

Martin Luther and Catechetical Instruction

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Catechetical Instructions in the Middle Ages

The Church of Medieval Europe required the sponsors at baptisms to know and to teach to their godchildren the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. In the 9th century a canon required an examination of the Lord's Prayer and Creed at Confession for the sacrament. From the middle of the 13th century, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, and some Psalms were taught in the Latin schools. The great churches of Europe, like the cathedrals of Köln, Canterbury, Strassbourg, were adorned with pictures, statues, and color glass windows telling Bible stories. After the invention of printing, chart-impressions (placards) with pictures illustrating the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments came into the possession of some laymen.

However, this was not intended to bring people to a knowledge of their sins, or to flee to Christ in faith. It merely served the interest of papal penances, satisfaction, and work righteousness. In the course of time even this deficient and false instruction fell into decay in much of Europe. As a matter of fact, not a single synod concerned itself specifically with the instructions of the young. At home, parents and sponsors became increasingly indifferent and incompetent in teaching.

Luther writes concerning this:

As for confession, the situation was like this: Everybody had to give an account of all his sins—an impossibility and the source of great torture. The sins which had been forgotten were pardoned only when a man remembered them and thereupon confessed them. Accordingly he could never know when he had made a sufficiently complete or a sufficiently pure confession. At the same time his attention was directed to his own works, and he was told that the more completely he confessed, the more he was ashamed, and the more he abased himself before the priest, the sooner and the better he would make satisfaction for his sins, for such humiliation would surely earn grace before God. Here, again, there was neither faith nor Christ. A man did not become aware of the power of absolution, for his consolation was made to rest on his enumeration of sins and on his self-abasement. But this is not the place to recount the torture, rascality, and idolatry which such confession had produced.

Satisfaction was even more complicated, for nobody could know how much he was to do for one single sin, to say nothing of all his sins. Here the expedient was resorted to of imposing small satisfactions which were easy to render, like saying five Our Fathers, fasting for a day, etc. For the penance that was still lacking man was referred to purgatory.

Here, too, there was nothing but anguish and misery. Some thought that they would never get out of purgatory because, according to the ancient canons, seven years of penance were required for a single mortal sin.ⁱ

Some of the early reformers—Gerson, Colet, Wycliff, Occam, Eckhart, a Kempis, Erasmus—attempted to elevate instructions in the catechism. However, all of these attempts proved ineffectual. If they had been successful, they would have accomplished little for Christian instruction, since the true essence of Christianity, the doctrine of objective justification, was unknown to these reformers.ⁱⁱ

The people grew more and more deficient in the knowledge of even the simplest of Biblical facts. Melancthon writes:

Among our opponents there is no catechization of the children at all, though even the canons give prescription about it. . . . Among our opponents, there are many regions where no sermons are preached during the whole year, except in Lent.ⁱⁱⁱ

Luther also tells of this deficiency in knowledge. In his preface to the *Small Catechism*, he writes concerning his recent visitation of the churches. He bewails the conditions of the churches.

Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christians, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts.^{iv}

An even more distressing situation prevailed in many sectors of spiritual leadership. Many priests had not opened a book for years, and others did not even know the Ten Commandments. One priest in Saxony had not celebrated Mass for three years, and another was without a Bible for twenty-six years because he neglected replacing the copy he had lost in a fire.^v

The Church visitations disclosed the sad fact that a large number of laymen and many priests knew neither the Commandments, nor the Creed, nor the Lord's Prayer. Such was the state of Christian knowledge. This ignorance could only transmit spiritual darkness.

Luther Restores Catechetical Instructions

Luther, in his call as pastor and teacher in Wittenberg, and also as the chief architect of the Lutheran Reformation, began the great task of preparing a book of instruction for laymen, for children, and for house-fathers. Luther's efforts in catechetical reforms did not arise in the meditations of a cloistered cell, but grew out of the life and experiences of a great man of God. The Catechisms of 1529 were the product of thirteen years of preaching and teaching.

For Luther the word "catechism" had the meaning of a sermon for children or instruction of children in the basic truths of Christianity. The word "catechism" did not mean questions and answers, but teaching by sermonizing and memorizing, especially the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. In the first Wittenberg edition of the *Small Catechism*, there appears the subtitle, "Christian Training."^{vi} Whenever Luther uses the word "catechism," he has in mind first of all children and unlearned people.

