



A Small Catechism on

Human

Life

By John T. Pless

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Notes for the Reader:

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Quotations from the Large Catechism and the Augsburg Confession are taken from *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). The Large Catechism is noted as LC, and the Augsburg Confession is noted as AC.

Hymn verses and prayers are quoted from the following sources: *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941); *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982); Excerpts from *Lutheran Worship Agenda* (© 1984 Concordia Publishing House). Used with permission. All rights reserved. These are noted, respectively, as *TLH*, *LW* and *LW Agenda*.

Quotations from the writings of Martin Luther are taken from Luther's Works, American Edition, volumes 31, 36 and 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957; 1959; 1961). These are noted as AE.

Sources for all other quotations are found in additional notes at the end of this volume.

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“I am also a doctor and a preacher, just as learned and experienced as all of them who are so high and mighty. Nevertheless, each morning and whenever else I have time, I do as a child who is being taught the catechism and I read and recite word for word the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms etc. I must still read and study the catechism — and I also do so gladly.”

– Martin Luther (LC, Preface, p. 380)

“Praise be to God — it has come to pass that man and woman, young and old, know the catechism; they know how to believe, to live, to pray, to suffer, and to die. Consciences are well instructed about how to be Christians and how to recognize Christ.”

– Martin Luther (“Warning to His Dear German People” 1531, AE 47:52-53)



INTRODUCTION

*F*our hundred seventy-five years ago, in 1529, Martin Luther prepared his Small Catechism as a “pattern of the sound words” (see 2 Tim. 1:13) to guide Christians in the life of faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Throughout the last five centuries, Lutherans have turned to this little handbook to guide them into the riches of Holy Scripture and help them understand what it means to live as a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The catechism orients all of life by the First Commandment and frames the story of our individual lives in the story of the Triune God, who is our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter. It shapes our view of the world and our purpose within it as those who live toward the resurrection of the body in the promise of Baptism. It teaches us how to call upon our Father in faith and how to serve our neighbor in love. It tutors us in repentance and faith. It prepares us to eat and drink Jesus’ body and blood, trusting His testament for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Small Catechism is a “life book,” to use the words of the German Lutheran bishop Ludwig Ihmels. It is a book about our life with God — a life created by the Father, redeemed by the Son and hallowed by the Spirit. This book that you now have in your hands is a companion to the Small Catechism. It seeks to let the Small Catechism speak about our life, the life of our Creator and His crucified Son in our dying world. We will use the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine to engage questions about the beginning and ending of life, about marriage and family as places where God gives and guards life, and about our responsibility to show mercy in all stages of life. Drawn from God’s Word, the catechism provides a reliable and coherent framework for responding to issues of life and death, vocation and mercy, from the perspective of God’s Law and Gospel.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Read the Preface to Luther's Small Catechism (pp. 246-252). Why did Martin Luther prepare the Small Catechism in 1529? While the world of 16th-century Germany is vastly different from the world we know, what are some of the ways Luther's diagnoses of church life still apply to us today?
2. How does the catechism serve to orient the Christian life to both faith and love? (See 2 Tim. 1:13.)
3. In the Bible, God speaks two distinct words to us. His word of Law exposes and condemns our sin. His word of Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins and peace with God through faith in Jesus. How do the structure and sequence of the Six Chief Parts of the Catechism reflect the right distinction between the Law and the Gospel? (See Rom. 3:19-31.)
4. What are some issues that challenge the sanctity of life in our day? While these issues might not be explicitly named in the catechism, how does the catechism provide us with "a reliable and coherent framework" for responding to these challenges?

ONE

“For no one of those who are alive today knows where he was during the first two years, when he lived either in the womb, or when, after being brought into the light of day, he sucked his mother’s milk. He knows nothing about the days, the nights, the times, the rulers. Yet he lived at that time, and he was a body joined to a soul — a body adapted to all natural functions. Therefore this is most certain proof that God wants to preserve man in a wonderful manner altogether unknown to him.”

– Martin Luther (“Genesis Lectures,” AE 8:316-317)





The Creation

WHO IS THE GIVER OF LIFE?

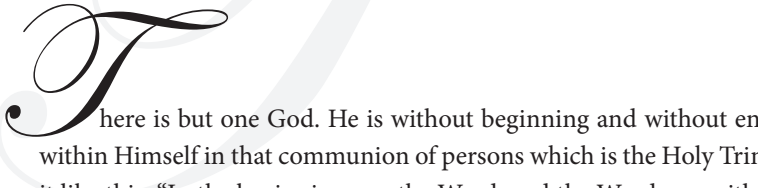
Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

The Lord's Prayer — Introduction

First Commandment

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 24, 26-29, 112-117



There is but one God. He is without beginning and without end. He has life within Himself in that communion of persons which is the Holy Trinity. John puts it like this: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:1-4). God is the source of all life, and it is His very nature to bestow life. Luther put it succinctly: “These are the three persons and one God, who has given himself to us wholly and completely, with all that he is and has. The Father gives himself to us, with heaven and earth and all the creatures, in order that they may serve us and benefit us. But this gift has become obscured and useless through Adam’s fall. Therefore the Son himself subsequently gave himself and bestowed all his works, sufferings, wisdom and righteousness, and reconciled us to the Father, in order that restored to life and righteousness, we might also know and have the Father and all his gifts.”¹ God is both Giver and Gift. There is no life apart from this God and His undeserved giving.

This brings us to one of the pet mythologies of our day: autonomy. Autonomy is taken from two Greek words meaning “self” and “law.” To be autonomous is to be a law unto oneself. It is to be self-contained. The Lutheran theologian Werner Elert rightly observed that autonomy is nothing more than an unfulfilled illusion.

It is yet another attempt to be your own god. The fact that you have a belly button proves Elert's point. You were not self-created. Your body was formed in the body of another. In other words, the life you have came to you from outside of yourself; it came as gift apart from your willing it. At the other end of life there is also the boundary of death. To paraphrase the words of Genesis, from dust you were taken and to dust you shall return. It is in between the boundaries of birth and death that we live; we may not transcend these boundaries, try as we might. Human life does not come into existence by its own willfulness, nor can it extend itself eternally. Autonomy comes crashing down on these two realities: birth and death. Many contemporary ethical issues like abortion, homosexuality and euthanasia are often argued for on the basis of autonomy, something that does not exist.

The First Commandment unmasks the lie of autonomy. God doesn't argue for His own existence. He simply asserts it: "*You shall have no other gods.*" Of course, God's very existence gets in the way of our quest for autonomy. This was recognized by the unbelieving philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who argued that even if the biblical God did exist, we would have to pretend that He did not exist in order to be free in the way we think we want to be free. The problem is that we are not free. We are bound to the earth, as we were taken from dust and will return to dust. Try as we might, we cannot escape being creatures. And that is a good thing!

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What is the connection between God and life according to John 1:1-4?
2. “God is the source of all life, and it is His very nature to bestow life.” Review Luther’s explanation to each of the three articles of the Apostles’ Creed. How does each person of the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — bestow life?
3. What is autonomy? Give examples of how this attitude shows itself today.
4. How do both birth and death prove that autonomy is an “unfulfilled illusion”?
5. The late theologian Gerhard Forde wrote, “If one starts from the premise and defense of freedom of the will one will end in bondage.”² How does the First Commandment show us that we are not free?



Image p. 8: The Creation; woodcut from the first illustrated edition of the Large Catechism, 1530, Wittenburg. Pritzlaff Memorial Library Rare Book Collection; Concordia Seminary Library, St. Louis, Mo.

Gen. 1:26a — “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...’*” As God gave life to the first man and woman, so now He gives life to all through His Son.

Two

“Here much could be said if we were to describe how few people believe this article (the First Article). We pass over it, we hear it and recite it, but we neither see nor think about what the words command us to do. For if we believed it with our whole heart, we would also act accordingly, and not swagger about and boast and brag as if we had life, riches, power, honor, and such things of ourselves, as if we ourselves were to be feared and served. This is the way the wretched, perverse world acts, drowned in its blindness, misusing all the blessings and gifts of God solely for its own pride, greed, pleasure, and enjoyment, and never once turning to God to thank him or acknowledge him as Lord or Creator.”

– Martin Luther (LC II:20-21, p. 433)





Adam and Eve

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CREATURE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 112-119

To be a creature is to owe your life to the One who is your Creator. Our first parents sinned not because they were only human but in their failure to trust the Word of their Creator. The satanic lie enticed Eve to believe that she would be like God, knowing good from evil (see Gen. 3:5). In unbelief, Adam and Eve attempted to step outside of their humanity, to rise above being mere creatures, to be like God. Not content to be creatures that rely on the goodness of the Father, Adam and Eve desired to take for themselves the position of lordship. Their descendants have been repeating their fatal error ever since. It is called sin. Mark Twain once quipped that in the beginning God created man in His own image, and ever since man has returned the favor! We want to be God; we will not be content to be creatures made in His image.

