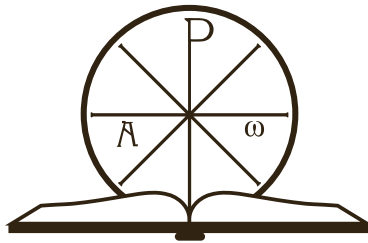


The Small and Large  
Catechisms  
of  
Martin Luther

St. Polycarp Publishing House Edition



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of  
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This edition utilizes the public domain text of the 1921 edition of *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English* as well as the public domain World English Bible (WEB).

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Martin Luther's Small and Large Catechisms are important tools in teaching the Christian faith to both young and old. In commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, St. Polycarp Publishing House is pleased to release this unique public domain edition of the Catechisms.

The English translation for the Catechisms comes from the public domain text of the 1921 edition of *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: German-Latin-English*. In certain places, the language has been updated to more modern English. In addition, the Biblical citations have been changed to the World English Bible (WEB) version, which is an accurate, literal, and modern translation. The WEB is also in the public domain. Therefore, the entire text of this edition of the Catechisms may be freely used.

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# SMALL CATECHISM

## LUTHER'S PREFACE TO THE SMALL CATECHISM

Martin Luther to All Faithful and Godly Pastors and Preachers:

Grace, Mercy, and Peace in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately 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! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach, so much so that one is ashamed to speak of it. Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the holy Sacraments. Yet they do not understand and cannot even recite either the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed, or the Ten Commandments; they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts.

O you bishops! to whom this charge has been committed by God, what will you ever answer to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and never for a moment discharged your office? (You are the persons to whom alone



this ruin of the Christian religion is due.) You have permitted men to err so shamefully; yours is the guilt; for you have ever done anything rather than what your office required you to do. May all misfortune flee you! (I do not wish at this place to invoke evil on your heads.) You command the Sacrament in one form (but is not this the highest ungodliness coupled with the greatest impudence that you are insisting on the administration of the Sacrament in one form only, and on your traditions) and insist on your human laws, and yet at the same time you do not care in the least (while you are utterly without scruple and concern) whether the people know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any part of the Word of God. Woe, woe, unto you forever!

Therefore I entreat and adjure you all for God's sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to devote yourselves heartily to your office, to have pity on the people who are entrusted to you, and to help us inculcate the Catechism upon the people, and especially upon 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, as follows:

In the first place, let the preacher above all be careful to avoid many kinds of or various texts and forms of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Sacraments, etc., but choose one form to which he adheres, and which he inculcates all the time, year after year. For young and simple people must be taught by uniform, settled

texts and forms, otherwise they easily become confused when the teacher to-day teaches them thus, and in a year some other way, as if he wished to make improvements, and thus all effort and labor which has been expended in teaching is lost.

Also our blessed fathers understood this well; for they all used the same form of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Therefore we, too, should imitate their diligence and be at pains to teach the young and simple people these parts in such a way as not to change a syllable, or set them forth and repeat them one year differently than in another no matter how often we teach the Catechism.

Hence, choose whatever form you please, and adhere to it forever. But when you preach in the presence of learned and intelligent men, you may exhibit your skill, and may present these parts in as 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, and teach them, first of all, these parts, namely, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same manner after you and commit it to memory.

But those who are unwilling to learn it should be told that they deny Christ and are no Christians, neither should they be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at

baptism, nor exercise any part of Christian liberty, but should simply be turned back to the Pope and his officials, yes, to the devil himself. Moreover, their parents and employers should refuse them food and drink, and they would also do well if they were to notify them that the prince will drive such rude people from the country, etc.

For although we cannot and should not force any one to believe, yet we should insist and urge the people that they know what is right and wrong with those among whom they dwell and wish to make their living. For whoever desires to reside in a town must know and observe the town laws, the protection of which he wishes to enjoy, no matter whether he is a believer or at heart and in private a rogue or knave.

In the second place, after they have well learned the text, then teach them the sense also, so that they know what it means, and again choose the form of these tables, or some other brief uniform method, whichever you like, and adhere to it, and do not change a single syllable, as was just said regarding the text; and take your time to it. For it is not necessary that you take up all the parts at once, but one after the other. After they understand the First Commandment well, then take up the Second, and so on, otherwise they will be overwhelmed, so as not to be able to retain any well.

In the third place, after you have thus taught them this Short Catechism, then take up the Large Catechism, and give them also a richer and fuller knowledge. Here explain at large

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. And particularly, urge that commandment or part most which suffers the greatest neglect among your people. For instance, the Seventh Commandment, concerning stealing, must be strenuously urged among mechanics and merchants, and even farmers and servants, for among these people many kinds of dishonesty and thieving prevail. So, too, you must urge well the Fourth Commandment among the children and the common people, that they may be quiet and faithful, obedient and peaceable, and you must always adduce many examples from the Scriptures to show how God has punished or blessed such persons.

Especially should you here urge magistrates and parents to rule well and to send their children to school, showing 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 the kingdom of God and that of the world, acting as the worst enemies both of God and of men. And 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 (also for other offices, with which we cannot dispense in this life), etc., and that God will punish them terribly for it. For such preaching is needed. Truly, I do not know of any other topic that deserves to be treated as much as this. Parents and magistrates are now

sinning unspeakably in this respect. The devil, too, aims at something cruel because of these things that he may hurl Germany into the greatest distress.

Lastly, since the tyranny of the Pope has been abolished, people are no longer willing to go to the Sacrament and despise it as something useless and unnecessary. Here again urging is necessary, however, with this understanding: We are to force no one to believe, or to receive the Sacrament, nor fix any law, nor time, nor place for it, but are to preach in such a manner that of their own accord, without our law, they will urge themselves and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer the Sacrament. This is done by telling them: Whoever does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least some four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is no Christian, just as he is no Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel; for Christ did not say, "This omit," or, "This despise," but, "This do you, as often as you drink it," etc. Truly, He wants it done, and not entirely neglected and despised. "This do you," He says.

Now, whoever does not highly value the Sacrament thereby shows that he has no sin, no flesh, no devil, no world, no death, no danger, no hell; that is, he does not believe any such things, although he is in them over head and ears and is doubly the devil's own. On the other hand, he needs no grace, life, Paradise, heaven, Christ, God, nor anything good. For if he believed that he had so much that is evil, and needed so much that is good, he would not thus neglect the

Sacrament, by which such evil is remedied and so much good is bestowed. Neither will it be necessary to force him to the Sacrament by any law, but he will come running and racing of his own accord, will force himself and urge you that you must give him the Sacrament.

Hence, you must not make any law in this matter, 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, and the people will come of themselves without your compulsion. But if they do not come, let them go and tell them that such belong to the devil as do not regard nor feel their great need and the gracious help of God. But if you do not urge this, or make a law or a bane of it, it is your fault if they despise the Sacrament. How could they be otherwise than slothful if you sleep and are silent? Therefore look to it, you pastors and preachers. Our office is now become a different thing from what it was under the Pope; it is now become serious and salutary. Accordingly, it now involves much more trouble and labor, danger and trials, and, in addition thereto, little reward and gratitude in the world. But Christ Himself will be our reward if we labor faithfully. To this end may the Father of all grace help us, to whom be praise and thanks forever through Christ, our Lord! Amen.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.

## **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 Yahweh your God.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

## **The Third Commandment**

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it.

### **The Fourth Commandment**

*Honor your father and your mother [that your days may be long in the land].*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not despise nor anger our parents and masters, but give them honor, serve, obey, and hold them in love and esteem.

### **The Fifth Commandment**

*You shall not murder.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

### **The Sixth Commandment**



*You shall not commit adultery.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in words and deeds, and each love and honor his spouse.

### **The Seventh Commandment**

*You shall not steal.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not take our neighbor's money or property, nor get them by false ware or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and business that his means are preserved and his condition is improved.

### **The Eighth Commandment**

*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, think and speak well of him, and put the best

construction on everything.

## **The Ninth Commandment**

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, and obtain it by a show of justice and right, etc., but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

## **The Tenth Commandment**

*You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear and love God that we may not estrange, force, or entice away our neighbor's wife, servants, or animals, but urge them to stay and diligently do their duty.

## **What Does God Say of All These Commandments?**

Answer: He says thus (Exodus 20:5ff): *I, Yahweh your God,*

*am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me, and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

What does this mean?

Answer: God threatens to punish all that transgress these commandments. Therefore we should dread His wrath and not act contrary to these commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all that keep these commandments. Therefore we should also love and trust in Him, and zealously and diligently order our whole life according to His commandments.

## THE CREED

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

### **The First Article**

Of Creation.

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

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them; in addition to that, clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and homestead, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life, protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil; and all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

### **The Second Article**

Of Redemption.

*And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be wholly His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

### **The Third Article**

Of Sanctification.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

What does this mean?

Answer: I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, 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; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

*Our Father in heaven.*

What does this mean?

Answer: God would with this little introduction tenderly urge us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him confidently with all assurance, as dear children ask their dear father.

### **The First Petition**

*May your name be kept holy.*

What does this mean?

Answer: God's name is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may become holy among us also.

How is this done?

Answer: When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead holy lives in accordance with it. To this end help us, dear Father in

heaven. But he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches profanes the name of God among us. From this preserve us, Heavenly Father.

## **The Second Petition**

*Let your kingdom come.*

What does this mean?

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

How is this done?

Answer: When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life here in time and hereafter in eternity.

## **The Third Petition**

*Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

What does this mean?

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



How is this done?

Answer: When God breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us keep holy the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is His gracious and good will.

### **The Fourth Petition**

*Give us today our daily bread.*

What does this mean?

Answer: God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all wicked men; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to know it, and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Answer: Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, homestead, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful magistrates, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

## **The Fifth Petition**

*Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor deny such petitions on account of them; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them; but that He would grant them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment. So will we truly, on our part, also heartily forgive and also readily do good to those who sin against us.

## **The Sixth Petition**

*Bring us not into temptation.*

What does this mean?

Answer: God, indeed, tempts no one; but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us, nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice; and though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and gain the victory.

## **The Seventh Petition**

*Deliver us from the evil one.*

What does this mean?

Answer: We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from all manner of evil, of body and soul, property and honor, and at last, when our last hour shall come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself into heaven.

Amen.

*Amen.*

What does this mean?

Answer: That I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray, and has promised that He will hear us. Amen, Amen; that is, “Yes, Yes, it shall be so.”

## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

### **First**

What is Baptism?

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

Which is that word of God?

Answer: Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

### **Secondly**

What does Baptism give or profit?

Answer: It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are such words and promises of God?

Answer: Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

### **Thirdly**

How can water do such great things?

Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts this word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: “Through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This saying is faithful” (Titus 3:5-8).

### **Fourthly**

What does such baptizing with water signify?

Answer: It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins

and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

Answer: St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: “We were buried therefore with [Christ] through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

# CONFESSION

How Christians should be taught to confess.

## **What is Confession?**

Confession embraces two parts: the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and do not doubt at all, but firmly believe, that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those which we do not know, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the confessor we should confess those sins alone which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Here consider your station according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, a male servant or female servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, slothful; whether you have grieved any one by words or deeds; whether you have stolen, neglected, or wasted anything at all, or done other injury.

## **Pray, Propose to Me a Brief Form of Confession.**

Answer: You should speak to the confessor thus:

*Reverend and dear sir, I beg you to hear my confession, and to pronounce forgiveness to me for God's sake.*

Proceed!

*I, a poor sinner, confess myself before God guilty of all sins; especially I confess before you that I am a male servant, a female servant, etc. But, alas, I serve my master unfaithfully; for in this and in that I have not done what they commanded me; I have provoked them, and caused them to curse, have been negligent in many things and permitted damage to be done; have also been immodest in words and deeds, have quarreled with my equals, have grumbled and sworn at my mistress, etc. For all this I am sorry, and pray for grace; I want to do better.*

A master or mistress may say thus:

*In particular I confess before you that I have not faithfully trained my children, domestics, and wife [family] for God's glory. I have cursed, set a bad example by rude words and deeds, have done my neighbor harm and spoken evil of him, have overcharged and given false ware and short measure.*



And whatever else he has done against God's command and his station, etc.

But if any one does not find himself burdened with such or greater sins, he should not trouble himself or search for or invent other sins, and thereby make confession a torture, but mention one or two that he knows.

Thus:

*In particular I confess that I once cursed; again, I once used improper words, I have once neglected this or that, etc.*

Let this suffice.

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

Then shall the confessor say:

*God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith! Amen.*

Furthermore:

*Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?*

Answer.

*Yes, dear sir.*

Then let him say:

*As you believe, so be it done unto you. And by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you of your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Depart in peace.*

But those who have great burdens upon their consciences, or are distressed and tempted, the confessor will know how to comfort and to encourage to faith with more passages of Scripture. This is to be merely a general form of confession for the unlearned.

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

### **What is the Sacrament of the Altar?**

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself.

### **Where is this written?**

The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write thus (Matthew 26:26ff; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19ff; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26):

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: "Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

## **What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?**

That is shown us in these words: “Given, and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins;” namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

## **How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?**

It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: “Given, and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.” Which words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

## **Who, then, receives this Sacrament worthily?**

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given, and shed for you, for the forgiveness of sins.”

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words “For you” require altogether believing hearts.

## DAILY PRAYERS

How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening.

### **Morning Prayer**

In the morning, when you rise, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

*In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you choose, you may, in addition, say this little prayer:

*I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask You to keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the Evil Foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

Then go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, or the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest.

## **Evening Prayer**

In the evening, when you go to bed, you shall bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

*In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you choose, you may, in addition, say this little prayer:

*I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day, and I ask You to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the Evil Foe may have no power over me. Amen.*

Then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.

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How the head of the family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks.

## **Asking a Blessing**

The children and servants shall go to the table reverently with folded hands and say (Psalm 145:15-16):

*The eyes of all wait for You, O Lord; and You give them their food in due season; You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

Note: To satisfy the desire means that all animals receive so much to eat that they are on this account joyful and of good cheer; for care and avarice hinder such satisfaction.

Then the Lord's Prayer, and the prayer here following:

*Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts, which we take from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

### **Returning Thanks**

Likewise also after the meal they shall reverently and with folded hands say (Psalm 136; Psalm 147):

*Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good; for his loving kindness endures forever. He gives food to every creature. He provides for the livestock and for the young ravens when they call. He doesn't delight in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his loving kindness.*

Then the Lord's Prayer and the prayer here following:

*We thank You, Lord God, Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for all Your benefits, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.*



## TABLE OF DUTIES

Certain passages of scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their duties and responsibilities.

### **For Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers**

The overseer therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, modest, hospitable, good at teaching; not a drinker, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence; not a new convert, holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict those who contradict him (1 Timothy 3:2ff; Titus 1:6ff).

### **What the Hearers Owe to Their Pastors**

Even so the Lord ordained that those who proclaim the Good News should live from the Good News (1 Corinthians 9:14).

But let him who is taught in the word share all good things with him who teaches (Galatians 6:6).

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in

teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain.” And, “The laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Timothy 5:17-18; Deuteronomy 25:4; Leviticus 19:13; Luke 10:7).

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls, as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy, and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you (Hebrews 13:17).

### **Concerning Civil Government**

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those who exist are ordained by God. Therefore he who resists the authority withstands the ordinance of God; and those who withstand will receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. Do you desire to have no fear of the authority? Do that which is good, and you will have praise from the authority, for he is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid, for he doesn't bear the sword in vain; for he is a servant of God, an avenger for wrath to him who does evil (Romans 13:1-4).

### **What Subjects Owe to the Magistrates**

Give therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21).

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those who exist are ordained by God. Therefore he who resists the authority withstands the ordinance of God; and those who withstand will receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. Do you desire to have no fear of the authority? Do that which is good, and you will have praise from the authority, for he is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid, for he doesn't bear the sword in vain; for he is a servant of God, an avenger for wrath to him who does evil. Therefore you need to be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this reason you also pay taxes, for they are servants of God's service, continually doing this very thing. Therefore give everyone what you owe: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if customs, then customs; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor (Romans 13:1-7).

I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks be made for all men: for kings and all who are in high places, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and reverence (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Remind them to be in subjection to rulers and to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all humility toward all men (Titus 3:1-2).

Therefore subject yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or to governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evildoers and for praise to those who do well (1 Peter 2:13-14).

### **For Husbands**

You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman, as to the weaker vessel, as also being joint heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Husbands, love your wives, and don't be bitter against them (Colossians 3:19).

### **For Wives**

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children you now are, if you do well, and are not put in fear by any terror (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:6).

### **For Parents**

You fathers, don't provoke your children to wrath, but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

### **For Children**

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise: “that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3; Deuteronomy 5:16).

### **For Male and Female Servants, Hired Men, and Laborers**

Servants, be obedient to those who according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as to Christ, not in the way of service only when eyes are on you, as men pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, he will receive the same good again from the Lord, whether he is bound or free (Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22).

### **For Masters and Mistresses**

You masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1).

### **For Young Persons in General**

Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder. Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility, to subject yourselves to one another; for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time, casting all your worries on him, because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:5-7; Proverbs 3:34).

### **For Widows**

Now she who is a widow indeed and desolate, has her hope set on God, and continues in petitions and prayers night and day. But she who gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives (1 Timothy 5:5-6).

### **For All in Common**

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other commandments there are, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love doesn’t harm a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10; Exodus 20:13-15, 17; Deuteronomy 5:17-19, 21; Leviticus 19:18).

I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks be made for all men: for

kings and all who are in high places, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and reverence (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

**Let each his lesson learn with care,  
And all the household well shall fare.**

# CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS WITH THEIR ANSWERS

Prepared by Dr. Martin Luther for those who intend to go to the Sacrament.

After confession and instruction in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the pastor may ask, or Christians may ask themselves these questions:

1. Do you believe that you are a sinner?

Yes, I believe it. I am a sinner.

2. How do you know this?

From the Ten Commandments, which I have not kept.

3. Are you sorry for your sins?

Yes, I am sorry that I have sinned against God.

4. What have you deserved from God because of your sins?

His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. See Romans 6:21, 23.



5. Do you hope to be saved?

Yes, that is my hope.

6. In whom then do you trust?

In my dear Lord Jesus Christ.

