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(Form B)

**A SHORT EXPOSITION
OF
DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM**

INTRODUCTION

When yet a child, you were baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. By this baptism God adopted you as His child and promised that He would some day take you into heaven.

Now it must be your chief concern in life that you remain a child of God, so that you may inherit this promised salvation. Therefore you certainly want to know more about your heavenly Father. You want to know who He is, what He has done for you, and how you should serve Him.

This little book, called the Small Catechism, will help you to learn these things.

1. What is a catechism?

A catechism is a book of instruction in the form of questions and answers.

2. Who wrote the Small Catechism?

The Small Catechism was written by Dr. Martin Luther.

3. Who is Dr. Martin Luther?

Martin Luther was born in Eisleben, Germany, November 10, 1483. He was brought up in the faith of the Catholic Church. Being seriously concerned about his soul's salvation, he entered a cloister and became a monk. However, he found no peace of conscience in the teachings and the practices of his Church. But from the Bible he learned that God freely forgives sins to all men for Jesus' sake and that this forgiveness was his by faith. As he continued to study the Scriptures, he found that many errors and abuses had crept into the Church of his day. So he began to teach and preach what he had learned from the Bible. Thus he became the Reformer of the Church, through whom God restored to us the pure teachings of His Word.

On October 31, 1517, Luther published 95 theses against the sale of indulgences; from 1522 to 1534 he translated the Bible into the German language; 1529 he published the Large and the Small Catechism. The Augsburg Confession, in which

the doctrines of the Lutheran Church are set forth, was publicly read before the Imperial Diet of Augsburg in 1530.

Luther died in Eisleben, February 18, 1546, to the end confessing the faith he had preached during his life.

4. What does the Small Catechism teach us?

The Small Catechism teaches in plain language and simple form the chief doctrines of our Christian faith.

5. Which are these?

I. The Ten Commandments, or the Law, in which God tells us what we should do and what we should not do.

II. The Creed, from which we learn what God has done, and is still doing, for us that we may be saved and get to heaven.

III. The Lord's Prayer, which teaches us how we may ask our heavenly Father for whatever we need for body and soul.

IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, in which we are reminded of the blessed covenant we made with our God in early infancy.

V. The Office of the Keys and Confession, where we learn that God has given to His Church the power to forgive our sins whenever we penitently confess them.

VI. The Sacrament of the Altar, which Christ has instituted to strengthen our faith.

6. From which book did Luther take the things he teaches in the Small Catechism?

Whatever Luther teaches in the Small Catechism he has taken from the Bible.

THE BIBLE

7. What is the Bible?

The Bible, or Holy Scripture, is the Word of God, which was written by holy men of God.

1 Thess. 2, 13. When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God.

2 Pet. 1, 21. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

8. Who were these holy men of God?

The holy men of God in the Old Testament were Moses and the prophets, in the New Testament the evangelists and

the apostles. These men were the writers, but God Himself is the Author, of the Bible.

9. How can God be the Author of what these men wrote?

God gave to these men His Holy Ghost, who moved them *when* to write; inspired them *what* to write, putting into their minds the ideas, thoughts, and truths they were to write; suggested to them *how* to write, controlling the very words in which to express the divine truths.

2 Sam. 23, 2. The Spirit of God spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue.

2 Pet. 1, 21. The holy men of God, etc.

2 Tim. 3, 16. All Scripture was given by inspiration of God.

1 Cor. 2, 13. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual [matching the words of the Spirit to the things, truths, of the Spirit].

B. S. On Pentecost the disciples spoke the wonderful works of God as the Spirit gave them utterance, Acts 2, 1—14.

10. In which language was the Bible first written?

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew, the New Testament in the Greek language.

The German translation of the Bible by Dr. Martin Luther was first published in 1534, the Authorized English Version in 1611.

Since then the Bible has been translated into many languages, so that today millions of people can read the Word of God in a language they understand.

11. What does God want us to do with His Word?

God wants us 1) to read and learn His Word, 2) to ponder it in our hearts, 3) to keep it in our lives, 4) to make it known to others.

John 5, 39. Search the Scriptures.