We see it enacted in every project that would attempt to transcend being a creature and would instead grasp the title of creator for ourselves. God fashioned Adam and Eve in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). They ceased to reflect the image of their Maker when their sin alienated them from their Father, putting them under condemnation and sentencing them to death. Grappling for life on their own terms, they lay hold of death. Seeking to be like God, they failed to be what God had created them to be: creatures who live under His blessing and favor. So it is with every attempt to “play God,” whether it is the god-like verdict that some human beings are not worthy of life — those who are physically or mentally handicapped,

the unwanted child and the suffering elderly person — or the high-minded desire to “improve humanity” through genetic engineering or human cloning. As C.S. Lewis reminded us, attempts to improve humanity are finally efforts to improve the lot of some of humanity at the expense of other segments of humanity. For example, embryonic stem cell research holds out the promise of an improved life for people with diabetes or Parkinson’s disease, but such an advance comes only by destroying nascent human beings. Appeals to compassion must never be allowed to suggest that we are permitted to do evil in the pursuit of good.

Human beings are made for life. We are made not only for biological existence but for life with God in time and eternity. We are made for what the Bible calls eternal life (see John 5:21; 6:63; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6). Life is fearing, loving and trusting the Triune God above all things. Apart from Him there is only death — even in those projects that we mistakenly believe will enhance life.

The Ten Commandments bind us to life in this world. They set out the demands that keep life human. The first three commandments deal with life *coram deo*, before God. Commandments four through ten deal with our life in the presence of other human beings, *coram hominibus*. The First Commandment is the source of the remainder of the commandments and is embedded in each of them. God, who is Lord over all of life, is a jealous God. He will not share us with any idols. He forbids us to exchange His truth for a lie and worship a creature rather than the Creator (see Rom. 1:25).

When this fatal exchange is undertaken, life actually becomes subhuman. Commandments two through ten diagnose the disease that is made evident in the superstitious use of God’s name, the neglect of His Word, the dishonoring of parents, the killing of the innocent, the violation of the marriage bond, the theft of property, the abuse of truth and the covetous life. Where these commandments are broken, life is disordered. More than that, it is put under the wrath of God. Therefore Luther concludes his explanation of the commandments with these words: “*God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and*

every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.”

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Read Ps. 100:2. How does the Psalmist describe our being creatures?
2. Read Gen. 3:1-7. What did Eve believe? How is this false belief repeated? (See Rom. 1:24-25.)
3. How does Gen. 1:26-27 describe the image of God? What happens when human beings want to be God rather than creatures made in His image?
4. The Christian writer C.S. Lewis worried about projects that were set to improve humanity at the expense of other segments of the human family. What are some examples of this failed project?
5. How does the Bible define eternal life? (See John 5:21; 6:63; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6.)
6. How do the Ten Commandments bind us to life in this world both before God and in the presence of other human beings?
7. How are all of the commandments connected to the First Commandment?



Image p. 14: Adam and Eve. *Dürer in America: His Graphic Work*, Charles W. Talbot, editor. (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

Gen. 3:4 — “*But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’*” Believing the satanic lie rather than trusting God’s Word, Adam and Eve no longer rely on their Creator for all good things.

THREE

“But once the male and the female are so created, man is then procreated out of their blood through the divine blessing. Although this procreation is something man has in common with the brutes, it detracts nothing from that glory of our origin, namely, that we are vessels of God, formed by God Himself, and that He Himself is our Potter, but we His clay, as Is. 64:8 says. And this holds good not only for our origin but throughout our whole life; until our death and in the grave we remain the clay of this Potter.”

– Martin Luther (“Genesis Lectures,” AE 1:84)





The Marriage of the Virgin

HOW DOES GOD GIVE LIFE?

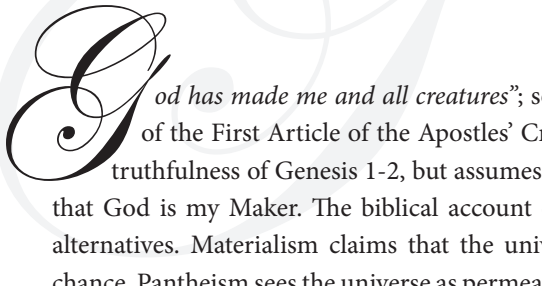
Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

The Lord's Prayer — Fourth Petition

Sixth Commandment

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 97-98, 102-103, 105-107, 55-56



*G*od has made me and all creatures”; so reads the catechism’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Luther does not argue for the truthfulness of Genesis 1-2, but assumes it and moves on to make the point that God is my Maker. The biblical account of creation excludes three popular alternatives. Materialism claims that the universe is a product of evolutionary chance. Pantheism sees the universe as permeated by divine energy. Deism accepts a creator but denies that this god actively governs and sustains his handiwork. Over against these false views of creation stands the truth that God, the Father Almighty, is the maker of heaven and earth. To be a creature is to be dependent on the Creator for all of life.

The same Lord God who wrought the universe into existence by the sound of His voice has made me. As we have already seen, there is no life apart from Him. God fashioned Adam out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). From sleeping Adam’s open side, God took a rib and made of Adam’s flesh a woman (Gen. 2:21-23). But how does God give life now?

God gives life through the one-flesh union of man and woman. Martin Luther liked to use the imagery of masks when talking about the work of God. God “hides” behind the masks of a man and a woman to create and sustain new life.

Out of this one-flesh union, God is as surely creating human life today as He was in Eden. In this union, man and woman are not interchangeable. The distinctive features of male and female are biological realities with spiritual significance. The distinction that God has made between men and women cannot be dismissed by an appeal to the ideology of equalitarianism. That we are equally children of the one Father, redeemed by His Son and given access to Him by the Spirit, does not erase the creaturely gift and vocation of being man or woman.

We often speak of the conceiving and birthing of children as reproduction. Yet this language is deceptive, for it carries with it the imagery of the factory and the assembly line. The language of procreation is preferable to reproduction. Procreation better illustrates the reality of creation. We are created, not manufactured or mass produced. The Scriptures use the language of begetting when referring to conception and birth. This language brings to mind the words of the Nicene Creed and its confession of the true deity of the Son, who is “begotten, not made.” The creed’s language is relational. The language of reproduction, on the other hand, invites us to think in terms of a product. It is only a short step, then, to treat a defective product as disposable.

Children are not our products. When children are seen as a product of human achievement, we begin to think of them as an entitlement, which we will do anything to achieve. Hence couples pursue having a child by means of *in vitro* fertilization using a donor egg or sperm — a process that fractures the one-flesh union of husband and wife that the Sixth Commandment seeks to guard. Or they employ another form of “reproductive technology” in which several eggs are fertilized but only one embryo is implanted, while those remaining are destroyed. The desire to conceive and bear new life is then fulfilled, but the “leftover” embryos are consigned to death. Conversely, Christian parents will welcome children not as an undeniable right, but as a gift, an inheritance held in trust from the Lord God (see Ps. 127:3). With this gift comes the responsibility of a vocation: the calling of parenthood.

God's creation of humanity as male and female is foundational. That is why Luther notes in the Large Catechism that God wishes us to honor marriage. "He has established it before all others as the first of all institutions, and created men and women differently (as is evident) not for indecency but to be true to each other, to be fruitful, to beget children, and to nurture them and bring them up to the glory of God."³ We are not just persons, but male and female, created for life with God and one another, according to the design that He has set in creation itself. We have human identity as male and female. The very structure of humanity is heterosexual in nature. Life itself is disordered and finally rendered impossible when this structure is denied.

It should really come as no surprise that denominations that just four decades ago decided to bypass the biblical prohibition of women in the pastoral office (see 1 Cor. 14:33-34 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14), and thus brought disorder in the church, are now set to endorse the blessing of homosexual unions and the ordination of homosexuals into the ministry. Life in the church follows God's good work in creation (see Eph. 5:22-33). Where the God-ordained distinctions of gender are ignored or rejected, we put ourselves outside the realm of God's blessing.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Review Luther's explanation of the First Article. How does Luther's explanation contrast with materialism, pantheism and deism?
2. Read Genesis 2. How did God give life to Adam and Eve? How does God give human life now?
3. What is the danger in speaking of reproduction rather than procreation?
4. How does *in vitro* fertilization using a donor egg or sperm fracture the one-flesh union that the Sixth Commandment seeks to guard?
5. Do the Scriptures view children as a right or a gift? (See Ps. 127:3.)
6. What is the significance of human beings as male and female?
7. What happens when the distinctiveness of being either male or female is set aside or ignored?



Image p. 20: The Marriage of the Virgin. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Eph. 5:31b-32 — “*And the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and ... it refers to Christ and the church.*”
By this union of man and wife, God continues to create life through the vocation of parents, even as He creates and upholds the life of His Bride, the Church.