7. Who is Christ?

The Son of God, true God and man.

8. How many Gods are there?

Only one, but there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

9. What has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?

He died for me and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

10. Did the Father also die for you?

He did not. The Father is God only, as is the Holy Spirit; but the Son is both true God and true man. He died for me and shed his blood for me.

11. How do you know this?

From the holy Gospel, from the words instituting the Sacrament, and by His body and blood given me as a pledge in the Sacrament.

12. What are the Words of Institution?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: "Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

13. Do you believe, then, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the Sacrament?

Yes, I believe it.

14. What convinces you to believe this?

The word of Christ: Take, eat, this is My body; drink of it, all of you, this is My blood.

15. What should we do when we eat His body and drink His

blood, and in this way receive His pledge?

We should remember and proclaim His death and the shedding of His blood, as He taught us: This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

16. Why should we remember and proclaim His death?

First, so that we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins. Only Christ, true God and man, could do that.

Second, so we may learn to be horrified by our sins, and to regard them as very serious.

Third, so we may find joy and comfort in Christ alone, and through faith in Him be saved.

17. What motivated Christ to die and make full payment for your sins?

His great love for His Father and for me and other sinners, as it is written in John 14; Romans 5; Galatians 2 and Ephesians 5.

18. Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?

That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love

God and my neighbor.

19. What should admonish and encourage a Christian to receive the Sacrament frequently?

First, both the command and the promise of Christ the Lord.

Second, his own pressing need, because of which the command, encouragement, and promise are given.

20. But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?

To such a person no better advice can be given than this: first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7.

Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15-16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8 and 16; 1 Peter 5; Ephesians 6; and 2 Timothy 2.

## **Note**

These questions and answers are no child's play, but are drawn up with great earnestness of purpose by the venerable and devout Dr. Luther for both young and old. Let each one pay attention and consider it a serious matter; for St. Paul writes to the Galatians in chapter six: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked."

# LARGE CATECHISM

## INTRODUCTION

*A Christian, Profitable, and Necessary Preface, and Faithful, Earnest Exhortation of Dr. Martin Luther to All Christians, but Especially to All Pastors and Preachers, that They Should Daily Exercise Themselves in the Catechism, which is a Short Summary and, Epitome of the Entire Holy Scriptures, and that They May Always Teach the Same.*

We have no slight reasons for treating the Catechism so constantly in sermons and for both desiring and beseeching others to teach it, since we see to our sorrow that many pastors and preachers are very negligent in this, and slight both their office and this teaching; some from great and high art (giving their mind, as they imagine, to much higher matters), but others from sheer laziness and care for their paunches, assuming no other relation to this business than if they were pastors and preachers, for their bellies' sake, and had nothing to do but, to spend and consume their emoluments as long as they live, as they have been accustomed to do under the Papacy.

And although they have now everything that they are to preach and teach placed before them so abundantly, clearly, and easily, in so many excellent and helpful books, and the true *Sermones per se loquentes, Dormi secure, Paratos et Thesuros*, as they were called in former times; yet they are not so godly and honest as to buy these books, or even when

they have them, to look at them or read them. Alas! they are altogether shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies who ought to be more properly swineherds and dog-tenders than care-takers of souls and pastors.

And now that they are delivered from the unprofitable and burdensome babbling of the Seven Canonical Hours, oh, that, instead thereof, they would only, morning, noon, and evening, 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 for themselves and their parishioners, so that they might render, in return, honor and thanks to the Gospel, by which they have been delivered from burdens and troubles so manifold, and might feel a little shame because like pigs and dogs they retain no more of the Gospel than such a lazy, pernicious, shameful, carnal liberty!

For, alas! as it is, the common people regard the Gospel altogether too lightly, and we accomplish nothing extraordinary even though we use all diligence. What, then, will be achieved if we shall be negligent and lazy as we were under the Papacy? To this there is added the shameful vice and secret infection of security and satiety, that is, that many regard the Catechism as a poor, mean teaching, which they can read through at one time, and then immediately know it, throw the book into a corner, and be ashamed, as it were, to read in it again.

Yes, even among the nobility there may be found some louts



and scimps, who declare that there is no longer any need either of pastors or preachers; that we have everything in books, and every one can easily learn it by himself; and so they are content to let the parishes decay and become desolate, and pastors and preachers to suffer distress and hunger a plenty, just as it becomes crazy Germans to do. For we Germans have such disgraceful people, and must endure them.

But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher, yes, as learned and experienced as all those may be who have such presumption and security; yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism, and ever 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 a child and pupil of the Catechism, and am glad so to remain. And yet these delicate, fastidious fellows would with one reading promptly be doctors above all doctors, know everything and be in need of nothing. Well, this, too, is indeed a sure sign that they despise both their office and the souls of the people, yes, even God and His Word. They do not have to fall, they are already fallen all too horribly; they would need to become children, and begin to learn their alphabet, which they imagine that they have long since outgrown.

Therefore I beg such lazy paunches or presumptuous saints to be persuaded and believe for God's sake that they are

truly, truly! not so learned or such great doctors as they imagine; and never to presume that they have finished learning this (i.e. 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 though they should know and understand it perfectly (which, however, is impossible in this life), yet there are manifold benefits and fruits still to be obtained, if it be daily read and practiced in thought and speech; namely, that the Holy Ghost is present in such reading and repetition and meditation, and bestows ever new and more light and devoutness, so that it is daily relished and appreciated better, as Christ promises, Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the middle of them.”

Besides, it is an exceedingly effectual help against the devil, the world, and the flesh and all evil thoughts to be occupied with the Word of God, and to speak of it, 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 not start a stronger incense or other fumigation against the devil than by being engaged upon God's commandments and words, and speaking, singing, or thinking of them. For this is indeed the true holy water and holy sign from which he flees, and by which he may be driven away.

Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think and treat of these things, if you had no other profit and

fruit from them than that by doing so you can drive away the devil and evil thoughts. For he cannot hear or endure God's Word; and God's Word is not like some other silly prattle, as that about Dietrich of Berne, etc., but as St. Paul says, Romans 1:16, the power of God. Yes, indeed, the power of God which gives the devil burning 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 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 naught this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? It must indeed be the master of more than a hundred thousand arts.

And shall we frivolously despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit - we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers? If so, we should not only have nothing given us to eat, but be driven out, being baited with dogs, and pelted with dung, because we not only need all this every day as we need our daily bread, but must also daily use it against the daily and unabated attacks and lurking of the devil, the master of a thousand arts.

And if this were not sufficient to admonish us to read the Catechism daily, yet we should feel sufficiently constrained by the command of God alone, who solemnly enjoins in Deuteronomy 6:6ff that we should always meditate upon His

precepts, sitting, walking, standing, lying down, and rising, and 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 knows 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 evil infection and suggestion.

Oh, what mad, senseless fools are we that, while we must ever live and dwell among such mighty enemies as the devils are, we nevertheless despise our weapons and defense, and are too lazy to look at or think of them!

And what else are such supercilious, presumptuous saints, who are unwilling to read and study the Catechism daily, doing than 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 these things daily, as knowing 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 or different to learn, and cannot finish learning this, are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine, if we have once read or heard it, that we know it all, and have no further need to read and learn, but can finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching, although He is engaged in teaching it from the

beginning to the end of the world, and all prophets, together with all saints, have been occupied with learning it, and have ever remained pupils, and must continue to be such?

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? Now I know of a truth that such lazy paunches and presumptuous spirits do not understand a single psalm, much less the entire Holy Scriptures; and yet they pretend to 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 cloth unshrunk fall far short of the measure), but that they daily exercise themselves well in these studies and constantly treat them; moreover, that they guard with all care and diligence against the poisonous infection of such security and vain imagination, but steadily keep on reading, teaching, learning, pondering, and meditating, and do not cease until they have made a test 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 manifest such diligence, then I will promise them, and they shall also perceive, what fruit they will obtain, 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 study 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 relish that which now they cannot endure, because of great abundance and satiety. To this end may God grant His grace! Amen.

## SHORT PREFACE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER

This sermon is designed and undertaken that it might be an instruction for children and the simple-minded. Hence of old it was called in Greek *Catechism*, i.e., instruction for children, what every Christian must needs know, so that he who does not know this could not be numbered with the Christians nor 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 the parts which belong to the Catechism or instruction for children well and fluently and diligently exercise themselves in them and keep them occupied with them.

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 to ascertain what they know of it, or are learning, and, if they do not know it, to keep them faithfully at it. For I well remember the time, indeed, even now it is a daily occurrence that one finds rude, old persons who knew nothing and still know nothing of these things, and who, nevertheless, go to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and use everything belonging to Christians, notwithstanding 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 are satisfied with the three parts, which have remained in Christendom from of old, though little of it has been taught and treated correctly until both young and old, who are called and wish to be Christians, are well trained in them and familiar with them. These are the following:

### **Firstly - The Ten Commandments of God**

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God; for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who misuses his name
3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother [that your days may be long in the land].
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

### **Secondly - 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, dead and 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 shall 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.

### **Thirdly - The Prayer, or “Our Father,” Which Christ Taught**

Our Father in heaven.

1. May your name be kept holy.
2. Let your kingdom come.
3. Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Give us today our daily bread.
5. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.
6. Bring us not into temptation.
7. Deliver us from the evil one. [For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever.] Amen.

These are the most necessary parts which one 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. Likewise every head of a household is obliged to do the same with respect to his domestics, man-servants and maid-servants, and not to keep them in his house if they do not know these things and are unwilling to learn them. For 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 comprehended in short, plain, 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.

Now, when these three parts are apprehended, it behooves a person also to know what to say concerning our Sacraments, which Christ Himself instituted, Baptism and the holy body and blood of Christ, namely, the text which Matthew 28:19ff and Mark 16:15f record at the close of their Gospels when Christ said farewell to His disciples and sent them forth.

### **Of Baptism**

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

So much is sufficient for a simple person to know from the Scriptures concerning Baptism.

In like manner, also, concerning the other Sacrament, in short, simple words, namely, the text of St. Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23ff).

### **Of the Sacrament**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: "Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (Matthew 26:26ff; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19ff; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Thus would have, in all, five parts of the entire Christian doctrine which should be constantly treated and required of children, and heard recited word for word. For you must not rely upon it that the young people will learn and retain these things from the sermon alone. When these parts have been well learned, you may, as a supplement and to fortify them, lay before them also some psalms or hymns, which have

been composed on these parts, and thus lead the young into the Scriptures, and make daily progress therein.

However, it is not enough for them to comprehend and recite these parts according to the words only, but the young people should also be made to 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, so as to be able to recite it as they have heard it, and, when asked, may give a correct answer, so that the preaching may not be without profit and fruit.

For the reason why we exercise such diligence in preaching the Catechism so often is that it may be inculcated on our youth, not in a high and subtile manner, but briefly and with the greatest simplicity, so as to enter the mind readily and be fixed in the memory.

Therefore we shall now take up the above-mentioned articles one by one and in the plainest manner possible say about them as much as is necessary.

# THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

## **The First Commandment**

*You shall have no other gods before me.*

That is: You shall have and worship Me alone as your God.

What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood? What does it mean to have a god? or, what is God?

Answer: A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than 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, 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 true faith and trust of the heart which settles upon the only true God, and clings to Him alone. That is as much as to say: "See to it that you let Me alone be your God, and never seek another," i.e.: "Whatever you lack of good things, expect it of Me, and look to Me for it, and whenever you suffer

misfortune and distress, creep and cling to Me. I, yes, I, will give you enough and help you out of every need; 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 person thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions; he trusts in them and boasts of them with such firmness and assurance 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 joyful and undismayed as though he were sitting 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 sticks and clings to our nature, even to the grave.

So, too, whoever trusts and boasts that he possesses great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor has also a god, but not this true and only God. This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent when they no longer exist or are withdrawn. Therefore I repeat that the chief explanation of this point is that to have a god is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts.

Besides, consider what, in our blindness, we have hitherto been practicing and doing under the Papacy. If any one had toothache, he fasted and honored St. Apollonia; if he was afraid of fire, he chose St. Lawrence as his helper in need; if he dreaded pestilence, he made a vow to St. Sebastian or Rochio, and a countless number of such abominations, where every one selected his own saint, worshiped him, and called for help to him in distress. Here belong those also, as, e.g., sorcerers and magicians, 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. For all these place their heart and trust elsewhere than in the true God, look for nothing good to Him nor seek it from Him.

Thus you can easily understand what and how much this commandment requires, namely, 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 to apprehend Him means when the heart lays hold of Him and clings to Him. But to cling to Him with the heart is nothing else than to trust in Him entirely. For this reason He wishes to turn us away from everything else that exists outside of Him, and to draw us to Himself, namely, because He is the only eternal good. As though He would say; "Whatever you have heretofore sought of the saints, or for whatever things you

have trusted in Mammon or anything else, expect it all of Me, and regard Me as the one who will help you and pour out upon you richly all good things.”

Lo, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath, namely, that the heart know no other comfort 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 reprobate as not to institute and observe some divine worship; every one has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort.

Thus, for example, the heathen who put their trust in power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god; the others, who were bent upon riches, happiness, or pleasure, and a life of ease, Hercules, Mercury, Venus, or others; women with child, Diana or Lucina, and so on; thus every one made that his god to which his heart was inclined, so that even in the mind of the heathen to have a god means 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, besides whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth. Therefore the heathen really make their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol, and put their trust in that which is altogether nothing. Thus it is with all idolatry; for it



consists not merely in erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather in the heart, which stands gaping at something else, and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils, and neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for so much good 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 worship 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 concerns the conscience alone, that seeks in its own works help, consolation, and salvation, presumes to wrest heaven from God, and reckons how many bequests it has made, how often it has fasted, celebrated Mass, etc. Upon such things it depends, and of them boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God as a gift, but desires itself to earn or merit it superabundantly, just as though He must serve us and were our debtor, and we His liege lords. What is this but reducing God to an idol, yes, a fig image or an apple-god, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God? But this is slightly too subtile, and is not for young pupils.

But let this be said to the simple, that they may well note and remember the meaning of this commandment, namely, that we are to trust in God alone, and look to Him and expect from Him nothing but good, as from one who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessaries of both temporal and eternal things. He also preserves us from misfortune, and if any evil befall us,

delivers and rescues 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 call God (more elegantly and appropriately than any other language) by that name from the word Good, as being an eternal fountain which gushes forth abundantly nothing but what is good, and from which flows forth all that is and is called good.

For even though otherwise we experience much good from men, still whatever we receive by His command or arrangement is all 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 hands, channels, and means whereby God gives all things, as He gives to the mother breasts and milk to offer to her child, and corn and all manner of produce from the earth for nourishment, none of which blessings could be produced by any creature of itself.

Therefore no man should presume to take or give anything except as God has commanded, in order that it may be acknowledged as God's gift, and thanks may be rendered Him for it, as this commandment requires. 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 regard it as a joke. Ask and examine your heart diligently, and you will find whether it cleaves to God alone or not. If you have a heart that can expect of Him nothing but what is good, especially in want and distress, and that, moreover, renounces and forsakes everything that is not God, then you have the only true God. If, on the contrary, it cleaves to anything else, of which it expects more good and help than of God, and does not take refuge in Him, but in adversity flees from Him, then you have an idol, another god.

In order that it may be seen that God will not have this commandment thrown to the winds, but will most strictly enforce it, He has attached to it first a terrible threat, and then a beautiful, comforting promise which is also to be urged and impressed upon young people, that they may take it to heart and retain it:

*For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me; and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

Although these words relate to all the commandments (as we shall hereafter learn), yet they are joined to this chief

commandment because 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, lest you 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 will not leave it unavenged if men turn from Him, 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.

He has also demonstrated this in all history, as the Scriptures abundantly show and daily experience still teaches. 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 (Sardanapaluses and Phalarides, who surpass even the Persians in wealth) are now to be found, who boast defiantly of their Mammon, with utter disregard whether God is angry at or smiles on them, and dare to withstand His wrath, yet they shall not succeed, but 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 heads 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 a smashing blow and punish them, so that He cannot forget it unto children's children; so that every one may take note and see that this is no joke 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; whatever is preached or said to them, they will not listen; when they are reproved, in order that they may learn to know themselves and amend before the punishment begins, they become mad and foolish so as to fairly merit wrath, as now we see daily in bishops and princes.

But terrible as are these threatenings, so much the more powerful is the consolation in the promise, that those who cling to God alone should be sure that He will show them mercy, that is, show them pure goodness and blessing, not only for themselves, but also to their children and children's children, even to the thousandth generation and beyond that. This ought certainly to move and impel us to risk our hearts in all confidence with God, if we wish all temporal and eternal good, since the Supreme Majesty makes such sublime offers and presents such cordial inducements and such rich promises.

Therefore let every one seriously take this to heart, lest it be regarded as though a man had spoken it. 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 He so kindly promises to be yours with every blessing, and to protect and help you in all need?

But, alas! here is the failure, that the world believes nothing of this, nor regards it 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, these words must be grasped as being directed against such appearances; and we must consider that they do not lie or deceive, but must come true.

Reflect for yourself or make inquiry and tell me: Those who have employed all their care and diligence to accumulate great possessions and wealth, what have they finally attained? You will find that they have wasted their toil and labor, or even though they have amassed great treasures, they have been dispersed and scattered, so that they themselves have never found happiness in their wealth, and afterwards it never reached the third generation.

Instances of this you will find a plenty in all histories, also in the memory of aged and experienced people. Only observe and ponder them.

Saul was a great king, chosen of God, and a godly man; but when he was established on his throne, and let his heart decline from God, and put his trust in his crown and power, he had to perish with all that he had, so that none even 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 had to remain in spite of Saul, and become king. For these words had to abide and come true, since God cannot lie or deceive. Only let not the devil and the world deceive you with their show, which indeed remains for a time, but finally is nothing.

Let us, then, learn well the First Commandment, that we may see how God will tolerate 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 right and straightforward and use 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 others follow.

## **The Second Commandment**

*You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God.*

As the First Commandment has instructed the heart and taught the basis of faith, so this commandment leads us forth and directs the mouth and tongue to God. For the first objects that spring from the heart and manifest themselves are words. Now, as I have taught above how to answer the question, what it is to have a god, so you must learn to comprehend simply the meaning of this and all the commandments, and to apply it to yourself.

If, then, it be asked: How do you understand the Second Commandment, or what is meant by taking in vain, or misusing God's name? answer briefly thus: It is misusing God's name when we call upon the Lord God, no matter in what way, for purposes of falsehood or wrong of any kind. Therefore this commandment enjoins this much, that God's name must not be appealed to falsely, or taken upon the lips, while the heart knows well enough, or should know, differently; as among those who take oaths in court, where one side lies against the other. For God's name cannot be misused worse than for the support of falsehood and deceit.



Let this remain the exact German and simplest meaning of this commandment.

From this every one can readily infer when and in how many ways God's name is misused, although it is impossible to enumerate all its misuses. Yet, to tell it in a few words, all misuse of the divine name occurs, first, in worldly business and in matters which concern money, possessions, honor, whether it be publicly in court, in the market, or wherever else men make false oaths in God's name, or pledge their souls in any matter. And this is especially prevalent in marriage affairs, where two go and secretly betroth themselves to one another, and afterward renounce their solemn pledge. 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 decking one's self out with God's name, or making a pretty show, or claiming to be right, whether it occur in gross, worldly business or in sublime, subtile matters of faith and doctrine. And among liars belong also blasphemers, not alone the very gross, well known to every one, who disgrace God's name without fear (these are not for us, but for the hangman to discipline); but also those who publicly traduce the truth and God's Word and consign it to the devil. Of this there is no need now to speak further.

Here, then, let us learn and take to heart the great

importance of this commandment, that with all diligence we may guard against and dread every misuse 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 when we attempt to justify it, and seek to confirm it by invoking the name of God and using it as a cloak for shame, so that from a single lie a double lie, or rather, manifold lies, result.

For this reason, too, God has added a solemn threat to this commandment, to wit: “for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who misuses his name.” That is: It shall not be condoned to any one nor pass unpunished. For as little as He will leave it unavenged if any one turn his heart from Him, as little will He suffer His name to be employed for dressing up a lie. Now, alas! it is a common calamity in all the world that there are as few who are not using the name of God for purposes of lying and all wickedness as there are those who with their heart trust alone in God.

For by nature we all have within us this beautiful virtue, to wit, that whoever 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; all wish to act by stealth and without any one being aware of what they do. Then, if any one be arraigned, the name of God is dragged into the affair and must make the villainy look like godliness, and the shame like honor. This is the common course of the world,

which, like a great deluge, has flooded all lands. Hence we have also as our reward what we seek and deserve: pestilences, wars, famines, conflagrations, floods, wayward wives, children, servants, and all sorts of defilement. Whence else should so much misery come? It is still a great mercy that the earth bears and supports us.

Therefore, above all things, our young people should have this commandment earnestly enforced upon them, and they should be trained to hold this and the First Commandment in high regard; and whenever they transgress, we must at once be after them with the rod, and hold the commandment before them, and constantly inculcate it, so as to bring them 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, that is (to recapitulate briefly), either simply for purposes of falsehood, and to allege God's name for something that is not so, or to curse, swear, conjure, and, in short, to practice whatever wickedness one may.

Besides this you must also know how to use the name of God aright. For when saying: "You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God," He gives us to understand at the same time 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. Hence it is a natural inference, since using the holy name for falsehood or wickedness is here

forbidden, that we are, on the other hand, commanded to employ it for truth and for all good, as when one swears truly where there is need and it is demanded. So also when there is right teaching, 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 Psalm 50:15: "Call on me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you will honor 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 the sum of the entire commandment explained. And with this understanding the question with which many teachers have troubled themselves has been easily solved, to wit, why swearing is prohibited in the Gospel (Matthew 5:24ff, James 5:12; Matthew 5:33-37; Matthew 26:29; Acts 21:20-26), and yet Christ, St. Paul, and other saints often swore. The explanation is briefly this: We are not to swear in support of evil, that is, of falsehood, and where there is no need or use; but for the support of good and the advantage of our neighbor we should swear. For it is a truly good work, by which God is praised, truth and right are established, falsehood is refuted, peace is made among men, obedience is rendered, and quarrels are settled. For in this way God Himself interposes and separates between right and wrong, good and evil. If one part swears falsely, he has his sentence that he shall not escape punishment, and though it be deferred a long time, he shall not succeed; so that all that he may gain thereby will slip out of his hands, and he will

never enjoy it; as I have seen in the case of many who perjured themselves in their marriage-vows, that they have never had a happy hour or a healthful day, and thus perished miserably in body, soul, and possessions.

Therefore I advise and exhort as before that by means of warning and threatening, restraint and punishment, the children be trained early to shun falsehood, and especially to avoid the use of God's name in its support. For where they are allowed to do as they please, no good will result, as 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 daring, unbridled men, whom no teaching or reproof helps; all of which is God's wrath and punishment for such wanton 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 that is the true honor of His name, 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 is also a blessed and useful habit and very effectual 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 very loath to hear God's name, and cannot remain long

where it is uttered 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 wishes.

For this end it is also of service that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God, with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may occur; whence also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals, and other prayers, morning and evening, have originated and remain in use. Likewise the practice of children to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard, and to exclaim: "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" etc. Thus, too, if any one meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, that he say: "God be praised and thanked; this God has bestowed on me!" etc., 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.

Behold, thus we might train our youth, in a childlike way and playfully in the fear and honor of God, so that the First and Second Commandments might be well observed and in constant practice, Then some good might take root, spring

up and bear fruit, and men grow up whom an entire land might relish and enjoy. Moreover, this would be the true way to bring up children well as long as they can become trained with kindness and delight. For what must be enforced with rods and blows only will not develop into a good breed, and at best they will remain godly under such treatment no longer than while the rod is upon their back.

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 we have 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 the abuse.

### **The Third Commandment**

*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

The word holy day (*Feiertag*) is rendered from the Hebrew word *sabbath* which properly signifies to rest, that is, to abstain from labor. Hence we are accustomed to say, *Feierabend machen* (that is, to cease working), or *heiligen Abend geben* (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 as holy above all others. As regards 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 not be weakened by unremitting labor. Although they afterwards restricted this too closely, and grossly abused it, so that they traduced and could not endure in Christ those works which they themselves were accustomed to do on that day, as we read in the Gospel; just as though the commandment were fulfilled by doing no external, manual work whatever, which, however, was not the meaning, but, as we shall hear, that they sanctify the holy day or day of rest.

This commandment, therefore, according to its gross sense, does not concern us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament, which were attached to particular customs, persons, times, and places, and now have been made free through Christ.

But to grasp a Christian meaning for the simple as to what God requires in this commandment, note that we keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians (for they have no need of it), but first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; for the common people, male servants and female servants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week, that for a day they may retire in order to rest and be refreshed.



Secondly, and most especially, that on such day of rest (since we can get no other opportunity) freedom and time be taken to attend divine service, so that we come together to hear and treat of God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and pray.

However, this, I say, is not so restricted 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; but this should indeed be done daily; however, since the masses 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, in order that everything be done in harmonious order, and no one create disorder by unnecessary innovation.

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

Accordingly, when asked, What is meant by the commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy [sanctified]? answer: To sanctify the holy day 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 you. Therefore it becomes holy or unholy on your account, according as you are occupied on the same with things that are holy or unholy.

How, then, does such sanctification take place? Not in this manner, that with folded hands we sit behind the stove and do no rough, external work, or deck ourselves with a wreath 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 holy day, and be occupied with nothing but holy things, i.e., daily be engaged upon God's Word, and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. But (as has been said) since we do not at all times have leisure, we must devote several hours a week for the sake of the young, or at least a day for the sake of the entire multitude, to being 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. At whatever time, then, this is being observed and practiced, there a true holy day is being kept; otherwise it shall not be called a Christians' holy day. For, indeed, non-Christians can also cease from work and be idle, just as the entire swarm of our ecclesiastics, who stand

daily in the churches, singing, and ringing bells but keeping no holy 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, yes, 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, still that would help us nothing; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God's Word is the treasure which sanctifies everything, and by which even all the saints themselves were sanctified. At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are 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 ordered according to God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled.

On the contrary, any observance or work that is practiced without God's Word is unholy before God, no matter how brilliantly it may shine, 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.

Note, therefore, that the force and power of this commandment lies 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 called holy exercises, unless the man himself be first holy. But here a work is to be done by which man is himself made holy, which is done (as we have heard) alone through God's Word. For this, then, fixed places, times, persons, and the entire external order of worship have been created and appointed, so that it may be publicly in operation.

Since, therefore, so much depends upon God's Word that without it no holy day can be sanctified, we must know that God insists 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 not only those sin against this commandment who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day, as those who on account of their greed or frivolity neglect to hear God's Word or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine; but also that other crowd, who listen to God's Word as to any other trifle, and only from custom come to preaching, and go away again, and at the end of the year know as little of it as at the beginning. For hitherto the opinion prevailed that you had properly hallowed Sunday when you had heard a mass or the Gospel read; but no one cared for God's Word, as also no one taught it. Now, while we have God's Word, we nevertheless do not correct the abuse; we suffer ourselves to be preached to and admonished, but we listen without seriousness and care.

Know, therefore, that you must be concerned not only about hearing, but also about learning and retaining it in memory, and do not think that it is optional with you or of no great importance, but that it is God's commandment, who will require of you how you have heard, learned, 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 *ajkhdia*, i.e., torpor or satiety, a malignant, dangerous plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives 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 in all things, still you are daily in the dominion of the devil, who ceases neither day nor night to steal unawares upon you, to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against the foregoing and 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 has done the damage before we are aware. On the other hand, such is the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound

never to be 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 urge every one thereunto, because thereby the devil is put to right and driven away, and, besides, this commandment is fulfilled, and this exercise in the Word is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant.

### **The Fourth Commandment**

Thus far we have learned the first three commandments, which relate to God. First, that with our whole heart we trust in Him, and fear and love Him throughout all our life. Secondly, that we do not misuse 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 on holidays and when at rest we diligently treat and urge God's Word, so that all our actions and our entire life be ordered according to it. Now follow the other seven, which relate to our neighbor, among which the first and greatest is:

*Honor your father and your mother.*

To this estate of fatherhood and motherhood God has given the special distinction above all estates that are beneath it that He not simply 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 at His side. For it is a far higher thing to honor than to love one, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility, and deference as 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 as the very highest. For one whom we are to 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 as in God's stead, and remember that however lowly, poor, frail, and odd they may be, nevertheless they are father and mother given them by God. They are not to be deprived of their honor because of their conduct or their failings. Therefore we are not to regard their persons, how they may be, but the will of God who has thus created 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 ordered difference, and therefore God commands it to be observed, that you obey me as your father, and that I have the supremacy.

Learn, therefore, first, what is the honor towards parents required by this commandment, to wit, that they be held in

distinction and esteem above all things, as the most precious treasure on earth. Furthermore, that also in our words we observe modesty toward them, do not accost them roughly, haughtily, and defiantly, but yield to them and be silent, even though they go too far. Thirdly, that we show them such honor also by works, that is, with our body and possessions, that we serve them, help them, and provide for them when they are 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 want or hunger, but will place them above him and at his side, and will share with them whatever he has and possesses.

Secondly, notice how great, good, and holy a work is here assigned children, which is, alas! utterly 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 inferred that they must be holy men who live according to these words. Thus there would have been no need of inventing monasticism nor 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 good and holy works, I know of none better than to render all honor and obedience to my parents, because God has Himself commanded it. For what God commands must be much and far nobler than everything that we may devise ourselves; and since there is no higher or better teacher to be found than



God, there can be no better doctrine, indeed, than He gives forth. Now, He teaches fully what we should do if we wish to perform truly good works; and by commanding them, He shows that they please Him. If, then, it is God who commands this, and who knows not how to appoint anything better, I will never improve upon it."

Behold, in this manner we would have had a godly child properly taught, reared in true blessedness, and kept at home in obedience to his parents and in their service, so that men should have had blessing and joy from the spectacle. However, God's commandment was not permitted to be thus (with such care and diligence) commended, but had to be neglected and trampled under foot, so that a child could not lay it to heart, and meanwhile gaped like a panting wolf at the devices which we set up, without once consulting or giving reverence to God.

Let us, therefore, learn at last, 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, 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 say and boast (in spite of and against all who are occupied with works of their own choice): "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 father and mother, to whom God has appointed and commanded obedience next to His own majesty; so that if God's Word and will are in force and being accomplished, nothing shall be esteemed higher than the will and word of parents; yet so that it, too, is subordinated to obedience toward God and is not opposed to the preceding 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 pleasing to Him. Only see that, although it be regarded as the most humble and despised, you esteem it great and precious, not on account of our worthiness, but because it is comprehended in, and controlled by, the jewel and sanctuary, namely, the Word and commandment of God. Oh, what a high price would all Carthusians, monks, and nuns pay, if in all their religious doings they could bring into God's presence a single work 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 You." Where will these poor wretched persons hide when in the sight of God and all the world they shall blush with shame before a young child who has lived according to this commandment, and shall have to confess that with their whole life they are not worthy to give it a drink of water? And it serves them right for their devilish perversion in treading God's commandment under foot that they must vainly

torment themselves with works of their own device, and, in addition, have scorn and loss for their reward.

Should not the heart, then, leap and melt for joy when going to work and doing what is commanded, saying: Lo, this is better than all holiness of the Carthusians, even though they kill themselves fasting and praying upon their knees without ceasing? For here you have a sure text and a divine testimony that He has enjoined this; but concerning the other He did not command a word. But this is the plight and miserable blindness of the world that no one believes these things; to such an extent the devil has deceived us with false holiness and the glamour of our own works.

Therefore I would be very glad (I say it again) if men would open their eyes and ears, and take this to heart, lest some time we may again be led astray from the pure Word of God to the lying vanities of the devil. Then, too, all would be well; for parents would have more joy, love, friendship, and concord in their houses; thus the children could captivate their parents' hearts. On the other hand, when they are obstinate, and will not do what they ought until a rod is laid upon their back, they anger both God and their parents, whereby 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 reverence nor sense of honor, do nothing 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 kinds of filth and misery. As a rule, the parents, too, are themselves stupid and ignorant; one fool trains another, and as they have lived, so live their children after them.

This, now, I say should be the first and most important consideration 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, whom we might call 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, yes, has set it up in His own stead, upon earth. This will and pleasure of God ought to be a sufficient reason and incentive to 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 our parents. But here 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 much good on body and soul; especially when an evil hour comes, we are angry and grumble with impatience, and all the good which we have received throughout our life is wiped out from our memory. Just so we do also with our parents, and there is no child that understands and considers this (what the parents have endured while nourishing and fostering him), except the Holy Spirit grant him this grace.

God knows very well this perverseness of the world; therefore He admonishes and urges by commandments that every one consider what his parents have done for him, and he will find that he has from them body and life, moreover, that he has been fed and reared when 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 bear them up on his hands as those through whom God has done him all good.

Over and above all this, another great reason that should incite us the more to obedience to this commandment is that God attaches to this commandment a temporal promise and says: “That your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.”

Here you can see yourself 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 that He has joy and delight 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 greatly emphasizes the same and rejoices in it when he says, Ephesians. 6:2-3: “[This] is the first commandment with a promise: ‘that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth.’” For although the rest also have their promises contained in them, yet in none is it so plainly and explicitly stated.

Here, then, you have the fruit and the reward, that whoever observes this commandment shall have happy days, fortune, and prosperity; and on the other hand, 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, such as health, wife, and children, livelihood, peace, good government, etc., without which this life can neither be enjoyed in cheerfulness nor long endure. If, therefore, you will not obey father and mother and submit to their discipline, then obey the hangman; if you will not obey him, then submit to the skeleton-man, i.e., death (death the all-subduer, the teacher of wicked children). For on this God insists peremptorily: Either if you obey Him, rendering love and service, He will reward you abundantly with all good, or if you offend Him, He will send upon you both death

and the hangman.

Whence come so many knaves that must daily be hanged, beheaded, broken upon the wheel, but from disobedience to parents, because they will not submit to discipline in kindness, so that, by the punishment of God, they bring it about that we behold their misfortune and grief? For it seldom happens that such perverse people die a natural or timely death.

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

Thus experience also teaches, that where there are honorable, old families who fare well and have many children, they owe their origin to the fact, to be sure, that some of them were brought up well and were regardful of their parents. On the other hand, it is written of the wicked, Psalm 109:13: "Let his posterity be cut off. In the generation following let their name be blotted out." Therefore heed 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 enforces punishment so rigorously on those who act contrariwise.

All this I say that it may be well impressed upon the young. For no one believes how necessary this commandment is, although it has not been esteemed and taught hitherto under

the papacy. These are simple and easy words, and everybody thinks he knew them afore; therefore men pass them lightly by, are gaping after other matters, and do not see and believe that God is so greatly offended if they be disregarded, nor that one does a work so well pleasing and precious if he follows them.

In this commandment belongs a further statement regarding 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 child, he employs a schoolmaster to instruct him; if he be too weak, he enlists the aid of his friends and neighbors; if he departs this life, he delegates and confers his authority and government upon others who are appointed for the purpose. Likewise, he must have domestics, male servants and female servants, under himself 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 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, “housefathers” and “housemothers.” So also they called their national rulers and overlords *patres patriae*, that is, “fathers of the entire country,” for a great shame to us who would be Christians that we do not likewise



call them so, or, at least, do not esteem and honor them as such.

Now, what a child owes to father and mother, the same owe all who are embraced in the household. Therefore male servants and female 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 to pilgrimages and indulgences, with loss of time and money and with an evil conscience.

If this truth, then, could be impressed upon the poor people, a servant-girl would leap and praise and thank God; and with her tidy 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 that, if you perform your daily domestic task, this is better than all the sanctity and ascetic life of monks? And you have the promise, in addition, that you shall prosper in all good and fare well. How can you lead a

more blessed or holier life as far as your works are concerned? For in the sight of God faith is what really renders a person holy, and alone serves Him, but the works are for the service of man. There you have everything 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, nothing but 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 godliness we hand over to the hangman and to the skeleton-man. 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 to do it, then take shame, misery, and grief for your reward.

