

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM¹

LORD'S DAY 1

Q. 1. What is your only comfort, in life and in death? **4.001**

A. That I belong—body and soul, in life and in death—not to myself but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of his own blood has fully paid for all my sins and has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that everything must fit his purpose for my salvation. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Q. 2. How many things must you know that you may live and die in the blessedness of this comfort? **4.002**

A. Three. First, the greatness of my sin and wretchedness. Second, how I am freed from all my sins and their wretched consequences. Third, what gratitude I owe to God for such redemption.

PART I

Of Man's Misery

LORD'S DAY 2

Q. 3. Where do you learn of your sin and its wretched consequences? **4.003**

A. From the Law of God.

Q. 4. What does the Law of God require of us? **4.004**

A. Jesus Christ teaches this in a summary in Matthew 22:37–40: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” (Cf. Luke 10:27.)

Q. 5. Can you keep all this perfectly? **4.005**

A. No, for by nature I am prone to hate God and my neighbor.

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4.006 Q. 6. Did God create man evil and perverse like this?

A. No. On the contrary, God created man good and in his image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness, so that he might rightly know God his Creator, love him with his whole heart, and live with him in eternal blessedness, praising and glorifying him.

4.007 Q. 7. Where, then, does this corruption of human nature come from?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden; whereby our human life is so poisoned that we are all conceived and born in the state of sin.

4.008 Q. 8. But are we so perverted that we are altogether unable to do good and prone to do evil?

A. Yes, unless we are born again through the Spirit of God.

4.009 Q. 9. Is not God unjust in requiring of man in his Law what he cannot do?

A. No, for God so created man that he could do it. But man, upon the instigation of the devil, by deliberate disobedience, has cheated himself and all his descendants out of these gifts.

4.010 Q. 10. Will God let man get by with such disobedience and defection?

A. Certainly not, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, both against our inborn sinfulness and our actual sins, and he will punish them according to his righteous judgment in time and in eternity, as he has declared: "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, and do them."

4.011 Q. 11. But is not God also merciful?

A. God is indeed merciful and gracious, but he is also righteous. It is his righteousness which requires that sin committed against the supreme majesty of God be punished with extreme, that is, with eternal punishment of body and soul.

PART II**Of Man's Redemption****4.012 Q. 12. Since, then, by the righteous judgment of God we have deserved temporal and eternal punishment, how may we escape this punishment, come again to grace, and be reconciled to God?**

A. God wills that his righteousness be satisfied; therefore, payment in full must be made to his righteousness, either by ourselves or by another.

Q. 13. Can we make this payment ourselves? 4.013

A. By no means. On the contrary, we increase our debt each day.

Q. 14. Can any mere creature make the payment for us? 4.014

A. No one. First of all, God does not want to punish any other creature for man's debt. Moreover, no mere creature can bear the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin and redeem others from it.

Q. 15. Then what kind of mediator and redeemer must we seek? 4.015

A. One who is a true and righteous man and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is at the same time true God.

LORD'S DAY 6

Q. 16. Why must he be a true and righteous man? 4.016

A. Because God's righteousness requires that man who has sinned should make reparation for sin, but the man who is himself a sinner cannot pay for others.

Q. 17. Why must he at the same time be true God? 4.017

A. So that by the power of his divinity he might bear as a man the burden of God's wrath, and recover for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

Q. 18. Who is this mediator who is at the same time true God and a true and perfectly righteous man? 4.018

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given to us for complete redemption and righteousness.

Q. 19. Whence do you know this? 4.019

A. From the holy gospel, which God himself revealed in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, afterward proclaimed through the holy patriarchs and prophets and foreshadowed through the sacrifices and other rites of the Old Covenant, and finally fulfilled through his own well-beloved Son.

LORD'S DAY 7

Q. 20. Will all men, then, be saved through Christ as they became lost through Adam? 4.020

A. No. Only those who, by true faith, are incorporated into him and accept all his benefits.

Q. 21. What is true faith? 4.021

A. It is not only a certain knowledge by which I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in his Word, but also a wholehearted trust which the Holy Spirit creates in me through the gospel, that, not only to others,

but to me also God has given the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ's saving work.