Luke 11, 28. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.

Josh. 1, 8. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

Deut. 6, 6, 7. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.

Mark 16, 15. Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

12. Of what benefit is such study of the Bible?

From the Bible we learn —

1) How we may obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus, our Savior;

2) How we as God's children may lead a pious life here on earth.

2 Tim. 3, 15—17. That from a child thou hast known, etc.

13. Can the Bible really do such great things for us?

The Bible is *sufficient* to make us wise unto salvation and to guide us in our way of life; we need no additional revelation. It is also *clear* enough for a child to understand its principal teachings. And because it is God's Word, it is absolutely *true*, and we can safely rely on all its statements and promises.

2 Tim. 3, 15. (See under 12.)

John 17, 17. Thy Word is truth.

14. Into what parts is the Bible divided?

The Bible is divided into two large parts: the Old Testament, which treats of the Savior who was promised, and the New Testament, which tells us of the Savior who has come.

Each Testament consists of a number of books, which are divided into chapters and verses. This arrangement helps us to find in the Bible the texts that are quoted in the Catechism.

15. By which names do we quote the books of the Bible?

(Here the names of the books of the Bible are to be given)

16. Of what does the Bible treat?

The Bible treats of God, of His works, and of His will toward us; that is, it tells us who the true God is whom we should worship, what He has done, is doing, and will do for us, and what He would have us believe and do.

(Here follows the doctrine of God, Questions 17—21)

THE FIRST CHIEF PART

GOD'S LAW, OR THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

22. Who gave the Ten Commandments?

God gave the Ten Commandments, because He is the Lord and Lawgiver of all men.

Ex. 20, 2. I am the Lord, thy God.

Jas. 4, 12. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.

23. How did God first make His Law known to man?

When God created man, He put the full knowledge of His Law into man's heart.

When man sinned, this knowledge was very much blurred, but not altogether forgotten. Hence all men by

nature have some knowledge of God's Law, according to which their conscience judges their deeds.

Rom. 2, 14, 15. The Gentiles, which have not the Law, etc.

24. When did God again reveal His Law?

That we might better learn to know His will, God, on Mount Sinai, wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone and published them through Moses in the Bible.

B. S. The story of the giving of the Law we find recorded Ex. 19 and 20 and Deut. 10, 1—5.

25. What does God tell us in these commandments?

In the Ten Commandments God tells us how we are to be, what we are to do, and what not to do.

Lev. 19, 2. Ye shall be holy, etc.

Ex. 34, 11. Observe thou that which I command thee this day.

(See the Ten Commandments)

26. Which other laws did God publish through Moses?

God gave to the children of Israel also —

Political laws, which regulated their civil affairs and were binding upon them only as long as they were a nation;

Ceremonial laws, which regulated their religious practices and were shadows of the coming Savior. They are no longer binding on us Christians in the New Testament.

27. To whom are the Ten Commandments given?

The Ten Commandments are the Moral Law, and they are binding upon all men. The first word in each commandment, "thou," points to every man, woman, and child in the world. The second word, "shalt," shows that God demands strict obedience of all.

Gal. 3, 10. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

28. What is a brief summary of the Law?

"Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. 22, 37, 39.

29. How may we group the Ten Commandments according to their content?

On the First Table we place the first three commandments, which treat of the love and service we owe to our God.

On the Second Table we place the last seven commandments, which treat of the love and service we owe to our neighbor.

THE FIRST TABLE

30. Of what does the First Table treat?

The First Table treats of the love and service we owe to our God.

31. What is the summary of the First Table?

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

The First Commandment

32. Which is the First Commandment?

Thou shalt have no other, etc.

33. What does this mean?

We should fear, love, etc.

34. What does God require of us in this commandment?

God demands that we should have Him only as our God.
Ex. 20, 2. I am the Lord, thy God.

35. What does it mean to have Him as our God?

We must learn to know the true God from the Bible and worship Him according to His Word.

John 17, 5. This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent.