The same also is to be said of obedience to civil government, which (as we have said) is all 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 through them, as through our parents, God gives to us food, house and home, 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 dearest 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 that he 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 also know, on the other hand, that he shall have no favor nor 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 is paid back and comes home to us.

If we would ever allow ourselves to be persuaded that such works are pleasing to God and have so rich a reward, we would be established in altogether abundant possessions and have what our heart desires. But because the word and command of God are so lightly esteemed, as though some babblers had spoken it, let us see whether you are the man to oppose Him. How difficult, do you think, it will be for Him to recompense you! Therefore you would certainly live much better with the divine favor, peace, and happiness than with His displeasure and misfortune. Why, think you, is the world now so full of unfaithfulness, disgrace, calamity, and murder, but because every one desires to be his own master and free from the emperor, to care nothing for any one, and do what pleases him? Therefore God punishes one knave by another,

so that, when you defraud and despise your master, another comes and deals in like manner with you, yes, in your household you must suffer ten times more from wife, children, or servants.

Indeed, we feel our misfortune, we murmur and complain of unfaithfulness, violence, and injustice, but will not see that we ourselves are knaves who have fully deserved this punishment, and yet are not thereby reformed. We will have no favor and happiness, therefore it is but fair that we have nothing but misfortune without mercy. There must still be somewhere upon earth some godly people because God continues to grant us so much good! On our own account we should not have a farthing in the house nor a 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 are steeped so deeply, and may truly understand the Word and will of God, and earnestly accept it. For thence we would learn how we could have joy, happiness, and salvation enough, both temporal and eternal.

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 country. Besides these there are yet spiritual fathers; not like those in the Papacy, who have indeed had themselves called thus, but have performed no function of the paternal office. For those only are called

spiritual fathers who govern and guide us by the Word of God; as St. Paul boasts his fatherhood (1 Corinthians 4:15), where he says: “in Christ Jesus, I became your father through the Good News.” Now, since they are fathers they are entitled to their honor, even above all others. But here it is bestowed least; for the way which the world knows for honoring 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 Corinthians 4:13) as the filth of the world and everybody's refuse and footrag.

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 is willing to add to you sufficient blessing and will not let you come to want. But in this matter every one refuses and resists, and all are afraid that they will perish from bodily want, and cannot now support one respectable preacher, where formerly they filled ten fat paunches. 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 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 is to support you and provide for you sufficiently. Since He has promised it, and has never yet lied, He will not be found lying to you.

This ought indeed to encourage us, and give us hearts that would melt in pleasure and love toward those to whom we owe honor, so that we would raise our hands and joyfully thank God who has given us such promises, for which we ought to run to the ends of the world. 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 casts this to the winds is not worthy ever to hear a word of God. This has now been stated more than enough for all who belong under this commandment.

In addition, it would be well to preach to the parents also, 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 Scripture. 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, that is, power and authority to govern, that they should have themselves worshiped; but they should consider that they are under obligations of obedience to God; and that, first of all, they should earnestly and faithfully discharge their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but, most of all, to train them to the honor and praise of God. Therefore do not think that this is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will, but that it is a strict command and injunction of God, to whom also you must give account for it.

But here again the sad plight arises 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 donkey, only for work, or as though we were only to gratify our wantonness with our subjects, ignoring them, as though it were no concern of ours 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 account and punish us for it; nor that there is so great need to be so seriously concerned about the young. For if we wish to have excellent and apt 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 issued this command that we

should train and govern them according to His will, else He would have no need of father and mother. Let every one know, therefore, that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children above all things in the fear and knowledge of God, and if they are talented, have them learn and study something, that they may be employed for whatever need there is.

If that were done, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to train men by whom land and people might be improved, and likewise well-educated citizens, chaste and domestic wives, who afterwards would rear godly children and servants. Here consider now what deadly injury you are doing if you be negligent and fail on your part to bring up your child to usefulness and piety, and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you be otherwise 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 draw this out at length belongs to another time.

### **The Fifth Commandment**

*You shall not murder.*

We have now completed both the spiritual and the temporal



government, that is, the divine and the paternal authority and obedience. But here now we go forth from our house among our neighbors to learn how we should live with one another, every one himself toward his neighbor. Therefore God and government are not included in this commandment, nor is the power to kill, which they have, taken away. For God has delegated His authority to punish evil-doers to the government instead of parents, who in time past (as we read in Moses) were required to bring their own children to judgment and sentence them to death. Therefore, what is here forbidden is forbidden to the individual in his relation to any one else, and not to the government.

Now this commandment is easy enough, and has been often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew 5:21ff, where Christ Himself explains and sums it up, namely, that we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel. Therefore it is here forbidden to every one to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and the government. For it is proper for God and for every one who is in a divine estate to be angry, to reprove and punish, namely, on account of those very persons 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 evil. Now, as

there are many assaults upon all commandments, so it happens also in this commandment that we must live among many people who do us harm, so that we have cause to be hostile to them.

As when your neighbor sees that you have a better house and home, greater possessions and fortune from God than he, he is sulky, envies you, and speaks no good of you.

Thus by the devil's incitement you will get many enemies who cannot bear to see you have any good, either bodily or spiritual. When we see such people, our hearts, in turn, would rage and bleed and take vengeance. Then there arise cursing and blows, from which follow finally misery and murder. Here, now, God like a kind father steps in ahead of us, interposes and wishes to have the quarrel settled, that no misfortune come of it, nor one destroy another. And briefly, He would hereby protect, set free, and keep in peace every one against the crime and violence of every one else; and would have this commandment placed as a wall, fortress, and refuge about our neighbor, that we do him no hurt nor harm in his body.

Thus this commandment aims at this, that no one offend his neighbor on account of any evil deed, 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 utters a wish, which would stop a person from running far if it were to

strike him in the neck. Now, since this inheres in every one by nature and it is a common practice 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 to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and invocation of His name to commit to Him the wrong which we suffer. Thus we shall suffer our enemies to rage and be angry, doing what they can, and we learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, that is, our enemies.

Therefore the entire sum of what it means not to kill is to be impressed most explicitly upon the simple-minded. In the first place, that we harm no one, first, with our hand or by 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 regard to every one, but especially those who wish you evil or inflict such upon you. For to do evil to one who wishes and does you good is not human, but diabolical.

Secondly, under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily

harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it. If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; 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 you 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 rightly 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 when He shall say, Matthew 25:42ff: "I was hungry, and you didn't give me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit me." That is: "You would have allowed 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 rot 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, allowed him to pine and perish in misfortune.

It is just as if I saw some one navigating and laboring in deep

water and struggling against adverse winds or one fallen into fire, and could extend to him the hand to pull him out and save him, and yet refused to do it. What else would I appear, even in the eyes of the world, than as a murderer and a criminal?

Therefore it is God's ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show him all good and love; and, as we have said, it is specially directed toward those who are our enemies. For to do good to our friends is but an ordinary heathen virtue, as Christ says Matthew 5:46.

Here we have again the Word of God whereby He would encourage and urge us to true 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, that is, that He will help, assist, and protect us, in order that He may thus quench the desire of revenge in us.

This we ought to practice and inculcate, and we would have our hands full doing good works. But this would not be preaching for monks; it would greatly detract from the religious estate, and infringe upon the sanctity of Carthusians, and would even be regarded as forbidding good works and clearing the convents. For in this wise the ordinary state of Christians would be considered just as worthy, and even worthier, and everybody would see how they mock and delude the world with a false, hypocritical

show of holiness, because they have given this and other commandments to the winds, and have esteemed them unnecessary, as though they were not commandments, but mere counsels; and have at the same time shamelessly proclaimed and boasted their hypocritical estate and works as the most perfect life, in order that they might lead a pleasant, easy life, without the cross and without patience, for which reason, too, they have resorted to the cloisters, so that they might not be obliged to suffer any wrong from any one or to do him any good. But know now that these are the true, holy, and godly works, in which, with all the angels, He rejoices, in comparison with which all human holiness is but stench and filth, and, besides, deserves nothing but wrath and damnation.

### **The Sixth Commandment**

*You shall not commit adultery.*

These commandments now 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 fine, elegant order. In the first place, they treat of his own person. Then they proceed to the person nearest him, or the closest possession next after his body, namely, his wife, who is one flesh and blood with him, so that we cannot inflict a higher injury upon him in any good that is his. Therefore it is explicitly forbidden here to bring any disgrace upon him in respect to

his wife. And it really aims at adultery, because among the Jews it was ordained and commanded that every one must be married. Therefore also the young were early provided for (i.e. married), so that the virgin state 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 among us there is such a shameful mess and the very dregs of all vice and lewdness, this commandment is directed also against all manner of unchastity, whatever it may be called; and not only is the external act forbidden, but also 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 to in chastity. And not only this, but that we also make resistance, afford protection and rescue wherever there is danger and need; and again, that we give help and counsel, so as to maintain our neighbor's honor. For whenever you omit this when you could make resistance, or connive at it as if it did not concern you, you are as truly guilty as the one perpetrating the deed. Thus, to state it in the briefest manner, there is required this much, that every one both live chastely himself and help his neighbor do the same, so that God by this commandment wishes to hedge round about and protect, as with a rampart, every spouse that no one trespass against them.

But since this commandment is aimed directly at the state of matrimony and gives occasion to speak of the same, you

must well understand and mark, first, how gloriously God honors and extols this estate, inasmuch as by His commandment He both sanctions and guards it. He has sanctioned it above in the Fourth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother;” but here He has (as we said) hedged it about and protected it. Therefore He also wishes us to honor it, and to maintain and conduct it as a divine and blessed estate; because, in the first place, He has instituted it before all others, and therefore created man and woman separately (as is evident), not for lewdness, but that they should legitimately live together, be fruitful, beget children, and nourish and train them to the honor of God.

Therefore God has also most richly blessed this estate above all others, and, in addition, has bestowed on it and wrapped up in it everything in the world, to the end that this estate might be well and richly provided for. Married life is therefore no jest or presumption; but it is an excellent thing and a matter of divine seriousness. For it is of the highest importance to Him that persons be raised who may serve the world and promote the knowledge of God, godly living, and all virtues, to fight against wickedness and the devil.

Therefore I have always taught that this estate should not be despised nor held in disrepute, as is done by the blind world and our false ecclesiastics, 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 estates, but that it precedes and surpasses them all, whether they be that



of emperor, princes, bishops, or whoever they please. For both ecclesiastical and civil estates must humble themselves and all be found in this estate, as we shall hear. Therefore it is not a peculiar estate, but the most common and noblest estate, which pervades all Christendom, yes which extends through all the world.

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

From this you see how this popish rabble, 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 (impostures). 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, so that one dare not speak of it, as has, alas! been learned too fully. And, in short, even though they abstain from the act, their hearts are so full of unchaste thoughts and evil lusts that there is a continual burning and secret suffering, which can be avoided in the married life. Therefore all vows of chastity out of the married state are condemned by this commandment, and free permission is granted, yes, even the command is given, to all poor ensnared consciences which have been deceived by their monastic vows to abandon the unchaste state and enter the married life, considering that even if the monastic life were godly, it would nevertheless not be in their power to maintain chastity, and if they remain in it, they must only sin more and more against this commandment.

Now, I speak of this in order that the young may be so guided that they conceive a liking for the married estate, and know that it is a blessed estate and pleasing to God. For in this way we might in the course of time bring it about that married life be restored to honor, and that there might be less of the filthy, dissolute, disorderly doings which now run riot the world over in open prostitution and other shameful vices arising from disregard of married life. Therefore it is the duty of parents and the government to see to it that our youth be

brought up to discipline and respectability, and when they have come to years of maturity, to provide for them (i.e. to have them married) in the fear of God and honorably; He would not fail to add His blessing and grace, so that men would have joy and happiness from the same.

Let me now say in conclusion that this commandment demands not only 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 the spouse given him by God. For where conjugal 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 love and desire of chastity, 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 [Ephesians 5:22ff]. Here you have again a precious, yes, 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**

*You shall not steal.*

After your person and spouse temporal property comes next. That also God wishes to have protected, and He has

commanded that no one shall subtract from, or curtail, his neighbor's possessions. For to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully, which briefly comprehends all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. Now, this is indeed quite a wide-spread and common vice, but so little regarded and observed that it exceeds all measure, so that if all who are thieves, and yet do not wish to be called such, were to be hanged on gallows, the world would soon be devastated, and there would be a lack both of executioners and gallows. For, as we have just said, to steal is to signify not only to empty our neighbor's coffer and pockets, but to be grasping in the market, in all stores, booths, wine- and beer- cellars, workshops, and, in short, wherever there is trading or taking and giving of money for merchandise or labor.

As, for instance, to explain this somewhat grossly for the common people, that it may be seen how godly we are: When a male servant or female servant does not serve faithfully in the house, and does damage, or allows it to be done when it could be prevented, or otherwise ruins and neglects the goods entrusted to him, from indolence, idleness, or malice, to the spite and vexation of master and mistress, and in whatever way this can be done purposely (for I do not speak of what happens from oversight and against one's will), you can in a year abscond thirty, forty florins, which if another had taken secretly or carried away, he would be hanged with the rope. But here you (while conscious of such a great theft)

may even bid defiance and become insolent, and no one dare call you a thief.

The same I say also of mechanics, workmen, and day-laborers, who all follow their wanton notions, and never know enough ways to overcharge people, while they are lazy and unfaithful in their work. All these are far worse than sneak-thieves, against whom we can guard with locks and bolts, 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, from whom I expect good (i.e. every faithful and diligent service), who defraud me first of all.

Furthermore, in the market and in common trade likewise, this practice is in full swing and force to the greatest extent, where one openly defrauds another with bad merchandise, false measures, weights, coins, and by nimbleness and abnormal finances or dexterous tricks takes advantage of him; likewise, when one overcharges a person in a trade and wantonly drives a hard bargain, skins and distresses him. And who can recount or think of all these things? To sum up, this is the commonest craft and the largest guild on earth, and if we regard the world throughout all conditions of life, it is nothing else than a vast, wide stall, full of great thieves.

Therefore they are also called swivel-chair robbers, land- and

highway-robbers, not pick-locks and sneak-thieves who snatch away the ready cash, but who sit on the chair at home and are styled great noblemen, and honorable, pious citizens, and yet rob and steal under a good pretext.

Yes, here we might be silent about the trifling individual thieves if we were to attack the great, powerful arch-thieves with whom lords and princes keep company, who daily plunder not only a city or two, but all Germany. Yes, where should we place the head and supreme protector of all thieves, the Holy Chair at Rome with all its retinue, which has grabbed by theft the wealth of all the world, and holds it to this day?

This is, in short, the course of the world: whoever can steal and rob openly goes free and secure, unmolested by any one, and even demands that he be honored. Meanwhile the little sneak-thieves, who have once trespassed, must bear the shame and punishment to render the former godly and honorable. But let them know that in the sight of God they are the greatest thieves, and that He will punish them as they are worthy and deserve.

Now, since this commandment is so far-reaching and comprehensive, as just indicated, it is necessary to urge it well and to explain it to the common people, not to let them go on in their wantonness and security, but always to place before their eyes the wrath of God, and inculcate the same. For we have to preach this not to Christians, but chiefly to

knaves and scoundrels, to whom it would be more fitting for judges, jailers, or Master Hannes (the executioner) 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 trade, but faithfully to preserve his property for him, to secure and promote his advantage, especially when one accepts money, wages, and one's livelihood for such service.

He now who wantonly despises this may indeed pass along 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 you are going your way wherever your heart's pleasure calls you while you ought to preserve the property of your master and mistress, for which service you fill your crop and maw, take your wages like a thief, have people treat you as a nobleman; for there are many that are even insolent towards their masters and mistresses, and are unwilling to do them a favor or service by which to protect them from loss.

But reflect what you will gain when, having come into your own property and being set up in your home (to which God will help with all misfortunes), it (i.e. your perfidy) will bob up again and come home to you, and you will find that where you have cheated or done injury to the value of one mite, you will have to pay thirty again.

Such shall be the lot also of mechanics and day-laborers of whom we are now obliged to hear and suffer such intolerable maliciousness, as though they were noblemen in another's possessions, and every one were obliged to give them what they demand. Just let them continue practicing their exactions as long as they can; but God will not forget His commandment, and will reward them according as they have served, and will hang them, not upon a green gallows, but upon a dry one, so that 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 soon be checked and prevented, as was the custom in ancient times among the Romans, where such characters were promptly seized by the head in a way that others took warning.

No more shall all the rest prosper who change the open free market into a carrion pit of extortion and a den of robbery, where the poor are daily overcharged, new burdens and high prices are imposed, and every one uses the market according to his caprice, and is even defiant and brags as though it were his fair privilege and right to sell his goods for as high a price as he please, and no one had a right to say a word against it. We will indeed look on and let these people skin, pinch, and hoard, but we will trust in God (who will, however, do this of His own accord) that, after you have been skinning and scraping for a long time, He will pronounce such a "blessing" on your gains that your grain in the garner, your beer in the



cellar, your cattle in the stalls shall perish; yes, where you have cheated and overcharged any one to the amount of a florin, your entire pile shall be consumed with rust, so that you shall never enjoy it.

And indeed, we see and experience this being fulfilled daily before our eyes, that no stolen or dishonestly acquired possession thrives. How many there are who rake and scrape day and night, and yet grow not a farthing richer! And though they gather much, they must suffer so many plagues and misfortunes that they cannot relish it with cheerfulness nor transmit it to their children. But as no one minds it, and we go on as though it did not concern us, God must visit us in a different way and teach us manners by imposing one taxation after another, or billeting a troop of soldiers upon us, who in one hour empty our coffers and purses, and do not quit 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 again as much will be stolen from you; and lie who robs and acquires with violence and wrong will submit to one who shall deal after the same fashion with him. For God is master of this art, that since every one robs and steals from the other, He punishes one thief by means of another. Else where should we find enough gallows and ropes?

Now, whoever is willing to be instructed, let him know 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 manage to endure your haughtiness, suffer, and, according to the Lord's Prayer, forgive and show pity; for we know that the godly shall nevertheless have enough, and you injure yourself more than another. But beware of this: 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 skin and scrape to the bone, and, besides, with pride and haughtiness turn him off to whom you ought to give for nothing, he will go away wretched and sorrowful, and since 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 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 them to go unavenged. But if you despise this and become defiant, see whom you have brought upon you: if you succeed and prosper, you may before all the world call God and me a liar.