FOUR

“For God rules us in such a way that He does not want us to be idle. He gives us food and clothing, but in such a way that we should plow, sow, reap, and cook. In addition, He gives offspring, which is born and grows because of the blessing of God and must nevertheless be cherished, cared for, brought up, and instructed by the parents. But when we have done what is in us, then we should entrust the rest to God and cast our care on the Lord; for He will act.”

– Martin Luther (“Genesis Lectures,” AE 8:94)





Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness

HOW DOES GOD SUSTAIN LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

The Lord's Prayer — Fourth Petition

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 219-222

*A*s Luther unfolds the confession, “*I believe that God has made me and all creatures,*” he describes what God has given and continues to give. First, the Father has endowed us with the bodily gifts of “*my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.*” All that is entailed in our bodily life is a gift from God. Next Luther discusses how it is that God takes care of the human life that He has created: “*He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all that I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.*” God’s ongoing provision of what is called “daily bread” in the Lord’s Prayer is the means by which He sustains the creaturely life. The God who opens His hand to satisfy the desires of every living creature (see Ps. 145:15-16) is the Lord on whose goodness we depend for life itself. God gives daily bread, for without it we die. He uses us to be “daily bread one to another,” as Luther once remarked. That is, we are daily bread to our neighbor even as our neighbor becomes daily bread for us. Such is the wondrous design of our heavenly Father. Therefore, we do not withhold the daily bread of nutrition and hydration from our neighbor even when he is dying. Christians will acknowledge that God uses human beings to thwart death and extend life.

Occasionally, we hear well-meaning folks make comments such as, “I don’t want to be a burden to anyone.” God, however, has a different design. In His gracious

will to save us, He has carried the whole burden of our sin in His Son. He has freed us to be both burden-bearers and burdens. Paul exhorts the Galatians to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Not only are we to care for those whose lives have become burdensome by illness or accident, by loss or old age, we are to humble ourselves to the point of receiving the loving service of others. We are not to be ashamed to be a burden, for in doing so we give opportunity to our brothers and sisters in Christ to fulfill their vocation to bear burdens for Jesus’ sake.

By faith we confess Luther’s explanation of the First Article, acknowledging that all we are and have is a gift from the Father. Life is not judged to be good on account of its quality, but because it is given from the Father, who is love. There is a story told about a student who attempted to trip up Edmund Schlink, a well-known professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg in the previous generation. Schlink was lecturing on the phrase God “*has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members.*” The student questioned his teacher, saying, “But Professor Schlink, how does a blind person confess these things?” Dr. Schlink replied, “By faith.” With such a simple answer, Schlink was echoing a sermon preached by Luther on Pentecost Monday, 1534. Luther says, “Giving, when it proceeds from true love, makes the gift all the greater and more precious; as we are wont to say, it makes me happy, for it is a gift of love, if I know that the heart is in it. On the other hand, if we doubt the existence of heartfelt love, we do not think very highly of the gift. If, therefore, God has given us only one eye, one foot, or one hand, and we were convinced that he had done this out of divine, fatherly love, then such eye, foot, or hand would be dearer to us than if there had been a thousand eyes, feet, or hands.”⁴ The goodness is not found in the gift but the Giver. He makes the gift a good thing to be cherished, cared for and protected.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How does Ps. 145:15-16 inform Luther's explanation both to the First Article of the Creed and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer?
2. How are we "daily bread one to another"? What are the implications of this for our care of the dying?
3. How might you answer an elderly or chronically ill person who says, "I don't want to be a burden to anyone"? (See Gal. 6:2.)
4. We are tempted to evaluate life on the basis of ability, attractiveness or other characteristics that would make life worthwhile. How does the First Article teach us to value human life?



Image p. 26: *Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness.*

The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.

Ex. 16:15b — *“And Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.’”* As God graciously supplied daily bread to His people in the wilderness, so even now He feeds Christians bread from heaven to be instruments of God's mercy to a dying world.

FIVE

“Since a true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself alone but for his neighbor, he does by the very nature of his spirit even what he himself has no need of, but is needful and useful to his neighbor. Because the sword is most beneficial and necessary for the whole world in order to preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked, the Christian submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves and helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function and be held in honor and fear. Although he has no need of these things for himself — to him they are not essential — nevertheless, he concerns himself about what is serviceable and of benefit to others as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:21-6:9.”

– Martin Luther (“Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should Be Obeyed,” AE 45:94)





St. Michael fighting the dragon

HOW DOES GOD PROTECT LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 108-110

There is a final aspect of Luther's description of God's care for life: "*He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.*" God has instituted the government to curb the unruly powers so that human life is not plunged into chaos and finally destroyed (see Rom. 13:1-7). Those in political office are tools in God's hand even if in the blindness of unbelief they do not recognize it. Those who make and administer the laws of the land do so as God's masks, for behind their work God wills to defend, guard and protect His creatures. In electing wise and just leaders, believers are not attempting to Christianize the political realm, but they are functioning as citizens, calling the government to do what it was put in place to do, namely, to protect and defend human life. All of this comes under what Luther calls the government of God's left hand. Even though these earthly institutions are flawed by sin and are often perverted by self-serving impulses, God uses them to prevent anarchy and the complete collapse of society.

God is Lord over all that He has made. His rule is not confined to that which might be called the spiritual dimension of life. But He works in two distinct ways in the world. Through the government of His right hand, He rules over His Church by the Gospel, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins for Jesus' sake. Here God's children live by faith, not by works. Through the government of God's left hand, He is at work through the Law to preserve the works of His hands so that the corrupting and corrosive effects of sin are held in check. Christians do not retreat into a purely spiritual realm but live in the world, fulfilling their vocations for

the good of their neighbors. Thus Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession states: “Because the Gospel transmits an eternal righteousness of the heart, they (that is, the Lutherans) condemn those who locate evangelical perfection not in the fear of God and faith but in the abandoning of civil responsibilities. In the meantime, the Gospel does not undermine government or family but completely requires both their preservation as ordinances of God and the exercise of love in these ordinances.”⁵

Life under the First Commandment finds its fulfillment not in withdrawal from the world but in a life of faith and love lived within one’s callings in the world. It is here that God uses the offices of our various callings to protect and sustain human life. Thus Christians function in the offices of citizenship and government to help maintain a civic community that treats all life with justice and compassion.

God also defends and guards human life in ways that are largely hidden from us. The Lord uses His angels to watch over and attend the ways of His children (see Ps. 91:11-12). Jesus warns against despising “the little ones” who believe in Him, for “their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). Even in ways beyond our comprehension, the Lord cares for the weak and the helpless who are at the margins of life. The catechism teaches us to recognize this in the way we pray. In Luther’s morning and evening prayers, we petition the Father: “*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.*” And for centuries, Lutherans have sung and prayed the words of Martin Schalling’s hymn as they have anticipated death:

Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abram’s bosom bear me home,
That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.

And then from death awaken me,
That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end. (TLH 429:3)

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How does God seek to defend, guard and protect human life in the world? (See Rom. 13:1-7.)
2. What place does the Christian have in civil government?
3. What are the proper goals for the Christian in civil community?
4. God protects human life not only through the instrumentality of governmental structures and civil law but also by the ministry of His holy angels. (See Ps. 91:11-12 and Matt. 18:10.) How do the angels demonstrate God's providential care for human life that is weak and endangered?
5. Meditate on the final stanza from Martin Schalling's hymn (TLH 429:3). How will God protect our life even in death?



Image p. 32: St. Michael fighting the dragon. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

