

Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism* (1529)¹

Dismayed over the ignorance of the laity, Luther in 1529 prepared this brief introduction to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Its foundations were the elements of traditional catechesis—the Ten Commandments, the creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, now explained in a distinctively “Lutheran” fashion. To this Luther added other things which he thought were indispensable for all Christians to know. This text, which Luther thought was one of his best, was taught by schoolmasters, parents, and pastors, and it thereby became one of his most influential writings, truly a “consolidation tract of the Reformation.”

Martin Luther: To all faithful and upright pastors and preachers.

Grace, mercy, and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! As a result they live like simple cattle or irrational pigs and, despite the fact that the gospel has returned, have mastered the fine art of misusing all their freedom.

O you bishops! How are you going to answer to Christ, now that you have so shamefully neglected the people and have not exercised your office for even a single second? May you escape punishment for this! You

forbid the cup [to the laity] in the Lord’s Supper and insist on observance of your human laws, while never even bothering to ask whether the people know the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or a single section of God’s Word. Shame on you forever!

Therefore, my dear sirs and brothers, who are either pastors or preachers, I beg all of you for God’s sake to take up your office boldly, to have pity on your people who are entrusted to you, and to help us bring the catechism to the people, especially to the young. Moreover, I ask that those unable to do any better take up these charts and versions and read them to the people word for word in the following manner:

In the first place, the preacher should above all take care to avoid changes or variations in the text and version of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the sacraments, etc., but instead adopt a single version, stick with it, and always use the same one year after year. For the young and the unlettered people must be taught with a single, fixed text and version. Otherwise, if someone teaches one way now and another way next year—even for the sake of making improvements—the people become quite easily confused, and all the time and effort will go for naught.

The dear church Fathers also understood this well. They used one form for the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Therefore, we, too, should reach these parts to the young and to people who cannot read in such a way that we neither change a single syllable nor present or recite it differently from one year to the next. Therefore, choose for yourself whatever version you want and stick with it for good. To be sure, when you preach to educated and intelligent people, then you

¹ Introduction and text from Denis Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (2nd ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 118-128; from R. Kolb and T. J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 347-67.

may demonstrate your erudition and discuss these parts with as much complexity and from as many different angles. as you can. But with the young people, stick with a fixed, unchanging version and form. To begin with, teach them these parts: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., following the text word for word, so that they can also repeat it back to you and learn it by heart.

Those who do not want to learn these things—who must be told how they deny Christ and are not Christians—should also not be admitted to the sacrament, should not be sponsors for children at baptism, and should not exercise any aspect of Christian freedom, but instead should simply be sent back home to the pope and his officials and, along with them, to the devil himself. Moreover, their parents and employers ought to deny them food and drink and advise them that the prince is disposed to drive such coarse people out of the country.

Although no one can or should force another person to believe, nevertheless, one should insist upon and hold the masses to this: that they know what is right and wrong among those with whom they wish to reside, eat, and earn a living. for example, if people want to live in a particular city, they ought to know and abide by the laws of the city whose protection they enjoy, no matter whether they believe or are at heart scoundrels and villains.

In the second place, once the people have learned the text well, then teach them to understand it, too, so that they know what it means. Take up again the form offered in these charts or some other short form that you may prefer. Then adhere to it without changing a single syllable, just as was stated above regarding the text. Moreover, allow yourself ample time

for it, because you need not take up all the parts at once but may instead handle them one at a time. After the people understand the First Commandment well, then take up the Second, and so on. Otherwise they will be so overwhelmed that they will hardly remember a single thing.

In the third place, after you have taught the people a short catechism like this one, then take up a longer catechism and impart to them a richer and fuller understanding. Using such a catechism, explain each individual commandment, petition, or part with its various works, benefits, and blessings, harm and danger, as you find treated at length in so many booklets. In particular, put the greatest stress on that commandment or part where your people experience the greatest need. For example, you must strongly emphasize the Seventh Commandment, dealing with stealing, to artisans and shopkeepers and even to farmers and household workers, because rampant among such people are all kinds of dishonesty and thievery. Likewise, you must emphasize the Fourth Commandment to children and the common people, so that they are orderly, faithful, obedient, and peaceful. Always adduce many examples from the Scriptures where God either punished or blessed such people.

In particular, at this point also urge governing authorities and parents to rule well and to send their children to school. Point out how they are obliged to do so and what a damnable sin they commit if they do not, for thereby, as the worst enemies of God and humanity, they overthrow and lay waste both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Explain very clearly what kind of horrible damage they do when they do not help to train children as pastors, preachers, civil servants, etc., and tell them that God will punish them dreadfully for this. For in our day and age it is

necessary to preach about these things. The extent to which parents and governing authorities are now sinning in these matters defies description.

The Lord's Prayer

In a very simple way in which the head of a house is to present it to the household

Our Father, you who are in heaven.

What is this?

Answer: With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.

The First Petition *May your name be hallowed.*

What is this?

Answer: It is true that God's name is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that it may also become holy in and among us.

How does this come about?

Answer: Whenever the Word of God is taught clearly and purely and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it. To this end help us, dear Father in heaven! However, whoever teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches profanes the name of God among us. Preserve us from this, heavenly Father!

