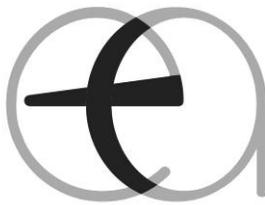


German Congregational Catechism

Living Heritage Edition



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EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION

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EDITOR'S NOTES

The text of this edition of the German Congregational Catechism is primarily based on the 1963 edition, the final edition to be published by the General Conference of the German Congregational Church. A number of questions from the 1942 English translation of the 1919 German edition have been re-inserted into this edition to help reclaim the German Congregationalists' central belief in Scripture as the foundation of faith, and some of the more traditional, evangelical teachings found in the original German translation that were omitted in the 1963 revision. The inserted 1942 questions and answers are indicated by an asterix (*).

Most Scripture passages quoted in the Catechism have been updated to the New International Version of the Bible (NIV), except those which retain deep traditional usage in worship.

Throughout the text, the English has been modernized to make archaic vocabulary more readable for the contemporary audience, except those passages which retain traditional usage in worship.

Introduction to this Edition

The German Congregational Catechism was first published in 1904 by the General Conference of German Congregational Churches, a small association of independent minded, Bible-centered, Russian German immigrants who homesteaded the plains of Nebraska, Iowa, the Dakotas, and beyond. Coming from Lutheran and Reformed backgrounds in Europe, but not feeling comfortable with the Lutheran and Reformed denominational groupings already established in the United States, these immigrants founded their own association of churches in 1883, in Crete, Nebraska, borrowing the “Congregational” style of local self government and melding that with their own blend of Lutheran and Reformed pietism.

In 1904, the German Congregationalists decided to publish a catechism to help teach the Christian faith to the youth of their congregations. Originally called *Katechismus*, the *Congregational Catechism of Religious Instruction*, attempted to include the basic teachings contained in *Luther’s Small Catechism* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. It also borrowed some source material by verbatim from the 1896 edition of the *Evangelical Catechism* published by the German Evangelical Synod of North America.

Unlike Luther’s Catechism that began with a study of the Law, or the *Heidelberg Catechism’s* pondering of one’s only comfort being found in belonging to Jesus Christ, the German Congregational Catechism begins with a focus on Scripture and the centrality of the Bible in expressing the truths of the Christian faith.

The German Congregational Catechism was first published in Chicago, but after a partnership was forged with English Congregationalists to train German Congregational ministers at Yankton College, Yankton, South Dakota, the catechism’s 1942 and 1963 editions were published on the Yankton College campus under the auspices of The Pioneer Press.

In 1957, because of their partnership with the Congregational Christian Church, the German Congregationalists became involved with the

German Congregational Catechism

nationwide Congregational Christian Church merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church that produced the United Church of Christ denomination. Thus in 1963, the General Conference of German Congregational Churches, meeting in Scotts Bluff, Nebraska, voted to disband their organization, 80 years after its founding.

The dissolution of the German Congregational Church also meant the cease of publication of the German Congregational Catechism and its abandonment by many churches of that heritage. Yet, the centrality of this Catechism remained a burning ember in a number of German Congregational heritage churches that refused to be snuffed out. As the years passed, a number of these churches found that their Bible-centered faith, still taught by their ministers who used the Catechism, produced an uneasy alliance with their new denominational affiliation as its doctrines and practices drifted away from solid Biblical foundations.

Finally, the burning ember of German Congregational faith reignited into a glowing flame as the heirs of their independent minded, Bible-centered, Lutheran and Reformed blended piety, defiantly reclaimed the foundations of their Biblical faith. A number of these churches have voted to sever denominational ties in favor of local congregational independence that places the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture back at the center of their fellowship. John 1:5 proclaims, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” And so, it has.