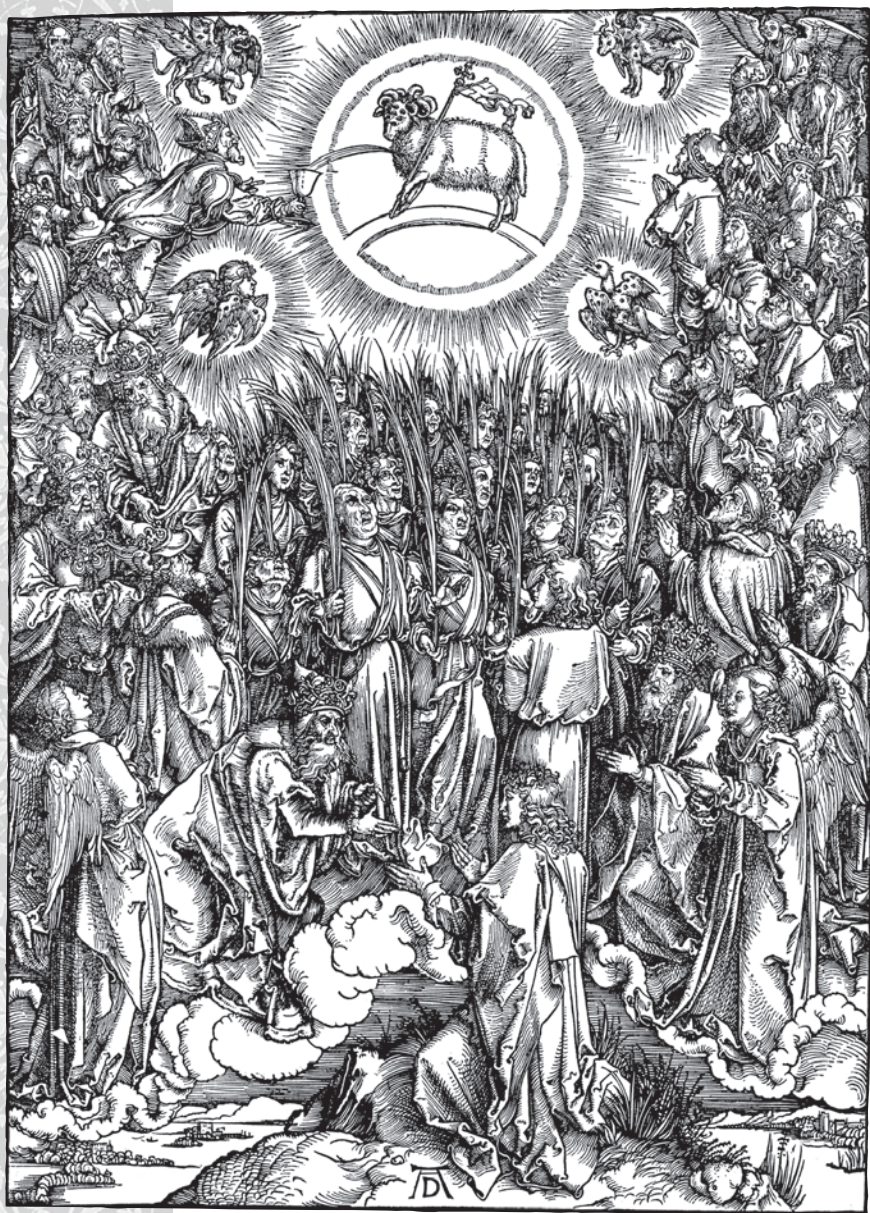
Rev. 12:10a; 12b — “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘... But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath.” Human life needs protecting because of sin and Satan. God, therefore, through His appointed agents — angels, government, those in helping vocations and Christians — defends, guards and protects our neighbor.

SIX

“For I confess and am able to prove from Scripture that all men have descended from one man, Adam; and from this man, through their birth, they acquire and inherit the fall, guilt and sin, which the same Adam, through the wickedness of the devil, committed in paradise; and thus all men along with him are born, live and die altogether in sin, and would necessarily be guilty of eternal death if Jesus Christ had not come to our aid and taken upon himself this guilt and sin as an innocent lamb, paid for us by his sufferings, and if he did not still intercede and plead for us as a faithful, merciful Mediator, Savior, and the only Priest and Bishop of our souls. I herewith reject and condemn as sheer error all doctrines which glorify our free will, as diametrically contrary to the help and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ death and sin are our masters and the devil is our god and lord, and there is no power or ability, no cleverness or reason, with which we can prepare ourselves for righteousness and life or seek after it. On the contrary, we must remain the dupes and captives of sin and the property of the devil to do and think what pleases them and is contrary to God and his commandments.”

– Martin Luther (“Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper,” AE 37:362-363)





The Adoration of the Lamb and the Hymn of the Chosen

WHAT GIVES LIFE ITS WORTH?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — First Article

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 111-112

At the heart of Lutheran theology is the biblical truth that we are justified by faith alone apart from the works of the Law (see Rom. 3:21-28; Gal. 2:16). In his exposition of the First Article, Luther sees the gifts of creation in light of this truth, so he confesses, *“All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”* The worth and merit of life are not determined by anything in us — not our physical appearance, our mental capacity, our bodily abilities or the quality of our life. God’s fatherly, divine goodness and mercy alone give human life its worth and value.

How different this is from the way our culture evaluates the worth and merit of life. Our culture argues that the unborn are not to be afforded the protection of the law since they do not yet possess the characteristics of personhood. Some claim that if the fetus is not capable of viability or self-sustained existence outside of the womb, it may not be ascribed the dignity of one who possesses such capacity. Others maintain that unless an unborn child is wanted by his/her mother, it has no claim to existence. Likewise, at the end of life, we hear the argument that some people are “unworthy” of life, such as the terminally ill, the person in a “persistent vegetative state” or the severely handicapped.

Christians, however, value human beings and care for them in every season of life, from conception to natural death, not because they possess certain physical or mental traits or capacities, but because they are created by God and endowed with

life. This worth is not based on what we have or even who we are, but *whose* we are — human beings created and redeemed in body and soul by the Triune God. Dignity is not a value that we assign to life according to our own estimations of worth. Dignity comes from outside of ourselves, from the Creator, “*without any merit or worthiness*” in us.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How is the truth that we are justified by faith expressed in Luther’s explanation of the First Article?
2. How does our culture evaluate the worth and merit of life?
3. How does Luther’s phrase “without any merit or worthiness in me” shape the way we care for all human beings from conception to natural death?



Image p. 38: The Adoration of the Lamb and the Hymn of the Chosen. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Rev. 7:9a, 10 — “A great multitude ... [cried] out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God ... and to the Lamb!’” By virtue of divine creation, God has bestowed worth on all life — a worthiness that has its ultimate value in the blood sacrifice of the “Lamb who was slain.”

SEVEN

“There was no counsel, no help, no comfort for us until this only and eternal Son of God, in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on us because of our misery and distress and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers have now been routed, and their place taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, righteousness, and every good and blessing. He has snatched us, poor and lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father’s favor and grace. As his own possession he has taken us under his protection and shelter, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.”

– Martin Luther (LC II:29-30, p. 434)





The Resurrection of Christ

WHAT DOES REDEMPTION HAVE TO DO WITH BODILY LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — Second Article

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 120-123, 126-131

There is a tendency to either idolize the body or ignore it. On the one hand, our culture glorifies the search for the perfect body — youthful, fit, attractive and healthy. On the other hand, there are ethicists who lament an “excessively physicalist approach,” specifically referring to homosexuality, arguing instead that the emphasis should be placed on such intangible dimensions as freedom of personal expression and the quality of relationship. Neither of these extremes is consistent with the Christian faith, for the Son of God took on human flesh and blood to redeem us in body and soul. The body is created, redeemed and hallowed by God, who destines it for the resurrection. The words that the pastor speaks at the grave actually tell us much about life: “May God the Father, who created this body, may God the Son, who by His blood redeemed this body, may God the Holy Spirit, who by Holy Baptism sanctified this body to be His temple, keep these remains to the day of the resurrection of all flesh.”⁶

God's Son has a body. In the womb of Mary, Jesus was conceived by the Spirit and grew as an embryo through the nine months of gestation to birth. By His incarnation, He has hallowed life in the womb. Redemption is not merely a spiritual transaction. It was accomplished by Christ Jesus in His flesh and blood. So the catechism reminds us that Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father from all eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary, “*has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, 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.”

Bought with a price, our bodies are not our own. This is the point Paul uses to clinch the case against sexual immorality: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19b-20). You do not belong to yourself, and that is good news. The Second Article of the Creed, just like the First Article, shows us that autonomy is a lie! In contrast to the beguiling temptation to be autonomous, a temptation that only drags us down to despair, entangling us in a life which is ultimately dead-ended, the catechism promises something far more liberating and expansive. It promises life in Jesus, who is bodily risen from the grave. He has redeemed our bodies and souls *“that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.”* And because it is most certainly true, all empty promises of autonomy are unmasked for what they really are — lies from the father of lies.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How does our culture tend to either idolize or ignore the human body?
2. What do the words spoken by the pastor at the committal service tell us about the worth that the Triune God places on our bodies?
3. What does the incarnation have to do with the way we treat life in the body at all stages?
4. Read 1 Cor. 6:19b-20 in light of Luther's explanation of the Second Article. To whom do our bodies belong? What does this mean for the way we use them?
5. What is the destiny of our bodies?



Image p. 42: The Resurrection of Christ. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Luke 24:39b — Jesus says, “Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Christ rose bodily from death. His physical resurrection is the guarantee of the redemption of our entire person — soul and body.

EIGHT

“Christ states clearly: ‘You are already made clean by the Word which I have spoken to you’ (John 15:3). This is nothing else than Christ’s entire sermon: He was sent into the world by the Father to redeem us from our sin by His suffering and death, and to reconcile us to the Father, that all who believe in Him might not be damned and lost but have remission of sin and eternal life for His sake. This Word makes man clean when the heart takes hold of it in faith; that is, it brings forgiveness of sin and makes man acceptable to God. On account of this faith, by which alone the Word is received and apprehended, we who adhere to it are accounted completely pure and holy before God, even though we — because of our nature and our life — are not clean enough but during our sojourn on earth are always infected with sin, weakness, and shortcomings, which must still be purged.”