4.022 Q. 22. What, then, must a Christian believe?

A. All that is promised us in the gospel, a summary of which is taught us in the articles of the Apostles' Creed, our universally acknowledged confession of faith.

4.023 Q. 23. What are these articles?

A. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

LORD'S DAY 8

4.024 Q. 24. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts: The first concerns God *the Father* and our *creation*; the second, God *the Son* and our *redemption*; and the third, God *the Holy Spirit* and our *sanctification*.

4.025 Q. 25. Since there is only one Divine Being, why do you speak of three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

A. Because God has thus revealed himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons are the one, true, eternal God.

Of God the Father

LORD'S DAY 9

4.026 Q. 26. What do you believe when you say: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth with all that is in them, who also upholds and governs them by his eternal counsel and providence, is for the sake of Christ his Son my God and my Father. I trust in him so completely that I have no doubt that he will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul. Moreover, whatever evil he sends upon me in this troubled life he will turn to my good, for he is able to do it, being almighty God, and is determined to do it, being a faithful Father.

LORD'S DAY 10

Q. 27. What do you understand by the providence of God? 4.027

A. The almighty and ever-present power of God whereby he still upholds, as it were by his own hand, heaven and earth together with all creatures, and rules in such a way that leaves and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and everything else, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

Q. 28. What advantage comes from acknowledging God's creation and providence? 4.028

A. We learn that we are to be patient in adversity, grateful in the midst of blessing, and to trust our faithful God and Father for the future, assured that no creature shall separate us from his love, since all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they cannot even move.

Of God the Son

LORD'S DAY 11

Q. 29. Why is the Son of God called JESUS, which means SAVIOR? 4.029

A. Because he saves us from our sins, and because salvation is to be sought or found in no other.

Q. 30. Do those who seek their salvation and well-being from saints, by their own efforts, or by other means really believe in the only Savior Jesus? 4.030

A. No. Rather, by such actions they deny Jesus, the only Savior and Redeemer, even though they boast of belonging to him. It therefore follows that either Jesus is not a perfect Savior, or those who receive this Savior with true faith must possess in him all that is necessary for their salvation.

LORD'S DAY 12

Q. 31. Why is he called CHRIST, that is, the ANOINTED ONE? 4.031

A. Because he is ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be *our chief Prophet and Teacher*, fully revealing to us the secret purpose and will of God concerning our redemption; to be *our only High Priest*, having redeemed us by the one sacrifice of his body and ever interceding for us with the Father; and to be *our eternal King*, governing us by his Word and Spirit, and defending and sustaining us in the redemption he has won for us.

Q. 32. But why are you called a Christian? 4.032

A. Because through faith I share in Christ and thus in his anointing, so that I may confess his name, offer myself a living sacrifice of gratitude

to him, and fight against sin and the devil with a free and good conscience throughout this life and hereafter rule with him in eternity over all creatures.

LORD'S DAY 13

4.033 Q. 33. Why is he called GOD'S ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, since we also are God's children?

A. Because Christ alone is God's own eternal Son, whereas we are accepted for his sake as children of God by grace.

4.034 Q. 34. Why do you call him OUR LORD?

A. Because, not with gold or silver but at the cost of his blood, he has redeemed us body and soul from sin and all the dominion of the devil, and has bought us for his very own.

LORD'S DAY 14

4.035 Q. 35. What is the meaning of: "Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary"?

A. That the eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took upon himself our true manhood from the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit, so that he might also be the true seed of David, like his fellow men in all things, except for sin.

4.036 Q. 36. What benefit do you receive from the holy conception and birth of Christ?

A. That he is our Mediator, and that, in God's sight, he covers over with his innocence and perfect holiness the sinfulness in which I have been conceived.

LORD'S DAY 15

4.037 Q. 37. What do you understand by the word "suffered"?

A. That throughout his life on earth, but especially at the end of it, he bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race, so that by his suffering, as the only expiatory sacrifice, he might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and might obtain for us God's grace, righteousness, and eternal life.