We have exhorted, warned, and protested enough; he who will not heed or believe it may go on until he learns this by experience. Yet it must be impressed 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 too. It behooves us

to do no more than to instruct and reprove with God's Word; but to check such open wantonness there is need of the princes and government, who themselves would have eyes and the courage to establish and maintain order in all manner of trade and commerce, lest the poor be burdened and oppressed nor they themselves be loaded with other men's sins.

Let this suffice as an explanation of what stealing is, that it be not taken too narrowly, but made to extend as far as we have to do with our neighbors. And briefly, in a summary, as in the former commandments, it is herewith forbidden, in the first place, to do our neighbor any injury or wrong (in whatever manner supposable, by curtailing, forestalling, and withholding his possessions and property), 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 advance and improve his possessions, and in case he suffers want, that we help, communicate, and lend both to friends and foes.

Whoever now seeks and desires good works will find here more than enough such as are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God, and in addition are favored and crowned with excellent blessings, that we are to be richly compensated for all that we do for our neighbor's good and from friendship; as King Solomon also teaches Proverbs 19:17: "He who has pity on the poor lends to Yahweh; he will reward him." Here, then, you have a rich Lord, who is

certainly sufficient for you, and who will not allow you to come short in anything or to want; thus you can with a joyful conscience enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together with unfaithfulness and wrong. Now, whoever does not desire the blessing will find wrath and misfortune enough.

### **The Eighth Commandment**

*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

Over and above our own body, spouse, and temporal possessions, we have yet another treasure, namely, honor and good report (i.e. the illustrious testimony of an upright and unsullied name and reputation), with which we cannot dispense. For it is intolerable to live among men in open shame and general contempt. Therefore God wishes the reputation, good name, and upright character of our neighbor to be taken away or diminished as little as his money and possessions, that every one may stand in his integrity before wife, children, servants, and neighbors. And in the first place, we take the plainest meaning of this commandment according to the words (“You shalt not give false testimony”), as pertaining to the public 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.

Now, this appears as if it were of little concern to us at

present; but with the Jews it was quite a common and ordinary matter. For the people were organized under an excellent and regular government; and where there is still such a government, instances of this sin will not be wanting. The cause of it is that where judges, burgomasters, princes, or others in authority sit in judgment, things never fail to go according to the course of the world; namely, men do not like to offend anybody, flatter, and speak to gain favor, money, prospects, or friendship; and in consequence a poor man and his cause must be oppressed, denounced as wrong, and suffer punishment. And it is a common calamity in the world that in courts of justice there seldom preside godly men.

For to be a judge requires above all things a godly man, and not only a godly, but also a wise, modest, yes, a brave and hold man; likewise, to be a witness requires a fearless and especially a godly man. For a person who is to judge all matters rightly and carry them through with his decision 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, have his eyes and ears closed, neither see nor hear, but go straight forward in everything that comes before him, and decide 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 twisted, but shall promote and strictly maintain them, no matter whether he be judge or witness, and let it pertain to whatsoever it will. And

especially is a goal set up here for our jurists that they be careful to deal truly and uprightly with every case, allowing right to remain right, and, on the other hand, not perverting anything by their tricks and technical points turning black into white and making wrong out to be right, nor glossing it over or keeping silent concerning it, irrespective of a person's money, possession, honor, or power. This is one part and the plainest sense of this commandment concerning all that takes place in court.

Next, it extends very much further, if we are to apply it to spiritual jurisdiction or administration; here it is a common occurrence that every one bears false witness against his neighbor. For wherever there are godly preachers and Christians, they must bear the sentence before the world that they are called heretics, apostates, yes, seditious and desperately wicked miscreants. Besides, the Word of God must suffer in the most shameful and malicious manner, being persecuted, blasphemed, contradicted, perverted, and falsely cited and interpreted. But let this 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 may injure or approach too closely to our neighbor. For to bear false witness is nothing else than a work of the tongue. Now, whatever is done with the tongue against a fellow-man God would have prohibited, whether it be false preachers with

their doctrine and blasphemy, false judges and witnesses with their verdict, or outside of court by lying and evil-speaking. Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, and of which there would be 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 so bad that 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, yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others.

Therefore, to avoid this vice we should note 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, judging sin and knowing sin. 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. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, do nothing else than turn your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office.

Those, then, are called slanderers who are not content with knowing a thing, but proceed to assume jurisdiction, and when they know a slight offense of another, carry it into

every corner, and are delighted and tickled that they can stir up another's displeasure, as swine roll themselves in the dirt and root in it with the snout. This is nothing else than meddling with the judgment and office of God, and pronouncing sentence and punishment with the most severe verdict. For no judge can punish to a higher degree nor go farther 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 would have it prohibited, that any one speak evil of another even though he be guilty, and the latter know it right well; much less if he do not know it, and have it only from hearsay. But you say: "Shall I not say it if it be the truth?" Answer: Why do you not make accusation to regular judges? "Ah, I cannot prove it publicly, and hence I might be silenced and turned away in a harsh manner (i.e. incur the penalty of a false accusation)." "Ah, indeed, do you smell the roast?" If you do not trust yourself to stand before the proper authorities and to make answer, then hold your tongue. But if you know it, know it for yourself and not for another. For if you tell it to others, although it be true, you will appear as a liar, because you cannot prove it, and you are, besides, acting like a knave. For we ought never to deprive any one of his honor or good name unless it be first taken away from him publicly.



False witness, then, is everything which cannot be properly proved. Therefore, what is not manifest upon sufficient evidence no one shall make public or declare for truth; and, in short, whatever is secret should be allowed to remain secret, or, at any rate, should be secretly reprov'd, as we shall hear. Therefore, if you encounter an idle tongue which betrays and slanders some one, contradict such a one promptly to his face, that he may blush; thus many a one will hold his tongue 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 taken away, but not easily restored.

Thus you see that it is summarily forbidden to speak any evil of our neighbor, however, the civil government, preachers, father and mother excepted, on the understanding that this commandment does not allow evil to go unpunished. Now, as according to the Fifth Commandment no one is to be injured in body, and yet Master Hannes (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 threatens in the First Commandment, - just so also, although no one has a right in his own person to judge and condemn anybody, yet if they to whose office it belongs fail to do it, they sin as well as he who would do so of his own accord, without such office. For here necessity requires one to speak of the evil, to prefer

charges, to investigate and testify; and it is not different from the case of a physician who is sometimes compelled to examine and handle the patient whom he is to cure in secret parts. 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, Matthew 18:15, where Christ says: "If your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone." Here you have a precious and excellent teaching for governing well the tongue, which is to be carefully observed against this detestable misuse. Let this, then, be your rule, that you do not too readily spread evil concerning your neighbor and slander him to others, but admonish him privately that he may amend his life. Likewise, also, if some one report to you what this or that one has done, teach him, too, to go and admonish him personally, if he have seen it himself; but if not, that he hold his tongue.

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 admonishes him personally. 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? Why do you not tell it to him?" Behold, that would be acting quite brotherly, so that the evil would be

stayed, and your neighbor would retain his honor. As Christ also says in the same place: “If he listens to you, you have gained back your brother.” Then you have done a great and excellent 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 doesn’t listen, take one or two more with you, that at 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 publicly before the community, 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 and punish. This is the right and regular course for checking and reforming a wicked person. But if we gossip about another in all corners, and stir the filth, no one will be reformed, and afterwards when we are to stand up and bear witness, we deny having said so. Therefore it would serve such tongues right if their itch for slander were severely punished, as a warning to others. If you were acting for your neighbor's reformation or from love of the truth, you would not sneak about secretly nor shun the day and the light.

All this has been said regarding secret sins. But where the sin

is quite 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 into disgrace, and you may also publicly testify concerning him. For when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying; as, when 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, to wit, that no one do any injury with the tongue to his neighbor, whether friend or foe, nor speak evil of him, no matter whether it be true or false, unless it be done by commandment or for his reformation, but that every one employ his tongue and make it serve for the best of every one else, to cover up his neighbor's sins and infirmities, excuse them, moderate and garnish them with his own reputation. The chief reason for this should be the one which Christ alleges in the Gospel, in which He comprehends all commandments respecting our neighbor, Matthew 7:12: "Whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them."

Even nature teaches the same thing in our own bodies, as St. Paul says, 1 Corinthians 12:22-23: "Much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. Those parts of the body which we think to be less honorable, on those we bestow more abundant honor; and our

unpresentable parts have more abundant propriety.” No one covers his face, eyes, nose, and mouth, for they, being 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; hands, eyes, and the whole body must help to cover and conceal them.

Thus also among ourselves should we adorn whatever blemishes and infirmities we find in our neighbor, and serve and help him to promote his honor to the best of our ability, 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 explain advantageously and put the best construction upon all he may hear of his neighbor (if it be not notoriously evil), or at any rate to condone it over and against the poisonous tongues that are busy wherever they can pry out and discover something to blame in a neighbor, and that explain and pervert it in the worst way; as is done now especially with the precious Word of God and its preachers.

There are comprehended therefore in this commandment quite a multitude of good works which please God most highly, and bring abundant good and blessing, if only the blind world and the false saints would recognize them. For there is nothing on or in 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

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.*

These two commandments are given quite exclusively to the Jews; nevertheless, in part they also concern us. For they do not interpret them as referring to unchastity or theft, because these are sufficiently 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 forbidden to desire or in any way to aim at getting our neighbor's wife or possessions; and especially because under the Jewish government male servants and female 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. Moreover, 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 allege any reason 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

male servant or female servant, or takes another's servants from him in any way.

Therefore (I say) they thus interpreted these commandments, and that rightly (although their scope reaches somewhat farther and higher), that no one think or purpose to obtain what belongs to another, such as his wife, servants, house and estate, land, meadows, cattle, even with a show of right or by a subterfuge, yet with injury to his neighbor. For above, in the Seventh Commandment, the vice is forbidden where one wrests to himself the possessions of others, or withholds them from his neighbor, which he cannot do by right. But here it is also forbidden to alienate anything from your neighbor, even though you could do so with honor in the eyes of the world, so that no one could accuse or blame you as though you had obtained it wrongfully.

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; the other may fare as best he can. And yet we pretend to be godly, know how to 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 the law codes; yes, we even dare impertinently to refer to it, and boast of it, and will not have it called rascality, but shrewdness and caution. In this lawyers and jurists assist, who twist and stretch the law to suit it to their cause, stress

words and use them for a subterfuge, irrespective of equity or their neighbor's necessity. And, in short, whoever is the most expert and cunning in these affairs finds most help in law, as they themselves say: *Vigilantibus iura subveniunt* (that is, “The laws favor the watchful”).

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 and upright people, since they have not offended against the former commandments, as especially the Jews claimed to be, and even now many great noblemen, gentlemen, and princes. For the other common masses belong yet farther down, under the Seventh Commandment, as those who are not much concerned whether they acquire their possessions with honor and right.

Now, this occurs most frequently in cases that are brought into court, where it is the purpose to get something from our neighbor and to force him out of his own. As (to give examples), when people quarrel and wrangle about 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 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 financing through relationships, and by any means he can, that the other is judicially deprived of it, and it is adjudicated to him, and confirmed with deed



and seal and declared to have been acquired by princely title and honestly.

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 a matter in which he sees advantage and benefit for himself, so that the latter, perhaps on account of distress or debt, cannot regain or redeem it without injury, 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: "First come, first served, and every one must look to his own interest, let another get what he can." And who can be so smart as to think of all the ways in which one can get many things into his possession by such specious pretexts? This the world does not consider wrong (nor is it punished by laws), and will not see that the neighbor is thereby placed at a disadvantage, and must sacrifice what he cannot spare without injury. Yet there is no one who wishes this to be done to him; from which we can easily perceive that such devices and pretexts are false.

Thus it was done formerly also with respect to wives: they knew such devices that if one were pleased with another woman, he personally or through others (as there were many ways and means to be invented) caused her husband to conceive a displeasure toward her, or had her resist him and so conduct herself that he was obliged to dismiss her and leave her to the other. 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 occur among us, because in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to be divorced, except in such a 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 alienates another's male servant or female servant, or entices them away 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, so that he suffer the loss and you gratify your avarice with it, even if you could keep it honorably before the world; for it is a secret and insidious imposition practiced under the hat, as we say, that it may not be observed. For although you go your way as if you had done no one any wrong, you have nevertheless injured your neighbor; and if it is not called stealing and cheating, yet it is called coveting 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, which is sure to take an ell in addition wherever you yield to her a finger's breadth [i.e. "give it an inch and it will take a mile"],

and at length public wrong and violence follow.

Therefore we allow these commandments to remain in their ordinary meaning, that it is commanded, first, that we do not desire our neighbor's damage, nor even assist, nor give occasion for it, but gladly wish and leave him what he has, 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 directed against envy and miserable avarice, God wishing to remove all causes and sources whence arises everything by which we do injury to our neighbor, and therefore He expresses it in plain words: "You shall 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 will remain, like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and show how godly 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 are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God, and the true fountain and channel from and in which everything must arise and flow that is to be a good work, so that outside of the 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, while they let these pass, as though they were far too insignificant, or had long ago been perfectly fulfilled.

I am of opinion, indeed, that here one will find his hands full, and will have enough to do to observe these, namely, meekness, patience, and love towards 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 peculiar and conceited works, and restricted to particular times, places, rites, and customs, but are common, every-day domestic works which one neighbor can practice toward another; therefore they are not of high esteem.

But the other works cause people to open their eyes and ears wide, and men aid to this effect by the great display, expense, and magnificent buildings with which they adorn them, so that everything shines and glitters. There they waft incense, they sing and ring bells, they light tapers and candles, so that nothing else can be seen or heard. For when a priest stands there in a surplice embroidered with gilt, or a layman continues all day upon his knees in church, that is regarded as a most precious work which no one can sufficiently praise. But when a poor girl tends a little child and faithfully does what she is told, that is considered nothing; for else what should monks and nuns seek in their cloisters?

But see, is not that a cursed presumption of those desperate saints who dare to invent a higher and better life and estate

than the Ten Commandments teach, pretending (as we have said) that this is an ordinary life for the common man, but that theirs is for saints and perfect ones? And the miserable blind people do not see that no man can get so far as to keep one of the Ten Commandments as it should be kept, but both the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer must come to our aid (as we shall hear), by which that (i.e. power and strength to keep the commandments) is sought and prayed for and received continually. Therefore all their boasting amounts to as much as if I boasted and said: "To be sure, I have not a penny to make payment with, but I confidently undertake to pay ten florins."

All this I say and urge in order that men might become rid of the sad misuse which has taken such deep root and still cleaves to everybody, and in all estates upon earth become used to looking hither only, and to being concerned about these matters. For it will be a long time before they will produce a doctrine or estates equal to the Ten Commandments, because they are so high that no one can attain to them by human power; and whoever does attain to them is a heavenly, angelic man, far above all holiness of 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.

Let this be sufficient concerning the first part of the common Christian doctrine, both for teaching and urging what is

necessary. In conclusion, however, we must repeat the text which belongs here, of which we have treated already in the First Commandment, in order that we may learn what pains God requires to the end we may learn to inculcate and practice the Ten Commandments: “For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate me, and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Although (as we have heard above) this appendix was primarily attached to the First Commandment, it was nevertheless (we cannot deny that it was) laid down for the sake of all the commandments, as all of them are to be referred and directed to it. Therefore I have said that this, too, should be presented to and inculcated upon the young, that they may learn and remember it, in order to see what is to urge and compel us to keep these Ten Commandments. And it is to be regarded as though this part were specially added to each, so that it inheres in, and pervades, them all.

Now, there is comprehended in these words (as said before) both an angry word of threatening and a friendly promise to terrify and warn us, and, moreover, 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 concerned about it, and how rigidly He will enforce it, namely, that He will horribly 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 gladly do and live according to them. Thus He demands that all our works proceed from a heart which fears and regards God alone, and from such fear avoids everything that is contrary to 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 speaks to us as friendly as a father, and offers us all grace and every good.

Just this is also the meaning and true interpretation of the first and chief commandment, from which all the others must flow and proceed, so that this word: “You shall have no other gods before me,” in its simplest meaning states nothing else than this demand: You shall fear, love, and trust in Me as your only true God. For where there is a heart thus disposed towards God, the same has fulfilled this and all the other commandments. On the other hand, whoever fears and loves anything else in heaven and upon earth will keep neither this nor any. Thus the entire Scriptures have everywhere preached and inculcated this commandment, aiming always at these two things: fear of God and trust in Him. And especially the prophet David throughout the Psalms, as when he says (Psalm 147:11): “Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his loving kindness.” As if the entire commandment were explained by one verse, as much as to say: “The Lord takes pleasure in those who have no other gods.”

Thus the First Commandment is to shine and impart its splendor to all the others. Therefore you must let this declaration run through all the commandments, like a hoop in a wreath, joining the end to the beginning and holding them all together, that it be continually repeated and not forgotten; as, namely, in the Second Commandment, that we fear God and do not take His name in vain for cursing, lying, deceiving, and other modes of leading men astray, or rascality, but make proper and good use of it by calling upon Him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, derived from love and trust according to the First Commandment. In like manner such fear, love, and trust is to urge and force us not to despise His Word, but gladly to learn, hear, and esteem it holy, and honor it.

Thus continuing through all the following commandments towards our neighbor likewise, everything is to proceed by virtue of the First Commandment, to wit, 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 do or omit anything. But see to that which God would have you do, and what He will quite surely demand of you; if you omit that, you have an angry Judge, but in the contrary case a gracious Father.

Again, that you do your neighbor no harm, injury, or violence, nor in any wise encroach upon him as touching 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 would reprove you; but that you do good to all men, help them, and promote their interest, howsoever and wherever 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 fountainhead which flows into all the rest, and again, all return to that and depend upon it, so that beginning and end are fastened and bound to each other.