– Martin Luther (“Sermons on the Gospel of St. John 14-16,” AE 24:211)





The Crucifixion

HOW DOES GOD MAKE LIFE HOLY?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Creed — Third Article, Second Article

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 156-163, 150

The vocabulary of autonomy is shaped by the grammar of choice and rights. If you think of your life as belonging to yourself, then you will naturally think of it as governed by choices that you have a right to make. Thus, the language of “pro-choice” emerges in relation to abortion. And now we are told that “the right to die” is a part of a long list of options that we ought to reserve for ourselves. We should not be surprised that this way of thinking has come to characterize a culture that has reduced God to one of the many objects that we are free to choose for ourselves.

In the Bible, however, life with God is not a life that we can choose for ourselves. According to the Scriptures, all those who live apart from faith in Jesus Christ are dead in sin (see Eph. 2:5). A corpse cannot choose to be alive. God brings us to life by His Spirit: *“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.”* Through the Good News of the forgiveness of sins purchased and won by Jesus on the cross, the Spirit works to create trust in Him. This is faith.

The Holy Spirit hallows us, makes us holy, by bringing us to Jesus Christ. Luther puts it like this in the Large Catechism: “Neither you nor I could ever know anything about Christ, or believe in him and receive him as Lord, unless these were first offered to us and bestowed on our hearts through the preaching of the

gospel by the Holy Spirit. The work is finished and completed; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work had remained hidden so that no one knew of it, it would have all been in vain, all lost. In order that this treasure might not remain buried but be put to use and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to be published and proclaimed, in which he has given the Holy Spirit to offer and apply this treasure, this redemption. Therefore being made holy is nothing else than bringing us to the Lord Christ to receive this blessing, to which we could not have come ourselves.”⁷

Under the lordship of Jesus’ word of forgiveness, our bodies are set apart, made holy. In fact, the apostle Paul says “that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God” (1 Cor. 6:19; also see 1 Cor. 3:16-17). Holy people now live holy lives. Jesus’ atoning death and victorious resurrection means, as we have already said, that you are His own and that you *“live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.”* The New Testament identifies this life as sacrifice.

In the Old Testament, Jerusalem’s temple was the edifice for sacrifice. With the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the temple was rendered obsolete (see John 2:19-22). His death on Calvary brought an end to the Old Testament’s system of sacrifices (see Hebrews 9-10). Atonement by the blood of the Lamb of God avails for all who cling to Him by faith. Sacrifice is relocated. It is not a ritual act that is offered to God for sin. Baptized into the death of Jesus (Rom. 6:1-11), believers are now to offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). Spiritual sacrifices are bodily — they have to do with the stuff of ordinary life, a life that is lived by faith in Jesus Christ and in love toward the neighbor in the everyday places of vocation — in the family and on the job, in the congregation and in the community. The letter to the Hebrews brings out the bodily character of the Christian’s sacrificial life: “Through him [Jesus] let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Heb. 13:15-16).

It is for this reason that the apostle Paul says in Romans 12, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). In the Old Testament, before a sacrifice could be offered, the sacrificial victim had to be slaughtered. The temple resembled a packing house, and the priest a butcher.

Paul’s language must have shocked the original readers of his letter, for he speaks of our bodies as “living sacrifices.” By the mercies of God, present your bodies not as dead sacrifices but as living sacrifices. Living sacrifices because the death has already taken place. Jesus has died for our sin, and by Baptism into His death we die *to* sin. Dead to sin, we live to walk in the newness of life. As members of His royal priesthood, we offer our bodies as spiritual sacrifices. God is glorified in the body, and our neighbor is served in the body. Bodies washed in Holy Baptism are consecrated for life with God and with one another.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. The Bible teaches us that we did not choose life with God, but when we were dead in sin and enemies of God, He chose us and brought us to life by the Gospel (see Eph. 2:5). How does this understanding contrast with the idea of autonomy?
2. What does the Holy Spirit do? (See 1 Cor. 6:19 and 3:16-17.)
3. The New Testament identifies the Christian’s bodily life as one of sacrifice. Read Rom. 12:1-2. What is included in this sacrifice? (See 1 Peter 2:5 and Heb. 13:15-16.)



Image p. 48: The Crucifixion. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Col. 1:22a — “*He has now reconciled [you] in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless.*” In the death of His beloved Son on the cross, God has bestowed to us His holiness through Christ’s righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

NINE

“... Since everyone must depart, we must turn our eyes to God, to whom the path of death leads and directs us. Here we find the beginning of the narrow gate and the straight path to life (Matt. 7:14). All must joyfully venture forth on this path, for though the gate is quite narrow, the path is not long. Just as an infant is born with peril and pain from the small abode of its mother’s womb into this immense heaven and earth, that is, into this world, so man departs this life through the narrow gate of death. And although the heavens and the earth in which we dwell at present seem large and wide to us, they are nevertheless much narrower and smaller than the mother’s womb in comparison with the future heaven. Therefore, the death of the dear saints is called a new birth, and their feast day is known in Latin as natale, that is, the day of their birth.”

– Martin Luther (“A Sermon on Preparing to Die,” AE 42:99)





The Lamentation for Christ

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DEATH COMES?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

Fifth Commandment

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 52-54



ur bodies are not incidental to our life with God. Luther's explanation of the Fifth Commandment teaches us: "*We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.*" Not only does this commandment forbid the deliberate taking of human life, it also requires that we actively seek the bodily well-being of our neighbor. Thus Christians seek to mercifully serve their neighbor by meeting his or her needs for food, drink, shelter and the other necessities of life. In this way, God uses us as daily bread to and for our neighbor.

God's commandment makes no distinction as to whether our neighbor is unborn or dying. The very fact that those at the margins are most vulnerable, due to their helplessness, weakness or lack of capacity to communicate, obligates us all the more to care for them. We may never aim at their death. People might be beyond cure, but they are never beyond care. While care does not necessarily include every form of medical treatment (treatments whose benefits are not proportionate to the difficulty, pain or risk involved), it does include nutrition and hydration. In attempting to alleviate suffering, we may not achieve this laudable goal by destroying the sufferer. Compassion is never an acceptable excuse for murder.

The end of life, like the beginning of life, exposes the fantasy of autonomy. Advocates of euthanasia and assisted suicide often appeal to the patient's alleged

right to die. To claim a right to die is but a final effort to have death on one's own terms. "If death cannot be avoided," we argue, "at least its timing will be under my control." How different this is from the biblical vision expressed by the apostle Paul: "For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:7-9).

Luther once remarked something to the effect that when faith in the true God vanishes, the fairy tales appear. Forsaking the true God, our culture is saturated with fairy tales about death. They come as desperate attempts to convince ourselves that death is natural — just a part of life — or in notions of reincarnation borrowed from paganism. Only Christianity can see death for what it is, that "last enemy" defeated by a crucified Lord who was raised to life, never to die again (see 1 Cor. 15:26). Death is not just a biological event; it is the payoff of sin. There is only one answer to the condemnation that death carries, and it is not in our fanciful flights to sidestep the trauma of death by trying to make death look preferable to life.

The end of the Apostles' Creed shapes our view of death: "*I believe in ... the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*" Death is not to be sought. But when death is inevitable, we need not attempt to hold on to life in defiance and fear. The Christian is free to die in the confidence of the resurrection, for death, the last enemy, has been trampled underfoot by Jesus. Extraordinary treatments are not demanded, even though ordinary care (food and fluids) is maintained. The creedal hope shapes our thinking about advance directives as well. Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender notes, "An advance directive is an attempt to extend our autonomy into a future time when we are no longer autonomous."⁸ These instruments can be too easily used for refusing not only treatment but appropriate care. A better approach would be to assign "health care power of attorney" to a family member or trusted friend who will respect your Christian convictions.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Read Luther's explanation to the Fifth Commandment. How does God guard and enhance life by means of this commandment?
2. Does the Fifth Commandment make any distinctions as to the physical or mental condition of the neighbor?
3. Why is compassion never a viable excuse for murder?
4. How is the claim of a right to die foreign to the biblical view of life and death? (See Rom. 14:7-9.)
5. What are some of the "fairy tales" about death that are present in our culture? What does our Lord's death and resurrection teach us about the truth of death? (See 1 Cor. 15:26.)
6. Theologian Steven Paulson writes, "The 'gift' of death is not ours but God's to give, and is given only in order that a second, greater gift can be given."⁹ How does the ending of the Apostles' Creed shape our view of death as a gift that is God's alone to give? How can death be both the last enemy and God's gift?
7. What is the basis for the distinction between ordinary care and extraordinary treatments?
8. Why might a Christian prefer assigning health care power of attorney to a family member rather than establishing advance directives or living wills?