4.038 Q. 38. Why did he suffer "under Pontius Pilate" as his judge?

A. That he, being innocent, might be condemned by an earthly judge, and thereby set us free from the judgment of God which, in all its severity, ought to fall upon us.

4.039 Q. 39. Is there something more in his having been crucified than if he had died some other death?

A. Yes, for by this I am assured that he took upon himself the curse which lay upon me, because the death of the cross was cursed by God.

LORD'S DAY 16

Q. 40. Why did Christ have to suffer “death”? 4.040

A. Because the righteousness and truth of God are such that nothing else could make reparation for our sins except the death of the Son of God.

Q. 41. Why was he “buried”? 4.041

A. To confirm the fact that he was really dead.

Q. 42. Since, then, Christ died for us, why must we also die? 4.042

A. Our death is not a reparation for our sins, but only a dying to sin and an entering into eternal life.

Q. 43. What further benefit do we receive from the sacrifice and death of Christ on the cross? 4.043

A. That by his power our old self is crucified, put to death, and buried with him, so that the evil passions of our mortal bodies may reign in us no more, but that we may offer ourselves to him as a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Q. 44. Why is there added: “He descended into hell”? 4.044

A. That in my severest tribulations I may be assured that Christ my Lord has redeemed me from hellish anxieties and torment by the unspeakable anguish, pains, and terrors which he suffered in his soul both on the cross and before.

LORD'S DAY 17

Q. 45. What benefit do we receive from “the resurrection” of Christ? 4.045

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death that he might make us share in the righteousness which he has obtained for us through his death. Second, we too are now raised by his power to a new life. Third, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection.

LORD'S DAY 18

Q. 46. How do you understand the words: “He ascended into heaven”? 4.046

A. That Christ was taken up from the earth into heaven before the eyes of his disciples and remains there on our behalf until he comes again to judge the living and the dead.

Q. 47. Then, is not Christ with us unto the end of the world, as he has promised us? 4.047

A. Christ is true man and true God. As a man he is no longer on earth, but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit, he is never absent from us.

4.048 Q. 48. But are not the two natures in Christ separated from each other in this way, if the humanity is not wherever the divinity is?

A. Not at all; for since divinity is incomprehensible and everywhere present, it must follow that the divinity is indeed beyond the bounds of the humanity which it has assumed, and is nonetheless ever in that humanity as well, and remains personally united to it.

4.049 Q. 49. What benefit do we receive from Christ's ascension into heaven?

A. First, that he is our Advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven. Second, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that he, as the Head, will also take us, his members, up to himself. Third, that he sends us his Spirit as a counterpledge by whose power we seek what is above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, and not things that are on earth.

LORD'S DAY 19

4.050 Q. 50. Why is there added: "And sits at the right hand of God"?

A. Because Christ ascended into heaven so that he might manifest himself there as the Head of his Church, through whom the Father governs all things.

4.051 Q. 51. What benefit do we receive from this glory of Christ, our Head?

A. First, that through his Holy Spirit he pours out heavenly gifts upon us, his members. Second, that by his power he defends and supports us against all our enemies.

4.052 Q. 52. What comfort does the return of Christ "to judge the living and the dead" give you?

A. That in all affliction and persecution I may await with head held high the very Judge from heaven who has already submitted himself to the judgment of God for me and has removed all the curse from me; that he will cast all his enemies and mine into everlasting condemnation, but he shall take me, together with all his elect, to himself into heavenly joy and glory.

The Holy Spirit

LORD'S DAY 20

4.053 Q. 53. What do you believe concerning "the Holy Spirit"?

A. First, that, with the Father and the Son, he is equally eternal God; second, that God's Spirit is also given to me, preparing me through a true faith to share in Christ and all his benefits, that he comforts me and will abide with me forever.

LORD'S DAY 21

Q. 54. What do you believe concerning “the Holy Catholic Church”? 4.054

A. I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, by his Spirit and his Word, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for eternal life. Moreover, I believe that I am and forever will remain a living member of it.

