CONTENTS

Introduction 6
The Small Catechism 17
Christian Questions with Their Answers 75
The Large Catechism 83
Enchiridion
The Small Catechism
PREFACE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther to all faithful and godly pastors and preachers: grace, mercy, and peace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

1 The deplorable, miserable condition that I discovered recently when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages, has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine. And unfortunately, many pastors are completely unable and unqualified to teach. <This is so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it.>

2 Yet, everyone says that they are Christians, have been baptized, and receive the holy Sacraments, even though they cannot even recite the Lord’s Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments. They live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs. Now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all freedom like experts.
O bishops! What answer will you ever give to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and never for a moment fulfilled your office [James 3:1]? May all misfortune run from you! «I do not wish at this place to call down evil on your heads.» You command the Sacrament in one form and insist on your human laws, and yet at the same time you do not care at all whether the people know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any part of God’s Word. Woe, woe to you forever! [See Matthew 23.]

Therefore, I beg you all for God’s sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to devote yourselves heartily to your office [1 Timothy 4:13]. Have pity on the people who are entrusted to you [Acts 20:28] and help us teach the catechism to the people, and especially to the young. And let those of you who cannot do better take these tables and forms and impress them, word for word, on the people [Deuteronomy 6:7], as follows:

In the first place, let the preacher above all be careful to avoid many versions or various texts and forms of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, and such. He should choose one form to which he holds and teaches all the time, year after year. For young
and simple people must be taught by uniform, settled texts and forms. Otherwise they become confused easily when the teacher today teaches them one way, and in a year some other way, as if he wished to make improvements. For then all effort and labor (that has been spent in teaching) is lost.

Our blessed fathers understood this well also. They all used the same form of the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Therefore, we, too, should (be at pains to) teach the young and simple people these parts in such a way that we do not change a syllable or set them forth and repeat them one year differently than in another.

Therefore, choose whatever form you please, and hold to it forever. But when you preach in the presence of learned and intelligent people, you may show your skill. You may present these parts in varied and intricate ways and give them as masterly turns as you are able. But with the young people stick to one fixed, permanent form and manner. Teach them, first of all, these parts: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and so on, according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same way after you and commit it to memory.
But those who are unwilling to learn the catechism should be told that they deny Christ and are not Christians. They should not be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at Baptism, or practice any part of Christian freedom. They should simply be turned back to the pope and his officials, indeed, to the devil himself [1 Corinthians 5:5]. Furthermore, their parents and employers should refuse them food and drink, and notify them that the prince will drive such rude people from the country.

Although we cannot and should not force anyone to believe, we should insist and encourage the people. That way they will know what is right and wrong for those among whom they dwell and wish to make their living. For whoever desires to live in a town must know and observe the town laws, because he wishes to enjoy the protection offered by the laws whether he is a believer or at heart and in private a rascal or rogue.

In the second place, after they have learned the text well, teach them the meaning also, so that they know what it means. Again, choose the form of these tables or some other brief uniform method, whichever you like, and hold to it. Do not change a single syllable, as was just said about the text. Take your time in doing this. For it is not
necessary for you to explain all the parts at once, but one after the other. After they understand the First Commandment well, then explain the Second, and so on. Otherwise they will be overwhelmed, so that they will not be able to remember anything well.

In the third place, after you have taught them this short catechism, then take up the Large Catechism and give them also a richer and fuller knowledge. Here enlarge upon every commandment, article, petition, and part with its various works, uses, benefits, dangers, and injuries, as you find these abundantly stated in many books written about these matters. In particular, urge the commandment or part that most suffers the greatest neglect among your people. For example, the Seventh Commandment, about stealing, must be strongly urged among mechanics and merchants, and even farmers and servants. For among these people many kinds of dishonesty and stealing prevail. So, too, you must drive home the Fourth Commandment among the children and the common people, so that they may be quiet and faithful, obedient and peaceable. You must always offer many examples from the Scriptures to show how God has punished or blessed such persons [Deuteronomy 28].
In this matter you should especially urge magistrates and parents to rule well and to send their children to school. Show them why it is their duty to do this and what a damnable sin they are committing if they do not do it. For by such neglect they overthrow and destroy both God’s kingdom and that of the world. They act as the worst enemies both of God and of people. Make it very plain to them what an awful harm they are doing if they will not help to train children to be pastors, preachers, clerks, and to fill other offices that we cannot do without in this life. God will punish them terribly for this failure. There is great need to preach this. In this matter parents and rulers are now sinning in unspeakable ways. The devil, too, hopes to accomplish something cruel because of these things.