The Second Petition *May your kingdom come.*

What is this?

Answer: In fact, God's kingdom comes on its own without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come to us.

How does this come about?

Answer: Whenever our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that through his grace we believe his Holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.

The Third Petition *May your will come about on earth as in heaven.*

What is this?

Answer: In fact, God's good and gracious will comes about without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may also come about in and among us.

How does this come about?

Answer: Whenever God breaks and hinders every evil scheme and will-as are present in the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh-that would not allow us to hallow God's name and would prevent the coming of his kingdom, and instead whenever God strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in his Word and in faith until the end of our lives. This is his gracious and good will.

The Fourth Petition *Give us today our daily bread.*

What is this?

Answer: In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

What then does "daily bread" mean?

Answer: Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government,

good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition *And remit our debts, as we remit what our debtors owe.*

What is this?

Answer: We ask in this prayer that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor deny these petitions on their account, for we are worthy of nothing for which we ask, nor have we earned it. Instead we ask that God would give us all things by grace, for we daily sin much and indeed deserve only punishment. So, on the other hand, we, too, truly wane to forgive heartily and to do good gladly to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition *And lead us not into temptation.*

What is this?

Answer: It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory.

The Seventh Petition *But deliver us from evil.*

What is this?

Answer: We ask in this prayer, as in a summary, that our Father in heaven may deliver us from all kinds of evil—affecting body or soul, property or reputation—and at last, when our final hour comes, may grant us a blessed end and take us by grace from this valley of tears to himself in heaven.

Amen.

What is this?

Answer: That I should be certain that such petitions are acceptable to and heard by our Father in heaven, for he himself commanded us to pray like this and has promised to hear us. “Amen, amen” means “Yes, yes, it is going to come about just like this.”

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

In a simple way in which the head of a home is to present it to the household

First: What is baptism?

Answer: Baptism is not simply plain water. Instead, it is water enclosed in God’s command and connected with God’s Word.

What then is this Word of God?

Answer: Where our Lord Christ says in Matthew 28[:19], “Go into all the world, teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Second: 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 promise of God?

Answer: Where our Lord Christ says in Mark 16[:16], “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be damned.”

Third: How can water do such great things?

Answer: Clearly the water does not do it, but the Word of God, which is with and alongside the water, and faith, which trusts this Word of God

in the water. For without the Word of God the water is plain water and not a baptism, but with the Word of God it is a baptism, that is, a grace-filled water of life and a “bath of the new birth in the Holy Spirit,” as St. Paul says to Titus in chapter 3[:5-8], “through the bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which he richly poured out over us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that through that very grace we may be righteous and heirs in hope of eternal life. This is surely most certainly true.”

Fourth: What then is the significance of such a baptism with water?

Answer: It signifies that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

Answer: St. Paul says in Romans 6[:4], “We were buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we, too, are to walk in a new life.”

How simple people are to be taught to confess

What is confession?

Answer: Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive the absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the confessor as from God himself and by no means doubt but firmly believe that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.

Which sins is a person to confess?

Before God one is to acknowledge the guilt for all sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer. However, before

the confessor we are to confess only those sins of which we have knowledge and which trouble us.

Which sins are these?

Here reflect on your walk of life in light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, whether you have harmed anyone by word or deed; whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted, or injured anything.

Please provide me with a brief form of confession!

Answer: You are to say to the confessor: “Honorable, dear sir, I ask you to listen to my confession and declare to me forgiveness for God’s sake.”

“Proceed.”

“I, a poor sinner, confess before God that I am guilty of all my sins. In particular I confess in your presence that although I am a manservant, maidservant, etc., I unfortunately serve my master unfaithfully, for in this and that instance I did not do what they told me; I made them angry and caused them to curse; I neglected to do my duty and allowed harm to occur. I have also spoken and acted impudently. I have quarreled with my equals; I have grumbled about and sworn at my mistress, etc. I am sorry for all this and ask for grace. I want to do better.”

A master or mistress may say the following: “In particular I confess to you that I have not faithfully cared for my child, the members of my household, my spouse to the glory of God. I have cursed, set a bad example with indecent words and deeds, done harm to my neighbors, spoken evil of them, overcharged them, and sold them inferior goods and

shortchanged them,” and whatever else he or she has done against the commands of God and their walk of life, etc.

However, if some individuals do not find themselves burdened by these or greater sins, they are not to worry, nor are they to search for or invent further sins and thereby turn confession into torture. Instead, mention one or two that you are aware of in the following way: “In particular I confess that I cursed once, likewise that one time I was inconsiderate in my speech, one time I neglected this or that, etc.” Let that be enough.

If you are aware of no sins at all (which is really quite unlikely), then do not mention any in particular, but instead receive forgiveness on the basis of the general confession, which you make to God in the presence of the confessor.

Thereupon the confessor is to say: “God be gracious to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.” Let the confessor say [further]: “Do you also believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness?”

[Answer:] “Yes, dear sir.”

Thereupon he may say: “‘Let it be done for you according to your faith.’ And I by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ forgive you your sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.”