Realizing the general decay of Christian training, Luther began to direct his efforts toward bringing about a change. Luther first mentioned a plan of publishing a catechism in a letter of February 2, 1525. However, he had been preaching on the catechism already in 1516. In 1517 he had published a series of sermons on the Lord's Prayer and a brief exposition of the Ten Commandments. This was reprinted in 1518.

In 1519 Luther published another booklet on the Ten Commandments entitled—*Brief Explanations*. He also published in the same year a booklet on *New Exposition of the Lord's Prayer* and *A Short Form to Understand and Pray the Lord's Prayer*. Later that same year a pamphlet on *Short Instructions on How to Make Confession* appeared.

In 1520 *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments*, *A Short Form of the Creed*, and *A Short Form of the Lord's Prayer* were printed. This "Short Form" is an important landmark in Luther's catechetical work. It is the direct predecessor of the *Small Catechism*.

In 1528 Luther preached three series of sermons on the Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine. This was the last preparatory work for the catechism. In fact, the catechisms came directly from these three series of sermons, particularly the *Large Catechism*.

The year 1523 was also the year of the visitations of the churches. The *Small Catechism* sprang directly from the compassion Luther felt for the churches and the sad state of destitution to which they had been brought.

The *Small Catechism* was published first in chart (placards) form.^{vii} These charts, written in Low German, were printed in Wittenberg during the first week of 1529. Luther, recognizing the educational advantages of visual aids, made the charts available to churches, schools, and homes. He urged that these charts be posted before children to enable them to master the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

The first evidence we have of the complete *Small Catechism* in book form is from a letter of Roerer of May 16, 1529, in which a reference is made to sending two copies of the *Small Catechism*.

The *Large Catechism* appeared late in April, 1529. Luther's sermons for Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday, 1529, are usually considered preliminary work, according to which the last paragraphs of the *Large Catechism* were elaborated.

Therefore, we see that the *Small Catechism* in chart form was completed and published before the *Large Catechism*. But the book form of the *Large Catechism* appeared before the book form of the *Small Catechism*. However, although completed after the *Small Catechism*, printed parts of the *Large Catechism* date back to 1528.

The Use of the Catechisms In Wittenberg

Luther considered the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer to be the main part of Christian doctrine which everyone must learn if he would be regarded and treated as a Christian. Concerning instruction and teaching of these three parts, Luther writes:

If any refuse to receive your instructions, tell them that they deny Christ and are no Christians. They should not be admitted to the sacrament, be accepted as sponsors in Baptism, or be allowed to participate in any Christian privileges. On the contrary, they should be turned over to the pope and his officials, and even to the devil himself. In addition, parents and employers should refuse to furnish them with food and drink and should notify them that the prince is disposed to banish such rude people from his land.^{viii}

Luther considered the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer to be the minimum for children. However, as a Christian grows, he should certainly strive to exceed this. Therefore, Luther soon added the parts of the catechism on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The section on Confession was not included in the original edition of 1529. However, in the second Wittenberg edition of the *Large Catechism*, a section was included concerning confession. By 1531 Luther had also inserted in the *Small Catechism* a form on confession between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, entitled "How the Unlearned Shall be Taught to Confess." The three questions on the Ministry of the Keys in our catechism today were not written by Luther and were not received into the Book of Concord in 1580.

In the Commandments, Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, we have "What shall I do?"; "What shall I believe?"; and "How shall I pray?". But a fourth question remains, "How will God nourish my spiritual life?" This question is answered in the chief parts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

It is interesting to note that while Luther was occupied with his catechetical labors, he had to contend at the same time with the Anabaptists. He knew that the Reformation would end in confusion and religious anarchy unless the Church stood firmly grounded upon the written Word and the Sacraments. Therefore, Luther added to the three ancient chief parts the parts on Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession. He writes in his *Large Catechism*:

When these three parts (i.e. Commandments, Creed, and the Lord's Prayer) are understood, we ought also to know what to say about the sacraments, which Christ himself instituted, Baptism, and the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, according to the texts of Matthew and Mark at the end of their Gospels where they describe how Christ said farewell to his disciples and sent them forth.^{ix}

Beginning the Fourth part, on Baptism, Luther writes:

We have now finished with the three chief parts of our common Christian teaching. It remains for us to speak of our two sacraments instituted by Christ. Every Christian ought to have at least some brief elementary instruction in them because without these no one can be a Christian, although unfortunately in the past nothing was taught about them.^x