Last, since the tyranny of the pope has been abolished, people are no longer willing to go to the Sacrament, and thus they despise it. Here again encouragement is necessary, yet with this understanding: We are to force no one to believe or to receive the Sacrament. Nor should we set up any law, time, or place for it. Instead, preach in such a way that by their own will, without our law, they will urge themselves and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament.
This is done by telling them, “When someone does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is not a Christian, just as a person is not a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel.” For Christ did not say, “Leave this out, or, despise this,” but, “Do this, as often as you drink it” [1 Corinthians 11:25], and other such words. Truly, He wants it done, and not entirely neglected and despised. “Do this,” He says.

Now, whoever does not highly value the Sacrament shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell. In other words, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them up over his head and his ears and is doubly the devil’s own. On the other hand, he needs no grace, no life, no paradise, no heaven, no Christ, no God, nor anything good. For if he believed that he had so much evil around him, and needed so much that is good, he would not neglect the Sacrament, by which such evil is remedied and so much good is bestowed. Nor would it be necessary to force him to go to the Sacrament by any law. He would come running and racing of his own will, would force himself, and beg that you must give him the Sacrament.
Therefore, you must not make any law about this, as the pope does. Only set forth clearly the benefit and harm, the need and use, the danger and the blessing, connected with this Sacrament. Then the people will come on their own without you forcing them. But if they do not come, let them go their way and tell them that such people belong to the devil who do not regard nor feel their great need and God’s gracious help. But if you do not urge this, or make a law or make it bitter, it is your fault if they despise the Sacrament. What else could they be than lazy if you sleep and are silent? Therefore, look to it, pastors and preachers. Our office has now become a different thing from what it was under the pope. It has now become a serious and saving office. So it now involves much more trouble and labor, danger and trials. In addition, it gains little reward and thanks in the world. But Christ Himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully [see Genesis 15:1]. To this end may the Father of all grace help us, to whom be praise and thanks forever through Christ, our Lord! Amen.
I. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

AS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY SHOULD TEACH THEM IN A SIMPLE WAY TO HIS HOUSEHOLD

GIVING OF THE COMMANDMENTS
(EXODUS 19)
The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.
The Second Commandment

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

*What does this mean?*

Answer: We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.
The Large Catechism

Preface

A Christian, profitable, and necessary preface, and faithful, serious encouragement from Dr. Martin Luther to all Christians, but especially to all pastors and preachers. They should daily exercise themselves in the catechism, which is a short summary and epitome of the entire Holy Scriptures. They should always teach the catechism.

We have no small reasons for constantly preaching the catechism and for both desiring and begging others to teach it. For sadly we see that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this matter and slight both their office and this teaching. Some neglect the catechism because of great and high art «giving their mind, as they imagine, to much “higher” matters». But others neglect it from sheer laziness and care for their bellies. They take no other stand in this business
than to act as pastors and preachers for their bellies’ sake. They have nothing to do but to spend and consume their wages as long as they live, just as they used to do under the papacy.

They now have everything they are to preach and teach placed before them abundantly, clearly, and easily, in so many helpful books. These truly are “Sermons That Preach Themselves,” “Sleep Soundly,” “Be Prepared,” and “Thesaurus,” as they used to be called. Yet these preachers are not even godly and honest enough to buy these books or, even when they have them, to look at them or read them. Oh, they are completely shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies. They are more fit to be swineherds and dog tenders than caretakers of souls and pastors.

These pastors are now released from the useless and burdensome babbling of the seven canonical hours of prayer. I wish that, instead of these, they would read each morning, noon, and evening only a page or two in the catechism, the prayer book, the New Testament, or something else in the Bible. They should pray the Lord’s Prayer for themselves and their parishioners. Then they might respond with honor and thanks to the Gospel, by which they have been delivered from obvious burdens and troubles, and might
feel a little shame. For like pigs and dogs, they take nothing more from the Gospel than this lazy, deadly, shameful, worldly freedom! The common people also respect the Gospel altogether too lightly, and we accomplish nothing special, even though we work diligently. What, then, would be achieved if we were as negligent and lazy as we were under the papacy?