The rebirth of the German Congregational faith heritage, 55 years after being dissolved, necessitates the reprinting of the German Congregational Catechism as a teaching tool to remind current and future generations of the importance of faith in Jesus Christ that is grounded on the solid foundation of Scripture. And so, in the year of our Lord 2018, it is a joy to offer churches, ministers and students of faith with a reprint of the German Congregational Catechism in celebration of the 135th Anniversary of the founding of the German Congregational Church.

It is our prayer that the reprint of this Catechism helps fan the flame of Biblical Christian faith that it might burn brightly as the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), just as Jesus intended, for many years to come.

The Ten Commandments

The First Commandment

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shall have no other gods before me. The

Second Commandment

Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

The Third Commandment

Thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

The Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep in holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The Fifth Commandment

Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God gives to thee.

The Sixth Commandment

Thou shall not kill.

The Seventh Commandment

Thou shall not commit adultery.

The Eighth Commandment

Thou shall not steal.

The Ninth Commandment

Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The Tenth Commandment

Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife nor his man-servant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The Apostles Creed

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 one Holy Universal Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

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 forgive 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.

The German Congregational Catechism

INTRODUCTION

1. What do we mean by the term Catechism?

A short presentation of biblical teachings for our welfare and our salvation.

2. What is the basis of these teachings?

The Bible, for in matters of faith only biblical teachings are to be accepted.

3. What is the Bible?

The Holy Scriptures or the Word of God; written by men guided by the spirit of God.

4. Into what main parts is our Bible divided?

Into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament

5. What writings are contained in the Old Testament?

It contains the books of the Bible which were written before the birth of Jesus. We group them into historical, instructional and prophetic books.

The historical books of the Old Testament are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

The instructional books of the Old Testament are: Job, the Psalms, the

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The prophetic books of the Old Testament are: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

***6.** Which books are called “The Apocrypha”?

We find these [Inter-Testament] books in some Bibles. They are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, The Prayer of Manasseh, Additions to Esther, The Hymn of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, 1 Esdras and 2 Esdras. These contain many good thoughts, which are worthy of consideration; although they do not have the same value as the other books of the Bible.

7. What writings are contained in the New Testament?

It contains the books that were written after the birth of Jesus and gives us a report of his life and teachings, the work of his apostles and the beginning of the Christian Church.

The historical books of the New Testament are: the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Acts of the Apostles.

The instructional books of the New Testament are: Paul’s Letters to the Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the Letter to the Hebrews, the Letters of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude.

The prophetic book of the New Testament is: The Revelation of John.

***8.** What are the contents of the Holy Scriptures?

The Holy Scriptures contain the revealed will of God in the Law and the Gospel.

***9.** What is the Law?

The Law is that presentation of the will of God, whereby he, as a loving Father, commands us to do good and to avoid evil.

***10.** In what verses of the Bible do we find the content of the Gospel concisely expressed?

In John 3:16 : “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
And in 1 Timothy 1:15; “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

***11.** What reasons do we have for believing that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God?

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God;

- 1.) Because of the divine influence which they have exerted upon the lives of so many people and the comfort they have given to believers during their lives and in their dying moments.
- 2.) Because of the many promises contained in them which have already been fulfilled, and the miracles described in them, which can be brought about only by divine power.
- 3.) Because they were written by holy men of God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Psalms 119:105; 2 Peter 1:21.

12. How do we divide the content of our catechism?

Our catechism is divided into five principal parts. These are: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacraments and the Christian Church.

The First Principal Part

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

13. What does the first principal part contain?

It contains the Ten Commandments.

14. Where and when did God give us the Ten Commandments?

On Mount Sinai 50 days after the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. (Exodus 20)

15. What is the First Commandment?

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

16. What does God require in the First Commandment?

That we fear, love and trust God above all things. 1 John 5:3. In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. Isaiah 42:8. I am the LORD, that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another, or my praise to idols.

17. The Second Commandment.

You shall not make for yourself an image, in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or that is in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them, nor worship them. For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me; but showing love to a

thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

18. What does God say in this Commandment?

God says in this Commandment that we shall not worship him in any image, for all true worshippers must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Isaiah 40:18.

