

# The West End Herald

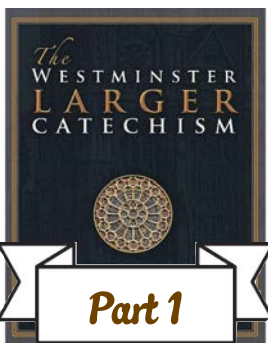
Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC



## Is the Larger Catechism Worthwhile?

by Chad Van Dixboorn

Unlike the Shorter Catechism, the Larger Catechism has suffered much neglect in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. At least a dozen commentaries have been written on the Shorter Catechism, and I can think of at least seven commentaries on the Confession of Faith. Yet only Thomas Ridgely has penned a commentary on the Larger Catechism, and that was in the early 1730s. Many of the commentaries on the Shorter Catechism



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Vol. CXXXII, Edition 26  
July 7, 2024

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and the Confession are still in print; Ridgeley's work was never reprinted and is now very scarce.

Closer to home, another indication of the popularity of the Larger Catechism among conservative Presbyterians may be Trinity Hymnal: the Larger Catechism has never been printed at the back of our hymnal, unlike the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism. Many families learn and study the Shorter Catechism, but few people tackle the Larger Catechism. So is the Larger Catechism worthwhile?

This question will be approached from three angles. First, we will ask why the Larger Catechism was written. The Westminster Assembly obviously thought there was a good purpose for it; it may still be worthwhile for the same reason. Second, we will compare the Larger Catechism with previous catechisms. This may show us what the Assembly thought was lacking in other catechisms, and help us see the unique contribution of the Larger Catechism. Third, we will ask if the Larger Catechism teaches us anything that the Shorter Catechism and the Confession of Faith do not.

### ***The Making of the Westminster Catechisms***

The year was 1642, and many Englishmen had taken up arms against King Charles I. Some of their complaints were similar to those

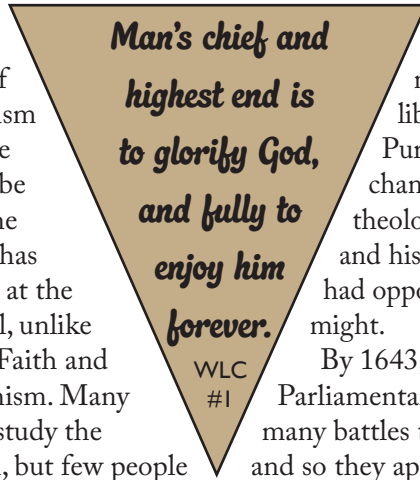
that would be raised by Americans one hundred and thirty years later, but many of their grievances were specifically religious. Some of their

number were reckless libertarians; many were Puritans, who wanted changes in worship and theology that King Charles and his Roman Catholic wife had opposed with all their might.

By 1643, the English Parliamentarians had lost too many battles to the royalist forces, and so they appealed to the north, asking the equally unhappy Scots to help them against the king. They agreed to help, so long as the English subscribed to the Solemn League and Covenant. The first point of that covenant stated that both countries were to be Reformed in "doctrine, worship, discipline, and government." To achieve this unity, the English Parliament called an ecclesiastical Assembly in 1643 to produce a "confession of faith, form of church-government, directory for worship," and a directory for "catechising."

### ***The First Steps toward the Catechism***

Thus, the first purpose of the Westminster Assembly's proposed catechism, like every one of its documents, was to achieve religious unity. Other catechisms existed, but in their view, a fresh one was necessary if the worship of the English and Scottish churches was to be uniform. At least five of the



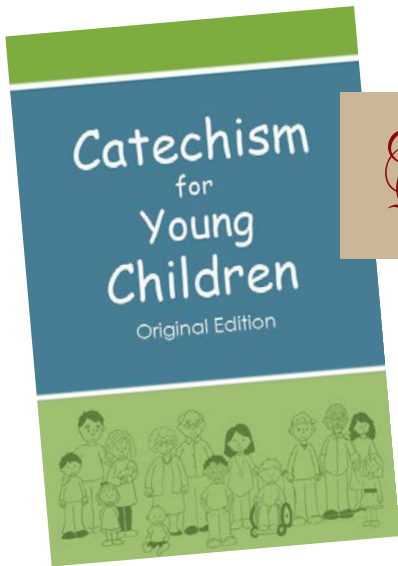
# Guillermo & Jennie Salinas



Guillermo and Jennie are serving our Lord in Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa, Guerrero, Mexico. They have planted several churches in the Zihuatanejo/Ixtapa area. Guillermo is an ordained minister with the PCA with a Masters in Divinity and a Masters in Missions from Birmingham Theological Seminary.

Guillermo will be in the States for a medical checkup this week. He also will be at the U. S. immigration services in Atlanta on July 5. Pray that he has success in the process of renewing his green card.

Please pray that Guillermo will know God's perfect peace in the recent loss of his father. ♦



## Question 87:

What does the fourth commandment teach us?

## Answer:

To keep the Sabbath holy.

***If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*** Isaiah 58:13-14

What did God do to the seventh day? He blessed it and hallowed it. God made the Sabbath day holy. It is different from all the other days because God made it His own special day. God has given us six days each week to work and play and do the things we need to do, but the seventh day belongs to him. ♦



at the corner of

# River & Rhett

## Sr. High Bible Conference *Pawleys Island, South Carolina* *June 24-29, 2024*





**7**

**Todd Walton**

**8**

**Addison Hughes**

**11**

**Ponder Babington,  
Chad Scoggins**

**12**

**Trey Hoopes, Dottie  
King, Mary Grace Mobley**

**13**

**Robert Clelland, Cole  
Owens, Rhonda Slayton**

# This Week

## **MORNING SERMON**

*Dr. Richard D. Phillips*

TO CAESAR AND TO GOD  
Mark 12:13-17

## **EVENING SERMON**

*Dr. Richard D. Phillips*

BROTHER SAUL  
Acts 9:10-19

### **Sunday, July 7**

- 8:30 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 9:55 A.M. Children's Chapel (*Chapel*)
- 10:00 A.M. Sunday School (*Adults in Sanctuary*)
- 11:00 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 5:00 P.M. Finance Committee (*Conference Room*)
- 5:30 P.M. Season of Prayer (*Chapel*)
- 6:00 P.M. EVENING WORSHIP
- 7:30 P.M. Worship and Music Committee (*Conference Room*)

### **Monday, July 8**

- 6:30 A.M. Men's Bible Study (*Conference Room*)
- 9:00 A.M. Vacation Bible School (all week)
- 6:30 P.M. Joint Diaconate/Session Meeting

### **Wednesday, July 10**

No Meal, Choirs, Activities, or Service

### **Friday, July 12**

- 11:00 A.M. VBS Closing Program (*Gym*)

# Upcoming Events

[spcgreenville.org/calendar](http://spcgreenville.org/calendar)

<b>July 8</b>	Joint Diaconate/Session Meeting
<b>July 8-12</b>	Vacation Bible School
<b>July 10</b>	No Wednesday Meal, Activities, Service
<b>July 21</b>	The Lord's Supper in the Morning Services
<b>July 22-26</b>	Jr. High Conference (Ridge Haven, NC)
<b>July 27</b>	Calvary Presbytery (Mount Calvary, Roebuck)
<b>July 27</b>	Bridal Shower for Anna Phillips

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English ministers (often called “divines” in those days) at the Assembly were famous catechists, and so the Assembly asked one of them, Herbert Palmer, to write the first draft of a catechism.

For some reason, Robert Baillie and the other Scottish delegates to the Assembly found Palmer’s work disappointing. The Assembly promptly handed the catechism over to the Scots, who were left to correct its shortcomings. Beginning in December of 1643, the catechism committee of the Assembly worked on this catechism, reporting back frequently to the Assembly for public discussion. Other debates sidetracked the Assembly, and other committees made faster progress: the divines completed the Confession of Faith first, and handed it over to Parliament in December of 1646.

## *The Forming of Two Catechisms*

Finally, in January of 1647, the Assembly gave up on the idea of writing one catechism that would be suitable for all purposes. Richard Vines, an English divine at the Assembly, spotted the problem and made a motion “that the Committee for the Catechism prepare a draught of two Catechisms in which they have an eye to the Confession of Faith, and to the matter of the Catechism already begun.”

Mr. Vines’s motion, which was accepted by the Assembly, has been understood in different ways. Most popular has been the interpretation of Robert Baillie, who inferred that no doctrine would be in the Larger or Shorter Catechism that was not already in the Confession. In his mind, the catechisms would only be reductions of the Confession.



The Scottish commissioners, in a report to their church back home, supplied a further reason for writing two catechisms rather than one: it is too hard to serve milk and meat in one dish. In their view, this difficulty prompted the Assembly to make one catechism “more exact and comprehensive” and the other “more easie and short for beginners.” In terms of efficiency, this was a good decision; by October 15 of that year, the Assembly completed the Larger Catechism, and a month before Christmas the divines presented the Shorter Catechism to Parliament.

We see, then, that the catechisms were designed to promote religious and political unity between England and Scotland and, more obviously, to instruct God’s people in matters of faith and duty, with the Larger Catechism providing more exact and comprehensive instruction.

### ***A Catechism for Preaching?***

Philip Schaff, the well-known nineteenth-century historian, and J. R. Pitman, the editor of one of the divine’s works, have both stated that the Larger Catechism was to be used for preaching. Schaff says that the Assembly wrote it “for the public exposition in the pulpit, according to the custom of the Reformed churches on the continent.” In a recent essay, W. Robert Godfrey has observed that the evidence for this claim is completely lacking. He also points out that the Assembly’s

Directory for Worship (still used by Scottish Presbyterians) explicitly states that the preacher is to preach from a biblical text. If the minister was to preach from a text, it is not likely that he was to use the propositions in the Larger Catechism as his launching point.

The unpublished minutes of the Assembly confirm Dr. Godfrey’s point. In the middle of the Assembly’s debates on preaching, there is a somewhat cryptic statement: “Debate upon that text or argument because it gives liberty to preach without a text.” In twentieth-century parlance, this means, “We debated whether a preacher should preach from a text of Scripture or from a doctrinal proposition (such as a catechism answer); we were concerned that a sermon based on a doctrinal statement could allow a minister to preach without expounding a text.”

This statement reveals that the final declaration found in the Directory was a deliberate one: the ministers at the Westminster Assembly did not think that a preacher should preach from a proposition, or argument, but only from the Scriptures themselves. As important as the catechisms were, the Westminster divines did not want to follow the Continental Reformed practice of preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism.

Most likely, the Scottish commissioners were correct in thinking that the Larger Catechism

# Announcements

## **Baptism Sunday**

The next Baptism Sunday will be July 28. If you would like to schedule your child's baptism, please contact the church office.

## **Open Gym**

The gym will be open every Monday and Tuesday for indoor activities. The Sports and Fellowship Committee purchased equipment (paddles, pickleballs, and nets) for four indoor pickleball courts which will be setup each week for anyone to use. No reservations are required.

***Due to Vacation Bible School, there will be no open gym again until July 15.***

## **Rafiki Bible Class**

This class will start again on September 9, 2024, on Mondays at 9:30 A.M. in the Fellowship Hall. The study is in the book of Exodus, consisting of 18 lessons. The recommended commentary is *EXODUS, Saved for God's Glory*, by Philip Graham Ryken. The main resource will be the study of God's Word in the Bible's book of Exodus.

Anyone who wants to join this study should sign up no later than the first week in August. Please contact Sylvia Long to register. Include your full name, home address with zip code, telephone (cell and home), and email. Lessons will be distributed at a luncheon on August 19, 2024.

## **Raising Up Mothers (RUM)**

Registration for this group's fall term is open now through August 1! RUM is a 12-week study designed for moms with children still in the home, whether you are expecting your first baby or your "babies" are in high school. Our intent is to encourage moms in Christ as they pursue their ordinary duties, strengthen relationships with fellow sisters in Christ, and provide mentoring opportunity from more seasoned women of the church.

Meetings are Friday mornings from 9:15 A.M.–11:15 A.M. beginning September 13. Childcare is provided through age 13; a study hall setting is offered for school-aged kids. To register or check out further details about the study, go to <https://spcgreenville.org/raisingupmothers/>.

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was simply intended to be used by those who were more seasoned in the faith. Its chief beneficiaries would be the adult Christians who already understood the doctrines and duties of the Shorter Catechism and needed the meat of the Word.

In view of the original purpose for the Larger Catechism, there seem to be at least two reasons why the Larger Catechism is still worthwhile. First, it unites us with other Presbyterians who use and love it. Second, it teaches the deeper aspects of the Christian faith. ♦

*Part 2 of this article will appear in the next West End Herald.*

## **Bridal Shower**

All ladies are invited to a bridal shower for Anna Phillips on July 27 in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 10:00 A.M. Anna is the daughter of Kevin & Pam and was married on June 1! Anna is registered at myregistry.com. (Her husband’s name is Michael.)

## **A Time to Build Update**

The membership has been asked to prayerfully consider pledging and giving to *A Time To Build* Campaign this summer. A summary of the information about our new building plans are available at [spcgreenville.org/A Time To Build](http://spcgreenville.org/A Time To Build). The officers of this church are asking you to give an offering beyond your regular tithe. The asking that has been suggested is that for some of you to double your giving for each of the next three years. Some are able to give beyond that. One-time gifts may be made at any time. Pledges are due by the end of the summer. Both can be done in-person or online.



**SECOND**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**To Date: July 2, 2024**

<b>Number of Pledges</b>	<b>Amount Pledged</b>	<b>Amount Given</b>
60	\$1,354,695	\$177,664
<b>Total Amount for Phase I:</b>		<b>\$14,000,000</b>