Image p. 54: The Lamentation for Christ. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Rom. 6:23 — "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" As the death of God provided an opportunity for loving care to the body of our Lord, so now the sufferings of our neighbor are occasions for the body of Christ to extend the sacrificial love of Christ to those in need.

TEN

“So in our suffering we should so act that we give our greatest attention to the promise, in order that our cross and affliction may be turned to good, to something that we could never have asked or thought. And this is precisely the thing which makes a difference between the Christian’s suffering and afflictions and those of all other men. For other people also have their afflictions, cross, and misfortune, just as they also have their times when they can sit in the rose garden and employ their good fortune and their goods as they please. But when they run into affliction and suffering, they have nothing to comfort them, for they do not have the mighty promises and the confidence in God which Christians have. Therefore they cannot comfort themselves with the assurance that God will help them to bear the affliction, much less can they count on it that he will turn their affliction and suffering to good.”

– Martin Luther (“Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering,” AE 51:201)





Christ on the Mount of Olives

HOW DOES JESUS TEACH US TO PRAY IN THE BATTLE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Lord's Prayer

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 205-209, 213, 216-219, 221-233

The Christian life is lived on a battlefield. Sin, death and the devil are the enemies. The conflict is vicious, and it will not come to an end until we are relieved by the resurrection (see Rom. 7:7-25). But the victory is sure, just as the death and resurrection of Jesus for sinners is sure. Luther's concluding statement for the explanation of each of the three articles of the Creed, "*This is most certainly true*," becomes the foundation for his exposition of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer to His disciples, to pray in the ongoing battle between faith and unbelief, between life and death. Each petition is a description of our own deep need. At the same time, each petition breathes with God's promises, which far exceed all that we can ask for or imagine.

Life is not lived in the confidence of ourselves, but in the knowledge that, in Jesus, God is our true Father and we are His true children. We are not left alone as orphans in a fatherless universe. Nor are we cosmic accidents. We are not unwanted offspring, but dear children of a dear Father. God delights in hearing His children speaking the language of faith, so we talk to Him "*with all boldness and confidence*." The knowledge that God is such a Father shapes the way we look at life in His world. Human life is never a mistake that needs to be altered or eradicated. It is a gift to be cherished, because it comes from the gracious hands of a God who is our Father.

The first three petitions are bound together. Here we pray for the things of God: His name, His kingdom and His will. His name is holy in itself. His kingdom comes without prayer. His will is done without our prayer. Here we are praying that His name will be kept holy among us, that His kingdom may come to us and that His will be done in us. Set these three petitions in contrast to all the ways in which we try to make a name for ourselves by our proud achievements, our futile efforts to build a secure kingdom for ourselves and the arrogant ways we insist on our will being done. These petitions stand against our culture of autonomy and choice.

The Fourth Petition illustrates our stance before God: God gives, we receive. *“God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”* This petition takes us back to the First Article. Taken together, both the First Article and the Fourth Petition will not let us escape our humanity. Life is not a product made in a laboratory. It is a gift of the Father, bestowed in the network of concrete, creaturely realities that *“includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body.”*

Only sinners may pray the Lord’s Prayer, for here we ask God to *“forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”* Sin is not a bad habit that we can break. It includes all those works of the flesh that stem from a heart that will not let God be God. We need His daily forgiveness as much as we do His daily bread. In receiving His unmerited forgiveness, we pledge ourselves to also forgive those who sin against us. The Father in heaven is merciful toward us. Having been shown mercy, we will show mercy to the sinners whose wrong-doing we have not deserved, for such is the nature of God’s love also for us, the undeserving.

The devil, the world and our sinful nature are the sources of temptation. Temptation’s target is always the First Commandment. As the tempter addressed Eve in the garden with the cool and coy question, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1), so also we are tempted. How can embryonic stem cell research be wrong when it holds so much potential for good? How can *in vitro* fertilization with a donor egg or sperm, or surrogate motherhood, be so

wrong when it is a good thing to desire children? How can genetic engineering be wrong when it promises to eliminate unwanted physical characteristics, and even remove potentially lethal diseases from our descendants? Like Eve we are tempted to rely on our sight, our vision of what is good or evil, rather than on the Word of the Lord. The Sixth Petition is prayed in the face of such deceptive and misleading temptations.

In the Seventh Petition, we pray that God would “*rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.*” The language of our culture is deceptive. For instance, the practice of causing the death of a suffering person either by direct intervention (administration of a lethal drug, etc.) or indirectly (withholding nourishment and liquids, etc.) is called euthanasia — a good or blessed death. Luther described a theologian of glory as one who calls good evil and evil good. But the theologian of the cross knows how to call a thing as it is. And Luther teaches us to pray the Lord’s Prayer as theologians of the cross. A “blessed end,” a blessed death, is not one that is free of suffering, one that is quick or painless, but a death that is died trusting in Jesus’ promises of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The Christian does not take life into his own hands but, like Jesus, commits that life into the hands of the Father (see Luke 23:46; Ps. 31:5). That is a blessed end in contrast to the evil death of euthanasia.

The evening prayers of the church (the services of vespers and compline) are dress rehearsals for that final evening when we will close our eyes in death and awake in the splendor of the resurrection:

“O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in Your mercy grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” — Collect at Compline¹⁰

“Abide with us, Lord, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Abide with

us and with Your whole Church. Abide with us in the end of the day, in the end of our life, in the end of the world. Abide with us with Your grace and goodness, with Your holy Word and Sacrament, with Your strength and blessing. Abide with us when the night of affliction and temptation come upon us, the night of fear and despair when death shall come. Abide with us and with all the faithful through time and eternity.” — Collect for Easter Eve¹¹

“Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious at the awesome day.” (Thomas Ken, *LW* 484:3)

“To rest my body hasteth,
Aside its garments casteth,
Types of mortality;
These I put off and ponder
How Christ will give me yonder
A robe of glorious majesty.” (Paul Gerhardt, *TLH* 554:4)

When a person has spent a lifetime living in these prayers, euthanasia is out of the question. It is exposed as another one of the old Adam’s carnal attempts to placate the last enemy by engineering a surrender rather than entrusting our souls into the hands of a faithful Creator, who has already secured the victory for us in His Son’s cross and empty tomb (see 1 Peter 4:19). Thus the prayer of the dying Christian is that of ancient Simeon: “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word” (Luke 2:29).

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Read Rom. 7:7-25. How does the apostle describe the Christian life?
2. How does the conclusion to the explanation of each article of the Apostles' Creed, "*This is most certainly true*," form the basis for Luther's explanation of the Introduction of the Lord's Prayer?
3. How does the Lord's Prayer stand against the culture of autonomy and choice?
4. How is the Lord's Prayer a petition for life?
5. What are the temptations that we pray against in the Sixth Petition? How do these temptations manifest themselves in bio-ethical challenges in our day?
6. How does the Seventh Petition teach us to understand a "blessed end"? How is this blessed end different from euthanasia or assisted suicide? Read Luke 23:46 and Ps. 31:5.
7. How do the evening prayers and hymns of the church expose euthanasia as a counterfeit hope?



Image p. 60: Christ on the Mount of Olives. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Heb. 5:7 — "*In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.*" Christ teaches us to pray to our heavenly Father, "Not my will, but Your will be done."

ELEVEN

“For our whole life should be baptism, and the fulfilling of the sign or sacrament of baptism, since we have been set free from all else and given over to baptism alone, that is, to death and resurrection.”

– Martin Luther (“The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” AE 36:70)





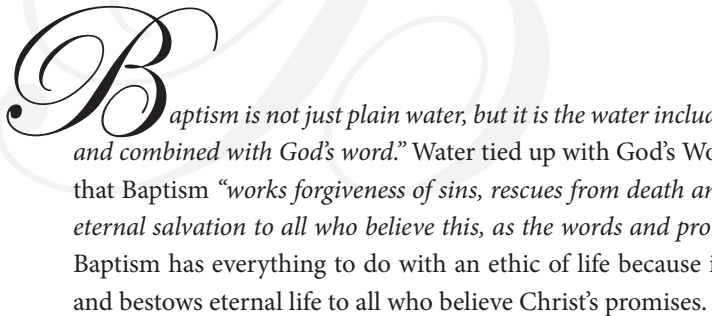
Baptism

WHAT DOES BAPTISM HAVE TO DO WITH AN ETHIC OF LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism — Parts 1–4

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 240, 248, 253–255, 257, 259

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word." Water tied up with God's Word of promise means that Baptism "works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare." Baptism has everything to do with an ethic of life because it rescues from death and bestows eternal life to all who believe Christ's promises.