Q. 55. What do you understand by “the communion of saints”? 4.055

A. First, that believers one and all, as partakers of the Lord Christ, and all his treasures and gifts, shall share in one fellowship. Second, that each one ought to know that he is obliged to use his gifts freely and with joy for the benefit and welfare of other members.

Q. 56. What do you believe concerning “the forgiveness of sins”? 4.056

A. That, for the sake of Christ's reconciling work, God will no more remember my sins or the sinfulness with which I have to struggle all my life long; but that he graciously imparts to me the righteousness of Christ so that I may never come into condemnation.

LORD'S DAY 22

Q. 57. What comfort does “the resurrection of the body” give you? 4.057

A. That after this life my soul shall be immediately taken up to Christ, its Head, and that this flesh of mine, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and be conformed to the glorious body of Christ.

Q. 58. What comfort does the article concerning “the life everlasting” give you? 4.058

A. That, since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, I shall possess, after this life, perfect blessedness, which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, and thereby praise God forever.

LORD'S DAY 23

Q. 59. But how does it help you now that you believe all this? 4.059

A. That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.

Q. 60. How are you righteous before God? 4.060

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my

own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me his righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.

4.061 Q. 61. Why do you say that you are righteous by faith alone?

A. Not because I please God by virtue of the worthiness of my faith, but because the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ alone are my righteousness before God, and because I can accept it and make it mine in no other way than by faith alone.

LORD'S DAY 24

4.062 Q. 62. But why cannot our good works be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of it?

A. Because the righteousness which can stand before the judgment of God must be absolutely perfect and wholly in conformity with the divine Law. But even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.

4.063 Q. 63. Will our good works merit nothing, even when it is God's purpose to reward them in this life, and in the future life as well?

A. This reward is not given because of merit, but out of grace.

4.064 Q. 64. But does not this teaching make people careless and sinful?

A. No, for it is impossible for those who are ingrafted into Christ by true faith not to bring forth the fruit of gratitude.

The Holy Sacraments

LORD'S DAY 25

4.065 Q. 65. Since, then, faith alone makes us share in Christ and all his benefits, where does such faith originate?

A. The Holy Spirit creates it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy Sacraments.

4.066 Q. 66. What are the Sacraments?

A. They are visible, holy signs and seals instituted by God in order that by their use he may the more fully disclose and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that because of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross he graciously grants us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

4.067 Q. 67. Are both the Word and the Sacraments designed to direct our faith to the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Yes, indeed, for the Holy Spirit teaches in the gospel and confirms by the holy Sacraments that our whole salvation is rooted in the one sacrifice of Christ offered for us on the cross.

Q. 68. How many Sacraments has Christ instituted in the New Testament? 4.068

A. Two, holy Baptism and the holy Supper.

Holy Baptism

LORD'S DAY 26

Q. 69. How does holy Baptism remind and assure you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross avails for you? 4.069

A. In this way: Christ has instituted this external washing with water and by it has promised that I am as certainly washed with his blood and Spirit from the uncleanness of my soul and from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water which is used to remove the dirt from my body.

Q. 70. What does it mean to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ? 4.070

A. It means to have the forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, for the sake of Christ's blood which he shed for us in his sacrifice on the cross, and also to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and sanctified as members of Christ, so that we may more and more die unto sin and live in a consecrated and blameless way.

Q. 71. Where has Christ promised that we are as certainly washed with his blood and Spirit as with the water of baptism? 4.071

A. In the institution of Baptism which runs thus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." "He who believes and is baptized will be saved: but he who does not believe will be condemned." This promise is also repeated where the Scriptures call baptism "the water of rebirth" and the washing away of sins.

LORD'S DAY 27

Q. 72. Does merely the outward washing with water itself wash away sins? 4.072

A. No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.

Q. 73. Then why does the Holy Spirit call baptism the water of rebirth and the washing away of sins? 4.073

A. God does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. Not only does he teach us by Baptism that just as the dirt of the body is taken away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Christ; but

more important still, by the divine pledge and sign he wishes to assure us that we are just as truly washed from our sins spiritually as our bodies are washed with water.