19. The Third Commandment.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

20. What is God's will as expressed in this Commandment?

That we should not use his name thoughtlessly, nor irreverently, but make it holy and honor it. Leviticus 19:12.

21. The Fourth Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God: On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, For in six days the Lord made heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

22. How can we make the Sabbath day holy?

We can make the Sabbath day holy by resting from all worldly employment, by studying the word of God at home and in church, by attending public

worship, with praises and thanksgiving, and by devoting the entire day to our own and to our neighbor's salvation. Psalms 100:2-4; Acts 2:42,46-47.

23. The Fifth Commandment.

Honor your father and your mother; so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

24. What does God require in this Commandment?

God requires that I recognize my parents as his representatives placed over me by him to care for me, to look after my training and to guide my feet heavenward. For this I am to honor them by truly loving and cheerfully obeying them through my whole life. May God in his mercy help me to do this. Proverbs 1:8; Colossians 3:20; Proverbs 23:22.

25. The Sixth Commandment.

You shall not murder.

26. What does God forbid in this Commandment?

God wishes to impress upon us the value and the sacredness of human life, therefore, he forbids us to take our own lives or to kill others. Romans 12:19; Matthew 5:44-45; [See also Didache 2:2].

27. The Seventh Commandment.

You shall not commit adultery

28. What does God forbid in the Seventh Commandment?

In the Seventh Commandment God forbids all unchaste thoughts, words and deeds. Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

29. The Eighth Commandment.

You shall not steal.

30. How is this Commandment broken?

This Commandment is broken when we appropriate to ourselves other people's money or goods, either secretly or openly, by trickery or by violence and when we covet our neighbor's possessions. Jeremiah 22:13.

31. The Ninth Commandment.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

32. What does this mean?

This means that we should not deceitfully misrepresent, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but should excuse his faults, speak well of him, and explain all his words and actions to his advantage. Ephesians 4:25; Leviticus 19:16.

33. The Tenth Commandment.

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

34. What is the meaning of the Tenth Commandment?

The fear of God and the love toward our fellow men are to restrain us from craftily seeking to appropriate to ourselves our neighbor's possessions; his house, his wife, his servants, his cattle... We should rejoice with him when he is happy and prosperous. 1 John 2:15-17.

35. Where in the New Testament and in what words do we find a summary of these Ten Commandments?

In the Gospel of St. Matthew 22:37-40: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The Second Principal Part

THE APOSTLES CREED

36. What do we mean by the word “creed”?

Our confession of faith in God. The Apostles’ Creed is the oldest declaration of Christian faith. It was first used in the Early Church to instruct Christian disciples.

37. What do we call the three parts of the Apostles Creed?

The three Articles of Faith.

THE FIRST ARTICLE: God the Father

38. What Is the First Article?

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

39. What is meant by this?

I believe that God made heaven and earth, including me and all creatures; he gave me body and soul, reasoning power and all my senses; he provides me with food, clothing, home, family and all my possessions. I believe that he provides me daily with all necessities of life, protects and preserves me from danger, this all out of his fatherly and divine mercy, without any praiseworthy quality on my part. For this I am duty bound to love, praise, serve and obey him.

***40.** What does it mean to believe in God?

To believe in God means to acknowledge him as our God, to accept his word as guide and to trust him completely. John 17:3; 1 Thess. 2:13; John 7:17; Hebrews 11:6, 1

41. Where is God?

God is everywhere. Wherever there is goodness, truth or love, God is revealed.

42. If God is everywhere, why can't we see him?

We can't see God because God is a spirit, and a spirit is invisible. John 4:24. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

43. Is the God revealed in the Bible the only God?

There is but one God; though he has revealed himself in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mark 12:29. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

44. How did God create all things?

God created all things by his own power, his own free will and in an orderly manner.

45. Which are the principal beings created by God?

The principal beings created by God are the angels and man.

