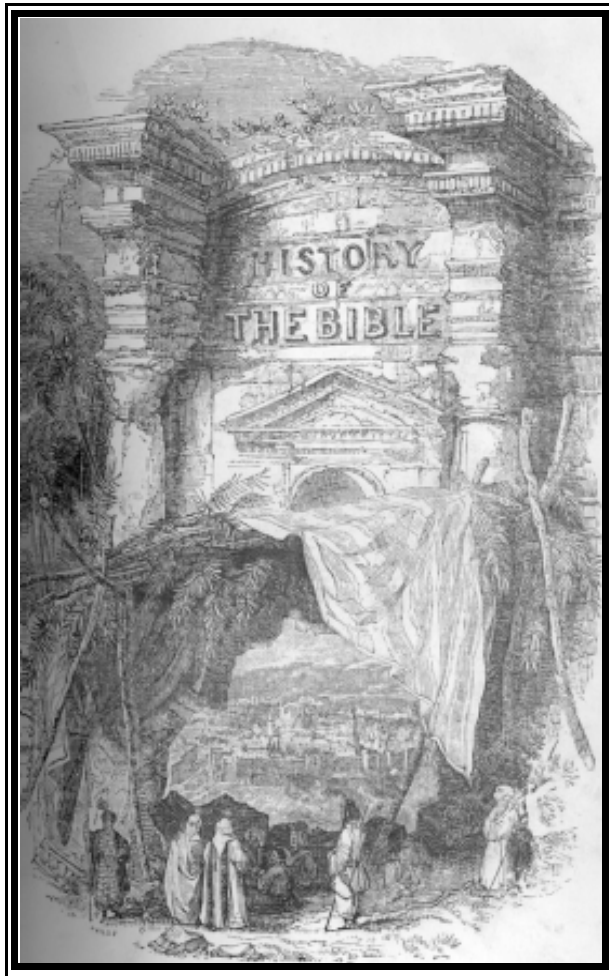


Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!



Second Part – Catechism Lessons.

A Devotional for the

Week of the First Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.

– Luke 11:28.

So with Christ. But where have we the Word of God? In Holy Scripture, or the Bible. What is the Bible? It is the Word of God. It is a collection of books written by the Prophets of God in the Old Testament and by the Apostles and Evangelists in the New Testament, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Thus the Bible is the Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," says the Apostle Paul concerning the writings of the Old Testament. (2 Timothy 3:16.) "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," says the Apostle Peter concerning the same writings. (2 Peter 1:21.) Every word in these writings is the Word of God. When referring to one particular word, the Lord Jesus says: "And the Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35.) Just so it is with the writings of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (2 Corinthians 2:13.) So the whole Bible is the Word of God. It does not merely claim this for itself, but it proves itself to be such by its great holiness, which cannot be man-made, but must be of God; and by the Holy Ghost, who witnesses and operates through it. "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." (2 John 5:6.)

And for what purpose did God in the Old and the New Testament give His Word? Thereby to "make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:16.) Jesus Christ is the nucleus, the pith and marrow, not only of the New Testament, but also of the Old. "Search the Scriptures," says Christ, speaking of the Old Testament; and they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39.)

Yes, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. Hear it and keep it, my dear Christian!

PRAYER. – Almighty and most gracious God, I thank You that to all the world and to me You have given Your Word, which makes me wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Give me Your Holy Spirit, that I may gladly hear and learn Your Word, read and study it daily, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and obtain eternal salvation. Amen.

Hymn 111.

How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration given;
Bright as a lamp its doctriens shine,
To guide our souls to heaven.

Its light, descending from above,
Illumes this world so drear,
Displays a Savior's boundless love,
And brings His glories near.

It shows to man his wandering ways,
And where his feet have trod;
And brings to view the matchless grace
Of a forgiving God.

O'er all the straight and narrow way
Its radiant beams are cast;
A light whose never weary ray
Grows brightest at the last.

It sweetly cheers our drooping hearts
In this dark vale of tears;
Life, light, and joy it still imparts,
And quells our rising fears.

This lamp, though all the tedious night
Of life, shall guide our way,
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.

MONDAY.

The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. – 2 Corinthians 3:16.

