned **Sum of our Christian doctrine**, was done for the reason that these have always and everywhere been regarded as the common, unanimously accepted meaning of our churches, and, moreover, have been subscribed at that time by the chief and most enlightened theologians, and have held sway in all evangelical churches and schools. ...

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, I. Original Sin

38] These passages clearly testify that God even since the Fall is the Creator of man, and creates his body and soul. Therefore corrupt man cannot, without any distinction, be sin itself, otherwise God would be a creator of sin; as also **our Small Catechism confesses in the explanation of the First Article**, where it is written: *I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them.* Likewise in the *Large Catechism* it is thus written: *This is what I believe and mean, that is, that I am a creature of God; that He has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul, and life, members great and small, and all my senses, mind, and reason.* Nevertheless, this same creature and work of God is lamentably corrupted by sin; for the mass (*massa*) from which God now forms and makes man was corrupted and perverted in Adam, and is thus transmitted by inheritance to us.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, II. Free Will

36] In the *Large Catechism of Dr. Luther (the Third Article of the Christian Faith)* it is written thus: *And I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost, by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it.* **37]** *For formerly, before we had attained to this, we were altogether of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Thus, until the last day, the Holy Ghost abides with the holy congregation or Christendom, by means of which He brings us to Christ, and which He employs to teach and preach 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.* **38]** In these words **the Catechism** does not mention our free will or cooperation with a single word, but ascribes everything to the Holy Ghost, namely, that through the office of the ministry He brings us into the Christian Church, wherein He sanctifies us, and brings it about that we daily grow in faith and good works.

39] And although the regenerate even in this life advance so far that they will what is good, and love it, and even do good and grow in it, nevertheless this (as above stated) is not of our will and ability, but the Holy Ghost, as Paul himself speaks concerning this, works such *willing and doing*, Phil. 2, 13. As also in Eph. 2, 10 he ascribes this work to God alone, when he says: *For*

we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk therein.

40] In the *Small Catechism* of Dr. Luther it is thus written: *I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, etc.*

41] And in the explanation of the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer the following words occur: *How is this, done? When our Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live a godly life, etc.*

...**45]** Therefore it is teaching incorrectly to assert that unregenerate man has still so much power as to desire to receive the Gospel and to be comforted by it, and that thus the natural human will cooperates somewhat [in a manner] in conversion. For such an erroneous opinion is contrary to the holy, divine Scripture, the Christian *Augsburg Confession*, its *Apology*, the *Smalcald Articles*, the *Large* and the *Small Catechisms* of Luther, and other writings of this excellent, highly [divinely] enlightened theologian.

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, VII. Lord's Supper

20] Dr. Luther has also more amply expounded and confirmed this opinion from God's Word in the *Large Catechism*, where it is written: *What, then, is 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. 21]* And shortly after: *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 called, the body and blood of Christ. 22]* Again: *With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward, crying, How can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as is the Divine Majesty in His little finger. Now, 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. 23]* *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 words remain with them, as they shall and must, then, in virtue of the same, it is truly the body and blood of Christ. For as the lips of Christ say and speak, so it is, as He can never lie or deceive.*

The Catalog of Testimonies, Conclusion, To the Christian Reader

Christian reader, these testimonies of the ancient teachers of the Church have been here set forth, not with this meaning that our Christian faith is founded upon the authority of men. For the true saving faith is to be founded upon no church-teachers, old or new, but only and alone upon God's Word, which is comprised in the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles, as unquestionable witnesses of divine truth. But because fanatical spirits, by the special and uncanny craft of Satan, wish to lead men from the Holy Scriptures—which, thank God! even a common layman can now profitably read—to the writings of the fathers and the ancient church-

teachers as into a broad sea, so that he who has not read them cannot therefore precisely know whether they and their writings are as these new teachers quote their words, and thus is left in grievous doubt,—we have been compelled by means of this Catalogue to declare, and to exhibit to the view of all, that this new false doctrine has as little foundation in the ancient pure church-teachers as in the Holy Scriptures, but that it is diametrically opposed to it. Their testimonies they quote in a false meaning, contrary to the will of the fathers, just as they designedly and wantonly pervert the simple, plain, and clear words of Christ's testament and the pure testimonies of the Holy Scriptures. On this account the Book of Concord directs every one to the Holy Scriptures and **the simple Catechism**; for he who clings to this simple form with true, simple faith provides best for his soul and conscience, since it is built upon a firm and immovable Rock, Matt. 7 and 17; Gal. 1; Ps. 119.