Baptism is not just about the beginning of the Christian life. It is far more than a rite of initiation; it is the present-tense reality of life in Christ. So Luther writes in his Large Catechism: "In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life. Christians always have enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and brings — victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts."¹² And, "No greater jewel, therefore, can adorn our body and soul than baptism, for through it we become completely holy and blessed, which no other kind of life and no work on earth can acquire."¹³ Baptism is justification-by-faith-alone in action. God carries the verbs. He does the saving.

The Christian life is lived from Baptism. Born anew by the Holy Spirit through Baptism (see Titus 3:5-8), we live by daily dying to sin and daily being made alive to live in Christ. Baptism "*indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily*

contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” Baptism is the end of the old way of life, that futile grasp at autonomy. God puts the autonomous old Adam to death. The new man lives not in his own skin, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We are clothed not with the garments of our self-righteousness but with the purity of Jesus’ blood. In Baptism, we relinquish control and let God be God for us, as He wills, to be in His grace and favor. Dying to self, we live in Him and for Him.

The works of the flesh are to be stripped off and put away (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:17-32; Gal. 5:16-26; Col. 3:1-14; Rom. 13:13-14), for these deeds are inconsistent with those who are baptized into Christ. They carry the stench of death, and those who continue in them will die. When the apostle Paul instructs the Ephesians regarding those who have given themselves up to sexual sin, he bluntly states, “But that is not the way you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:20-24).

Baptism is foundational for the Christian ethic of life. For the Christian, ethics is not a project that we undertake to make ourselves holy. The Christian ethic is liberated from the quest for salvation. In Baptism, we are joined to the death of Christ, and sharing in His death, we are made partakers of His resurrection (see Rom. 6:1-11). Outwitting, escaping or at least managing death is not our project — for the real death that counts, the death of sin, has already been accomplished. Alive in Christ by faith, we are now free to live in love toward our neighbor. From our Baptism we know that our bodies are not our own. They have been marked with the cross of Jesus and destined for resurrection. That makes all the difference in the world for how we use them — not as instruments of unrighteousness but of righteousness (Rom. 6:12-14).

Much in our culture tells you that your body is your own toy to do with as you

desire. When toys wear out or break down, they are tossed out with the garbage. Such is the message of a culture that does not see much difference between a toy and a human body. Both are disposable. The Christian creed and your Baptism tell you otherwise.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How does Baptism rescue us from death? (See Titus 3:5-8.)
2. In what sense is Baptism always present tense for the Christian?
3. How is Baptism foundational for the Christian life? (See Col. 3:1-4 and Eph. 4:20-24.)
4. What does Baptism reveal about the destiny of our bodies according to Rom. 6:1-11?



Image p. 68: Baptism. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.

Rom. 6:4 — “*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that ... we too might walk in newness of life.*” Where there was only sin and death, the mercy of God has brought forgiveness and life, by which we are freed to serve and love our neighbor.

TWELVE

“The Holy Spirit must always work in us through the Word, granting us daily forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life there will be only perfectly pure and holy people, full of integrity and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all misfortune, living in new, immortal, and glorified bodies.”

– Martin Luther (LC II:58, p. 438)






Preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments

WHERE CAN I HEAR THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

Confession

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 261-268, 269-277

Autonomy breeds a spirit of tolerance for sin and the accommodation of the old Adam rather than his baptismal death. It has been observed that we live in a time when everything is permitted but nothing is forgiven. But acceptance is a poor substitute for absolution.

Thank God that we have something more to offer our death-bound world than the empty mantras of affirmation or accommodation. What a great betrayal of the Gospel it is when churches can no longer name sin for what it is. If it is not named as sin, it may be lamented, complained about or rationalized, but it will not be confessed, and thus the gift of forgiveness is denied.

The church is not interested, first of all, in morality and traditional values, but in the Gospel of Jesus Christ — the Good News that through the suffering and death of God's Son, sins are forgiven. We have an important message for those who have tried to live for themselves, to people whose lives have been bruised and scarred in their futile pursuit of autonomy. There is only one place of restoration for those who have been lured into shame by those deceitful lusts that promise pleasure and deliver pain, that offer heaven and give hell. It is in Jesus Christ, by whose wounds we are healed (see 1 Peter 2:24). Sinners need not live under the burden of guilt for their abuse of or destruction of God's gifts of life.

To consciences terrified by sin, Christ Jesus speaks a word of consolation. It is His verdict of forgiveness in the place of condemnation. The Large Catechism says it well: “Further we believe that in this Christian community we have the forgiveness of sins, which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through the comforting words of the entire gospel. This encompasses everything that is to be preached about the sacraments, and, in short, the entire gospel and all official responsibilities of the Christian community. Forgiveness is constantly needed, for although God’s grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word in the unity of the Christian church, yet we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck. Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth.”¹⁴

Luther included teaching on confession as well as a brief order of confession in the Small Catechism, so that those who are troubled by their sins may hear God’s word of forgiveness spoken directly into their ears. It is one of the abiding strengths of the catechism that it functions as a pastoral document. That is, it teaches us how to repent, naming the sins that torment us, and then how to “*receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.*” Absolution is God’s verdict of forgiveness pronounced here and now to those who repent of their sins. This word brings life out of death. It bestows healing to those who have wounded themselves and others by their attempts at playing God. Absolution restores us to creaturely life, a life that lets God be God.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What is the difference between acceptance and absolution, tolerance and forgiveness?
2. When sin is minimized, what happens to forgiveness?
3. Where do we find a real and lasting healing for our sinfulness?
(See 1 Peter 2:24.)
4. Review Luther's brief order for confession and absolution in the catechism.
What does the absolution do?



Image p. 74: Preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.

Luke 10:16a — Jesus said to the 72, “*The one who hears you hears me ...*” Where, or to whom, shall we go? Christ Himself gathers us to His ministry of preaching, Baptism and Supper, to deliver His absolution, that is, forgiveness.

THIRTEEN

“We know, however, that it is the Lord’s Supper, in name and reality, not the supper of the Christians. For the Lord not only instituted it, but also prepares and gives it himself, and is himself cook, butler, food, and drink.”

– Martin Luther (“That These Words of Christ, ‘This is My Body,’ etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics,” AE 37:142)





Christ and the disciples at Emmaus

HOW DOES THE LORD'S SUPPER SUSTAIN LIFE?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

The Sacrament of the Altar

An Explanation of the Small Catechism, Questions 287-288, 291, 293-298, 303-304

*I*n the solemn night of His betrayal, on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus established the holy supper of His body and blood. This Sacrament “*is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.*” Out of His death, Jesus provides for us the testament of His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, and “*where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.*”

The Lord's Supper is neither a ritual re-enactment of Jesus' final meal with His disciples before His death, nor a sacrifice that we repeatedly offer to God. It is His last will and testament, through which He names us as heirs who receive into our mouths the very body and blood crucified and raised for us. In this Sacrament, we are one with our Lord as we eat His body and drink His blood. Here He forgives us our sins, strengthens our faith and enlivens us with the hope of the heavenly banquet that is yet to come.

Luther describes what a precious gift we have in the Lord's Supper: “For in this sacrament he offers us all the treasures he brought from heaven for us, to which he most graciously invites us in other places, as when he says in Matthew 11(:28): ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’ Surely it is a sin and a shame that, when he so tenderly and faithfully summons and exhorts us for our highest and greatest good, we regard it with such disdain, neglecting it so long that we grow quite cold and callous and lose all desire and love for it. We must never regard the sacrament as a harmful thing from which we should flee, but as a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine that aids and gives life

in both body and soul. For where the soul is healed, the body is helped as well.”¹⁵

Jesus’ body and blood given into us are the pledge of our own resurrection as well. This heavenly food strengthens and sustains our faith that we may bear with patience all trials and afflictions, crosses and illnesses, until God gives relief, either in time or else in the resurrection of the flesh. In this Holy Sacrament, our Lord gives us a foretaste of the marriage feast of the Lamb. Therefore, one Lutheran theologian has suggested that we are to go to the Lord’s Supper as though we were going to our death, so that when we go to our death, we may go as though we are going to the Lord’s Supper.

In the Lord’s Supper, we are bound together with our crucified and risen Lord Jesus and with those who eat and drink the Sacrament with us. This Holy Communion is both vertical (connecting us to God) and horizontal (connecting us to each other). Receiving the forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ body and blood, we are joined to Him, and we are one with His body, the Church. The scriptural practice of closed communion rightly guards this unity. No contradiction of Christ or His words may be brought to the altar. There is also a horizontal dimension to this communion. Made one with those who eat and drink Jesus’ body and blood with us, we are to care for them and bear their burdens as members of the one body. Luther expressed this most strikingly in these words: “For it is necessary for each one to know that Christ has given his body, flesh, and blood on the cross to be our treasure and to help us receive forgiveness of sins, that is, that we may be saved, redeemed from death and hell. That is the first principle of Christian doctrine. It is presented to us in the words, and his body and blood are given to us to be received corporeally as a token and confirmation of this fact. To be sure, he did this only once, carrying it out and achieving it on the cross; but he causes it each day anew to be set before us, distributed and poured out through preaching, and he orders us to remember him always and never forget him. The second principle is love. It is demonstrated in the first place by the fact that he has left us an example. **As he gives himself for us with his body and blood in order to redeem us from all misery, so we too are to give ourselves with might and main for our neighbor**”¹⁶ (emphasis added).