As early as 1525, Wittenberg had a regulation prescribing quarterly instructions in the catechism by means of special sermons. The *Instruction for Visitors* of 1527 reads:

The Ten Commandments, the Articles of Faith, and the Lord's Prayer are to be steadily preached and expounded on Sunday afternoons. . . . And when the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed have been preached on Sundays in succession, matrimony, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall also be preached diligently. In this interest the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Articles of Faith shall be recited word for word, for the sake of the children and other simple and ignorant folks.^{xi}

On November 29, 1528, Luther proclaimed from the pulpit:

We have ordered, as hitherto has been customary with us, that the first principles and the fundamentals of Christian knowledge and life be preached four times each year, two weeks in each quarter, four days per week, at 10:00 A.M.^{xii}

In a sermon on November 27, 1530, Luther says:

It is our custom to preach the Catechism four times a year. Therefore attend these services, and let the children and the rest of the household come.^{xiii}

And on September 10, 1531, Luther concluded his sermon with the following admonition:

It is the custom, and the time of the Catechism sermons is at hand. I admonish you to give these eight days to your Lord and permit your household and children to attend, and you yourself may also come and profit by this instruction. No one knows as much as he ought to know. For I myself am constrained to drill it every day. You know that we did not have it under the Papacy. Buy while the market is at the door; some day you will behold the fruit. We would, indeed, rather escape the burden, but we do it for your sakes.^{xiv}

While it is true that Luther favored Latin masses, yet he demanded that for the sake of the unlearned laity, German services be introduced. He therefore published the *Deutsche Messe*, the German Order of Worship, in 1526. Here the Catechism was to constitute a chief part in the service. Luther emphasized the German Catechism in the German service.

According to Luther's German service, the pastors were to preach the Catechism on Mondays and Tuesdays. The children were to be questioned on the Catechism in these services. This questioning was to continue at home also.

In the same manner, the passages of Scripture were to be used. The children were to take home passages from the Sunday sermon and recite them to their parents at the noon meal. After the Sunday sermon, the Catechism was read to the people. This became a fixed custom in Wittenberg.

On Maundy Thursday, in 1523, Luther announced that instead of the papistic confession, communicants were to announce for communion to the pastors and submit to an examination on the Catechism. This examination became a permanent institution at Wittenberg.

In a sermon on the Sacrament of 1526, Luther says:

Confession, though it serves no other purpose, is a suitable means of instructing the people and of ascertaining what they believe, how they learn to pray, etc.; for else they live like brutes. Therefore, I have said, that the Sacrament shall be given to no one except he be able to give an account of what he receives (in the Sacrament) and why he is going. This can best be done in confession.^{xv}

Thus Luther continually urged the Catechism. In a sermon of 1530, he states:

Whoever is able to read let him, in the morning, take a psalm or some other chapter in the Bible and study it for a while. For that is what I do. When I rise in the morning, I pray the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and also a psalm with the children. I do so because I wish to remain familiar with it, and not have it over grown with mildew, so that I know it.^{xvi}

And in a sermon of November 27, 1530, Luther again warns:

Beware lest you become presumptuous, as though, because you have heard it often, you know enough of the Catechism. For this knowledge ever desires us to be its students. We shall never finish learning it, since it does not consist in speech, but in life. For I also, Dr. Martin, doctor and preacher, am compelled day by day to pray and to recite the words of the Decalog, the Symbol, and the Lord's Prayer as children are wont to do. Hence you need not be ashamed; for much fruit will result.^{xvii}

This is also the teachings of our Confessions. In the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Melancthon writes:

We gladly keep the old traditions set up in the churches because they are useful and promote tranquillity, and we interpret them in an evangelical way. In our churches the public liturgy is more decent Every Lord's Day many in our circles use the Lord's Supper, but only after they have been instructed, examined, and absolved. The children chant the Psalms in order to learn; the people sing, too, in order to learn or to worship. In our circles the pastor and minister of the churches are required to instruct and examine the youth publicly, a custom that produces a very good result.^{xviii}

The Catechism thus was to be the "Layman's Bible." Luther calls it this in a sermon of September 14, 1525. It is also an expression adopted by the writers of the *Formula of Concord*.

They (Small and Large Catechisms) are the layman's Bible and contain everything which Holy Scripture discusses at greater length and which a Christian must know for his salvation.^{xix}

Teaching the Catechism in Wittenberg

Luther's method of teaching the Catechism was guided by two maxims: (1) Christ's, wishing to educate man, became a man, and if we wish to educate children, we must become little children; and (2) the apple must lie next to the rod.