Matt. 4, 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

36. Wherein does such true worship of God consist?

True worship of God does not consist in external ceremonies and lip-service, but in this that from the heart we fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

Matt. 15, 8. This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

John 4, 24. God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

37. What does it mean to fear God above all things?

To fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him, but it means to honor, respect, and reverence Him, to stand in awe of Him, to think highly of Him.

Because He is the Holy and Almighty One, we should fear Him above all things and not do anything that might displease Him.

Ps. 33, 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

Ps. 5, 4. Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell with Thee.

Gen. 17, 1. I am the almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.

Prov. 8, 13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.

Gen. 39, 9. How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?

B. S. Because Abraham feared God, he would not disobey Him, **Gen. 22.** The three men in the fiery furnace feared God more than the wrath of the king, **Dan. 3.**

38. What does it mean to love God above all things?

To love God means to long for Him, to desire to be with Him.

Because God is our best Friend, continually doing more good to us than any one else, we should love Him above all things and therefore gladly do whatever He may ask of us.

Psa. 73, 25, 26. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever.

Matt. 22, 37. Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.

Psa. 146, 19. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.

1 John 5, 3. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.

B. S. The woman whose many sins were forgiven loved much and showed her love in serving the Master, **Luke 7, 36—50.**

39. What does it mean to trust in God above all things?

To trust in God means to rely upon Him, to feel sure that He can help us in every need of body and soul.

Because God is willing and able to help us in our greatest difficulties, we should trust in Him above all things. Therefore we should not worry or despair, but believe His promises and confidently wait for His help.

Prov. 3, 5. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. (Trust own in God than in yourself.)

Psa. 118, 8. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. (Trust more in God than in man.)

Psa. 37, 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He will bring it to pass.

Isa. 41, 10. Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

B. S. Daniel trusted in God to deliver him from the lions, **Dan. 6.** Christ teaches us to trust more in God than in Mammon, **Matt. 6, 24—34.**

40. When do we sin against this commandment?

We sin against this commandment —

1) When we have no god at all;

Psa. 14, 1. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works.

2) When we have other gods in place of the true God or beside Him; (See the First Commandment)

3) When we do not fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. (See explanation of First Commandment)

41. Are there other gods besides the Triune God?

There is but one who really and truly is God; but there are many idols which men regard as gods.

Is. 44, 6. I am the First and the Last, and beside Me there is no God.

Ps. 96, 5. All the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens.

42. What is an idol?

An idol is anything men worship in place of the Triune God. Such an idol may be a creature (the sun, fire, an animal); a graven image, figure, or picture (the golden calf, Ex. 32; the golden image, Dan. 3); a spiritual being which men imagine in their own minds (the Great Spirit of the Indians, the god of the Mohammedans, of the modern Jews, of the Unitarians). The worship of false gods, or idols, is called idolatry.

Ex. 20, 4. 5. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God.

Ps. 115, 4. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

John 5, 23. All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him.

43. How do even we Christians often transgress this commandment?

We transgress this commandment whenever we set our hearts on anything and fear, love, or trust in it as we should fear, love, and trust in God only.

Matt. 10, 28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

B. S. When Peter denied the Lord, he feared men more than God, Mark 14, 66—72.

Matt. 10, 37. He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

B. S. When Eli restrained not his wicked sons, he showed that he loved them more than God, 1 Sam. 3, 11—14.

Phil. 3, 19. Whose god is their belly and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things.

B. S. The rich man made himself his god by living only for his own pleasure and enjoyment, Luke 16, 19.

Matt. 6, 24. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

B. S. The rich young man loved his possessions more than God, Matt. 19, 16—24.

Jer. 17, 5. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

B. S. The Philistines trusted in Goliath, and Goliath trusted in his strength; but David trusted in the Lord, 1 Sam. 17, 42—51.

Mark 10, 24. Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

B. S. The rich fool trusted in his worldly goods, Luke 12, 15—21.

Noxz. —The First Commandment is the most important of all commandments because here God claims our hearts for Himself. In no wise and at no time should our hearts depart from Him, but always we should fear, love, and trust in Him with all our heart.

All other commandments are included in the First, and unless we keep this one, we shall not be able to keep the others. For this reason Luther begins the explanation of each of the following commandments with the words "We should fear and love God."