4.074 Q. 74. Are infants also to be baptized?

A. Yes, because they, as well as their parents, are included in the covenant and belong to the people of God. Since both redemption from sin through the blood of Christ and the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit are promised to these children no less than to their parents, infants are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Covenant by circumcision. In the New Covenant baptism has been instituted to take its place.

The Holy Supper

LORD'S DAY 28

4.075 Q. 75. How are you reminded and assured in the Holy Supper that you participate in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and in all his benefits?

A. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup in remembrance of him. He has thereby promised that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood was shed for me, as surely as I see with my eyes that the bread of the Lord is broken for me, and that the cup is shared with me. Also, he has promised that he himself as certainly feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life with his crucified body and shed blood as I receive from the hand of the minister and actually taste the bread and the cup of the Lord which are given to me as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ.

4.076 Q. 76. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his shed blood?

A. It is not only to embrace with a trusting heart the whole passion and death of Christ, and by it to receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In addition, it is to be so united more and more to his blessed body by the Holy Spirit dwelling both in Christ and in us that, although he is in heaven and we are on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, always living and being governed by one Spirit, as the members of our bodies are governed by one soul.

4.077 Q. 77. Where has Christ promised that he will feed and nourish believers with his body and blood just as surely as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the holy Supper which reads: The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "this is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper,

saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

This promise is also repeated by the apostle Paul: When we bless “the cup of blessing,” is it not a means of sharing in the blood of Christ? When we break the bread, is it not a means of sharing the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, many as we are, are one body; for it is one loaf of which we all partake.

LORD’S DAY 29

Q. 78. Do the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ? 4.078

A. No, for as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, nor becomes the washing away of sins by itself, but is only a divine sign and confirmation of it, so also in the Lord’s Supper the sacred bread does not become the body of Christ itself, although, in accordance with the nature and usage of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ.

Q. 79. Then why does Christ call the bread his body, and the cup his blood, or the New Covenant in his blood, and why does the apostle Paul call the Supper “a means of sharing” in the body and blood of Christ? 4.079

A. Christ does not speak in this way except for a strong reason. He wishes to teach us by it that as bread and wine sustain this temporal life so his crucified body and shed blood are the true food and drink of our souls for eternal life. Even more, he wishes to assure us by this visible sign and pledge that we come to share in his true body and blood through the working of the Holy Spirit as surely as we receive with our mouth these holy tokens in remembrance of him, and that all his sufferings and his death are our own as certainly as if we had ourselves suffered and rendered satisfaction in our own persons.

LORD’S DAY 30

***Q. 80. What difference is there between the Lord’s Supper and the papal Mass?**² 4.080

*A. The Lord’s Supper testifies to us that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which he himself has accomplished on the cross once for all; (and that through the Holy Spirit we are incorporated into Christ, who is now in heaven with his true body at the right hand of the Father and is there to be worshiped). But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ unless Christ is

²This question first appeared in part in the second edition. The sections in parentheses were added in the third.

again offered for them daily by the priest (and that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine and is therefore to be worshiped in them). Therefore the Mass is fundamentally a complete denial of the once for all sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ (and as such an idolatry to be condemned).

4.081 Q. 81. Who ought to come to the table of the Lord?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves for their sins, and who nevertheless trust that these sins have been forgiven them and that their remaining weakness is covered by the passion and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and improve their life. The impenitent and hypocrites, however, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

4.082 Q. 82. Should those who show themselves to be unbelievers and enemies of God by their confession and life be admitted to this Supper?

A. No, for then the covenant of God would be profaned and his wrath provoked against the whole congregation. According to the ordinance of Christ and his apostles, therefore, the Christian church is under obligation, by the office of the keys, to exclude such persons until they amend their lives.

LORD'S DAY 31

4.083 Q. 83. What is the office of the keys?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline. By these two means the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.

4.084 Q. 84. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?

A. In this way: The kingdom of heaven is opened when it is proclaimed and openly testified to believers, one and all, according to the command of Christ, that as often as they accept the promise of the gospel with true faith all their sins are truly forgiven them by God for the sake of Christ's gracious work. On the contrary, the wrath of God and eternal condemnation fall upon all unbelievers and hypocrites as long as they do not repent. It is according to this witness of the gospel that God will judge the one and the other in this life and in the life to come.