46. Who are the angels?

The angels are spirits, which God created to glorify him and to serve man.

47. Which is the principal being on earth?

The principal being on earth is man, consisting of body, soul and spirit. Genesis 2:7. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

48. Why do we call God the Father of all men?

We call God the Father of all men because all human beings belong to one family, of which God is the Father.

49. How may we know God for ourselves?

God will make himself known to us if we read the Bible (to know his will), pray to him, do right and try to live in the spirit of Jesus.

50. What is divine providence?

Divine providence is the care with which God watches over us and over the world. Psalm 33:18. "But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love." Nahum 1:7.

THE SECOND ARTICLE: Jesus Christ, Our Lord

51. What is the Second Article?

I believe 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.

52. What is meant by this?

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father, lived among his fellow men, and by his teaching, his suffering and death on the cross revealed the true love of God to mankind. In giving himself in this sacrifice of his own free will, he is our redeemer and deliverer from death and the power of Satan. His sacrifice is the assurance for us that God is willing to forgive our sins if we repent and in turn love and obey him.

***53. What does the name Jesus mean?**

The name Jesus is of Hebrew origin and means Savior or Redeemer.

Matthew 1:21. "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

***54. Why is Christ called the God-man?**

Christ is called the God-man because there are two aspects to his nature, the divine and the human.

John 1:14. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

55. What does the name Christ mean?

The name Christ means the Anointed One. Jesus was the long-expected Messiah. [*He is the Anointed of the Lord, our Teacher, High-priest, and King.]

56. Why do we call Jesus our Teacher?

We call Jesus our Teacher because he teaches us about God, our Father, and how he expects us to live as his children. John 1:18

***57** Why do we call Christ our High-priest?

Christ is our high-priest because he offered himself for our sins, and even now makes intercession for us at the right hand of God, the Father, and bestows upon us all the blessings which he acquired for us. Hebrews 9:26 and 28; Hebrews 9:24

***58.** Why do we call Christ our King?

Christ is our king, because he reigns over us and protects us, and also gathers and preserves his church. He will return again as king to judge the world and to take us into the kingdom of his eternal glory. Psalm 96:10; Revelation 17:14; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:25

59. Why do we call Jesus the Savior of mankind?

We call Jesus the Savior of mankind because through his life and death he revealed the true love of God the Father toward us. It is this love that draws us from the way of sin to God. Romans 5:8; Hebrews 9:26, 28.

60. What is sin?

Sin is the wrong and evil in this world that stands in opposition to God.
James 4:17.

61. What are the results of sin?

Sin separates us from God and brings sorrow, pain and suffering, and always leads to destruction.

***62.** Why do we say: “Born of the Virgin Mary?”

We say this in order to confess that he became true man and thus fulfilled the prophecies concerning his incarnation. Luke 1:35; John 1:14

63. What does the suffering of Jesus teach us about God?

The suffering of Jesus teaches us that God loves the world enough to suffer for its salvation. John 3:16. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

***64.** Why is his crucifixion especially mentioned?

Christ’s crucifixion is especially mentioned in the Apostles Creed because, in his death on the cross, he endured the greatest torture, bore the curse of the Law, and atoned for our sins. Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24

65. What did Christ accomplish for us by his suffering and death?

Through his suffering and death, Christ reconciled us with God and redeemed us from sin, death, Satan and hell, and restored unto us

righteousness and eternal life. Titus 2:14.

66. What do we mean by the resurrection of Jesus?

By the resurrection of Jesus we mean that though he was crucified and died he arose on the third day and lives forever. 1 Corinthians 15:20, 22.

***67.** How did Christ rise from the dead?

Christ rose from the dead by the power of God, on the third day, with a transfigured body, and thereby clearly established that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the World. Acts 2:24; Acts 10:40-41; Romans 1:4; Romans 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:17-18; Romans 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:15; John 11:25-26; 1 Cor. 15:20, 22; 1 Cor. 6:14; Romans 8:11; Rev. 1:17-18

68. When did Christ ascend into heaven?

Forty days after his resurrection Christ ascended into heaven and entered into his glory; where he is sitting at the right hand of God. Acts 1:3, 9.