To this laziness such preachers add the shameful vice and secret infection of security and contentment. In other words, many see the catechism as a poor, common teaching, which they can read through once and immediately understand. They can throw the book into a corner and be ashamed to read it again.

Yes, even among the nobility one may find some clowns and penny pinchers, who say (a) there is no longer any need for either pastors or preachers, (b) we have everything in books, and (c) everyone can easily learn it by himself. So they are happy to let the parishes rot and become empty. They let pastors and preachers worry and go hungry, just as crazy Germans are accustomed to do. For we Germans have such disgraceful people and must put up with them.

But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher; yes, as learned and experienced as all
THE CREATION; WOODCUT FROM THE FIRST ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF THE LARGE CATECHISM, 1530, WITTEMBERG
the people who have such assumptions and contentment. Yet I act 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, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so. Yet these delicate, refined fellows would in one reading promptly become doctors above all doctors, know everything, and need nothing. Well, this, too, is a sure sign that they despise both their office and the souls of the people. Indeed, they even despise God and His Word. They do not have to fall. They have already fallen all too horribly. They need to become children and begin to learn their alphabet, which they imagine they have long outgrown [Mark 10:15].

Therefore, for God’s sake I beg such lazy bellies or arrogant saints to be persuaded and believe that they are truly, truly not so learned or such great doctors as they imagine! They should never assume that they have finished learning the parts of the catechism or know it well enough in all points, even though they think that they know it ever so well. For even if they know and understand the catechism perfectly (which, however,
is impossible in this life), there are still many benefits and fruits to be gained, if it is daily read and practiced in thought and speech. For example, the Holy Spirit is present in such reading, repetition, and meditation. He bestows ever new and more light and devoutness. In this way the catechism is daily loved and appreciated better, as Christ promises in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.”

Besides, catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts. It helps to be occupied with God’s Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God’s Law day and night (Psalm 1:2). Certainly you will not release a stronger incense or other repellant against the devil than to be engaged by God’s commandments and words, and speak, sing, or think them [Colossians 3:16]. For this is indeed the true “holy water” and “holy sign” from which the devil runs and by which he may be driven away [James 4:7].

Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think, and use these things, even if you had no other profit and fruit from them than driving away the devil and evil thoughts by doing
so. For he cannot hear or endure God’s Word. God’s Word is not like some other silly babbling, like the story about Dietrich of Berne, for example. But as St. Paul says in Romans 1:16, it is “the power of God.” Yes indeed, it is the power of God that gives the devil burning pain and strengthens, comforts, and helps us beyond measure.

And what need is there for more words? If I were to list all the profit and fruit God’s Word produces, where would I get enough paper and time? The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God’s Word, which drives away and brings to nothing this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? The Word must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts. And shall we easily despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit—we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, not only should we have nothing given us to eat, but we should also be driven out, baited with dogs, and pelted with dung. We not only need all this every day just as we need our daily bread, but we must also daily use it against the daily and unending attacks and lurking of the devil [1 Peter 5:8], the master of a thousand arts.

If these reasons were not enough to move us to read the catechism daily, we should feel
bound well enough by God’s command alone. He solemnly commands in Deuteronomy 6:6–8 that we should always meditate on His precepts, sitting, walking, standing, lying down, and rising. We should have them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant mark and sign. Clearly He did not solemnly require and command this without a purpose. For He knows our danger and need, as well as the constant and furious assaults and temptations of devils. He wants to warn, equip, and preserve us against them, as with a good armor against their fiery darts [Ephesians 6:10–17] and with good medicine against their evil infection and temptation.

Oh, what mad, senseless fools are we! While we must ever live and dwell among such mighty enemies as the devils, we still despise our weapons and defense [2 Corinthians 10:4], and we are too lazy to look at or think of them!