This (I say) it is profitable and necessary always to teach to the young people, to admonish them and to remind them of it, that they may be brought up not only with blows and compulsion, like cattle, but in the fear and reverence of God. For where this is considered and laid to heart that these things are not human trifles, but the commandments of the Divine Majesty, who insists upon them with such earnestness, is angry with, and punishes those who despise them, and, on the other hand, abundantly rewards 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 the sake of merely having them written in these places and making a show of them, as did the Jews, but that we might have our eyes constantly fixed upon them, and have them always in our memory, and that we might practice them in all our actions and ways, and every one make them

his daily exercise in all cases, in every business and transaction, as though they were written in every place wherever he would look, yes, wherever he walks or stands. 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 from them.

From this it again appears how highly these Ten Commandments are to be exalted and extolled above all estates, commandments, and works which are taught and practiced aside from them. For here we can boast and say: Let all the wise and saints step forth and produce, if they can, a single 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 that He will pour out upon us all good things and blessings. Therefore they should be taught above all others, and be esteemed precious and dear, as the highest treasure given by God.

## THE APOSTLES' 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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 all 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 shall briefly sum up the entire Creed in three chief articles, according to the three persons in the

Godhead, to whom everything that we believe is related, so that the First Article, of God the Father, explains Creation, the Second Article, of the Son, Redemption, and the Third, of the Holy Spirit, Sanctification. Just 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 Spirit, who sanctifies me. One God and one faith, but three persons, therefore also three articles or confessions. Let us briefly run over the words.

## **Article I**

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

This portrays and sets forth most briefly what is the essence, will, activity, and work of God the Father. For since the Ten Commandments have taught that we are to have not more than one God, the question might be asked, What kind of a person is God? What does He do? How can we praise, or portray and describe Him, that He may be known? Now, that is taught in this and in 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: "This is my God: first, the Father, who has created heaven and earth; besides this only One I regard nothing else as God; for there

is no one else who could create heaven and earth.”

But for the learned, and those who are somewhat advanced (i.e. have acquired some Scriptural knowledge), these three articles may all be expanded 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: This is what I mean and believe, 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, and so on, food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestics, house and home, etc. Besides, He causes all creatures to serve for the uses and necessities of life sun, moon, and stars in the firmament, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces, birds and fishes beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce, and whatever else there is of bodily and temporal goods, good government, peace, security. Thus we learn from this article that none of us has of himself, nor can preserve, his life nor anything that is here enumerated or can be enumerated, however small and unimportant a thing it might be, for all is comprehended in the word “Creator.”

Moreover, 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 us against all evil and misfortune, averts all sorts of danger and calamity; and that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a benevolent Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us. But to speak more of this belongs in the other two parts of this article, where we say: “Father Almighty.”

Now, since all that we possess, and, moreover, whatever, in addition, is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God, it is readily inferred and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for it without ceasing, and, in short, to serve Him with all these things, as He demands and has enjoined in the Ten Commandments.

Here we could say much if we were to expatiate, 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, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, and honor, etc., of ourselves, so that others must fear and serve us, as is the practice of the wretched, perverse world, which is drowned in blindness, 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, this article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have, especially 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, impress it upon our mind, and to remember it in all that meets our eyes, 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 sense and see His Paternal heart and his transcendent love toward us. Thereby the heart would be warmed and kindled to be thankful, and to employ all such good things 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 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 by His Son and the Holy Spirit, as we shall hear.

## Article II

*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, dead, and 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 shall come to judge the living 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 the temporal goods aforementioned; namely, how He has completely poured forth Himself and withheld nothing from us that He has not given us. Now, this article is very rich and broad; but in order to expound it also briefly and in a childlike way we shall take up one word and sum up in that the entire article, namely (as we have said), that we may here learn how we have been redeemed; and we shall base this on these 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 this, that He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all evil. For before I had no Lord nor King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, enmeshed 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 and eternal Son of God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are all expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, 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 this, then, be 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 serve no other end than to explain and express this redemption, how and whereby it was accomplished, that is, how much it cost Him, and what He spent and risked that He might win us and bring us under His dominion, namely, that He became man, conceived and born without any stain of sin, of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, that He might overcome sin; moreover, 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 this, 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, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed the government at the Father's right hand, so that the devil and all powers must be subject to Him and lie at His feet, until finally, at the last day, He will completely part and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc.

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

Indeed, the entire Gospel which we preach is based on this, that we properly understand this article as that upon which our salvation and all our happiness rest, and which is so rich and comprehensive that we never can learn it fully.

### **Article III**

*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.*

This article (as I have said) I cannot relate better than to Sanctification, that through the same the Holy Spirit, with His office, is declared and depicted, namely, that He makes holy. Therefore we must take our stand upon the word “Holy Spirit,” because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot find another. For there are, besides, many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as, the spirit of man, heavenly spirits, and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called “Holy Spirit,” that is, He who has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called “Creator,” the Son “Redeemer,” so the Holy Spirit, from His work, must be called “Sanctifier,” or “One that makes holy.” But how is such sanctifying done? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby He wins us, through His birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Spirit effects our sanctification by the following parts, namely, by the communion of saints or the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; 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 obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it,

then it would be 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 Spirit to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves.

Learn, then, to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: “What do you mean by the words: I believe in the Holy Spirit?” you can answer: “I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as His name implies.” But whereby does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end? Answer: By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, 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 begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He reveals and preaches, and through which He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand, 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 that it is understood, it is lost, as was the case under the Papacy, where faith was entirely put under the bench, and no one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier, that is, no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that He has acquired this treasure for us, without our works and merit, and made us

acceptable to the Father. What, then, was lacking? This, that the Holy Spirit was not there to reveal it and cause 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 not a Christian Church either; for where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit who creates, 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 parts which are here enumerated are not quite clear to the simple, we shall run over them also.

The Creed denominates the holy Christian Church, *communio sanctorum*, a communion of saints; for both expressions, taken together, are identical. But formerly the one [i.e. the second] expression was not there, and it has been poorly and unintelligibly translated into German *eine Gemeinschaft der Heiligen*, “a communion of saints.” If it is to be rendered plainly, it must be expressed quite differently in the German idiom; for the word *ecclesia* properly means in German *eine Versammlung*, an “assembly.” But we are accustomed to the word “church,” by which the simple do not understand an assembled multitude, but the consecrated house or building, although the house ought not to be called a “church,” except only for the reason that the multitude assembles there. For we who assemble there make and choose for ourselves a particular place, and give a name to the house according to the assembly.

Thus the word *Kirche* (church) means really nothing else

than a common assembly, and is not German by idiom, 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 genuine German, in our mother-tongue, it ought to be called a “Christian congregation or assembly” (*eine christliche Gemeinde oder Sammlung*), or, best of all and most clearly, “holy Christendom” (*eine heilige Christenheit*).

So also the word *communio*, which is added, ought not to be rendered communion (*Gemeinschaft*), but congregation (*Gemeinde*). And it is nothing else than an interpretation or explanation by which some one meant to explain what the Christian Church is. This our people, who understood neither Latin nor German, have rendered *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (“communion of saints”), although no German language speaks thus, nor understands it thus. 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, *eine heilige Gemeinde*, “a holy congregation.” I say this in order that the words *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen* (“communion of saints”) 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 little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ,

called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. 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 Spirit by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it. 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 Spirit abides with the holy congregation or Christendom, by means of which He fetches us to Christ and which He employs to teach and preach to us the Word, whereby He works and promotes sanctification, causing it (i.e. this community) daily to grow and become strong in the faith and its fruits 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, moreover, 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 offices 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 Spirit 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 ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain there nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sins, the grace of the Holy Spirit does not allow them to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but continuous, uninterrupted 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 holiness (i.e. sanctification). Therefore all who seek and wish to merit holiness (i.e. sanctification), not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves from this Church.

Meanwhile, however, while 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 Spirit 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, removed and free from sin, death, and all evil, in a new, immortal, and glorified body.



Behold, all this is to be the office and work of the Holy Spirit, that He begin and daily increase holiness upon earth by means of these two things, the Christian Church and the forgiveness of sin. But in our dissolution He will accomplish it altogether in an instant, and will forever preserve us therein by the last two parts.

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 of the shambles. But in good German idiom we would say *Auferstehung des Leibes*, or *Leichnams* (“resurrection of the body”). However, it is not a matter of much moment, if we only understand the words aright.

This, now, is the article which must ever be and remain in operation. For creation we have received; redemption, too, is finished. But the Holy Spirit carries on His work without ceasing to the last day. And for that purpose He has appointed a congregation upon earth by which He speaks and does everything. For He has not yet brought together all His Christian Church nor dispensed forgiveness. Therefore we believe in Him who through the Word daily brings us into the fellowship of this Christian Church, 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

forever 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 and exceeds the wisdom, mind, and reason of all men. For although the whole world with all diligence has endeavored to ascertain what God is, what He has in mind and does, yet has she never been able to attain to the knowledge and understanding of any of these things. But here we have everything in richest measure; for here in all three articles He has Himself revealed and opened the deepest abyss of his paternal heart and of His pure unutterable love. For He has created us for this very object, that He might redeem and sanctify us; and in addition to giving and imparting to us everything in heaven and upon earth, He has given to us even His Son and the Holy Spirit, 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 either, unless it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit.

These articles of the Creed, therefore, divide and separate 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 expect any love or blessing 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 any gifts of the Holy Spirit.

From this you perceive that the Creed is a doctrine quite different from the Ten Commandments; for the latter teaches indeed what we ought to do, but the former tells what God does for us and gives to us. Moreover, apart from this, the Ten Commandments are written in the hearts of all men; the Creed, however, no human wisdom can comprehend, but it must be taught by the Holy Spirit alone. The latter doctrine (i.e. of the Law), therefore, makes no Christian, for the wrath and displeasure of God abide upon us still, because we cannot keep what God demands of us; but this (namely, the doctrine of faith) brings pure grace, and makes us godly and acceptable to God. For by this knowledge we obtain love and delight in all the commandments of God, because here we see that God gives Himself entire to us, with all that He has and is able to do, to aid and direct us in keeping the Ten Commandments - the Father, all creatures; the Son, His entire work; and the Holy Spirit, all His gifts.

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 themselves may afterwards strive to acquire more, and to refer to these parts whatever they learn in the Scriptures, and may ever grow

and increase in richer understanding. For as long as we live here, we shall daily have enough to do to preach and to learn this.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. 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 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 explain the Lord's Prayer part by part, it is most necessary first to exhort and incite people to prayer, as Christ and the apostles also have done. And the first matter is to know that it is our duty to pray because of God's commandment. For thus we heard in the Second Commandment: "You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God," that we are there required to praise that holy name, and call upon it in every need, or to pray. For to call upon the name of God is nothing else than to pray. Prayer is therefore as strictly and earnestly commanded as all other commandments: to have no other God, not to kill, not to

steal, etc. Let no one think that it is all the same whether he pray or not, as vulgar people do, who grope in such delusion and ask, "Why should I pray? Who knows whether God heeds or will hear my prayer? If I do not pray, some one else will." And thus they fall into the habit of never praying, and frame a pretext, as though we taught that there is no duty or need of prayer, because we reject false and hypocritical prayers.

But this is true indeed that such prayers as have been offered hitherto when men were babbling and bawling in the churches 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 not really praying. But praying, as the Second Commandment teaches, is to call upon God in every 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 it is our duty and obligation to obey our parents and the government; for by calling upon it and praying the name of God is honored and profitably employed. This you must note above all things, that thereby you may silence and repel such thoughts as would keep and deter us from prayer. For 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, "You shall and must do it," so also here it is not left to my will to do it or leave it undone, but prayer shall and must be offered at the risk of God's wrath and

displeasure.

This is therefore to be understood and noted before everything else, in order 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 if we do not pray, or as though it were commanded those who are holier and in better favor with God than we; as, indeed, the human heart is by nature so despondent that it always flees from God and imagines that He does not wish or desire our prayer, because we are sinners and have merited nothing but 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 cast us from Him nor chase us away, although we are sinners, but rather draw us to Himself, so that we might humble ourselves before Him, bewail this misery and plight of ours, and pray for grace and help. Therefore we read in the Scriptures that He is angry also with those who were smitten for their sin, because they did not return to Him and by their prayers assuage His wrath and seek His grace.

Now, from the fact that it is so solemnly commanded to pray, you are to conclude and think, that no one should by any means despise his prayer, but rather set great store by it, and always seek an illustration from the other commandments. A child should by no means despise his obedience to father and mother, but should always think: "This work is a work of

obedience, and what I do I do with no other intention than that I may walk in the obedience and commandment of God, on which I can settle and stand firm, and esteem it a great thing, not on account of my worthiness, but on account of the commandment.” So here also, what and for what we pray we should regard as demanded by God and done in obedience to Him, and should reflect thus: “On my account it would amount to nothing; but it shall avail, for the reason that God has commanded it.” Therefore everybody, no matter what he has to say in prayer, should always come before God in obedience to this commandment.

We pray, therefore, and exhort every one most diligently to take this to heart and by no means to despise our prayer. For hitherto it has been taught thus in the devil's name that no one regarded these things, and men supposed it to be sufficient to have done the work, whether God would hear it or not. But that is staking prayer on a risk, and murmuring it at a venture; and therefore it is a lost prayer. For we allow such thoughts as these to lead us astray and deter us: “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 you should say: “My prayer is as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul or of the most holy



saints.” 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. For on the commandment on which all the saints rest their prayer I, too, rest mine. Moreover, I pray for the same thing for which they all pray and ever have prayed; besides, I have just as great a need of it as those great saints, yes, even a greater one than they.”

Let this be the first and most important point, that all our prayers must be 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 be angry, and punish all who do not pray, as surely as He punishes all other disobedience; next, that He will not allow our prayers to be in vain or lost. For if He did not intend to answer your prayer, He would not bid you pray and add such a severe commandment to it.

In the second place, we should be the more urged and incited to pray because God has also added a promise, and declared that it shall surely be done to us as we pray, as He says Psalm 50:15: “Call on me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you.” And Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew 7:7: “Ask, and it will be given you. For every one that asks receives.” Such promises ought certainly to encourage and kindle our hearts to pray with pleasure and delight, since He testifies with His own word that our prayer is heartily pleasing to Him,

moreover, that it shall assuredly be heard and granted, in order that we may not despise it or think lightly of it, and pray at a venture.

This you can hold up to Him and say: “Here I come, dear Father, and pray, not of my own purpose nor upon my own worthiness, but at 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 as a person who most highly dishonors Him and reproaches Him with falsehood.

Besides this, we should be incited and drawn to prayer 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 pleasing to Him and shall certainly be answered; which the Lord's Prayer is a great advantage indeed over all other prayers that we might compose ourselves. For in them the conscience would ever be in doubt and say: “I have prayed, but who knows how it pleases Him, or whether I have hit upon the right proportions and form?” 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 it has been prescribed also for this reason 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 day and night like fiends; but none of them think of praying for a hair's breadth of anything. And if we would assemble 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 (when they had done their best) they thought no further than this, to do a good work, whereby they might repay God, as being unwilling to take anything from Him, but wishing only to give Him something.

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 for it and to attain to the proper devotion. But the distress which ought to concern us most, both as regards ourselves and 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, lest we become remiss in

prayer. For we all have enough that we lack, but the great want is that we do not feel nor see it. Therefore God also requires that you lament and plead such necessities and wants, not because He does not know them, but that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires, and make wide and open your cloak to receive much.

Therefore, every one of us should 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 live, as for preachers, the 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 these things brought home again to the people that they might learn to pray truly, and not go about coldly and indifferently, whereby they become daily more unfit for prayer; 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 him when prayer is in proper practice.

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 power and adherents that set themselves against us, and they might easily crush us under their feet. Therefore we must consider and take up those weapons with which Christians must be armed in order to stand against the devil. For what do you think has hitherto accomplished such great things, has checked or quelled the counsels, purposes,

murder, and riot of our enemies, 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? They should else have witnessed a far different tragedy, namely, how the devil would have destroyed all Germany in its own blood. But now they may confidently deride it and make a mock of it; however, we shall nevertheless be a match both for themselves and the devil by prayer alone, if we only persevere diligently and not become slack. For whenever a godly Christian prays: “Dear Father, let Your will be done,” God speaks from on high and says: “Yes, dear child, it shall be so, in spite of the devil and 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 babbling 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 long palavers. Now we shall most briefly and clearly treat of the Lord's Prayer. Here there is comprehended in seven successive articles, or petitions, every need which never ceases to relate to us, and each so great that it ought to constrain us to keep praying it all our lives.

### **The First Petition**

*May your name be kept holy.*

This is, indeed, somewhat obscure, and not expressed in good German, for in our mother-tongue we would say: "Heavenly Father, help that by all means Your name may 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 in our use it is not holy. For God's name was given us when we became Christians and were baptized, so that we are called children of God and have the Sacraments, by which He so incorporates us in Himself that everything which is God's must serve for our use.

Here now the great need exists for which we ought to be most concerned, that this name have its proper honor, be esteemed holy and sublime as the greatest treasure and sanctuary that we have; and that as godly children we pray that the name of God, which is already 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 behave and conduct ourselves as godly children, that He may not receive shame, but honor and praise from us.

Now the name of God is 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, then, it is

profaned when men preach, teach, and speak in the name of God what is false and misleading, so that His name must serve to adorn and to find a market for falsehood. That is, indeed, the greatest profanation and dishonor of the divine name. Furthermore, also when men, by swearing, cursing, conjuring, etc., grossly abuse the holy name as a cloak for their shame. In the second place, also by an openly wicked life and works, when those who are called Christians and the people of God are adulterers, drunkards, misers, envious, and slanderers. Here again 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, perverse child that opposes him in words and deeds, so that on its account he suffers contempt and reproach, 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, so that people say of us that we must be not God's, but the devil's children.

Thus you see that in this petition we pray just for that which God demands in the Second Commandment; namely, that His name be not taken in vain to swear, curse, lie, deceive, etc., but be usefully 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 in former times a church was considered desecrated when a murder or any other crime had been committed in it, or when a pyx or relic was desecrated, as being holy in themselves, yet become

unholy in use. Thus this point is easy and clear if only the language is understood, that to hallow is the same as in our idiom to praise, magnify, and honor both in word and deed.