69. Will Christ return to this earth?

Christ will come again, in great power and glory, to bring joy and deliverance to the righteous. Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:36.

70. What is the judgment of the world?

The judgment of the world is the final judgment by Jesus Christ of all the living and dead people, according to their works. Matthew 16:27; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

THE THIRD ARTICLE: The Holy Spirit

71. What is the Third Article of the Apostles Creed?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, in the one Holy Universal Christian Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

72. What is meant by this?

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Holy Trinity, preceeds from the Father and the Son, dwells in the hearts of true believers, and that he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies all Christians and keeps them in the true faith. As he has risen from the dead he will in the end raise all the dead and give to all true believers eternal life.

73. What offices are ascribed to the Holy Spirit?

Three offices are ascribed to the Holy Spirit; the office of reproof; the office of comforting; the office of teaching.

74. How does the Holy Spirit reprove us?

By leading men to recognize their sinfulness. John 16:8.

75. How does the Holy Spirit comfort us?

If we love and obey God, the Holy Spirit is our constant companion. John 14: 16-17.

76. How does the Holy Spirit guide us?

When we sincerely pray to God, the Holy Spirit opens our minds to the truth and stirs our consciences to choose the right. John 16:13-14.

77. What must we do when we have done wrong?

We must confess our wrong-doing to God and in certain cases to the person wronged, as to be forgiven and do all we can to set things right.

78. What is repentance?

True repentance consists in the conviction of our sinfulness, feeling sorry for our sin, confessing and renouncing our sin and asking God for forgiveness. Luke 15:18-19.

79. What is conversion?

Conversion is the decision of the sinner to renounce all evil, seek salvation, and dedicate his life to the service of God. Ezekiel 33:11; Ezekiel 18:21; Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:25.

80. Is conversion necessary?

Yes, because it leads to spiritual renewal or restoration, as Jesus said: "You must be born again!" and: "Verily, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." (John 3:7, 3) 1 Peter 1:23.

81. What is salvation?

Salvation consists in the justification of the sinner, his complete spiritual renewal or restoration, and his transformation into the image of Christ. Acts 16:31.

82. What is faith?

Faith is a firm confidence in God. It is accepting God's ways without doubt even though we do not fully understand them. Hebrews 11:1.

83. Why must we have faith?

We must have faith because faith is necessary for wise and happy living. By faith in God and man, and in better things to come, we discover God's highest goals. Hebrews 11:6. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

The Third Principal Part

THE LORD'S PRAYER

84. What is prayer?

Prayer is speaking with God, whereby we offer praise, give thanks, express our thoughts to him, listen to him and make our petitions either for ourselves or others.

85. Where and how often should we pray?

We should pray everywhere and without ceasing. 2 Timothy 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

86. What do we mean by the Lord's Prayer?

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples as given in Matthew 6:9-13.
[See also Didache 8:2]

87. Will you repeat the Lord's Prayer?

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 forgive 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.

88. According to the opening words, to whom do we speak in this prayer?

To God as our heavenly Father.

89. What is the first petition in this prayer?

Hallowed be thy name.

90. What is meant by this?

The name of God is in itself holy, but we pray in this petition that it may also be made holy among us. This is done when the word of God is taught in sincerity and we as children of God live according to his teaching.

91. What is the second petition?

Thy kingdom come.

92. What is meant by this?

The kingdom of God is coming even without our prayers, but we pray in this petition that we and all the people on earth may share in this kingdom and that all the kingdoms of the earth may speedily become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

93. What is the third petition?

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

94. What is meant by this?

God's good and gracious will is indeed done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also be done among us, and everywhere, and that everyone on earth may do his will as cheerfully as the angels in heaven.

Hebrews 13:21.