Luther saw the need for the cooperation of church, school, and home in the study of the Catechism. But above all, the home must not fail. In his *German Order of Worship*, 1526, he writes:

For if the parents and guardians of the young are unwilling to take such pains with the young, either personally or through others, catechetical instruction will never be established.^{xx}

Luther wished the Christian homes to become home-churches, home-schools, where the housefathers were both house-priests and house-teachers performing the office of the ministry there, just as the pastors did in the church. Every housefather is a priest in his own house and every housemother is a priestess. Luther writes:

Think not ye housefathers that you are freed from the care of your household when you say: 'oh, if they are unwilling to go (to catechism instruction), why should I force them? I am not in need of it.' You have been appointed their bishop and house-pastor; beware lest you neglect your duty toward them!^{xxi}

At the beginning of a sermon on the Catechism, Luther said:

Therefore, I have admonished you adults to have your children and your servants, attend it and also be present yourselves; otherwise we shall not admit you to Holy Communion. For if you parents and masters will not help us, we shall accomplish little by our preaching. If I preach an entire year, the household comes, gapes at the walls and windows of the church and leaves. Whoever is a good citizen is in duty bound to urge his people to learn these things; he should refuse them food unless they do. If the servants complain, slam the door on them. If you have children, accustom them to learn the Ten Commandments, the Symbol, the Lord's Prayer. If you will diligently urge them, they will learn much in one year. When they have learned these things, there are everywhere in the Scriptures fine passages which they may learn next; if not all, at least some. For this reason God has appointed you a master, a mistress, that you may urge your household to do this. And this you are well able to accomplish; that they pray in the morning and evening, before and after meals. In this way they would be brought up in the fear of God. I am no idle prattler; I ask you not to cast my words to the winds. I would not think you so rude if I did not daily hear it. Every housefather is a priest in his own house, every housemother is a priestess; therefore see that you help us to perform the office of the ministry in your homes as we do in church. If you do, we shall have a propitious God, who will defend us from all evil. In the Psalm (78:5) it is written: 'He appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children'.^{xxii}

Luther also urged in his preface to the *Large Catechism* this instruction in the homes.

It is the duty of every head of a household to examine his children and servants at least once a week and ascertain what they have learned of it and if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it.^{xxiii}

At the end of the third section on the Lord's Prayer, Luther writes:

These are the most necessary parts of Christian instruction. We should learn to repeat them word for word. Our children should be taught the habit of reciting them daily when they rise in the morning, when they go to their meals, and when they go to bed at night; until they repeat them they should not be given anything to eat or drink. Every father has the same duty to his household; he should dismiss man-servants and maid-servants if they do not know these things and are unwilling to learn them. Under no circumstances should a person be tolerated if he is so rude and unruly that he refuses to learn these three parts in which everything contained in Scripture is comprehended in short, plain, and simple terms, for the dear fathers or apostles, whoever they were, have thus summed up the doctrine, life, wisdom, and learning which constitute the Christian's conversation, conduct, and concern.^{xxiv}

From these instructions we see that it was the head of the house who was to take the lead in teaching the Catechism. But if he was unable or unwilling, then he was to send his children to school.

When planning and writing the *Small Catechism*, Luther also had in mind that this booklet was to be a text-book in the schools. We can see connections between the Catechism and the old chart-booklets from which Luther had learned the alphabet. We especially see this connection in the word "enchiridion," a title used also in the middle ages of the handbooks in the Latin schools.

In the Instruction for the Visitors, we read:

A certain day, either Saturday or Wednesday shall be set aside for imparting to the children Christian instruction. Hereupon the school teacher shall simply and correctly expound at one time the Lord's Prayer, at another the Creed, etc.^{xxv}

In another place Luther gives an example on how the Catechism is to be used and taught. He writes:

The teacher should ask: 'What do you pray?' Answer: 'The Lord's Prayer.' 'What is meant by "Our Father who art in Heaven?"' Answer: 'That God is not an earthly, but a Heavenly Father, who will make us rich and blessed in Heaven.' 'What is meant by "Hallowed by Thy name?"' Answer: 'That we should honor His name that it may not be profaned.' 'How is it profaned?' Answer: 'When we, who are His children, lead evil lives, and teach and believe error.' And so on with every statement in the Catechism.^{xxvi}

In the schools at Wittenberg, Luther's *Small Catechism* served as a text-book. The enchiridion was used as the First Reader in the schools of Saxony. One edition of the Catechism began with the alphabet.

