

The West End Herald

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC

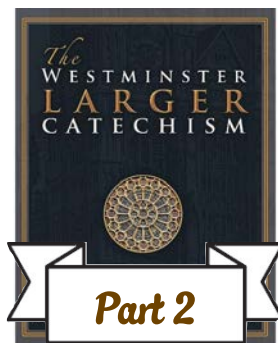


Is the Larger Catechism Worthwhile?

by Chad Van Dixboorn

A Comparison with Previous Catechisms

Having outlined the historical purpose of the Larger Catechism, it still seems appropriate to ask why it had to be written at all. After all, respected teachers in Britain had composed good catechisms, Calvin's catechism was in the bookstores, and so was the Heidelberg Catechism. Why could the assemblymen not agree to use one of those catechisms for the



Part 2

continued on page 2

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In This Issue

- 1** The Larger Catechism
- 3** Calvary Presbytery
- 4** Weekly Catechism
- 5** Corner of River/Rhett
- 6** Birthdays
- 7** Calendar
- 10** Announcements
- 12** The Intercessor

purposes of unity and instruction? The simple answer is that they thought that the earlier catechisms could be improved upon.

This needs immediate qualification. Although the Westminster divines may have spotted deficiencies in the earlier catechisms, they were not departing from their fathers in any large way. In fact, studies have shown that the bulk of the phrases in the Westminster catechisms can be found word-for-word in earlier theological works. Thus, the framers of the catechisms took what they thought was best expressed elsewhere, and brought it together.

The Apostles' Creed

The main difference between Westminster's catechisms and earlier catechisms has to do with the Apostles' Creed. The standard practice of catechisms written earlier had been to expound the Apostles' Creed, phrase by phrase, just as they did the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. But the Westminster Assembly decided to exclude the Apostles' Creed because it, though scriptural, was not Scripture.

Scripture Alone

Avoiding the Apostles' Creed gave both of the Westminster catechisms two strengths. First, the catechisms are based explicitly on Scripture, which is consistent with the position expressed in the first chapter of the Confession: all our doctrine comes from Scripture alone. Second, every catechism that uses the Apostles'

Creed reflects one of the weaknesses of the Creed: there is no mention of the importance of Christ's life.

The Life of Christ

The Apostles' Creed says that Jesus Christ "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." And what does it say next? He "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism moves right from Christ's birth to his death. The same thing is true of Craig's Catechism, a popular Scottish catechism written in 1581, and the New Catechism, written in 1644.

Calvin notes this jump in the Creed and asks in question 55 of his catechism: "Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life?" While this observation is helpful, Calvin's answer is disappointing: "Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption." A similar approach is taken in his Institutes, II.xvi.5-7.

This is rather shocking, particularly from Calvin. Christ's life has everything to do with our salvation: he spent his life fulfilling all righteousness; he kept the law that Adam broke. It is because of Jesus' active, lifelong obedience that God the Father sees us as righteous in Christ. The Larger Catechism, using a framework different from that of the Apostles' Creed, recognizes the importance of Christ's life. It speaks about his birth in question 47, his

CALVARY PRESBYTERY

Missionary of the Week

Since 1973, Calvary Presbytery has been a regional body of congregations within the South Carolina Upcountry. We are members of the Presbyterian Church in America, the largest Bible Believing Presbyterian denomination in the United States.



Calvary Presbytery Membership includes 125 Ministers of the Gospel, called Teaching Elders and the representatives called Ruling Elders of 42 particular Churches & Mission Works. Our churches are home to over 10,000 Christians in 13 SC Counties.

