

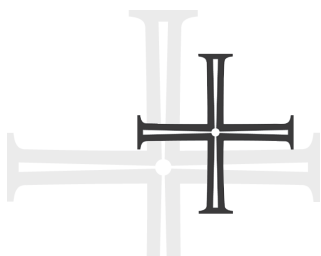
LUTHER'S SMALL  
CATECHISM



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## INTRODUCTION

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.



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

You shall have no other gods.

I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use  
of the name of the Lord your God.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,  
or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey,  
or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

*from Exodus 20:1-17*



## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

### 1. WHAT IS BAPTISM?

*Answer:* Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead, it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's word.

#### WHAT THEN IS THIS WORD OF GOD?

*Answer:* Where our Lord Jesus Christ says in Matthew 28, "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."

### 2. WHAT GIFTS OR BENEFITS DOES BAPTISM GRANT?

*Answer:* It brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare.

#### WHAT ARE THESE WORDS AND PROMISES OF GOD?

*Answer:* Where our Lord Christ says in Mark 16, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned."