

STUDY EDITION



LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

ENLARGED PRINT

AUGSBURG FORTRESS
MINNEAPOLIS

CONTENTS

How to Use This Book	6
The Ten Commandments	14
The Apostles' Creed	25
The Lord's Prayer	33
The Sacrament of Holy Baptism	43
How People Are to Be Taught to Confess	45
Individual Confession and Forgiveness	46
The Sacrament of the Altar	49
Morning and Evening Blessings	52
Blessings at Meals	54
The Household Chart of Some Bible Passages	57
The Marriage Service	63
The Service of Holy Baptism	71
Luther's Preface to the Small Catechism of 1529	81

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In the first several decades of the 21st century, Christians around the world are commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation events ignited by the posting of Martin Luther's 95 *Theses* in 1517. The *Theses* dealt with how believers come to terms with God's discipline and why buying divine indulgence was impossible and undermined God's judgment and grace, which one experiences through God's forgiving word. By 1520, what had begun as an academic debate over the sale of letters of indulgence had come to involve questions of papal authority and the nature of the church in the world. Luther, however, never strayed far from his original commitment: that God's judgment (in the law) and God's mercy (in the gospel) could not be bought or earned but only received in faith. Whether it was in his 1520 tract, *The Freedom of a Christian*, or in his 1522 preface to a new translation of the book of Romans, or in his countless sermons and tracts, the message remained the same. In 1529, Luther published the *Small Catechism*, once again centering on God's law and gospel and on the life of the baptized as a daily dying and rising. Shorn of polemics and providing succinct explanations of common Christian texts, the *Small Catechism*, as a "handbook for the Christian household," has provided countless believers with life-giving insights into their relation to God and their neighbor.

WHERE DO CATECHISMS COME FROM?

In 1529 Martin Luther, a pastor in the German town of Wittenberg and teacher at the university there, published his explanations to the chief parts of the Christian faith. These explanations were first produced on individual sheets and sold for a few pennies each. By the middle of 1529 printers in Wittenberg and elsewhere had collected them into what they called an *enchiridion* or handbook, to which Luther added a preface, telling pastors how to use the book, and several other sections to the end of it. By the end of the year printers had given this handbook a subtitle by which we know it today, *The*



from Psalm 8

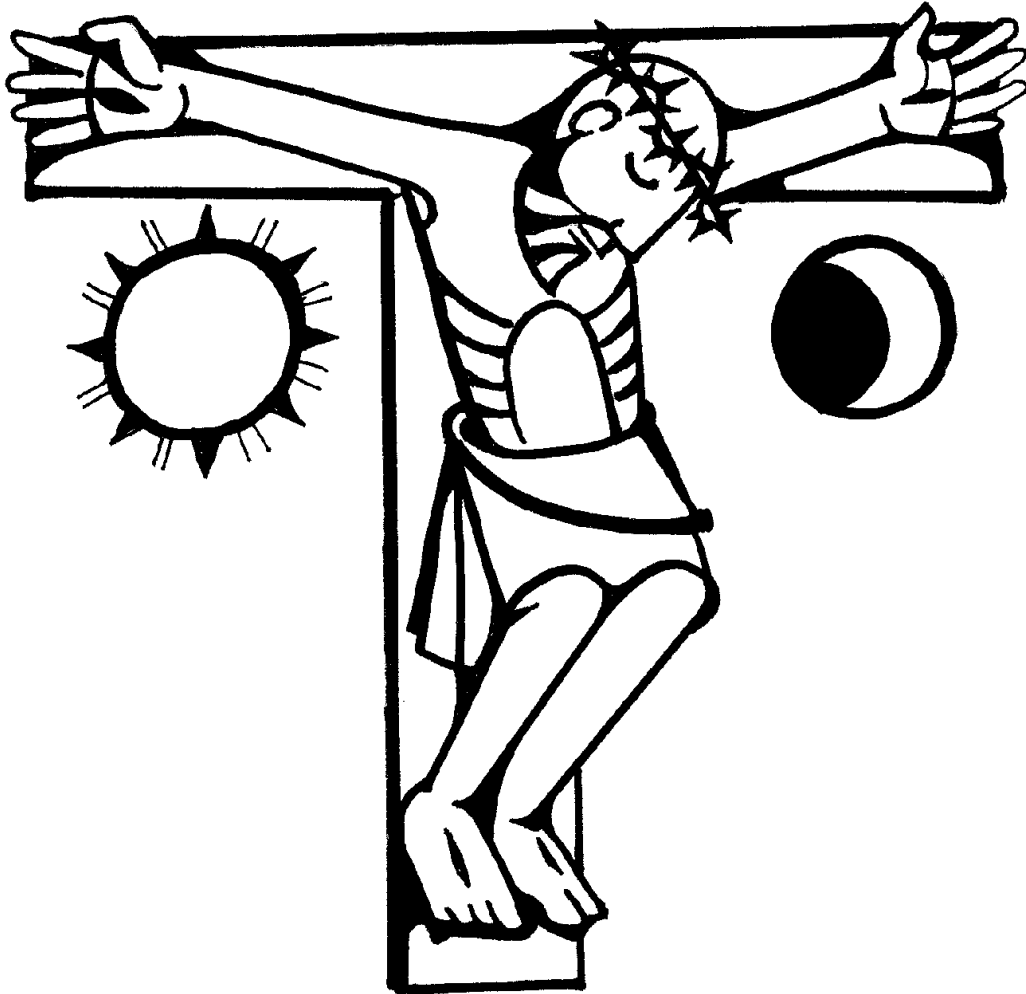
THE FIRST ARTICLE: ON CREATION

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

WHAT IS THIS? or WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties.

In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property—along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.



from Luke 23:39-46

THE SECOND ARTICLE: ON REDEMPTION

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

WHAT IS THIS? or WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed 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. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.



from Acts 2

THE THIRD ARTICLE: ON BEING MADE HOLY

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. Amen.

WHAT IS THIS? *or* WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.