4.085 Q. 85. How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

A. In this way: Christ commanded that those who bear the Christian name in an unchristian way either in doctrine or in life should be given brotherly admonition. If they do not give up their errors or evil ways, notification is given to the church or to those ordained for this by the church. Then, if they do not change after this warning, they are forbidden to

partake of the holy Sacraments and are thus excluded from the communion of the church and by God himself from the kingdom of Christ. However, if they promise and show real amendment, they are received again as members of Christ and of the church.

PART III

Thankfulness

LORD'S DAY 32

Q. 86. Since we are redeemed from our sin and its wretched consequences by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why must we do good works? 4.086

A. Because just as Christ has redeemed us with his blood he also renews us through his Holy Spirit according to his own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for his goodness and that he may be glorified through us; and further, so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ.

Q. 87. Can those who do not turn to God from their ungrateful, impenitent life be saved? 4.087

A. Certainly not! Scripture says, "Surely you know that the unjust will never come into possession of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake: no fornicator or idolater, none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion, no thieves or grabbers or drunkards or slanderers or swindlers, will possess the kingdom of God."

LORD'S DAY 33

Q. 88. How many parts are there to the true repentance or conversion of man? 4.088

A. Two: the dying of the old self and the birth of the new.

Q. 89. What is the dying of the old self? 4.089

A. Sincere sorrow over our sins and more and more to hate them and to flee from them.

Q. 90. What is the birth of the new self? 4.090

A. Complete joy in God through Christ and a strong desire to live according to the will of God in all good works.

Q. 91. But what are good works? 4.091

A. Only those which are done out of true faith, in accordance with the Law of God, and for his glory, and not those based on our own opinion or on the traditions of men.

4.092 Q. 92. What is the law of God?

A. God spoke all these words saying:

FIRST COMMANDMENT

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.”

SECOND COMMANDMENT

“You shall not make yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

THIRD COMMANDMENT

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

FOURTH COMMANDMENT

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.”

FIFTH COMMANDMENT

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.”

SIXTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not kill.”

SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not commit adultery.”

EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not steal.”

NINTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

TENTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

Q. 93. How are these commandments divided? 4.093

A. Into two tables, the first of which teaches us in four commandments how we ought to live in relation to God; the other, in six commandments, what we owe to our neighbor.

Q. 94. What does the Lord require in the first commandment? 4.094

A. That I must avoid and flee all idolatry, sorcery, enchantments, invocation of saints or other creatures because of the risk of losing my salvation. Indeed, I ought properly to acknowledge the only true God, trust in him alone, in humility and patience expect all good from him only, and love, fear and honor him with my whole heart. In short, I should rather turn my back on all creatures than do the least thing against his will.

Q. 95. What is idolatry? 4.095

A. It is to imagine or possess something in which to put one’s trust in place of or beside the one true God who has revealed himself in his Word.

LORD’S DAY 35

Q. 96. What does God require in the second commandment? 4.096

A. That we should not represent him or worship him in any other manner than he has commanded in his word.

Q. 97. Should we, then, not make any images at all? 4.097

A. God cannot and should not be pictured in any way. As for creatures, although they may indeed be portrayed, God forbids making or having any likeness of them in order to worship them, or to use them to serve him.

Q. 98. But may not pictures be tolerated in churches in place of books for unlearned people? 4.098

A. No, for we must not try to be wiser than God who does not want his people to be taught by means of lifeless idols, but through the living preaching of his Word.

LORD’S DAY 36

Q. 99. What is required in the third commandment? 4.099

A. That we must not profane or abuse the name of God by cursing, by perjury, or by unnecessary oaths. Nor are we to participate in such horrible

sins by keeping quiet and thus giving silent consent. In a word, we must not use the holy name of God except with fear and reverence so that he may be rightly confessed and addressed by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.

4.100 Q. 100. Is it, therefore, so great a sin to blaspheme God's name by cursing and swearing that God is also angry with those who do not try to prevent and forbid it as much as they can?