We have already referred to the use of the Catechism in the churches. According to the German Order of Service, the Catechism was read to the people every Sunday after the sermon. It also was used for examining people at confession.

In these ways Luther sought to introduce catechetical learning in Wittenberg. He introduced a system whereby the home, the school, and the Church would work together. The Catechism was a chief text-book in the school. The same book was to be read and studied at home. The same book was also read and preached in the Church. The Catechism was thus a book of religious instructions for home, school, and church. Luther planned and desired it to be a book for parents, children, teachers, and pastors.

In May, 1530, just one year after the Catechism appeared, Luther wrote to the Elector of Saxony:

Now the tender youth of both sexes are growing up so well instructed in the Catechism and the Bible that it does my heart good to see how the girls and boys can pray and believe and speak more of God and Christ than formerly any religious foundation, cloister, or school could or yet can.^{xxvii}

The Merits of the Catechism

In conclusion, we would like to call attention to some of the outstanding merits of the Catechisms. We note the following:^{xxviii}

1. The absence of polemics. This is really an astounding fact when one considers the fierce conflicts with the Pope and with the Protestant fanatics out of which it was born. One would expect to see in the article on the Creed, polemical references to the Pope and bishops in the perversion of the way of salvation. Or we would certainly be expecting attacks against Zwingli and the Anabaptist in the articles on the Sacraments.

However, throughout the statements are positive. Truth is stressed. Old and young are made to feel the worth of simple godliness, the beauty of personal faith, the supremacy of Christ and of His Word. In the Catechisms we have simple affirmations of that which constitutes Christian belief and life. Luther throughout emphasized the positive. Christianity is not only the refraining from doing certain number of things. Above all else, Christianity consists in a faith and love that does God's will.

Though living in a period of religious strife, it is to Luther's credit both as a Christian and teacher that he would not have the children perplexed with controversial questions. In the Saxony School Plan, it is said: 'The school-master shall impress upon the children those truths that are necessary to right living, as the fear of God, faith, and good works. He shall not speak of polemical matters. He shall not, as many unskillful teachers do, accustom the children to hate the monks and others.'^{xxix}

2. The Evangelical Quality. The Catechism is permeated with one thought—Justification by grace alone, through faith alone. Even in the Commandments, the thought of fear, love, and trust in God is taught, not only in the first but in all the Commandments. The entire Decalog is based upon this fundamental truth of Christianity. All articles of the Creed, as explained by Luther, are saturated with Justification. Truly evangelical ideas permeate also the Lord's Prayer. This is true in a most eminent degree in the last three chief parts. Everything has as its presupposition the forgiveness of sins. It breathes the assurance of faith throughout.

We are reconciled to God through Christ and through faith have forgiveness of sins and the righteousness which avails before God. This is not one article of faith among many others. It is the A and the Z, the beginning and the end, the source and goal of catechism instructions.

3. The Literary Form. As in his translation of the Bible, so in the writing of the Catechism, Luther reveals himself as a master of language. We see striking combinations for memorization and beauty: "love and esteem," "property and business," "heaven and earth," "thank and praise," "goodness and mercy." We also note the beautiful triads: "redeemed, purchased and won," "sin, death, power of the devil."

The Second Article's explanation has been called the most beautiful sentence in the German language. A German critic writes:

There is a strange rise and fall, cadence and rhythm, in these sentences, to which nothing else in our literature can be compared. It is a masterful use of the language of the common people, combined with a genius for the tonal qualities of language.^{xxx}

When one considers these merits, we would wonder how many copies of this Catechism have been printed and sold since 1529. We often read of the estimated number of copies printed of other books, but Luther's Catechisms are never mentioned. *The New England Primer*, for example, is said to have been printed in over three million copies. How many copies of the Catechisms have been printed?

If we may consider that every Lutheran had at least one copy of the Catechism, and if we count four generations per century, we can construct the following table:

16 century	10,000,000 Lutherans x 4 =	40 million copies
17 century	20,000,000 Lutherans x 4 =	80 million copies
18 century	30,000,000 Lutherans x 4 =	120 million copies
19 century	50,000,000 Lutherans x 4 =	200 million copies
20 century	80,000,000 Lutherans x 4 =	240 million copies
	total	680 million copies

If we also consider reprints in various forms in other books, such as memory books, I think we could say, conservatively, that over a billion copies of the Catechisms have been printed.