A confessor, by using additional passages of Scripture, will in fact be able to comfort and encourage to faith those whose consciences are heavily burdened or who are distressed and under attack. This is only to be an ordinary form of confession for simple people.

The Sacrament of the Altar

In a simple way in which the head of a house is to present it to the household

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

Answer: The holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and St. Paul write thus: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, ‘Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” “In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, and drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?

Answer: The words “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins” show us that forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such a great thing?

Answer: Eating and drinking certainly do not do it, but rather the words that are recorded: “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, when accompanied by the physical

eating and drinking, are the essential thing in the sacrament, and whoever believes these very words has what they declare and state, namely, “forgiveness of sins.”

Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?

Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are in fact a fine external discipline, but a person who has faith in these words, “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” is really worthy and well prepared. However, a person who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, because the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.

How the head of the house is to teach the members of the household to say morning and evening blessings

[The Morning Blessing]

In the morning, as soon as you get out of bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: “God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.” Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you wish, you may in addition recite this little prayer as well: “I give thanks to you, my heavenly Father through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected me this night from all harm and danger, and I ask you that you would also protect me today from sin and all evil, so that my life and actions may please you completely. For into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.”

After singing a hymn perhaps (for example, one on the Ten Commandments) or whatever else may serve your devotion, you are to go to your work joyfully.

[The Evening Blessing]

In the evening, when you go to bed, you are to make the sign of the holy cross and say: “God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.” Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If you wish, you may in addition recite this little prayer as well: “I give thanks to you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today, and I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously to protect me tonight. For into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.” Then you are to go to sleep quickly and cheerfully.

How the head of the house is to teach members of the household to offer blessing and thanksgiving at meals

[The Table Blessing]

The children and the members of the household are to come devoutly to the table, fold their hands, and recite: “The eyes of all wait upon you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy all living things with delight.”

Comment: “Delight” means that all animals receive enough to eat to make them joyful and of good cheer, because worry and greed prevent such delight.

Then they are to recite the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer:
"Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bountiful goodness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Thanksgiving

Similarly, after eating they should in the same manner fold their hands and recite devoutly: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious and his goodness endures forever. He gives food to all flesh. He gives food to the cattle and to the young ravens that cry to him. He takes no pleasure in the power of the horse, nor is he pleased with human strength. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him and wait for his goodness."

Then recite the Lord's Prayer and the following prayer: "We give thanks to you, Lord God our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord for all your benefits, you who live and reign forever. Amen."

The Household Chart of Some Bible Passages

For all kinds of holy orders and walks of life, through which they may be admonished, as through lessons particularly pertinent to their office and duty.

For Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers

"A bishop is to be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, virtuous, moderate, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not vicious, not involved in dishonorable work, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not stingy, one who manages his own household well, who has obedient and honest children, not a recent convert, who holds to the Word that is certain and can teach, so that he may be strong enough to

admonish with saving teaching and to refute those who contradict it."

From 1 Timothy 3[:2-4, 6a].

Concerning Governing Authorities

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authority. For wherever the governing authority is, it is ordered by God. But whoever resists the governing authority, resists God's order, and whoever resists will incur judgment, for that authority does not bear the sword in vain. It is God's handmaid who executes punishment against those who do evil." From Romans 13[:1-2, 4b].

For Husbands

"You husbands, live reasonably with your wives and, as co-heirs of the grace of life, give honor to wives as to the [weakest] instrument, so that your prayers may not be hindered." From 1 Peter 3[:7]. "And do not be harsh with them." From Colossians 3[:19].

For Wives

"Let wives be subjected to their husbands as to the Lord, as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. And you have become her daughters, when you do right and are not so fearful." From 1 Peter 3[:1, 6].

For Parents

"You fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, lest they become fearful. Instead, bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." From Ephesians 6[:4].

For Children

"You children, be obedient to your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother.' This is the first commandment that

has a promise, namely: ‘that it may go well for you and that you may live Long on earth.’” From Ephesians 6[:1-3].

For Male and Female Servants, Day Laborers, Workers, etc.

“You servants, be obedient to your bodily lords with fear and trembling, with singleness of heart, as to Christ himself; not with service meant only for the eyes, done to please people, but rather as servants of Christ, so that you do the will of God from the heart [with a good will]. Imagine to yourselves that you are serving the Lord and not people, and know that whatever good anyone does, the same will that person receive, whether servant or free.”

For Masters and Mistresses

“You lords, do the same to them, and refrain from making threats, and know that you also have a lord in heaven, and there is no partiality with him.” Ephesians 6[:9].

For Young People in General

“You young people, be subject to your elders and in this way show humility. For ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in his time.” From 1 Peter 5[:5-6].

For Widows

“She who is a real widow and is left all alone sets her hope on God and remains in prayer day and night; whereas she who lives self-indulgently is dead while alive.” From 1 Timothy 5(:5-6).

For All in the Community “Love your neighbor as yourself. In this all the commandments are summarized.” From Romans 13[:9], “And entreat [God] with prayers for all people.” From 1 Timothy 2[:1].

Let all their lessons learn with care,
So that the household well may fare.