In Holy Scriptures we have two chief doctrines. Both are of God. And yet they differ as widely as death and life. And unless you clearly perceive the difference between these two doctrines, you will not know what to make of it all or what to believe. – These two doctrines are the *Law* and the *Gospel*.

– In His *Law*, God tells us how we ought to be, and what we should do and not do. In His *Gospel* God tells us that He lovingly desires to save us by grace for Christ's sake. Every word of the Bible that tells us how we ought to be, and what we should do and not do, is *Law*. Every word of the Bible that tells us that it is God's will to save us by grace for Christ's sake, is *Gospel*. Take your Bible and try to become adept in discerning what therein is *Law* and what is *Gospel*.

– The *Law* ("the letter") kills, damns us. How so? Why? Because we have not kept it and cannot keep it, because we have transgressed it and still transgress it, we poor sinners. The *Gospel* ("the spirit"), however, gives life, salvation. How so? Why? Because it demands nothing of us, but merely gives freely, so that we need but take, and rely upon it, and believe. Thus says the *Law*: "Cursed be he that confirms not all the words of this *Law* to do them." (Deuteronomy 27:26.) Thus says the *Gospel*: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

– The *Law* shows you your sin and ruin. The *Gospel*, however, shows you the deliverance, salvation. Learn to know your sin and your utter spiritual ruin front the *Law*, but learn to know the deliverance, your salvation, from the *Gospel*. From the killing *Law* flee into the life-giving *Gospel*. Then the *Law* will cease to curse you, then you will have eternal salvation given you by the *Gospel*.

Dear Christian, let the *Law* be your schoolmaster, to drive you to Christ, whom the *Gospel* preaches to you.

PRAYER. – Enlighten me, O God, that I may rightly understand Your Word. From Your holy Law let me learn to know my boundless spiritual ruin. But from Your holy Gospel let me learn to know Your grace, which does much more abound, the grace which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, and which saves me from my utter ruin and gives me eternal salvation. And, O merciful Lord, let me abide in true faith in Your Gospel, the secure place of refuge against every curse. Amen.

Hymn 314, 9.

The Law reveals the guilt of sin
And makes man conscience-stricken;
The gospel then doth enter in
The sinful soul to quicken.
Come to the Cross, trust Christ and live;
The Law to you no peace can give
With all its good endeavors.

TUESDAY.

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee. - Micah 6:8.

God has given His Law to every man. To every man these words apply: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee." In creation God wrote His Law into man's heart: man knew by nature how he ought to be and what God wanted him to do and not to do. By sin this writing was blurred, but not totally effaced. Because it was blurred, God afterwards laid down His Law in Ten Commandments written on two tables of stone, published it through Moses and the Prophets of Israel, and expounded and explained it through Christ and His Apostles.

But that the natural knowledge of the Law of God has not been

lost entirely is proved by the heathen. The heathen have neither the Ten Commandments nor their exposition. And yet, by nature they do various works of the Law, as is evidenced by their moral teachings and their laws. Since they have not the Law that is revealed in Scripture, they are a law to themselves. And so they show that something of the Law is still within their hearts. Have not also the heathen a conscience? Do not their thoughts accuse or else excuse one another? (Romans 2:14-15.)

So every man knows the Law of God. No man can plead ignorance of the divine Law to excuse his sin. Least of all can you plead this. He has shown you what is good, and what the Lord requires of you, not only by the writing within your heart, but much more so by the writings of the Prophets and Apostles. Sinner, flee to Christ, your Savior, that your guilt be taken from you!

PRAYER. – Yes, Lord, I am a sinner, and my sin is inexcusable. I know Your Law, and still I transgressed it. I sin daily. I flee to You, Lord Jesus Christ! Wash me of my sin, and I shall be whiter than snow! Forgive my sins to me, since You did bear them for me and did expiate them. Give me Your free Spirit, that henceforth I may strive against sin and serve You according to Your commandment. Amen.

Hymn 109, 3.

The Law may threaten endless death
From awful Sinai's burning hill,
Straightway from its consuming breath
My soul through faith mounts higher still;
She throws herself at Jesus' feet
And finds with Him a safe retreat
Where curse and death can never come.
Though all things threaten condemnation,
Yet Jesus, Thou art my Salvation,
For in Thy love I find my home.

WEDNESDAY.

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. – Matthew 22:37, 39.