95. What is the fourth petition?

Give us this day our daily bread.

96. What is meant by this?

God indeed gives daily bread without our prayer, even to the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he may help us to recognize his kindness, that we may learn to appreciate his gracious gifts and receive them with thanksgiving. Psalm 145:15.

97. What is the fifth petition?

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

98. What is meant by this?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven may not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our petitions, for we are unworthy, but we ask that by his grace he grant them in the measure as we are willing to forgive our fellow men who may do wrong to us. Matthew 6:14, 15; Colossians 3:13.

99. What is the sixth petition?

Lead us not into temptation.

100. What is meant by this?

God indeed tempts no one; but we pray in this petition that God may protect and keep us; that the Devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor lead us into sin. James 1:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

101. What is the seventh petition?

But deliver us from evil.

102. What is meant by this?

We pray in this petition that the Father in heaven may deliver us from every evil of body and soul; and, finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a happy end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven. John 17:15.

103. What is the conclusion of this prayer?

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

104. What is meant by this?

With these words we express a confident assurance that such petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard by him; for he himself commanded us thus to pray and promised that we shall be heard. Amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.

The Fourth Principal Part

THE SACRAMENTS

105. What does the fourth principal part deal with?

The Holy Sacraments.

106. What are these Holy Sacraments?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion. They are sacred ceremonies observed from the earliest times by the Christian church to remember Christ and to receive his Spirit.

107. Why do we call them Sacraments?

Because they are visible signs or symbols of spiritual truths that are sacred, things that we feel deeply but cannot see.

A. Holy Baptism

108. What is Holy Baptism?

Holy Baptism is a sacrament, whereby God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, and the Holy Spirit, assures those who are baptized, whether adults or infants, that he will be gracious unto them and forgive them all their sins for Jesus' sake, and in his mercy and compassion adopt them as his children and make them heirs of heaven.

109. In what words did Christ institute Holy Baptism?

In the Gospel according to Matthew Jesus said to his disciples: "All

authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.: And in the Gospel according to St. Mark, in the last chapter, he said these words: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16)

***110.** What does Baptism symbolize?

Baptism is a symbol of the cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ and of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:26; Acts 1:5.

***111.** What does Baptism require of us?

Holy Baptism requires of us that we renounce all sin and by faith lead a new life, gladly confess our Lord Jesus, and in everything we do seek the glory of God the Father. Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 3:9-10

112. Why do we believe in infant Baptism?

When Jesus commissioned his disciples to baptize all nations he certainly included children. Thus to give our children the assurance of the grace and love of God and fellowship in Jesus Christ, we administer this sacrament.

113. What does [infant] Baptism as practiced in our churches involve?

It involves a solemn obligation on the part of the parents who present their child for consecration to God, to teach it early the fear of the Lord, to watch over its education, associates and habits, and give it all the opportunities of religious education and training. Ephesians 6:4.

B. The Lord's Supper

114. What is the Lord's Supper?

According to Christ's own words the Holy Supper is a memorial, commemorating his death. At the communion table we are to remember with penitent, believing and grateful hearts how he suffered and died for us and our salvation.

115. When and in what words did Christ institute the Lord's Supper?

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it unto the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying. Drink you all of it; this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

116. What do we receive by partaking of the Lord's Supper?

By partaking of the Lord's Supper we receive the assurance that his body was as surely offered for us upon the cross and his bloodshed for us, as surely we see with our own eyes that the bread of the Lord is broken for us and the blessed cup present to us; and that Christ will as certainly nourish us with his body and blood, as certainly as we physically eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord. John 6:51.

117. How must we prepare ourselves to be worthy partakers of the Lord's Supper?

We must search our own hearts and examine our own lives, for in 1 Corinthians 11:28 we read: “Everyone ought to examine themselves, before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.” Psalm 139:23, 24. “Search

me, O God, and know my heart; test me, and know my anxious thoughts
See if there be any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

118. What is the result for one who partakes of the Lord’s Supper unworthily?

He who partakes of the Lord’s Supper when he is not worthy of it is just as guilty of the suffering and death of Christ as those who caused the same; for the Apostle Paul writes: “He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, for not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1 Corinthians 11:27. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord.