Geneva City Council, *Geneva Ordinances*, 1547²

One of the things Calvin abhorred most was “disorderly living.” Accordingly, when he returned to Geneva in 1541, he was more determined than ever to regulate every aspect of life in accordance with “God’s law” (as he understood it). Immediately laws were passed reorganizing the Genevan church and attaching legal sanctions to breaches of “Christian” behavior. Calvin’s attempt to thus “Christianize” the social order became a lifelong struggle in the face of considerable resistance. The following set of ordinances from 1547 give us an idea of what Calvin had in mind. Also visible is the partnership between the consistory (a committee consisting of the minister and elected lay elders, responsible for church government) and the municipal government (the Council and Syndics, who were a panel of four judges).

Sermons

1. Everyone in each house is to come on Sundays, unless it be necessary to leave someone behind to take care of children or animals, under penalty of three *sous*³.
2. If there be preaching any weekday, arranged with due notice, those that are able to go and have no legitimate excuse are to attend, at least one from each house, under penalty as above.
3. Those who have man- or maid-servants, are to bring them or have them conveyed when possible, so that they do not live like cattle without instruction.
4. Everyone is to be present at sermon when the prayer is begun, under penalty as above, unless he absent himself for legitimate reason.

² Text and Introduction from Denis Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (2nd ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 256-260. From J. K. S. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 77-82. 71.

³ *sou* is a coin, equivalent to a shilling; exchange rates are extremely difficult to trace, but a sou would be a significant (but not overwhelming) fine.

5. Everyone is to pay attention during sermon, and there is to be no disorder or scandal.

6. No one is to leave or go out from the church until the prayer be made at the end of sermon, under penalty as above, unless he have legitimate cause.

Catechism

1. Because each preacher has two parishes, catechism is to take place each fortnight. Those who have children are to bring them, with the rest of their household who have not been to sermon, as above.

2. The same attention, honest and regular, is to be given to catechism as has been said for sermon.

Penalties

1. Those who fail in their duty of coming are to be admonished by the guardians⁴, both themselves and their family.

2. If after intimation they continue to default, they are to be fined three groats⁵, for each time. Of this one-third will be applied to the guardians; the other two-thirds will be applied to the poor of the parish and put into the funds of the church for distribution according to need as it becomes known.

3. If anyone come after sermon has begun, he is to be admonished, and if after this is done he does not amend, for each fault he is to be fined three sous, which will be applied as above.

⁴ the elected lay elders, members of the consistory (see below; “election of the guardians”).

⁵ A groat is another coin, worth about the same as a *sou* or shilling.

4. If during sermon anyone make any disturbance or scandal, he is to be reported to the consistory⁶ to be cautioned, in order that procedure be in proportion to the fault; that is, if by carelessness he is to be well told off, if it happen by intended malice or rebelliousness he is to be reported to their lordships to be punished appropriately.

By Whom Fines Are to Be Exacted

1. The local lord, in conjunction with the ministers and the guardians, is to oblige the delinquents to pay the fines they have incurred, when they will not pay of their own free will. Legitimate excuses are to be admitted, but this is to be done without any formal procedure.

2. If there be any so rebellious that, despite the above fines, they do not at all amend, they are to be reported to the consistory with advice to the effect that their lordships⁷ punish them according to the seriousness of their obstinacy.

3. Fathers are to be responsible for their children, and, if there be a penalty, it is to be exacted from them.

Of Baptism

1. Baptism is to be administered any day, provided that there be sermon along with it. The ministers are always to exhort the people to link it up with the catechism.

2. Children are to be brought at the beginning of catechism or sermon.

3. Fathers are to be present, unless they have legitimate excuse of which cognizance will be taken by the consistory.

⁶ A committee consisting of the minister and elected lay elders, responsible for church government.

⁷ their lordships: the Council and Syndics (4 judges) of the Geneva city government (see below; ratification of the ordinances).

4. No godfather is to be admitted for presenting a child, unless he is of an age to make such a promise; that is, he must have passed fifteen years, be of the same confession as ourselves, and be duly instructed.

5. As to names, let their lordships' ordinances be careful both to avoid all superstition and idolatry and to remove from the church of God everything foolish and indecent.

6. If midwives usurp the office of baptism, they are to be reprov'd or chastised according to the measure of fault found, since no commission is given them in this matter, under penalty of being put on bread and water for three days and fined ten sous; and all who consent to their action or conceal it will be liable to the same penalty.

Of the Supper

1. No one is to be received at the supper unless he first have made confession of his faith. That is to say, he must declare before the minister that he desires to live according to the reformation of the gospel, and that he knows the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the commandments of God.

2. Those who wish to receive the supper are to come at the beginning of the service; those who come at the end are not to be received.

3. Other impediments are to be within the cognizance of the consistory, to deal with them in accordance with what has been ordained.

4. All are to remain until the end, unless there be a legitimate excuse which is recognized as above.

Of Times of Meeting at Church

Buildings are to remain shut for the rest of the time, in order that no one outside the hours may enter for superstitious reasons. If anyone be found making any particular devotion inside or nearby, he is to be

admonished: if it appear to be a superstition which he will not amend, he is to be chastised.

Faults Contravening the Reformation Besides Those Already Mentioned

First, Superstitions

1. Those found to have any paternosters or idols for adoration are to be brought before the consistory, and, besides the punishment imposed on them there, they are to be brought before their lordships.