Calvary Presbytery sponsors four area College Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) campus ministries (Anderson, Clemson, Furman, Wofford) and also Reformed University Fellowship International at Clemson. ♦

Melton Duncan
Presbytery Stated Clerk

Kevin Mobley
Moderator

Dan Dodds
Vice Moderator

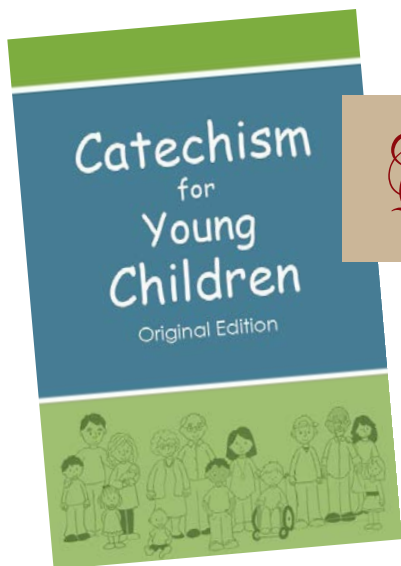
David Bragdon
Treasurer

Robert Cathcart
Recording Clerk

Summer Quarterly Meeting:
Saturday, July 27, 2024
Mount Calvary, Roebuck, SC

COMMISSIONERS

Richard Phillips
Jeffrey Early
Brendon Branigin
Melton Duncan
Kevin Mobley
Dennis Zimmerman
David Bragdon (alt.)



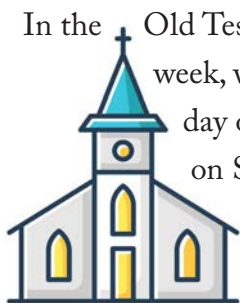
Question 88:

What day of the week is the Christian Sabbath?

Answer:

The first day of the week, called the Lord's day.

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. Acts 20:7



In the Old Testament, the seventh day, the last day of the week, was set out by God as the Sabbath. The seventh day of our week is Saturday. So why do we worship on Sundays? Are we breaking the law of God? Why have we made Sunday our Sabbath? In the New Testament, the apostles and the other Christian worshiped on Sunday because that was the day on which God did His greatest work of all—the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many people think Easter Sunday is the day we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, but we celebrate it every Sunday. That's why the Sabbath is now called the Lord's Day. ♦

From the Lips of Little Ones, Jeff Kingswood



at the corner of

River & Rhett



Vacation Bible School 2024

Kingdom Kids Identity in Christ





- 14** Scott Grubbs
- 15** Kaitlyn Bouchillon
- 16** Ruth Anne Bouchillon,
Ezra Branigin, Audrey
McKee, Nicole Plourde
- 17** Jason Joiner, Rose
McConnell, Rebekah
McDaniel, Rebecca Senn
- 18** Isaac Maralit, David Wright
- 20** Bob Holman, Hanna Lizak

This Week

MORNING SERMON

Dr. Jonathan L. Master

WHAT WILL CONVINCE YOU?

Luke 16:19–31

EVENING SERMON

Mr. Chase A. Harms

AFTER DARKNESS—LIGHT

John 8:12

Sunday, July 14

- 8:30 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 9:55 A.M. Children's Chapel (*Sanctuary*)
- 10:00 A.M. Sunday School (*Adults in Gym*)
- 11:00 A.M. MORNING WORSHIP
- 5:30 P.M. Season of Prayer (*Chapel*)
- 6:00 P.M. EVENING WORSHIP

Monday, July 15

- 6:30 A.M. Men's Bible Study (*Fellowship Hall*)

Wednesday, July 17

- 5:30 P.M. FAMILY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP SUPPER (*Gym*)
- 6:30 P.M. Covenant Choir (Grades 1–6)
- 6:30 P.M. Missions Moment (*Gym*)
- 6:30 P.M. Administration Committee (*Conference Room*)
- 6:45 P.M. Hope Choir (Ages 4–6)
- 6:45 P.M. Women's Bible Study (*Gym*)
- 6:45 P.M. Jr. & Sr. High Bible Studies
- 6:45 P.M. Adult Prayer Meeting & Bible Study (*Sanctuary*)

Thursday, July 18

- 6:30 P.M. Mission to Main

Friday, July 19

- 12:00 P.M. Men's Luncheon and Bible Study (*Gym*)

Upcoming Events

spcgreenville.org/calendar

- July 21** The Lord's Supper in the Morning Services
- July 22-26** Jr. High Conference (Ridge Haven, NC)
- July 27** Calvary Presbytery (Mount Calvary, Roebuck)
- July 28** Baptism Sunday
- July 28** Ice Cream Social

continued from page 2

life in question 48, and his death in question 49, thus presenting a more balanced and biblical picture. The Shorter Catechism does something similar, summarizing these three statements in question 27. The Larger Catechism also recognizes the importance of Christ's life, at least implicitly, in its statements on justification (questions 70 and 71).