This is the sum, the chief contents, the real and true meaning of all commandments, each commandment being but an application of this to particular requirements; this must be the living heart of the fulfillment of all commandments; each separate commandment marks but the pulse-beatings that should and must come from this heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Thus Christ said, thus says the entire Scripture. And you can see that it is so, my dear Christian. In a measure every man can see this, especially when he hears it. Since God is the Most High, since He is Goodness itself and worthy of being loved more than anything else, you must love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. If you do not do this, you are sinful and do what is wrong. Since God regards your neighbor just as highly as yourself, you must love your neighbor as yourself. If you do not do this, you are sinful and do what is wrong. God desires no outward, unwilling, slavish, loveless fulfillment of His commandments.

Love must impel you to fulfill all commandments. If you have this love, as God demands it of you, then you wilt gladly and properly fulfill all commandments. You will serve God in perfection, you will do no evil to your neighbor, but only good. "Therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law." (Romans 13:10.) If you do not have this love, you lack the heart, you are dead, spiritually dead, sinful beyond measure, then you can not keep any of the commandments of God. Do you have this love, O Christian? Since you are a regenerated child of God, you begin, it is true, to love God and your neighbor.

But oh, how much does your love still lack the true quality and strength! How sinful you are, how sinful am I! Is it not so? Self-love grows rank within us. And the love toward God and toward the

neighbor is but a poor and pitiable seedling standing in the shadow and among the weeds of many sins.

PRAYER. – O God, Most High, Fountain of goodness, and most worthy to be loved, whose love toward me and my fellow-sinners on earth knows neither bound nor measure, who did not spare Your own Son, but did deliver Him up for us all that in Him we might live forever: continue to have mercy upon me, a poor sinner, and for Christ's sake forgive me for loving You so little and keeping Your commandments so poorly. And through Your Holy Spirit, O Lord, kindle love toward You and toward my neighbor in my heart, and grant that in eternal life this small flame of God will become a perfect and a holy fire. Amen.

Hymn 413, 3.

And in Thy mercy now bestow
True Christian faith on me, O Lord!
That all the sweetness I may know
Which in Thy holy cross is stored,
Love Thee o'er earthly pride or pelf,
And love my neighbor as myself;
And when, at last, is come my end,
Be Thou my Friend,
From Satan's wiles my soul defend.

THURSDAY.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. – Exodus 20:3.

This is God's First Commandment. God forbids us to have other gods besides Him. There are no other gods besides God, it is true; but if we fear, love, and trust in any creature in heaven or in earth more than in God, then with a madly sinful heart we make a god, an idol, of such a creature, and commit idolatry. How enormously sinful the world is! Since the Fall it is, on the one hand, steeped in gross idolatry and worships images, the concoctions of its own impure thoughts, –and Satan knows that in reality it is he that is

worshiped; and on the other hand, it is steeped in fine idolatry, –if such a thing may be called fine, –inasmuch as it exalts itself above God, and serves its own belly, and fears the creature, loves the creature, trusts in the creature.

We must know God aright, and fear, love, and trust in Him above all things. And the fear of God must keep us aloof from every wicked thing that is opposed to God: the love of God must make us zealous to every good thing desired of God: the trust in God which we should have must make us bold and glad to run into the outstretched arms of God. Alas, while it is true that in us who have learned to know Christ and God in Christ such new life is budding, planted, and nursed by God, –how sinful we are nevertheless! How frail is our fear of God, our love of God, our trust in God! How wild does that hateful idolatry still grow in our mortal body!

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord." In Christ we have the forgiveness of sins, and that righteousness which God imputes to us for Christ's sake, the righteousness wherein we can stand before God, He also gives us His Holy Spirit, and He renews us. And so, while sin still cleaves to us heavily, yet with a freed spirit we serve God, fear Him, love Him, trust in Him.

PRAYER. – O my God, I am a poor, miserable sinner. I am devoid of the fear, love, and trust in You which I should have. Forgive me my sins, impute to me the righteousness of my Savior. You surely do so. Your Word assures me of it. And behold, You have given me Your Holy Spirit, who begins the new and right life within me. Let Him abide with me, O God! And on the day of resurrection let me awake from the sleep of death with Your likeness, in perfect holiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Hymn 391, 2.

