

MARTIN LUTHER

MARTIN LUTHER'S
LARGE CATECHISM,
TRANSLATED BY BENTE
AND DAU

Martin Luther

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Preface

A Christian, Profitable, and Necessary Preface and Faithful, Earnest Exhortation of Dr. Martin Luther to All Christians, but Especially to All Pastors and Preachers, 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 Thesaurus, 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.

Yea, 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, yea, 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 every morning, and whenever I have time, I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain 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, yea, 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 verily, verily! not so learned or such great doctors as they imagine; and never to presume that they have finished learning this [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, Matt. 18, 20: Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst 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, Rom. 1, 16, the power of God. Yea, 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 Deut. 6, 6 ff. 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 [and false weights] 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:

First.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain [for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain].
3. Thou shalt sanctify the holy-day. [Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.]
4. Thou shalt honor thy father and mother [that thou mayest live long upon the earth].
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle [ox, nor his ass], nor anything that is his.

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 Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
3. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Thirdly.

THE PRAYER, OR "OUR FATHER," WHICH CHRIST TAUGHT

Our Father who art in heaven.

1. Hallowed be Thy name.
2. Thy kingdom come.
3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

4. Give us this day our daily bread.
5. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
6. And lead us not into temptation.
7. But deliver us from evil. [For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever.] Amen.

These are the most necessary parts 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, ma-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 arts 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, 19 ff.] and Mark [16, 15 f.] record at the close of their Gospels when Christ said farewell to His disciples and sent them forth.

OF BAPTISM.

Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. So much is sufficient for a 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 Cor. 11, 23 f.].

OF THE SACRAMENT

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.

Thus, ye 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 subtle 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.

Part First. The Ten Commandments

The First Commandment

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

That is: Thou shalt have [and worship] Me alone as thy God. What is the force of this, and how is it to be understood? What 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 one 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 [lacerated his flesh by voluntary fasting to the honor of 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, yea, [a fig image or] an apple-god, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God? But this is slightly too subtle, 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 naught but good, as from one who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessities 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:

[Exposition of the Appendix to the First Commandment.]

For I am the Lord, thy God, strong and jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

Although these words 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 desisted.

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 everyone 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 the themselves have never found happiness in their wealth, and afterwards 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 food 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

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

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 abjure [their plighted troth].

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, subtle 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, nay, manifold lies, result.

For this reason, too, God has added a solemn threat to this commandment, to wit: For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in van. 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: Thou shalt not take the name of the

Lord thy God, in vain, 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 Ps. 50, 15: Call upon Me in the days of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. For all this is bringing 't 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, 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, ad though it be deferred a long time, he shall not succeed; 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 betimes 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 practices 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 practices 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

Thou shalt sanctify the holy day.

[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 [holy days]), but first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; for the common people, man-servants and maid-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 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: Thou shalt sanctify the holy day? 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 practices God's Word, but teach and live contrary to it.

For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, 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 reprov'd 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 *achedia*, 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 flight 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:

Thou shalt honor thy father and thy 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 queer 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 Thee." 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.

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