2. Those who have been on pilgrimages or voyages the same.

3. Those who observe the papistical feasts or fastings are to be admonished only, unless they are obstinate in their rebellion.

4. Those who have attended mass, besides admonition, are to be brought before their lordships.

5. In such cases, their lordships will have the right of chastising by means of prison or otherwise, or of punishing by extraordinary fines, at their discretion. In the case of fines, they are to apply some small portion of them to the guardians, if the delict was notified by them.

Blasphemies

1. Those who have blasphemed, swearing by the body or by the blood of our Lord, or suchlike, ought to do reverence for the first time; for the second a penalty of five sous; for the third ten sous; and for the last time put in the pillory for an hour.

2. Anyone who abjures or renounces God or his baptism is for the first time to be put for ten days on bread and water; for the second and third time he is to be punished with some more rigorous corporal punishment, at the discretion of their lordships.

Contradiction of the Word

1. If there are any who contradict the Word of God, let them be brought before the consistory to be admonished, or be remanded to their lordships to receive chastisement according to the needs of the case.

2. If the contradiction or rebellion amount to scandal which demands prompter remedy, the local lord is to take a hand in the matter for the maintenance of the honor of the ministry and the magistracy.

Drunkenness

1. There is to be no treating of one another to drinks, under penalty of three sous.

2. The taverns are to be closed during service, under penalty that the taverner pay three sous and anyone entering them the same.

3. If anyone be found drunk, he is to pay for the first time three sous and be brought before the consistory; the second time he must pay the sum of five sous; and the third ten sous and be put in prison.

4. There are to be no carousings, under penalty of ten sous.

Songs and Dances

If anyone sing songs that are unworthy, dissolute or outrageous, or spin wildly round in the dance, or the like, he is to be imprisoned for three days, and then sent on to the consistory.

Usury

No one is to lend at interest or for profit greater than 5 percent, on pain of confiscation of the capital sum and of being required to make appropriate amends according to the needs of the case.

Brawling

1. No one is to cause noise or dispute on pain of being punished according to the needs of the case.

2. If there be any who causes sedition or assembling to make or support quarrels, he is to be punished with more rigorous penalties according to what he merits.

Complaints

If there be a complaint or dispute between two people, the minister, summoning the guardians, will do his duty to bring them to accord; and if he is unable to prevail, he will remand them to the consistory.

Games

No one is to play at games that are dissolute, or at games played for gold or silver or at excessive expense, on pain of five sous and loss of the sum staked.

Fornication

1. As to those who are caught in fornication, if it be an unmarried man with an unmarried woman, they are to be imprisoned for six days on bread and water, and pay sixty sous amends.

2. If it be adultery, one or the other being married, they are to be imprisoned for nine days on bread and water, and pay amends at the discretion of their lordships, as the crime is much more grave.

3. Those who are promised in marriage are not to cohabit as man and wife until the marriage be celebrated in church, otherwise they will be punished as for fornication.

Of the Election of Guardians

The local lord assembling the more responsible and better part of the parishioners, and duly advising them, election of guardians is to take place before them. They are to be men of substance and fearing God. He then brings the said guardians to the consistory, to be instructed in their office, and from there they will be brought before their lordships to take the oath.

For Remanding to the Consistory

The decision of the minister and the guardians or of one of them, the local lord, or in his absence one of the assistants, may remand delinquents to the consistory.

On May 16, 1547, the above ordinances were read, and then approved and accepted; and it is further declared that the penalties for offenses are to be applied in part to the guardians of the parishes, in part to the local lord and the municipal council, and in part to the poor of the parish and district. By command of their lordships, the Syndics and Council of Geneva.

Records of the Geneva Consistory⁸

In 1541 Calvin set up the "Consistory," a court system to enforce "godly living" in Geneva. Brawlers, blasphemers, drunkards, fornicators, and so forth, were tried before this court. What follows here are examples of minutes taken during two such proceedings.

[On 2 November 1542, **Jehan Mouri of Peissy** appeared before the Consistory] because he fornicated in this city and he is married, and other reasons. Answers that he did not fornicate and that someone puts this crime on him because he is examining the rights of the Council. Although he was found in a tavern with this girl with a pot of wine and a *quart* loaf,

⁸ Text and Introduction from Denis Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (2nd ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 256-260. From *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin, Vol. I, 1542-1544*, ed. T. A. Lambert and I. M. Watt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 142, 318.

he did not fornicate with her, because he is married, and he takes God to witness that it is not so. Admittedly he was behind this house and told the host to take him up to another room in order, he said, that the watch would not make him pay for a pot of wine. And the host took him up and he drank the said pot of wine with the said girl and the *quart* loaf and had a tart made, which he says he had made for the girl's mother, who was ill. The Consistory advises and is of the opinion that he be remanded to Monday before the Council. [Court records indicate that he was sentenced for the crime on 18 December 1542; the nature of the sentence is unknown.]