I am thy God and Lord alone,
No other God beside me own;
Put thy whole confidence in me,
And love me e'er cordially.
Have mercy, Lord!

FRIDAY.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain.
– Exodus 20:7.

This is God's Second Commandment. God forbids us to take His name in vain. God's name is everything by which He reveals Himself to us, particularly His precious Word. If we take this divine name in vain, if we profane it, we commit a grievous sin and profane the Divine Majesty itself. We should not use the various appellations of God for frivolous exclamations. It is shameful impudence and blasphemy to do so. We should not curse by the name of God, that is, neither blaspheme, nor invoke upon ourselves or others the wrath and punishment of God. We should not swear by the name of God, not utter unnecessary, frivolous, sinful, or even false oaths. We should not use witchcraft nor incantations, not have our fortune told, nor tell fortune ourselves, not consult the dead, nor practice similar satanic arts by the name of God. We should not lie nor deceive by God's name, not adorn nor cover up false doctrine or an ungodly life by making use of the Word and name of God. No, since God has so graciously revealed Himself to us by making known to us His name and giving us His Word, we should hold fast to Him by making proper use of His name and His Word, for this is what He would have us do; and in childlike fear and love we should call upon Him in every trouble of body and soul; and we should confidently believe that He will surely hear us, and be good and kind to us, and shower His blessings upon us; and at all times we should pray to Him, praise Him, and give thanks to Him. What poor sinners we are! How graciously does God tender Himself to us through His name and Word! But what poor use do we make of that, how unwillingly do we take what He so lovingly offers!

PRAYER. – You God, great God, You make Yourself known to me – oh, so graciously! – by revealing Your name and Your Word to us. And You will that there I should seek and find You, and let my heart's delight be in You, and honor, praise, and magnify You.

But oh! how sinful, how weak of faith, how tardy, and cold I am! Forgive me this sin for Christ's sake. Grant to me, I beg You, Your Holy Spirit that He may draw me, heart, soul, and mind, into Your name and Word, that I may have my being wholly in You. Amen.

Hymn 391, 3.

By idle word and speech profane
Take not my holy name in vain,
And praise but that as good and true
Which I myself say and do.
Have mercy, Lord!

SATURDAY.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. – Exodus 20:8.

This is God's Third Commandment as it was written on the table of stone, that is to say, the first words. The Sabbath day, the day of rest, was the seventh day, Saturday. God commanded His people, the children of Israel, to keep this particular day holy. But this requirement was expressly abrogated in the New Testament. The Holy Ghost says through the Apostle: "Let no man therefore judge you in . . . respect of an holy-day, or ... of the Sabbath days." (Colossians 2:16.) The Apostle then teaches that Christ has brought the true day of rest; by the grace of God we may now rest from sin. The day of rest of the Old Testament was but a type and shadow of this. Now that the body has come in Christ, the shadow has been done away with. The specific Sabbath day is no more. Nor has another specific holy-day been instituted in its place, not even Sunday.

The whole life of a Christian is to be a Sabbath. But "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," so God commands. (Colossians 3:16.) In the Christian congregation the Word of Christ is to be taught and preached publicly. This is most necessary and most salutary. For this purpose a day and a certain time of the day must be appointed when the Christian congregation meets for public worship. Since the earliest times the Church has appointed Sunday for this purpose. We still observe this custom. He that will not take time to hear the Word of Christ despises the Word of Christ. And we are not to despise the Word of Christ, but to keep it holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

Behold the mercy of God in having His saving Word preached to us. We must heartily thank Him for this, and do our utmost to retain this spiritual boon, regularly attend divine worship, and eagerly listen to the Word preached to us. But do you not know the sinful disinclination of your heart to hear the Word of God, even though you are a Christian?

PRAYER. – Lord God, Heavenly Father, I pray You so to rule and guide me by Your Holy Spirit that with all my heart I may hear and receive Your Word and truly sanctify the Sabbath day, that by Your Word I, too, may be sanctified, place all my trust and hope in Jesus Christ, Your Son, and then also correct my life in conformity with Your Word, guarding against every offense, until by Your grace in Christ I shall obtain eternal life. Amen.

Hymn 391, 4.

Hallow the day which God hath blest,
That thou and all thy house may rest;
Keep hand and heart from labor free,
That God may so work in thee.
Have mercy, Lord!

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
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