A. Yes, indeed; for no sin is greater or provokes his wrath more than the profaning of his name. That is why he commanded it to be punished with death.

LORD'S DAY 37

4.101 Q. 101. But may we not swear oaths by the name of God in a devout manner?

A. Yes, when the civil authorities require it of their subjects, or when it is otherwise needed to maintain and promote fidelity and truth, to the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbor. Such oath-taking is grounded in God's Word and has therefore been rightly used by God's people under the Old and New Covenants.

4.102 Q. 102. May we also swear by the saints or other creatures?

A. No; for a lawful oath is a calling upon God, as the only searcher of hearts, to bear witness to the truth, and to punish me if I swear falsely. No creature deserves such honor.

LORD'S DAY 38

4.103 Q. 103. What does God require in the fourth commandment?

A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and Christian education be maintained, and that I diligently attend church, especially on the Lord's day, to hear the Word of God, to participate in the holy Sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian service to those in need. Second, that I cease from my evil works all the days of my life, allow the Lord to work in me through his Spirit, and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.

LORD'S DAY 39

4.104 Q. 104. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show honor, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all who are set in authority over me; that I submit myself with respectful obedience to all their careful instruction and discipline; and that I also bear patiently their failures, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.

LORD'S DAY 40

4.105 Q. 105. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A. That I am not to abuse, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor, either with

thought, or by word or gesture, much less by deed, whether by myself or through another, but to lay aside all desire for revenge; and that I do not harm myself or willfully expose myself to danger. This is why the authorities are armed with the means to prevent murder.

Q. 106. But does this commandment speak only of killing? 4.106

A. In forbidding murder God means to teach us that he abhors the root of murder, which is envy, hatred, anger, and desire for revenge, and that he regards all these as hidden murder.

Q. 107. Is it enough, then, if we do not kill our neighbor in any of these ways? 4.107

A. No; for when God condemns envy, hatred, and anger, he requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness toward him, to prevent injury to him as much as we can, also to do good to our enemies.

LORD'S DAY 41

Q. 108. What does the seventh commandment teach us? 4.108

A. That all unchastity is condemned by God, and that we should therefore detest it from the heart, and live chaste and disciplined lives, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.

Q. 109. Does God forbid nothing more than adultery and such gross sins in this commandment? 4.109

A. Since both our body and soul are a temple of the Holy Spirit, it is his will that we keep both pure and holy. Therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires and whatever may excite another person to them.

LORD'S DAY 42

Q. 110. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment? 4.110

A. He forbids not only the theft and robbery which civil authorities punish, but God also labels as theft all wicked tricks and schemes by which we seek to get for ourselves our neighbor's goods, whether by force or under the pretext of right, such as false weights and measures, deceptive advertising or merchandising, counterfeit money, exorbitant interest, or any other means forbidden by God. He also forbids all greed and misuse and waste of his gifts.

Q. 111. But what does God require of you in this commandment? 4.111

A. That I work for the good of my neighbor wherever I can and may, deal with him as I would have others deal with me, and do my work well so that I may be able to help the poor in their need.

LORD'S DAY 43

Q. 112. What is required in the ninth commandment? 4.112

A. That I do not bear false witness against anyone, twist anyone's words, be a gossip or a slanderer, or condemn anyone lightly without a hearing. Rather I am required to avoid, under penalty of God's wrath, all lying and deceit as the works of the devil himself. In judicial and all other matters I am to love the truth, and to speak and confess it honestly. Indeed, insofar as I am able, I am to defend and promote my neighbor's good name.

LORD'S DAY 44

4.113 Q. 113. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. That there should never enter our heart even the least inclination or thought contrary to any commandment of God, but that we should always hate sin with our whole heart and find satisfaction and joy in all righteousness.

4.114 Q. 114. But can those who are converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

A. No, for even the holiest of them make only a small beginning in obedience in this life. Nevertheless, they begin with serious purpose to conform not only to some, but to all the commandments of God.

4.115 Q. 115. Why, then, does God have the ten commandments preached so strictly since no one can keep them in this life?