Comparing the Larger and Shorter Catechism with previous catechisms is a useful exercise. It reveals that the Westminster catechisms (1) explicitly base their teaching on Scripture alone, and (2) emphasize Christ's life (and active obedience) as well as his death and resurrection. For these reasons also, then, the Larger Catechism is very worthwhile.

A Comparison with the Other Westminster Standards

But does the church really need the Larger Catechism when it has the

brilliant summaries of the Shorter Catechism on the one hand and the depth and breadth of the Confession of Faith on the other? The answer is yes, and the reason for this answer is simple: the Larger Catechism is neither a mere summary of the Confession nor a verbose expansion of the Shorter Catechism.

At times, the Larger Catechism asks different questions than the Shorter Catechism. Sometimes these extra questions may not strike us as all that important, such as when question 16 asks about the creation of angels, or when question 19 asks about God's providence toward angels.

At other times, the contributions are more obviously significant. The Larger Catechism, for example, gives us rules to interpret and apply the law of God, and spells out the differences between justification and sanctification. The Larger Catechism also goes into more

detail about our triune God than does the Shorter Catechism, and has more to say about Jesus Christ. The Larger Catechism has multiple questions on the mediatorial role of Christ, and Christ's humiliation and exaltation. These and other contributions show that the Larger Catechism was written to take us into the heavier matters of the Word of God. But perhaps the largest remaining contribution of the Larger Catechism is one noted by Dr. Godfrey.

The Church

Dr. Godfrey has pointed out that the Larger Catechism frequently speaks of the church, whereas the Shorter Catechism is concerned with the individual. The Larger Catechism frequently mentions ministers of the gospel and carries on extensive discussions of the outward and ordinary means of grace, whereas the Shorter Catechism says almost nothing on these matters. The Larger Catechism broadens its view to include the corporate, public, gathered people of God. Dr. Godfrey appropriately warns that where the church has neglected the Larger Catechism, there could be a lack of teaching about the church.

Dr. Godfrey has hit the proverbial nail on the head. His observation may explain why so many non-Presbyterians appreciate the Shorter Catechism and not the Larger Catechism. The Shorter Catechism,

like much of North American evangelicalism, focuses on the individual; the Larger Catechism, on the other hand, is explicitly Presbyterian and churchly. In places the Larger Catechism appears more concerned with the church and the ordinary means of grace than even the Confession.

Of course, if Robert Baillie's earlier statement is correct, this should not be the case. Baillie thought that the catechisms would not say anything that the Confession did not. But it appears that the committee working on the catechism did not always feel bound to follow the wording of the Confession. Prof. John Murray has suggested, for example, that the Larger Catechism's teaching on the covenant of grace surpasses that of the Confession (7.3), and that question 22 has a better discussion of the imputation of Adam's sin than the Confession of Faith (6.3).

Summary

There are many reasons why the Larger Catechism is worth our study. It unifies Presbyterians who use it as one of their church standards. It gives us the meat of the Word of God. It places a greater emphasis on, and gives fuller explanations of, doctrines that maturing Christians need to hear. It emphasizes aspects of the gospel and draws directly from Scripture in a way that other catechisms do not. And the Larger Catechism emphasizes the church,

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/>.

continued from page 9

the ministry, preaching, and the sacraments at a time when Presbyterians—and in fact all Christians—need to hear of them. For these reasons, the Larger Catechism is worth our while. ♦

Dr. Chad Van Dixhoorn is Professor of Church History and Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte.



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. 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.



To Date: July 9, 2024

SECOND
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Percentage of Congregation Pledging	Amount Pledged	Amount Given
20%	\$1,386,795	\$189,987
Total Amount for Phase I:		\$14,000,000