Here, now, learn how great need there is of such prayer. 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 their 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 and pure doctrine, and would suppress it, as bishops, tyrants, enthusiasts, etc. Likewise also for ourselves who have the Word of God, but are not thankful for it, nor live as we 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 is exalted above everything else, and His Word is taught in its purity and is esteemed precious and dear.

## **The Second Petition**

*Let your kingdom come.*

As we prayed in the First Petition concerning the honor and name of God that He would prevent the world from adorning its lies and wickedness with it, but cause it to be esteemed sublime and holy both in doctrine and life, so that He may be praised and magnified in us, so here we pray that His



kingdom also 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 itself, without our prayer, yet we pray nevertheless that it may come to us, that is, 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, for which end He has also bestowed His Holy Spirit, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power.

Therefore we pray here in the first place that this may become effective with us, and that His name be so praised through the holy Word of God and a Christian life that both we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow therein, and that it may gain approbation and adherence among other people and proceed with power throughout the world, that many may find entrance into the Kingdom of Grace, be made partakers of redemption, being led thereto by the Holy Ghost, in order that thus we may all together remain forever in the one kingdom now begun.

For the coming of God's Kingdom to us occurs in two ways; first, here in time through the Word and faith; and secondly, in eternity forever through revelation. Now we pray for both these things, that it may come to those who are not yet in it, and, by daily increase, to us who have received the same, and hereafter in eternal life. All this is nothing else than saying: "Dear Father, we pray, give us first Your Word, that the Gospel be preached properly 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 Spirit Your kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be put down, that he 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 forever 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 inestimable treasure and everything that God Himself possesses; 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 also claims the honor of giving much more and more abundantly 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 when the richest and most mighty emperor would bid a poor beggar ask whatever he might desire, and were ready 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 treated the command of his imperial majesty as a jest and sport, and was not 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 so many unspeakable treasures, despise the same, or have not the confidence to receive them, but scarcely venture to pray for a piece of bread.

All this is 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, we shall have all else in abundance, as Christ teaches (Matthew 6:33): “But seek first God’s Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well.” For how could He allow us to suffer want and to be straitened in temporal things when He promises that which is eternal and imperishable?

### **The Third Petition**

*Let your 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 receive as our own God and all His riches. But now a need just as great arises, namely, that we firmly keep them, and do not allow 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 firmly, so here likewise, although we have prayed for the greatest need, for the Gospel, faith, and the Holy Spirit, that He may govern us and redeem us from the power of the devil, we must also pray that His will be done. For there will be happenings quite strange if we are to abide therein, as we shall have to suffer many thrusts and blows on that account 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 resists them, and cannot tolerate that any one teach or believe aright. And it hurts him beyond measure to let his lies and abominations, that have been honored under the most specious pretexts of the divine name, to be exposed, and to be disgraced himself, and, besides, be driven out of the heart, and permit such a breach to be made in his kingdom. Therefore he chafes and rages as a fierce enemy with all his power and might, and marshals all his subjects, and, in addition, 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, however, is perverse and wicked; this he incites against us, fans and stirs

the fire, that he may hinder and drive us back, cause us to fall, and again bring us under his power. Such is all his will, mind, and thought, for which he strives day and night, and never rests a moment, employing all arts, wiles, ways, and means whichever he can invent.

If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and reckon upon having the devil with all his angels and 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 children, body and life. Now, this hurts our flesh and the old Adam; for the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assailed, and to let go whatever is taken from us.

Hence there is just as great need, as in all the others, that we pray without ceasing: "Dear Father, Your will be done, not the will of the devil and of our enemies, nor of anything that would persecute and suppress Your holy Word or hinder Your kingdom; and grant that we may bear with patience and overcome whatever is to be endured on that account, lest our poor flesh yield or fall away from weakness or sluggishness."

Behold, thus we have in these three petitions, in the simplest manner, the need which relates to God Himself, yet all for

our sakes. For whatever we pray concerns only us, namely, as we have said, that what must be done anyway 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 great tumult, are angry and rage against it, and undertake to exterminate the Gospel utterly. But for our own sakes we must pray that even against their fury His will be done without hindrance also among us, that they may not be able to accomplish anything and we remain firm against all violence and persecution, and submit to such will of God.

Such prayer, then, is to be our protection and defense now, is to repel and put down all that the devil, Pope, bishops, tyrants, and heretics can do against our Gospel. Let them all rage and attempt their utmost, and deliberate and resolve how they may suppress and exterminate us, that their will and counsel may prevail: over and against this one or two Christians with this petition alone shall be our wall against which they shall run and dash themselves to pieces. This consolation and confidence we have, that the will and purpose of the devil and of all our enemies shall and must fail and come to naught, however proud, secure, and powerful they know themselves to be. For if their will were not broken and hindered, the kingdom of God could not abide on earth nor His name be hallowed.

### **The Fourth Petition**

*Give us today our daily bread.*

Here, now, we consider the poor bread basket, the necessaries of our body and of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it has a very wide scope. For when you mention and pray for daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread and, on the other hand, against everything which interferes with it. Therefore you must open wide and extend your thoughts not only to the oven or the flour-bin, 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 comprise it briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world, because on that account alone do we need daily bread. Now for our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessaries, but also that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live and have dealings in daily business and conversation and all sorts of doings, in short, whatever pertains both to the domestic and to the neighborly or civil relation and government. For where these two things are hindered that they do not prosper as they ought, the necessaries of life also are impeded, so that ultimately life cannot be maintained. And there is, indeed, 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 have received of God all good things in abundance, we are not 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 checked.

Therefore it would be very proper to place in the coat-of-arms of every pious prince a loaf of bread instead of a lion, or 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. Therefore they are also worthy of all honor, that we 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, because otherwise we would not keep a farthing; and that, in addition, we also pray for them that through them God may bestow on us the more blessing and good.

Let this be a very brief explanation and sketch, showing how far this petition extends through all conditions on 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 us food and drink, clothing, house, and home, and health of body; also that He cause the grain and fruits of the field to grow and mature well; furthermore, that He help us at home towards good



housekeeping, that He give and preserve to us a godly wife, children, and servants, that He cause our work, trade, or whatever we are engaged in to prosper and succeed, favor us with faithful neighbors and good friends, etc. Likewise, that He give to emperors, kings, and all estates, and especially to the rulers of our country and to all counselors, magistrates, and officers, wisdom, strength, and success that they may govern well and vanquish the Turks and all enemies; to subjects and the common people, obedience, peace, and harmony in their life with one another; and on the other hand, that He would preserve us from all sorts of calamity to body and livelihood, as lightning, hail, fire, flood, poison, pestilence, cattle-plague, war and bloodshed, famine, destructive beasts, wicked men, etc. All this it is well to impress upon the simple, namely, that these things come from God, and must be prayed for by us.

But this petition is especially directed also against our chief enemy, the devil. For all his thought and desire is to deprive us of all that we have from God, or to hinder it; and he is not satisfied to obstruct and destroy spiritual government in leading souls astray by his lies and bringing them under his power, but he also prevents and hinders the stability of all government and honorable, peaceable relations on earth. There he causes so much contention, murder, sedition, and war, also lightning and hail to destroy grain and cattle, to poison the air, etc. In short, he is sorry that any one has a morsel of bread from God and eats it in peace; and if it were in his power, and our prayer (next to God) did not prevent

him, we would not keep a straw in the field, a farthing in the house, yes, not even our life for an hour, especially those who have the Word of God and would like to be Christians.

Behold, thus God wishes to indicate to us how He cares for us in all our need, and faithfully provides also for our temporal support. And although He abundantly grants and preserves these things even to the wicked and knaves, yet He wishes that we pray for them, in order that we may recognize that we receive them from His hand, and may feel His paternal goodness toward us therein. For when He withdraws His hand, nothing can prosper nor be maintained in the end, as, indeed, we daily see and experience. How much trouble there is now in the world only on account of bad coin, yes, on account of daily oppression and raising of prices in common trade, bargaining and labor on the part of those who wantonly oppress the poor and deprive them of their daily bread! This we must suffer indeed; but let them take care that they do not lose the common intercession, and beware lest this petition in the Lord's Prayer be against them.

### **The Fifth Petition**

*Forgive us our debts [trespasses], as we also forgive our debtors [those who trespass against us].*

This part now relates to our poor miserable life, which, although we have and believe the Word of God, and do and

submit to His will, and are supported by His gifts and blessings, is nevertheless not without sin. For we still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among men who do us much harm and give us cause for impatience, anger, revenge, etc. Besides, we have Satan at our back, who sets upon us on every side, and fights (as we have heard) against all the foregoing petitions, so that it is not possible always to stand 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 forgive sin without and even before our prayer (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 trusts nor believes God, and is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed, by commission and omission, by which the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of the wrath and displeasure of God, and thus loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel; therefore it is ceaselessly necessary that we run hither and obtain consolation to comfort the conscience again.

But this should serve God's purpose of breaking our pride and keeping us humble. For in case any one should boast of his godliness and despise others, God has reserved this prerogative to Himself, that the person is to consider himself

and place this prayer before his eyes, and 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 that they can attain forgiveness. And let no one think that as long as we live here he can reach such a position that he will not need such forgiveness. In short, if God does not forgive without ceasing, we are lost.

It is therefore the intent of this petition that God would not regard our sins and hold up to 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 nevermore venture to pray. But such a confident and joyful heart can spring from nothing else than the certain knowledge of the forgiveness of sin.

But there is here attached a necessary, yet consolatory addition: "As we forgive." He has promised that we shall be sure that everything is forgiven and pardoned, yet in the manner that we also forgive our neighbor. For just as we daily sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, 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 are forgiven in heaven, 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 in order that He may set this up for our confirmation and assurance for a sign alongside of the promise which accords with this prayer, Luke 6:37: “Set free, and you will be set free” [“Forgive, and you will be forgiven”]. Therefore Christ also repeats it soon after the Lord's Prayer, and says, Matthew 6:14: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

This sign is therefore attached to this petition, that, when we pray, we remember the promise and reflect thus: “Dear Father, for this reason I come and pray You to forgive me, not that I can make satisfaction, or can merit anything by my works, but because You have promised and attached the seal thereto that I should be as sure as though I had absolution pronounced by Yourself.” For as much as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, appointed as external signs, effect, so much also this sign can effect to confirm our consciences and cause them to rejoice. And it is especially given for this purpose, that we might use and practice it every hour, as a thing that we have with us at all times.

### **The Sixth Petition**

*Bring us not into temptation.*

We have now heard enough what toil and labor is required to retain all that for which we pray, and to persevere therein,

which, however, 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 today and tomorrow falls. Therefore, even though we be godly now and stand before God with a good conscience, we must pray again that He would not allow us to relapse and yield to trials and temptations.

Temptation, however, or (as our Saxons in olden times used to call it) *Bekoerunge*, is of three kinds, namely, of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil. For in the flesh we dwell and carry the old Adam about our neck, who exerts himself and incites us daily to in chastity, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness, avarice and deception, to defraud our neighbor and to overcharge 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, example and what we hear and see of other people, which often wound and inflame even an innocent heart.

Next 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, mockery, slander, pride and haughtiness, with superfluous finery, 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 agitating matters that concern the conscience and spiritual affairs, namely, to induce us to despise and disregard both the Word and works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love, and bring us into misbelief, 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, yes, real fiery darts which are shot most venomously into the heart, not by flesh and blood, but by the devil.

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 allow us to become weary and faint and to relapse into sin, shame, and unbelief. For otherwise it is impossible to overcome even the least temptation.

This, then, is “bringing us not into temptation,” to wit, when He gives us power and strength to resist - the temptation, however, not being taken away or removed. For while 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, yes, be engulfed in them; but we pray for this, that we may not fall and be drowned in them.

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, the young 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 would rather 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 the reins and do not resist or pray against it.

Therefore we Christians must be armed and daily expect to be incessantly attacked, in order that no one may go on in security and heedlessly, as though the devil were far from us, but at all times expect and parry his blows. For though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very 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, there always arise others and fresh ones.

Accordingly, there is no help or comfort except to run hither and to take hold of the Lord's Prayer, and thus speak to God from the heart: "Dear Father, You have bidden me pray; let me not relapse because of temptations." Then you will see that they must desist, and finally acknowledge themselves conquered. 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 slip, the whole body will follow without check. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back.

## **The Seventh Petition**

*Deliver us from the evil one. Amen.*

In the Greek text this petition reads thus: “Deliver or preserve us from the Evil One,” or the “Malicious One;” and it looks as if He were speaking of the devil, as though He would comprehend everything in one, so that the entire substance of all our prayer is directed against our chief enemy. For it is he who hinders among us everything 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 evil may happen to us under the devil's kingdom - poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all the agonizing misery and heartache of which there is such an unnumbered multitude on 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 afflict our bodies with misfortune and harm. Hence it comes that he often breaks men's necks or drives them to insanity, drowns some, and incites many to commit suicide, and to

many other terrible calamities. Therefore there is nothing for us to do upon earth but to pray against this arch-enemy without ceasing. For unless God preserved us, we would not be safe from him even for an hour.

Hence you see again how God wishes us to pray to Him also for all the things which affect our bodily interests, so that we seek and expect help nowhere else except in Him. But this matter He has put last; for if we are to be preserved and delivered from all evil, the name of God must first be hallowed in us, His kingdom must be with us, and His will be done. After that He will finally preserve us from sin and shame, and, besides, from everything that may hurt or injure us.

Thus God has briefly placed before us all the distress which may ever come upon us, so that we might have no excuse whatever for not praying. But all depends upon this, that we learn also to say "Amen," that is, that we do not doubt that our prayer is surely heard, and what we pray shall be done. For this is nothing else than the word of undoubting faith, which does not pray at a venture, but knows that God does not lie to him, since He has promised to grant it. Therefore, where there is no such faith, there cannot be true prayer either.

It is, therefore, a pernicious delusion of those who pray in such a manner that they dare not from the heart say yes and positively conclude that God hears them, but remain in

doubt and say, “How should I be so bold as to boast that God hears my prayer? For I am 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 1:6 says: “But let him ask in faith, without any doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For that man shouldn’t think that he will receive anything from the Lord.” Behold, such importance God attaches to the fact that we are sure we do not pray in vain, and that we do not in any way despise our prayer.

## HOLY BAPTISM

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. 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.

In the first place, we must above all things know well the words upon which Baptism is founded, and to which everything refers that is to be said on the subject, namely, where the Lord Christ speaks in Matthew 28:19: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Likewise in St. Mark 16:16: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned.”

In these words you must note, in the first place, that here stand God's commandment and institution, lest we doubt that Baptism is divine, not devised nor 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 instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest any one regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God's Word and command which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. But what God institutes and commands cannot be a vain, but must be a most precious thing, though in appearance it were of less value than a straw. If hitherto people could consider it a great thing when the Pope with his letters and bulls dispensed indulgences and confirmed altars and churches, solely because of the letters and seals, we ought to esteem Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it, and, besides, it is performed in His name. For these are the words, Go you, baptize; however, 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 truly God's own work. From this fact every one may himself readily infer

that it is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work greater than the work of God can we do?

But here the devil is busy to delude us with false appearances, and lead us away from the work of God to our own works. For there is a much more splendid appearance 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. Here, then, we must not estimate the person according to the works, but the works according to the person, from whom they must derive their nobility. But insane reason will not regard this, and because Baptism does not shine like the works which we do, it is to be esteemed as nothing.

From this now learn a proper understanding of the subject, and how to answer the question what Baptism is, namely thus, that it is not mere ordinary water, but water comprehended in God's Word and command, and sanctified thereby, so that it is nothing else than a divine water; not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that God's Word and command are added.

Therefore it is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil

that now our new spirits, to mock at Baptism, omit from it God's Word and institution, and look upon it in no other way than as water which is taken from the well, and then blather and say: "How is a handful of water to help the soul?" Indeed, my friend, who does not know that water is water if tearing things asunder is what we are after? But how dare you thus interfere with God's order, and tear away the most precious treasure with which God has connected and enclosed it, and which He will not have separated? For the kernel in the water is God's Word or command and the name of God, which is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth.

Comprehend the difference, then, that Baptism is quite another thing than all other water; not on account of the natural quality but because something more noble is here added; for God Himself stakes His honor, His power and might on it. Therefore it is not only 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 essence 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, a holy and divine matter and sign.

Therefore we always teach that the Sacraments and all external things which God ordains and institutes 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 propose to regard them in as far as they have noses, eyes, skin, and hair, flesh and bones, they look like Turks and heathen, and some one might start up and say: "Why should I esteem them more than others?" But because the commandment is added: "Honor your father and your mother," I behold a different man, adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God. The commandment (I say) is the chain of gold about his neck, yes, the crown upon his head, which shows to me how and why one must honor this flesh and blood.

Thus, and much more even, you must honor Baptism and esteem it glorious on account of the Word, since He Himself has honored it both by words and deeds; moreover, confirmed it with miracles from heaven. For do you think it was a jest that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty?

Therefore I exhort again that these two, the water and the Word, by no means be separated from one another and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bath-keeper's baptism. But when it is added, as



God has ordained, it is a Sacrament, and is called Christ-baptism. Let this be the first part, regarding the essence and dignity of the holy Sacrament.

In the second place, since we know now what Baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted; that is, what it profits, gives, and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, 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 forever.

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 ordinary mere water. For mere water could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the fact that the name of God is comprehended therein.

But where the name of God is, there must be also 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 “washing of regeneration,” as St. Paul also calls it, Titus 3:5.

But as our would-be wise, new spirits assert that faith alone saves, and that works and external things avail nothing, we answer: It is true, indeed, that nothing in us is of any avail but faith, as we shall hear still further. But these blind guides are unwilling to see this, namely, that faith must have something which it believes, that is, of which it takes hold, and upon which it stands and rests. Thus faith clings to the water, and believes that it is Baptism, in which there is pure salvation and life; not through the water (as we have sufficiently stated), but through the fact that it is embodied in the Word and institution of God, and the name of God inheres in it. Now, if I believe this, what else is it than believing in God as in Him who has given and planted His Word into this ordinance, and proposes to us this external thing wherein we may apprehend such a treasure?