[On 10 January 1544, the **wife of Loys Piaget** appeared before the Consistory.] Answers that she received Communion in the morning, and Monsieur Amied Gervays gave her to drink, and she received it for the honor of Jesus and did not let it fall and would not want to receive it thus. And she no longer prays to saints, and she formerly prayed for the dead, and she has frequented the sermons as much as she could. And she says she still says the Ave Maria and does not think this is idolatry, and it does not seem to her she does wrong to pray to the Virgin Mary, and she has no faith in saints but in God and in the Virgin Mary. And one may do what one wants with her. She believes the Virgin Mary is a creature, the mother of Our Lord, her son she bore. She answers that she wants to believe only in the Word of God and does not believe she does wrong by invoking the Virgin Mary. And she does not know whether any other than Our Lord should be adored. And says that if she has adored the Virgin Mary may the Consistory pardon her. The opinion of the Consistory is that since she is possessed by the devil, that for the present she be commanded to go to

the sermon three times a week for six weeks, and catechism, and that she be given strict remonstrances, or remanded before the Council, and that here in a week the confession of her faith be examined, and she be admonished more thoroughly to frequent the sermons. And that she cease to carry or say her rosary and her knotted cords, and every day for a week, and appear here next Thursday and be given strict remonstrances. Ordered to go to the sermon every day for a week.

St. Ignatius of Loyola [Various Writings]⁹

The interests of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), born of a Spanish noble family, centered more on chivalry than religion before his serious injury at the Battle of Pamplona in 1520. While recovering, he experienced a conversion when he began reading the only books available to him, The Golden Legend (about saints' lives) and the Life of Christ. After spending time at the monastery of Montserrat, where he devoted himself to prayer, fasting, and self-reflection, he began work on The Spiritual Exercises, a manual of discernment for the pilgrim journeying to God. After studying at the University of Paris, Ignatius, Francis Xavier (1506-1552), and other friends made vows of chastity and poverty, determining to travel to Jerusalem. When this became impossible, they went to Italy. The Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), founded by Ignatius and his early companions, was officially recognized by Pope Paul III in 1540 as a new order directly under the papacy. Its spirituality would be expressed most prominently in teaching and missionary work. The following letters of Ignatius were written as instructions to his fellow Jesuits about how to conduct themselves. They reveal a new form of Catholic spiritual expression that was active and apostolic in its orientation. It was less a "response" to Protestantism than a model for Catholic life and work. Along with the works of other early Jesuits, it embodied a new spirit that so many had sought but not found in the late medieval church.

[instructions for ministry in Trent during the Council], 1546

[These instructions were apparently written to members of the Jesuit order who had been sent to the Council of Trent, the Catholic church council that was attempting to reform the Catholic church from within.

⁹ Introduction and text from Katherine J. Lualdi, *Sources of the Making of the West* Vol. 1 (2nd ed., Bedford St. Martin, 2005), 211. From Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, eds. and trans., *Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Person. al Writings: Reminiscences, Spiritual Diary, Select Letters, Including the Text of The Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 165, 166, 230, 233- 34, 257, 259, 262-63.

These passages describe what they should do apart from attending council meetings]

Our main aim [to God's greater glory) during this undertaking at Trent is to put into practice (as a group that lives together in one appropriate place) preaching, confessions and readings, teaching children, giving good example, visiting the poor in the hospitals, exhorting those around us, each of us according to the different talents he may happen to have, urging on as many as possible to greater piety and prayer...

In their preaching they should not refer to points of conflict between Protestants and Catholics, but simply exhort all to upright conduct and to ecclesiastical practice, urging everyone to full self-knowledge and to greater knowledge and love of their Creator and Lord, with frequent allusions to the Council. At the end of each session, they should (as has been mentioned) lead prayers for the Council. They should do the same with readings as with sermons, trying their best to influence people with greater love of their Creator and Lord as they explain the meaning of what is read; similarly, they should lead their hearers to pray for the Council...

They should spend some time, as convenient, in the elementary teaching of youngsters, depending on the means and disposition of all involved, and with more or less explanation according to the capacity of the pupils...Let them visit the almshouses once or twice a day, at times that are convenient for the patients' health, hearing confessions and consoling the poor, if possible taking them something, and urging them to the sort of prayers mentioned above for confession. If there are three of ours in Trent, each should visit the poor at least once every four days.

When they are urging people in their dealings with them to go to confession and communion, to say mass frequently, to undertake the Spiritual Exercises and other good works, they should also be urging them to pray for the Council.

It was said that there are advantages in being slow to speak and measured in one's statements when doctrinal definitions are involved. The opposite is true when one is urging people to look to their spiritual progress. Then one should be eloquent and ready to talk, full of sympathy and affection.

**[instructions to the Jesuits serving at the University in Ingolstadt],
1549**

The aim that they should have above all before their eyes is that intended by the Supreme Pontiff who has sent them: to help the University of Ingolstadt, and as far as is possible the whole of Germany, in all that concerns purity of faith, obedience to the Church, and firmness and soundness of doctrine and upright living...

They must be very competent in them, and teach solid doctrine without many technical terms (which are unpopular), especially if these are hard to understand. The lectures should be learned yet clear, sustained in argument yet not long-winded, and delivered with attention to style... Besides these academic lectures, it seems opportune on feast days to hold sermons on Bible readings, more calculated to move hearts and form consciences than to produce learned minds... They should make efforts to attract their students into a friendship of spiritual quality, and if possible towards confession and making the Spiritual Exercises, even in the full form, if they seem suitable to join the Society...