119. What does partaking of the Lord’s Supper require of us?

Our communion requires that we keep in remembrance the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, and that we consider well how hard it was for our Savior to bear our sins and the sins of the whole world, and to gain eternal salvation for us by offering up his life and shedding his blood. Since our sins caused the Lord Jesus the greatest sufferings, yea, bitter death, we should have no pleasure in sin, but should earnestly flee from sin and avoid it; and being reclaimed by our Savior and Redeemer, we should live, suffer, and die to his honor so that at all times and especially in the hour of death we may cheerfully and confidently say:

Lord Jesus, for Thee I live,
for Thee I suffer,
and for Thee I die!
Lord Jesus, Thine will I be in life and death!
Grant me, O Lord, eternal salvation! Amen.

The Fifth Principle Part

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

120. What is the Christian church?

The Christian church is the entire body of Christians, in heaven and on earth, which Christ has redeemed by his blood (Acts 20:28), called and spiritually renewed or restored by the Holy Spirit (John 3:8), and gathered into one great body of which he is the head.

121. What two phases of the church do we distinguish?

We distinguish between the visible and the invisible church, or church militant and the church triumphant.

122. What is the visible church?

The visible church consists of all members of the various church organizations who partake of the means of grace.

123. What is the invisible church?

The invisible church comprises all those, in heaven and on earth, who have been regenerated and are true Christians. This group is called the invisible church because true believers are known to God only, "For man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

124. What is the church militant?

The church militant consists of those members of the church who are [zealous of good works, patient in suffering and] actively engaged in the struggle with sin, which means all forces of evil.

125. What is the church triumphant?

The church triumphant consists of those Christians who have been victorious through the blood of the Lamb, and who have already entered into everlasting glory, and are now, as the redeemed praising the Lord for their salvation. Revelation 7:16, 17. Revelation 3:21.

126. Who governs the church?

The church is governed by Christ, its only head, through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

127. What kind of churches are best able to regulate their own affairs, in accordance with the will of God?

Those churches are best able to regulate their own affairs, in accordance with the will of God which earnestly follow the precepts of the Holy Scriptures, and in which the members do nothing through strife or vain glory, but gladly follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In such churches the Holy Spirit is able to give the necessary wisdom and to reveal clearly the will of God, even in the most difficult cases.

128. What is the duty of the individual congregation toward other churches?

The individual congregations must have fellowship with other churches, heartily cooperate with them in building the kingdom of God, and help them in all worthy endeavors.

129. What is the hope of the church?

The hope of the church is the second coming of Christ, as he promised, when he said: “I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.” (John 14:3) Acts 1:11.

130. What great events will take place at the second coming of Christ?

The resurrection of the dead and the ascension of the Lord’s elect will take place. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) John 5:28, 29. “For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”

131. Will the wicked also be raised from the dead?

Yes, the wicked will also be raised from the dead on the last day, not however, to everlasting glory, but to eternal disgrace and damnation, because they have repudiated Christ and rejected salvation.

***132.** What is the judgment of the world?

The judgment of the world is the final judgment by Jesus Christ of all the living and the dead people according to their works. Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31-32; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-13.

***133.** What decree will be pronounced at the final judgment?

The Lord will say to the ungodly: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.” And to the righteous he will say: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 20:11-13, 15; Matthew 25:34-36, 40.

134. What is meant by “life everlasting”?

The elect of God shall enter into everlasting bliss and great joy. They shall have blessed fellowship with all the redeemed and the holy angels, and have full possession of all heavenly gifts. Revelation 7:9-17; Revelation 15:2-3

135. What should therefore be a person’s greatest concern in life?

That he may have steadfast hope of eternal life, as Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)