What else are such proud, arrogant saints doing who are unwilling to read and study the catechism daily? They think they are much more learned than God Himself with all His saints, angels, prophets, apostles, and all Christians. God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. He always keeps teaching the same thing and does not
take up anything new or different. All the saints know nothing better or different to learn and cannot finish learning this. Are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine that if we have once read or heard the catechism, we know it all and have no further need to read and learn? Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching? He is engaged in teaching this from the beginning to the end of the world. All prophets, together with all saints, have been busy learning it, have ever remained students, and must continue to be students.

17 It must be true that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures [Matthew 7:12]. So, in all matters and cases, he can advise, help, comfort, judge, and decide both spiritual and temporal matters. Such a person must be qualified to sit in judgment over all doctrines, estates, spirits, laws, and whatever else is in the world [1 Corinthians 6:2–3]. And what, indeed, is the entire Book of Psalms but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment? Now I truly know that such lazy “bellies” and arrogant spirits do not understand a single psalm, much less the entire Holy Scriptures. Yet they pretend to know and despise the catechism, which is a short and brief summary of all the Holy Scriptures.

18
GOD GIVES THE COMMANDMENTS;
FROM 1530 LARGE CATECHISM
Therefore, I again beg all Christians—especially pastors and preachers—not to think of themselves as doctors too soon and imagine that they know everything. (For imagination, like unshrunk cloth, will fall far short of the measure.) Instead, they should daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly use them. Furthermore, they should guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of contentment and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating on the catechism. And they should not stop until they have tested and are sure that they have taught the devil to death, and have become more learned than God Himself and all His saints.

If they show such diligence, then I will promise them—and they shall also see—what fruit they will receive, and what excellent people God will make of them. So in due time they themselves will admit that the longer and the more they study the catechism, the less they know of it and the more they will find to learn. Only then, as hungry and thirsty men, will they truly relish what now they cannot stand because of great abundance and contentment. To this end may God grant His grace! Amen.
SHORTER PREFACE
OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

This sermon is designed and undertaken to be an instruction for children and the simple folk. Therefore, in ancient times it was called in Greek *catechism* (i.e., instruction for children). It teaches what every Christian must know. So a person who does not know this catechism could not be counted as a Christian or be admitted to any Sacrament, just as a mechanic who does not understand the rules and customs of his trade is expelled and considered incapable. Therefore, we must have the young learn well and fluently the parts of the catechism or instruction for children, diligently exercise themselves in them, and keep them busy with these parts.

Therefore, it is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism. And if they do not know the catechism, he should keep them learning it faithfully. For I well remember the time—indeed, even now it happens daily—that one finds rude, old persons who knew nothing and still know nothing about these things. Yet
they go to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper and use everything belonging to Christians, even though people 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 are satisfied if they know the three “parts.” These have remained in Christendom from of old, though little of them has been taught and used correctly until both young and old (who are called Christians and wish to be so) are well trained in them and familiar with them. These parts are the following:

**FIRST**

**GOD’S TEN COMMANDMENTS**

1. **You shall have no other gods.**

2. **You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.**

3. **You shall sanctify the holy day.**

4. **You shall honor your father and mother (that it may be well with you and you may live long upon the earth).**

5. **You shall not murder.**
6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is his.

SECOND

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 Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
3. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THIRD

THE PRAYER, OR “OUR FATHER,” WHICH CHRIST TAUGHT

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 forever and ever.] Amen.

These are the most necessary parts of Christian teaching that one should first learn to repeat word for word. And our children should be used to reciting them daily when they rise in the morning, when they sit down to their meals, and when
they go to bed at night. And until they repeat them, they should not be given food or drink. Likewise, every head of a household is bound to do the same with his household, manservants, and maidservants. He should not keep them in his house if they do not know these things or are unwilling to learn them. A person who is so rude and unruly as to be unwilling to learn these things is not to be tolerated. For in these three parts, everything that we have in the Scriptures is included in short, plain, and simple terms. For the holy fathers or apostles (whoever first taught these things) have summarized the doctrine, life, wisdom, and art of Christians this way. These parts speak, teach, and are focused on them.

Now, when these three parts are understood, a person must also know what to say about our Sacraments, which Christ Himself instituted: Baptism and the holy body and blood of Christ. They should know the texts that Matthew [28:19–20] and Mark [16:15–16] record at the close of their Gospels, when Christ said farewell to His disciples and sent them forth.

**BAPTISM**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the...