On occasion they should give time to works of mercy of a more visible character, such as in hospitals and prisons and helping other kinds of poor; such works arouse a "sweet fragrance" in the Lord. Opportunity may also arise to act as peacemakers in quarrels and to teach basic Christian doctrine to the uneducated. Taking account of local conditions and the persons concerned, prudence will dictate whether they should act themselves or through others.

They should make efforts to make friends with the leaders of their opponents, as also with those who are most influential among the heretics or those who are suspected of it yet seem not absolutely immovable. They must try to bring them back from their error by sensitive skill and signs of love... All must try to have at their finger-tips the main points concerning dogmas of faith that are subjects of controversy with heretics, especially at the time and place when they are present, and with those persons with whom they are dealing. Thus they will be able, whenever opportunity arises, to put forward and defend the Catholic truth, to refute errors and to strengthen the doubtful and wavering, whether by lectures and sermons or in the confessional and in conversations...

It will be helpful to lead people, as far as possible, to open themselves to God's grace, exhorting them to a desire for salvation, to prayer, to alms, and to everything that conduces to receiving grace or increasing it... Let [the duke] understand also what glory it will mean for him if he is the first to introduce into Germany seminaries in the form of such colleges, to foster sound doctrine and religion.

Contamini and Carafa, *Consilium de emendanda ecclesiae*, 1537¹⁰

In 1536 Pope Paul III (1534--1549) called for a general council and appointed a commission to prepare a report on the state of the church. Two cardinals, Contarini and Carafa (who was later to become the fanatical Pope Paul IV), drafted the "Consilium" in 1537. Its frank admission of appalling abuses illustrates the strength of reform impulses within the church.

The spirit of God decrees that Christ's church, almost collapsed, should be restored to its early glory Your Holiness knows that these evils arose from the willfulness of several previous popes ...[and their belief] that the pope, being lord of all benefices, can sell his own and cannot therefore be guilty of simony From this, as the Trojan horse, burst forth into God's church so many grave ills ... [which] obeying your command we have examined and here make known to you

Concerning ordination: no care is taken. Whoever they are (uneducated, of appalling morals, under age), they are routinely admitted to the holy order from which came so many scandals and a contempt for the church. Reverence for divine service is so much diminished as now to be virtually extinct Your Holiness should order every bishop to take the greatest care in this and, observing the laws, appoint a professor to instruct their clergy in Letters and in morals. ... [Eleven paragraphs detail abuses relating to benefices.]

Another common abuse is the conferring of bishoprics on the most reverend cardinals. These offices are incompatible. Cardinals should assist your Holiness in Rome whereas bishops must care for their flocks and so be resident with them as the shepherd. This sets a particularly harmful

example, for how can the holy see correct the abuses of others if abuse is tolerated in its own senior ranks? And as they are cardinals they have not greater freedom to break the law but far less. Their life should be as a law to all others ... yet what can they encourage in others but greed? ... Heavy penalties should be imposed, especially withholding of income

Concerning the government of the Christian faithful, the most fundamental abuse in need of reformation is that bishops and priests must not be absent from their churches, but must be resident for they are entrusted with their care. What sight can be more piteous than deserted churches? Almost all the shepherds have deserted their flocks or abandoned them to hirelings. A heavy penalty must be imposed, not only censures but the withholding of income ...[on all] absent for more than three Sundays per year An intolerable abuse lies in the impediments put in the way of bishops ruling their flocks. Many evildoers are exempt from their jurisdiction Among these, none are more blatant than the monastic orders, who are become so deformed that they do grave harm by example. All conventuals should be done away with, by the prohibition of admitting novices [Ten paragraphs detail the evils of dispensations and indulgences.]

Concerning Rome: honest manners should flourish in this city and church, mother and teacher of other churches ... [yet] whores perambulate like matrons or ride on muleback, with whom noblemen, cardinals, and priests consort in broad daylight...

¹⁰ Denis Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (2nd ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 400-01. From Jones, *Counter Reformation*, 45-46.

Council of Trent, Decrees, 1545-1563¹¹

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) issued decrees stating the official catholic stance on theological issues, but it also attempted to reform the shortcomings of the Catholic Church. Many of its decrees defined the nature of Catholicism until 1962.

Reform Decree on Establishing Seminaries (1563)

Since the age of youth, unless rightly trained, is inclined to follow after the pleasure of the world, and unless educated from its tender years in piety and religion before the habits of vice take possession of the whole man, will never perfectly and without the greatest and well-nigh extraordinary help of almighty God persevere in ecclesiastical discipline, the holy council decrees that all cathedral and metropolitan churches and churches greater than these shall be bound, each according to its means and the extent of its diocese, to provide for, to educate in religion, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of boys of their city and diocese, or, if they are not found there, of their province, in a college located near the said churches or in some other suitable place to be chosen by the bishop.