In Christ's body and blood, we receive the benefits of His atoning death. The catechism says, "*These words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' show us 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.*" Forgiveness is more than just amnesty. It is life and salvation. The forgiveness of sins won by Jesus' death absorbs our dying and gives us life with God. And life with God is never lonely. It always includes life with our neighbor. God comes to us in the body of Jesus, born of Mary, crucified on the cross and given to us in the Sacrament of the Altar. This same Lord Jesus wraps Himself up in the body of our neighbor — whether that body is embryonic, disabled, injured or worn out and near death (see Matt. 25:31-46). To care for the neighbor in his bodily need is to tend Christ Himself. The Sacrament gives us the strength to do just this very thing. So Luther added a post-communion collect to the Divine Service in 1526. It is the genuine eucharistic prayer in the Lutheran liturgy, for it is prayed in thanksgiving for the gifts received. In this prayer we give thanks to God that He has "refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore you that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another."¹⁷

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What does Jesus bestow in His last will and testament?
2. How does Christ comfort us in the Lord's Supper?
3. How is the Sacrament a pledge of the resurrection of our bodies?
4. How does the reception of the Lord's Supper prepare us for death?
(See 1 Cor. 10:16 and 11:23-26.)
5. How are we bound together with Jesus and with one another in the Lord's Supper? What are the implications of this for our life together?



Image p. 80: Christ and the disciples at Emmaus. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

Luke 24:35b — “*He was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*” The true body and blood of Christ, given us to eat and drink, is a “salutary gift”; that is, a health-giving food by which Christ cures death by the forgiveness of sins, strengthens faith and makes us active in love toward our neighbor.

FOURTEEN

“Hence these ordinary works are God’s order. What more glorious commendation are you asking for, or what clearer testimony? Hence when a milk maid milks the cows or a hired man hoes the field — provided that they are believers, namely, that they conclude that this kind of life is pleasing to God and was instituted by God — they serve God more than all the monks and nuns, who cannot be sure about their kind of life.”

– Martin Luther (“Genesis Lectures,” AE 3:321)





Christ washing Peter's feet

HOW ARE WE TO THANK, PRAISE, SERVE AND OBEY GOD?

Luther's Small Catechism References:

Daily Prayers

Table of Duties

At the end of his explanation of the First Article, Luther writes: “*For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.*” Luther will return to these themes at the end of the catechism in the Daily Prayers and the Table of Duties. We thank and praise God in the morning as we rise from sleep and in the evening as we go to bed. We thank and praise God for the gift of daily bread as we receive our meals from His generous hand. Rest and food are two minimal requirements for human life. These two requirements demonstrate our dependence on our Father. He watches over our bodies while we are rendered oblivious by sleep. He guards us from harm and danger while we are unable to detect the threat that comes while we slumber. The morning/evening prayers, along with mealtime prayer, are the vehicles for our thanking and praising God.

The end of Luther's explanation of the First Article brings us to the doctrine of vocation. We often confuse vocation with a job or an occupation. We talk about vocational guidance counselors who assist students in determining suitable career paths, or vocational schools that prepare people for technical professions. While your daily work is certainly part of your vocation, your vocation includes far more of your life than the job that you hold. Your vocation is first and foremost a matter of being, and only secondarily a matter of doing. God has made you the man or woman that you are. He has located you at a particular time in history and a specific geographical place. He has given you a certain set of parents. These are all

beyond your control. You cannot undo your birth and start over again. But you need not start over. You accept it all as a gift, because you know the love of the Father, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

Our service and obedience to God take place in the context of vocation, our calling to a dual life of faith and love. In *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), Luther writes: “We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and the neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith and in the neighbor through love.”¹⁸ Life is not self-centered but Christ-centered (faith) and neighbor-centered (love). Faith is active in a life of loving service to the neighbor. The catechism’s Table of Duties shows how specifically we serve and obey God.

The “holy orders” of congregation, civil government and family/daily work are embraced in the Table of Duties. Of these orders or stations in life, Luther writes in *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper* (1528): “For these three religious institutions or orders are found in God’s Word and commandment; and whatever is contained in God’s Word must be holy, for God’s Word is holy and sanctifies everything connected with it and involved in it. Above these three institutions and orders is the common order of Christian love, in which one serves not only the three orders but also serves every needy person in general with all kinds of benevolent deeds, such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, forgiving enemies, praying for all men on earth, suffering all kinds of evil on earth, etc. Behold these are called good and holy works. However, none of these orders is a means of salvation. There remains only one way above them all ... faith in Jesus Christ.”¹⁹ The Christian’s calling does not take him out of the world but directs him back into the world to serve God, who hides Himself under the mask of the neighbor’s need. Service rendered by the Christian to the needy neighbor is rendered to Christ Himself (see Matt. 25:31-46). God does not need our good works, but the neighbor does. And it is through these works that life is supported, protected and sustained.

Luther worried about people who embarked on a path of “self-chosen” works, as though life in the monastery or going on a religious pilgrimage would please God.

HOW ARE WE TO THANK, PRAISE, SERVE AND OBEY GOD?

God's commandments direct us away from self-chosen works and to the good works that He has established for us (see Eph. 2:10). Self-chosen works today are likely to include not only religious projects that people imagine will make them more spiritual, but also attempts to "better humanity" in ways that run contrary to the will of the Creator and invite us, once again, to be like God, knowing good and evil. The Christian, on the other hand, will be content to live as a creature who knows that he is a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Living in the confidence of that gift, he is then free to be an agent of life and blessing within the web of God's creation. The Small Catechism points the way. It is the way of faith in Christ and love for our neighbor. It is the path of life in the name of the Triune God, put on us in Baptism for time and eternity.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How does Luther link the words of the explanation of the First Article, "*For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him,*" to the Daily Prayers and Table of Duties in the catechism?
2. How do Luther's morning and evening prayers shape our awareness of the gift of life?
3. How inclusive is vocation in the Scriptures?
4. How is vocation a dual life of both faith and love?
5. Where is God to be served and obeyed?
6. Luther worried over people who embarked on self-chosen works, like forsaking family to go into a monastery. What are some examples of self-chosen works today?
7. Luther liked to speak of God working behind masks, both to serve us and to receive our service. Read Matt. 25:31-46. Where does God receive our service? (See Col. 3:15-17.)



Image p. 86: Christ washing Peter's feet. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

John 13:15 — Jesus said, “*For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*” As Christ kneels with towel and bowl to “wash the feet” of His creation, so we give thanks and service to God in our various callings by meeting the needs of our neighbor in every place.

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Notes

1. AE vol. 37, p. 366.
2. Gerhard Forde, *The Captivation of the Will: Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005, p. 44.
3. LC part 1, paragraph 207, p. 414.
4. *Sermons of Martin Luther — The House Postils*, vol. 2, translated by Eugene Klug. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996, pp. 196-197.
5. AC article XVI, pp. 50-51.
6. *LW Agenda*, p. 194.
7. LC part 2, paragraph 38, p. 436.
8. Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004, p. 80.
9. Steven Paulson, "Endings and Beginnings: Death and Resurrection" *Dialog* (Winter 1999): p. 26.
10. *LW*, p. 267.
11. *LW*, p. 46.
12. LC part 4, paragraph 41, p. 461.
13. LC part 4, paragraph 46, p. 462.
14. LC part 4, paragraphs 54-55, p. 438.
15. LC part 5, paragraphs 66-67, pp. 473-474.
16. AE vol. 36, p. 352.
17. *LW*, p. 153.
18. AE vol. 31, p. 371.
19. AE vol. 37, p. 365.

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1. The Creation; woodcut from the first illustrated edition of the Large Catechism, 1530, Wittenburg. Pritzlaff Memorial Library Rare Book Collection; Concordia Seminary Library, St. Louis, Mo.
2. Adam and Eve. *Dürer in America: His Graphic Work*, Charles W. Talbot, editor. (New York: Macmillan, 1971).
3. The Marriage of the Virgin. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
4. Manna from Heaven in the Wilderness. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.
5. St. Michael fighting the dragon. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
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8. The Crucifixion. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
9. The Lamentation for Christ. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
10. Christ on the Mount of Olives. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
11. Baptism. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.
12. Preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. The Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection; Pitts Theological Library, Chandler School of Theology, Emory University.
13. Christ and the disciples at Emmaus. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).
14. Christ washing Peter's feet. *The Complete Woodcuts of Albrecht Dürer*, Willi Kurth, editor. (New York: Arden Book Company, 1936).

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