Now, they are so mad as to separate faith, and that to which faith clings and is bound, though it be something external. Yes, it shall and must be something external, that it may be apprehended by the senses, and understood and thereby be brought into the heart, as indeed the entire Gospel is an external, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He proposes to work through such external ordinances. Wherever, therefore, He speaks, yes, in whichever direction or by whatever means He speaks, thither faith must look, and to that it must hold. Now here we have the words: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." To what else do they refer than to Baptism, that is, to the

water comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects Baptism rejects the Word of God, faith, and Christ, who directs us thither and binds us to Baptism.

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 what Baptism gives and profits. This is again most beautifully and clearly expressed in the words: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. For, since these blessings are here presented and promised in the words in and with the water, they cannot be received in any other way than by believing them with the heart. Without faith it profits nothing, notwithstanding it is in itself a divine superabundant treasure. Therefore this single word ("He who believes") effects this much that it excludes and repels all works which we can do, in the opinion that we obtain and merit salvation by them. For it is determined that whatever is not faith avails nothing nor receives anything.

But if they say, as they are accustomed: "Still Baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation; what, then, becomes of faith?" Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; Baptism, however, is not our work, but God's (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-baptism far away from a bath-keeper's baptism). God's works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude, but demand, faith; for without faith they

could not be apprehended. For by tolerating the water to be poured upon you, you have not yet received Baptism in such a manner that it benefits you anything; but it becomes beneficial to you if you have yourself baptized with the thought that this is according to God's command and ordinance, and besides in God's name, in order that you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Now, this the fist cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it.

Thus you see plainly that there is here no work done by us, 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 violence by exclaiming against us as though we preach against faith; while we alone insist upon it as being of such necessity that without it nothing can be received nor enjoyed.

Thus we have these three parts which it is necessary to know concerning this Sacrament, especially that the ordinance of God is to be held in all honor, which alone would be sufficient, though it be an entirely external thing, like the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," which refers to bodily flesh and blood. Therein we regard not the 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 you and baptize, etc., it would be necessary for us to accept and do it as the ordinance of God.

Now there is here 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 skill to believe this, for the treasure is not wanting, but this is wanting that men 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 it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts. In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature could realize it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, 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 medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive.

Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: "Nevertheless I am baptized; but if I am baptized, it is

promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.” For that is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism, namely, that the body, which can apprehend nothing but the water, is sprinkled, and, in addition, the word is spoken for the soul to apprehend. Now, since both, the water and the Word, are one Baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word 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 by it we are made holy and are saved, which no other kind of life, no work upon earth, can attain.

Let this suffice respecting the nature, blessing, and use of Baptism, for it answers the present purpose.

### **Of Infant Baptism**

Here a question occurs by which the devil, through his sects, confuses the world, namely, Of Infant Baptism, whether children also believe, and are justly baptized. Concerning this we say briefly: Let the simple dismiss this question from their minds, and refer it to the learned. But if you wish to 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 Spirit; and that there are yet many even today in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Spirit both because of their doctrine and life; 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 Spirit. But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, He would not give the Holy Spirit nor any of His gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian. Now, since God confirms Baptism by the gifts of His Holy Spirit, as is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, 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 a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints."

Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account Baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God. This now is perhaps somewhat acute, but it rests entirely upon what I have said, that Baptism is nothing else than water and the Word of God in and with each other, that is, when the Word

is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it be wrongly received or employed; since it is not bound (as stated) to our faith, but to the Word.

For even though a Jew should today come dishonestly and with evil purpose, 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 does not receive it as he should, just as those who unworthily go to the Sacrament 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, yet their baptism as now shown would be valid, and no one should rebaptize them; just as nothing is detracted from the Sacrament though some one approach it with evil purpose, and he could not 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 mean to blaspheme and profane the Sacrament in the worst manner. How dare we think that God's Word and ordinance should be wrong and invalid because we make a wrong use of it?

Therefore I say, if you did not believe 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 hither in my faith and in that of others, yet I cannot rest in this, that I believe, and that many people pray for me; but in this I rest, that it is Your Word and command.” Just as I go to the Sacrament trusting not in my faith, but in the Word of Christ; whether I am strong or weak, that I commit to 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 conviction and hope that it believes, 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, clumsy minds that draw such inferences and conclusions as these: Where there is not the true faith, there also can be no true Baptism. Just as if I would infer: If I do not believe, then Christ is nothing; or thus: If I am not obedient, then father, mother, and government are nothing. Is that a correct conclusion, that whenever any one does not do what he ought, the thing in itself shall be nothing and of no value? My dear, just invert the argument and rather draw this inference: For this very reason Baptism is something and is right, because it has been wrongly received. For if it were not right and true in

itself, it could not be misused nor sinned against. The saying is: *Abusus non tollit, sed confirmat substantiam*, “Abuse does not destroy the essence, 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 essence, even though a single person should be baptized, and he, in addition, should not believe truly. For God's ordinance and Word cannot be made variable or be altered by men. But these people, the fanatics, are so blinded that they do not see the Word and command of God, and regard Baptism and the magistrates only as they regard water in the brook or in pots, or as any other man; and because they do not see faith nor obedience, they conclude that they are to be regarded as invalid. Here lurks a concealed seditious devil, who would like to tear the crown from the head of authority and then trample it under foot, and, in addition, pervert and bring to naught all the works and ordinances of God. Therefore we must be watchful and well armed, and not allow ourselves to be directed nor turned away from the Word, in order that we may not regard Baptism as a mere empty sign, as the fanatics dream.

Lastly, we must also know what Baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such external sign and ceremony for the Sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or ceremony 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 operation 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 come forth. But what is the old man? It is that which is born in us from Adam, angry, hateful, envious, unchaste, stingy, lazy, haughty, yes, unbelieving, infected with all vices, and having by nature nothing good in it. Now, when we are come into the kingdom of Christ, these things must daily decrease, that the longer we live we become more gentle, more patient, more meek, and ever withdraw more and more from unbelief, avarice, hatred, envy, haughtiness.

This is the true use of Baptism among Christians, as signified by baptizing with water. Where this, therefore, is not practiced, but the old man is left unbridled, so as to continually become stronger, that is not 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 much prouder and more avaricious this year, so that the vice grows and increases with him from his youth up. A young child has no special vice; but when it grows up, it becomes unchaste and impure, and when it reaches

maturity, real vices begin to prevail the longer, the more.

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

And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, 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) and entering upon 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, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong.

Therefore our Baptism abides forever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were put under the water a hundred times, it would

nevertheless be only one Baptism, although the operation and signification continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, that we repeat and practice what we began before, but abandoned.

This I say lest we fall into the opinion in which we were for a long time, imagining that our Baptism is something past, which we can no longer use after we have fallen again into sin. The reason is, that it is 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, on which we step and are carried across when we come into the Christian Church. Thereby the use of Baptism has been abolished so that it can profit us no longer. Therefore the statement is not correct, or at any rate not rightly understood. For the ship never breaks, because (as we have said) it is the ordinance of God, and not a work 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 what a great, excellent thing Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then 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 dress in which he is to walk constantly, 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 from it, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy-seat, does not recede from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. If, therefore, we have once in Baptism obtained forgiveness of sin, it will remain every day, as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old man about our neck.

## THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

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, 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:

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: "Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you 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 to learn first (as we did regarding Baptism) what is of the greatest importance, namely, that the chief point is the Word and ordinance or command of God. For it

has not been invented nor 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, pray, or believe them, so also does this venerable Sacrament remain undisturbed, so that nothing is detracted or taken from it, even though we employ and dispense it unworthily. What do you think God cares about what we do or believe, so that on that account He should permit His ordinance to be changed? Why, in all worldly matters every thing remains as God has created and ordered it, no matter how we employ or use it. This must always be urged, for thereby the prating of nearly all the fanatical spirits can be repelled. For they regard the Sacraments, aside from the Word of God, as something that we do.

Now, what 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. And as we have said of Baptism that it is not simple water, so here also we say the Sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread and wine, such as are ordinarily served at the 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 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 properly 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 ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the sublime Majesty, at whose feet all creatures should fall, and affirm 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, should rush forward, crying, "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." Now here stands the Word of Christ: "Take, eat; this is My body; Drink you all of it; 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 words, 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.

Hence it is easy to reply to all manner of questions about which men are troubled at the present time, such as this one: Whether even a wicked priest can minister at, and dispense, the Sacrament, and whatever other questions like this there may be. For here we conclude and say: Even though a knave takes or distributes 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, yes, no angel in heaven, can make bread and wine to be the body and blood of Christ, so also can no one change or alter it, even though it be misused. 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 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 are worthy or unworthy, you have here His body and blood by virtue of these words which are added to the bread and wine.” Only note and remember this well; for upon these words rest all our foundation, protection, and defense against all errors and deception that have ever come or may yet come.

Thus we have briefly the first point which relates to the essence of this Sacrament. Now examine further the efficacy and benefits on account of which really the Sacrament was

instituted; which is also its most necessary part, that we may know what we should seek and obtain there. Now 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.” Briefly that is as much as to say: For this reason we go to the Sacrament because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins. Why so? Because the words stand here and give us this; 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, yes, the very same treasure that is appointed for me against my sins, death, and every calamity.

On this account it is indeed 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 still 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 a daily pasture and sustenance, that faith may refresh and strengthen itself so as not to fall back in such a battle, but 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 when he sees that we oppose him and attack the old man, and that he cannot topple us over by force, he prowls and moves about on all

sides, tries all devices, and does not desist, until he finally wearies us, so that we either renounce our faith or yield hands and feet and become listless or impatient. Now to this end the consolation is here given when the heart feels that the burden is becoming too heavy, that it may here obtain new power and refreshment.

But here our wise spirits contort themselves with their great art and wisdom, crying out and bawling: How can bread and wine forgive sins or strengthen faith? Although they hear and know that we do not say this of bread and wine, because in itself bread is bread, but of such bread and wine as is the body and blood of Christ, and has the words attached to it. That, we say, is truly the treasure, and nothing else, through which such forgiveness is obtained. Now the only way in which it is conveyed and appropriated to us is in the words (“Given and shed for you”). For herein you have both truths, that it is the body and blood of Christ, and that it is yours as a treasure and gift. Now the body of Christ can never be an unfruitful, vain thing, that effects or profits nothing. Yet, however great is 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, hence we could not have forgiveness of sins in the Sacrament. For although the work is accomplished and the forgiveness of sins acquired on the cross, yet it cannot come

to us in any other way than through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it, that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given us if it were not presented by preaching or the oral Word? Whence do they know of it, or how can they apprehend and appropriate to themselves the forgiveness, except they lay hold of 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, then, should we allow this treasure to be torn from the Sacrament when they must confess that these are the very words which we hear every where in the Gospel, and they cannot say that these words in the Sacrament are of no use, as little as they dare say that the entire Gospel or Word of God, apart from the Sacrament, is of no use?

Thus we have 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 power 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 hear 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 said: "For this reason I give it, and bid you eat and drink, that you may

claim it as yours and enjoy it.” Whoever now accepts these words, and believes that what they declare is true, has it. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, as he allows it to be offered to him in vain, and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at every one's door, yes, upon his table, but it is necessary that you also claim it, and confidently view it as the words suggest to you. This, now, is the entire Christian preparation for receiving this Sacrament worthily. For since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be apprehended and appropriated in any other way than with the heart. For such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the fist. Fasting and prayer, etc., may indeed be an external preparation and discipline for children, that the body may keep and bear itself modestly and reverently towards the body and blood of Christ; yet what is given in and with it the body cannot seize and appropriate. But this is done by the faith of the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. This may suffice for what is necessary as a 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 admonition and exhortation, that men may not let so great a treasure which is daily administered and distributed among Christians pass by unheeded, that is, that those who would be Christians make ready to receive this venerable Sacrament often. For we see that men seem weary and lazy

with respect to it; and there is a great multitude of such as hear the Gospel, and, 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 except those who feel hunger and thirst, which urge them 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 brutish, and finally despise both the Sacrament and the Word of God.

Now, it is true, as we have said, that no one should by any means be coerced or compelled, lest we institute a new murdering of souls. Nevertheless, it must be known that such people as deprive themselves of, and withdraw from, the Sacrament so long a time are not to be considered Christians. For Christ has not instituted it to be treated as a show, but has commanded His Christians to eat and drink it, and thereby remember Him.

And, indeed, those who are true Christians and esteem the Sacrament precious and holy will urge and impel themselves unto it. Yet that the simple-minded and the weak who also would like 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 only, but there is need also of daily exhortation, so here also there is need of continuing to preach that men may not become weary and disgusted, since we know and feel how the devil always opposes this and every Christian exercise, 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 bidding and commanding words 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 also consider and observe this, not from compulsion, as being forced by men, but in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him. However, if you say: “But the words are added, ‘As often as you do it;’ there 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. Yes, just because He speaks the words, ‘As often as you do it,’ it is nevertheless implied that we should do it often;” and it is added for the reason 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 that just upon the fourteenth day of the first full moon in the evening, and which they must not vary a day. As if He would say by these words: 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 the 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 yet never feels a desire for it. If you wish such liberty, you may just as well have the liberty to be no Christian, and neither have to 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 one, I would certainly have some little longing for that which my Lord has commanded me to do."

And, indeed, since we act such strangers to it, it is easily seen what sort of Christians we were under the Papacy, namely, 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 force nor compel any one; nor need any one do it to serve or please us. But this should induce and constrain you by itself, that He desires it and that it is pleasing to Him. You must not allow men to coerce you unto faith or any good work. We are doing 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; if you despise it, you must answer for

it yourself.

Now, this is to be the first point, especially for those who are cold and indifferent, that they may reflect upon and rouse themselves. For this is certainly true, as I have found in my own experience, and as every one will find in his own case, that if a person thus withdraw from this Sacrament, he will daily become more and more callous and cold, and will at last disregard it altogether. To avoid this, we must, indeed, examine heart and conscience, and act like a person who desires to be right with God. Now, 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: That is also my scruple, especially from the old way under the Pope, in which a person tortured himself 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! you are 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 tarry until they are prepared, so long that one week trails another, and one half year the other. But if you are to regard how good and pure you are, and labor to have no compunctions, you must never approach.

We must, therefore, make a distinction here among men. For those who are wanton and dissolute must be told to stay away; for they are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. But the others, who are not such callous and wicked people, and desire to be godly, must not absent themselves, even though otherwise they be feeble and full of infirmities, as St. Hilary also has said: "If any one have not committed sin for which he can rightly be put out of the congregation and esteemed as no Christian, he ought not stay away from the Sacrament, lest he may deprive himself of life." For no one will make such progress 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, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform.

But whoever would gladly obtain grace and consolation should impel himself, and allow no one to frighten him away, but say: "I, indeed, would like to be worthy; but I come, not upon any worthiness, but upon Your Word, because You have commanded it, as one who would gladly be Your

disciple, no matter what becomes of my worthiness.” But this is difficult; for we always have this obstacle and hindrance to encounter, 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 firmly on itself, otherwise it refuses to make the approach. Let this suffice concerning the first point.

In the second place, there is besides this command 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 me and you; else He might just as well be silent and not institute a Sacrament. Therefore consider, and put yourself into this “you,” that He may not speak to you in vain.

For here He offers to us the entire treasure which He has brought for us from heaven, and to which He invites us also in other places with the greatest kindness, as when He says in St. Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.” Now it is surely 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, so that we 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 pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?

To be sure, it is true that those who despise it and live in an unchristian manner receive it to their hurt and damnation; for nothing shall be good or wholesome 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 they have in them. For here in the Sacrament you are to receive from the lips of Christ forgiveness of sin, which contains and brings with it the grace of God and the Spirit with all His gifts, protection, shelter, and power against death and the devil and all misfortune.

Thus you have, on the part of God, both the command and the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, on your part, your own distress which is about your neck, and because of which this command, invitation, and promise are given, ought to impel you. For He Himself says [Mark 2:17]: “Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are 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 come to the Sacrament pure and worthy, you must forever 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, in turn, none of thee.” Therefore those alone are called unworthy who neither feel their infirmities nor wish to be considered sinners.

But if you say: “What, then, 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 put their hand into their bosom 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 sort of a fruit your flesh is: “Now the deeds of the flesh” (he says [Galatians 5:19ff]) “are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.”

Therefore, if you cannot feel it, at least believe the Scriptures; they will not lie to you, and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yes, St. Paul further concludes in Romans 7:18: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good

thing.” If St. Paul may speak thus of his flesh, we do not propose to be better nor 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 the leprosy rages and keeps spreading. Yet, as we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still 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 about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be lack of sins and misery. For only begin to act as though you would be godly and adhere to the Gospel, and see whether no one will become your enemy, and, moreover, do you harm, wrong, and violence, and likewise give you cause for sin and vice. If you have not experienced it, then let the Scriptures tell you, 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? Nothing else than what 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 to see you live one single hour. If you could see how many knives, darts,

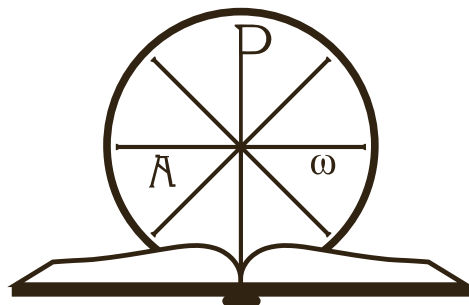
and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible. But there is no reason why we walk so securely and heedlessly, except that we neither think nor believe that we are in the flesh, and in this wicked world or in the kingdom of the devil.

Therefore, try this and practice it well, and do but 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 misery to lament both to God and to your brother. Then take advice and have others pray for you, and do not desist until the stone be removed from your heart. Then, indeed, the distress will not fail to become 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 see, so that, with the grace of God, you may feel it more and become the more hungry for the Sacrament, especially since the devil plies his force against you, and lies in wait for you without ceasing to seize and destroy you, soul and body, so that you are not safe from him one hour. How soon can he have brought you suddenly into misery and distress when you least expect it!

Let this, then, be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are old and grown, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the Christian doctrine and understanding. For thereby the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer might be the more easily



inculcated to our youth, so that they would receive them with pleasure and earnestness, and thus would practice them from their youth and accustom themselves to them. For the old are now well-nigh done for, so that these and other things cannot be attained, unless we train the people who are to come after us and succeed us in our office and work, in order that they also may bring up their children successfully, 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, in order that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us to believe, love, pray, and fight against the devil.



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