Conclusion

The *Small* and *Large Catechisms* are precious books! Luther's Catechisms strike a personal, confessional note. The beautiful explanations are cast in so personal a mold that they fairly invite the attitude of prayer. Luther thus refers repeatedly to "praying the Catechism." In this respect no confessional writing has ever approached Luther's Catechisms.

We are thankful for the *Small* and *Large Catechism*. We praise God for this great gift to us poor, sinful beings. The Catechisms are Confessional documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They are the layman's Bible. May we continue to pray:

Lord, help us ever to retain
The Catechism's doctrine plain
As Luther taught the Word of Truth
In simple style to tender youth.

Help us Thy holy Law to learn,
To mourn our sin, and from it turn WORD
In faith thee and to Thy Son
And Holy Spirit, Three in One.

Hear us, dear Father, when we pray
For needed help from day to day BAPTISM
That as Thy children we may live,
Whom Thou in Baptism didst receive.

Lord, when we fall and sin doth stain,
Absolve and lift us up again; LORD'S SUPPER
And thro' the Sacrament increase
Our faith till we depart in peace.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, 288)

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Notes

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- ⁱ T. Tappert, *Book of Concord*, “Smalcald Articles,” p. 306.
- ⁱⁱ F. Bente, *Historical Introduction to Symbolical Books*, p. 66.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Tappert, “Apology to Augsburg Confession,” p. 220-221.
- ^{iv} Tappert, “Small Catechism,” p. 338.
- ^v M. Reu, *Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, p. 3-4.
- ^{vi} F. Janzow, *Getting Into the Large Catechism*, p. 8.
- ^{vii} Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 19-21.
- ^{viii} Tappert, “Small Catechism,” p. 339.
- ^{ix} Tappert, “Large Catechism,” p. 364.
- ^x *Ibid.*, p. 436.
- ^{xi} Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
- ^{xii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xiii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xiv} *Ibid.*
- ^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- ^{xvi} *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xviii} Tappert, “Apology to the Augsburg Confession,” p. 220.
- ^{xix} Tappert, “Formula of Concord,” *Epitome, Rules and Norms*, p. 465.
- ^{xx} Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxii} *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- ^{xxiii} Tappert, “Large Catechism,” p. 362.
- ^{xxiv} *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- ^{xxv} Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
- ^{xxvi} F.V.N. Painter, *Luther on Education*, p. 153.
- ^{xxvii} Th. Engelder, *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. III, Oct. 1932, p. 771.
- ^{xxviii} T. Graebner, *Story of the Catechism*.
- ^{xxix} Painter, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- ^{xxx} Graebner, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

THE PRINCIPAL WRITINGS BY MARTIN LUTHER ON THE CATECHISMS

A reading of this list will give one a history of Luther's writings and work on the Catechisms. The references are primarily to the 54 volumes of the *American Edition* of Luther's works (LW). When not translated in the *American Edition*, the references are to either the *St. Louis-Walch* edition (SL) or to the *Weimar* edition (W). The arabic numerals are to the volume numbers.

- 1516 - "Sermon on the Ten Commandments," SL, 3.
- 1517 - "Sermon on the Lord's Prayer," W, 1.
- 1518 - "Ten Commandments with Brief Expositions," (placards) W, 1,30.
 "Sermon on the Threefold Righteousness," SL, 10.
- 1519 - "The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism," LW, 35.
 "Two Kinds of Righteousness," LW, 31.
 "Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," LW, 35.
 "Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen," LW, 42.
 "Brief Instruction on How to Confess," (explanation of the Ten Commandments) SL, 10.
 "Sermon of the Estate of Marriage," LW, 44.
 "Brief Form for Understanding and Praying the Lord's Prayer," W, 6.
 "Short and Good Explanation Before Oneself and Behind Oneself," W, 6.
- 1520 - "Treatise on Good Works," LW, 44.
 "Brief Form of the Ten Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer," W, 7 (cf. also *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia Edition) vol. 2).
 "Opinion of Martin Luther that Private Mass Should be Abolished," SL, 19.
- 1521 - "Sermon on the Worthy Reception of the Sacrament," LW, 42.
 "A Sermon on the Three Kinds of Good Life for the Instruction of Consciences" LW, 44.
 "On Confession, whether the Pope Has the Authority to Demand It," SL, 19.
- 1522 - "Eight Sermons at Wittenberg," LW, 51.
 "Receiving Both Kinds in the Sacrament," LW, 36.
 "Personal Prayer Book," LW, 43.
 "The Estate of Marriage," LW, 45.
 "Catechism Sermons," (Decalog, Creed, Lord's Prayer) Lent, W, 30.
- 1523 - "Temporal Authority, To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," LW, 45.
 "Order of Baptism," LW, 53.
 "Catechism Sermons," (Decalog, Creed, Lord's Prayer) Lent, W, 30.
 "Order of Mass and Communion for Church at Wittenberg," LW, 53.
- 1524 - "To Councilors of All Cities in German Empire on Establishment and Maintenance of Christian School," LW, 45.
- 1525 - "Exhortation to Communicants," LW, 53.
 "Booklet for Laymen and Children" (Five Chief Parts to be Read to People after the Sermon), W, 10.

- 1526 - "Sacrament of Body and Blood of Christ," LW, 36.
 "Order of Baptism," (revised) LW, 51.
 "Order of the Mass and Communion for the Church at Wittenberg," LW, 53.
- 1528 - "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," LW, 37.
 "Ten Sermons on the Catechism," LW, 51.
 "Three Series of Sermons an the Catechism," W, 30
 May 18-30 Sept. 14-25 Nov. 30-Dec.19
- 1529 - "Palm Sunday Sermon"(conclusion to Large Catechism), W, 30.
 "Catechism" (first edition), SL, 10.
 "Maundy Thursday Sermon," W, 30.
 "Small Catechism," (in tables or wall charts) Jan-March, W, 30.
 "Large Catechism," April, W, 30.
 "Small Catechism," May, SL, 10.
 "Short Order of Confession," LW, 53.
- 1530 - "Exhortation to Partake of Body and Blood of Christ," SL, 10.
- 1531 - "How One Should Teach Common Folk to Strive Themselves," LW, 53.
- 1535 - "A Simple Way to Pray," LW, 43.
- 1538 - "The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith," LW, 34.
- 1544 - "Brief Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," LW, 38.

APPLICATIONS: Questions, statements, etc. for discussion!

OBSERVATION # 1

“Future belongs to rising generations.” Luther.

“Every cause which is not or cannot be made the cause of the rising generation is doomed from the very outset.” Luther.

Discussion!

- (a) The central position of the Lutheran Church is *Sola Gratia*, grace alone. How can we present this truth to our youth, our Sunday School children, in format, application, method?
- (b) Our concern for “purity of doctrine” - Is this the concern of our children?
How can we make it the concern of our children? Consider:
 1. Type of Church Service
 2. Type of Catechism Instructions
 3. Hymns, new vs. old
 4. Bible translations
 What can we change? What must we change!
- (c) Cooperation of Church, School, and Home.
If Sunday School is for children, then Bible Classes must be for adults. A successful Sunday School means a successful Bible Class.

OBSERVATION # 2

“The preacher should take the utmost care to avoid changes or variations in the text and wording of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacraments, etc. On the contrary, he should adopt one form, adhere to it, and use it repeatedly year after year. Young and inexperienced people must be instructed on the basis of a uniform fixed text and form.”

“After the people have become familiar with the text, teach them what it means. For this purpose, take the explanations in this booklet, or choose any other brief and fixed explanations which you may prefer, and adhere to them without changing a single syllable, as stated above with reference to the text. Moreover, allow yourself ample time, for it is not necessary to take up all the parts at once. They can be presented one at a time. When the learners have a proper understanding of the First Commandment, proceed to the Second Commandment, and so on. Otherwise they will be so overwhelmed that they will hardly remember anything at all.”

“After you have thus taught this brief catechism, take up a large catechism so that the people may have a richer fuller understanding.”

Luther, Small Catechism, Tappert, p. 339

Discussion!

- (a) How can we apply those principles?

- (b) Are they still applicable today?
- (c) How much memory work can we insist upon with children at our Lutheran schools, with children of our Lutheran schools?
- (d) What do these principles have to say to our many Bible translations? Does this rule out the use of several translations?
- (e) How do we teach understanding of memory work? (Recall Luther film and Luther's method of teaching)
- (f) The use of questions and answers in our teaching.
- (g) How do we use the Large Catechism?

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