

## Footstep #42 Luther Writes the Catechism 1529

In 1527, the Reformation movement entered Sweden and Scotland and the first Protestant university was established at Marburg. Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon supported educational reforms throughout Germany at this time and encouraged a liberal arts education to “liberate” the mind from the mastery of others. Luther knew that people had to be taught about God and the Reformation movement is directly related to the humanist values of critical thinking. Luther and Melanchthon supported reading the Bible and music in school. As one of his contributions to education, Luther wrote the Catechism in a way that used clear and concise language with practical examples for both children and adults. Both his *Small and Large Catechisms* continue as the basis for spiritual education of children and adults seeking membership in the Lutheran religion.

**“Parents should send their children to school, and prepare them for the Lord God so that He may use them for the service of others.”** (Philipp Melanchthon. *In Praise of the New School.*)

Here are some selections on what Luther labeled , “The Law” or the Ten Commandments.

***The Fourth Commandment.* Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother [that it may be well with thee and thou mayest live long upon the earth].**

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear and love God that we may not despise nor anger our parents and masters, but give them honor, serve, obey, and hold them in love and esteem.

***The Fifth Commandment.* Thou shalt not kill.**

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need [in every need and danger of life and body].

***The Sixth Commandment.* Thou shalt not commit adultery.**

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear and love God that we may lead a chaste and decent life in words and deeds, and each love and honor his spouse.

***The Seventh Commandment.* Thou shalt not steal.**

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear and love God that we may not take our neighbor's money or property, nor get them by false ware or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and business [that his means are preserved and his condition is improved].

***The Eighth Commandment.* Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

What does this mean?--Answer.

We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, [think and] speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything.



**Catechism Lessons Before Smart Boards and PowerPoint! (circa 1535)**