Into this college shall be received such as are at least twelve years of age, are born of lawful wedlock, who know how to read and write competently, and whose character and inclination justify the hope that they will dedicate themselves forever to the ecclesiastical ministry. It wishes, however, that in the selection the sons of the poor be given preference, though it does not exclude those of the wealthy class, provided they be maintained at their own expense and manifest a zeal to serve God and the church. These youths the bishop shall divide into as many classes

as he may deem proper, according to their number, age, and progress in ecclesiastical discipline, and shall, when it appears to him opportune, assign some of them to the ministry of the churches, the others he shall keep in the college to be instructed, and he shall replace by others those who have been withdrawn, so that the college may be a perpetual seminary of ministers of God.

And that they may be the better trained in the aforesaid ecclesiastical discipline, they shall forthwith and always wear the tonsure and the clerical garb; they shall study grammar, singing, ecclesiastical computation and other useful arts; shall be instructed in Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical books, the homilies of the saints, the manner of administering the sacraments, especially those things that seem adapted to the hearing of confessions, and the rites and ceremonies. The bishop shall see to it that they ate present every day at the sacrifice of the mass, confess their sins at least once a month, receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the directions of their confessor, and on festival days serve in the cathedral and other churches of the locality.

All these and other things beneficial and needful for this purpose each bishop shall prescribe with the advice of two of the senior and more reputable canons chosen by himself as the Holy Spirit shall suggest, and they shall make it their duty by frequent visitation to see to it that they are always observed.

The disobedient and incorrigible, and the disseminators of depraved morals they shall punish severely, even with expulsion if necessary; and removing all obstacles, they shall foster carefully whatever appears to

¹¹ Denis Janz, *A Reformation Reader* (2nd ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 419-22. From Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees*, 175- 79.

contribute to the advancement and preservation of so pious and holy an institution.

And since for the construction of the college, for paying salaries to instructors and servants, for the maintenance of the youths and for other expenses, certain revenues will be necessary...[the decree describes how the seminaries should be financed]

Furthermore, in order that the establishment of schools of this kind may be procured at less expense, the holy council decrees that bishops, archbishops, primates, and other local ordinaries urge and compel, even by the reduction of their revenues, those who hold the position of instructor and others to whose position is attached the function of reading or teaching, to teach those to be educated in those schools personally, if they are competent, otherwise by competent substitutes, to be chosen by themselves and to be approved by the ordinaries. But if these in the judgment of the bishop are not qualified, they shall choose another who is competent, no appeal being permitted; and should they neglect to do this, then the bishop himself shall appoint one. The aforesaid instructors shall teach what the bishop shall judge expedient.

In the future, however, those offices or dignities, which are called professorships, shall not be conferred except on doctors or masters or licentiates of Sacred Scripture or canon law and on other competent persons who can personally discharge that office; any appointment made otherwise shall be null and void, all privileges and customs whatsoever, even though immemorial, notwithstanding.

But if in any province the churches labor under such poverty that in some a college cannot be established, then the provincial synod or the

metropolitan with two of the oldest suffragans shall provide for the establishment of one or more colleges, as he may deem advisable, at the metropolitan or at some other more convenient church of the province, from the revenues of two or more churches in each of which a college cannot be conveniently established, where the youths of those churches might be educated.

In churches having extensive dioceses, however, the bishop may have one or more in the diocese, as he may deem expedient; which, however, shall in all things be dependent on the one erected and established in the [metropolitan] city.

Finally, if either with regard to the unions or the appraisement or assignment or incorporation of portions, or for any other reason, any difficulty should happen to arise by reason of which the establishment or the maintenance of the seminary might be hindered or disturbed, the bishop with those designated above or the provincial synod, shall have the authority, according to the custom of the country and the character of the churches and benefices, to decide and regulate all matters which shall appear necessary and expedient for the happy advancement of the seminary, even to modify or augment, if need be, the contents hereof.

Reform Decree on Preaching (1563)¹²

Desiring that the office of preaching, which belongs chiefly to bishops, be exercised as often as possible for the welfare of the faithful, the holy council, for the purpose of accommodating to the use of the present time the canons published elsewhere on this subject under Paul III, of happy memory, decrees that they themselves shall personally, each

¹² From Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees*, 195-96.

in his own church, announce the Sacred Scriptures and the divine law, or, if lawfully hindered, have it done by those whom they shall appoint to the office of preaching; but in other churches by the parish priests, or, if they are hindered, by others to be appointed by the bishop in the city or in any part of the diocese as they shall judge it expedient, at the expense of those who are bound or accustomed to defray it, and this they shall do at least on all Sundays and solemn festival days, but during the season of fasts, of Lent and of the Advent of the Lord, daily, or at least on three days of the week if they shall deem it necessary; otherwise, as often as they shall judge that it can be done conveniently.

The bishop shall diligently admonish the people that each one is bound to be present at his own parish church, where it can be conveniently done, to hear the Word of God. But no one, whether secular or regular, shall presume to preach, even in churches of his own order, in opposition to the will of the bishop.

The bishops shall also see to it that at least on Sundays and other festival days, the children in every parish be carefully taught the rudiments of the faith and obedience toward God and their parents by those whose duty it is, and who shall be compelled thereto, if need be, even by ecclesiastical censure; any privileges and customs notwithstanding. In other respects the things decreed under Paul III concerning the office of preaching shall remain in force.