A. First, that all our life long we may become increasingly aware of our sinfulness, and therefore more eagerly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ. Second, that we may constantly and diligently pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that more and more we may be renewed in the image of God, until we attain the goal of full perfection after this life.

Prayer

LORD'S DAY 45

4.116 Q. 116. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

A. Because it is the chief part of the gratitude which God requires of us, and because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who sincerely beseech him in prayer without ceasing, and who thank him for these gifts.

4.117 Q. 117. What is contained in a prayer which pleases God and is heard by him?

A. First, that we sincerely call upon the one true God, who has revealed himself to us in his Word, for all that he has commanded us to ask of him. Then, that we thoroughly acknowledge our need and evil condition so that we may humble ourselves in the presence of his majesty. Third, that we rest assured that, in spite of our unworthiness, he will certainly hear our prayer for the sake of Christ our Lord, as he has promised us in his Word.

Q. 118. What has God commanded us to ask of him? 4.118

A. All things necessary for soul and body which Christ the Lord has included in the prayer which he himself taught us.

Q. 119. What is the Lord's Prayer? 4.119

A. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

Our Lord's Prayer**LORD'S DAY 46****Q. 120. Why has Christ commanded us to address God: "Our Father"?" 4.120**

A. That at the very beginning of our prayer he may awaken in us the childlike reverence and trust toward God which should be the motivation of our prayer, which is that God has become our Father through Christ and will much less deny us what we ask him in faith than our human fathers will refuse us earthly things.

Q. 121. Why is there added: "who art in heaven"?" 4.121

A. That we may have no earthly conception of the heavenly majesty of God, but that we may expect from his almighty power all things that are needed for body and soul.

LORD'S DAY 47**Q. 122. What is the first petition? 4.122**

A. "Hallowed be thy name." That is: help us first of all to know thee rightly, and to hallow, glorify, and praise thee in all thy works through which there shine thine almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth. And so order our whole life in thought, word, and deed that thy name may never be blasphemed on our account, but may always be honored and praised.

LORD'S DAY 48**Q. 123. What is the second petition? 4.123**

A. "Thy kingdom come." That is: so govern us by thy Word and Spirit that we may more and more submit ourselves unto thee. Uphold and increase thy church. Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against thee, and all wicked schemes thought up against thy holy Word, until the full coming of thy kingdom in which thou shalt be all in all.

LORD'S DAY 49

4.124 Q. 124. What is the third petition?

A. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." That is: grant that we and all men may renounce our own will and obey thy will, which alone is good, without grumbling, so that everyone may carry out his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

LORD'S DAY 50

4.125 Q. 125. What is the fourth petition?

A. "Give us this day our daily bread." That is: be pleased to provide for all our bodily needs so that thereby we may acknowledge that thou art the only source of all that is good, and that without thy blessing neither our care and labor nor thy gifts can do us any good. Therefore, may we withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in thee alone.

LORD'S DAY 51

4.126 Q. 126. What is the fifth petition?

A. "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." That is: be pleased, for the sake of Christ's blood, not to charge to us, miserable sinners, our many transgressions, nor the evil which still clings to us. We also find this witness of thy grace in us, that it is our sincere intention heartily to forgive our neighbor.

LORD'S DAY 52

4.127 Q. 127. What is the sixth petition?

A. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is: since we are so weak that we cannot stand by ourselves for one moment, and besides, since our sworn enemies, the devil, the world, and our own sin, ceaselessly assail us, be pleased to preserve and strengthen us through the power of thy Holy Spirit so that we may stand firm against them, and not be defeated in this spiritual warfare, until at last we obtain complete victory.

4.128 Q. 128. How do you close this prayer?

A. "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever." That is: we ask all this of thee because, as our King, thou art willing and able to give us all that is good since thou hast power over all things, and that by this not we ourselves but thy holy name may be glorified forever.

4.129 Q. 129. What is the meaning of the little word "Amen"?

A. Amen means: this shall truly and certainly be. For my prayer is much more certainly heard by God than I am persuaded in my heart that I desire such things from him.